

**MIGRATIONS, GENDER AND  
INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN BULGARIA**





# **MIGRATIONS, GENDER AND INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN BULGARIA**

**Edited by  
Marko Hajdinjak**

Project GeMIC:  
Gender, Migration and Intercultural Interactions in the  
Mediterranean and South East Europe: an interdisciplinary  
perspective

International Center for Minority Studies  
and Intercultural Relations  
Sofia, 2011

This book is an outcome of the international research project GeMIC (2008-2011). GeMIC was coordinated by the Center for Gender Studies at the Panteion University, Greece. It involved Universities and research institutes from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Italy, Macedonia, Romania, Spain and Turkey.

The project was funded by the Seventh Framework Program of the European Commission (FP7 2007-2013)

Theme: SSH-2007-3.3.1 – Cultural interactions and multiculturalism in European societies; Funding scheme: Collaborative projects (small or medium scale focused research projects)

Grant agreement no.: 216065

For more information about project GeMIC, visit: <http://www.gemic.eu>

© Georgeta Nazarska, author, 2011

© Mila Mancheva, author, 2011

© Evgenia Troeva, author, 2011

© Marko Hajdinjak, author and editor, 2011

© International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 2011

**ISBN: 978-954-8872-68-3**

## CONTENTS

Introduction, <i>Marko Hajdinjak</i> . . . . .	7
Migrations to and from Bulgaria: the State of Research, <i>Mila Mancheva, Evgenia Troeva</i> . . . . .	13
Gender, Migration and Intercultural Interactions: Policy Analysis on Bulgaria (1990-2010), <i>Georgeta Nazarska, Marko Hajdinjak</i> . . . . .	61
Mixed and Transnational Families in Bulgaria, <i>Georgeta Nazarska, Marko Hajdinjak</i> . . . . .	111
Migration, Religion and Gender: Female Muslim Immigrants in Bulgaria, <i>Evgenia Troeva, Mila Mancheva</i> . . . . .	155
Invisible Engines of Change and Self-Sacrificing Tradition-Breakers: Mixed and Transnational Families in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, <i>Georgeta Nazarska, Marko Hajdinjak</i> . . . . .	193



# INTRODUCTION

In February 2008, the International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR) started its work on the international research project GeMIC – Gender, Migration and Intercultural Interactions in the Mediterranean and South East Europe: an interdisciplinary perspective. The project was financed by the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission. IMIR was a part of an international consortium, which included research institutes and universities from eight countries from southern Europe: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Romania, Spain and Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

The Bulgarian research team included the following experts: Dr. Georgeta Nazarska (University of Library Studies and Information Technologies), Dr. Evgenia Troeva (Institute of Ethnography and Folklore at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences), Dr. Mila Mancheva (Centre for the Study of Democracy; American College of Sofia) and Marko Hajdinjak (IMIR).

During the first year of the project, the team collected and analysed a large number of laws and other legal documents from the Bulgarian legislation, as well as international treaties and agreements, policy documents, scholarly publications, and studies and analyses of various non-governmental and international organisations. In this way, the team

---

<sup>1</sup> Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences (UPSPS), Center for Gender Studies, Athens – Coordinator;  
Consorci Institut d'Infància i Mon Urbà (CIIMU, Institute of Childhood and Urban World), Barcelona;  
Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna (UNIBOL), Department of Politics, Institutions and History, Bologna;  
University of Cyprus (UCY), Department of Education, Nicosia;  
“Euro-Balkan” Institute, (EU-BAL), Research Center in Gender Studies, Skopje;  
“Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați (UDJG), Department of English Language and Literature, Galați;  
Bilkent University (UBIL), Department of Political Science, Ankara.

“paved its road” towards the fieldwork, which lasted through the second year of the project. Nazarska and Hajdinjak conducted a field research on mixed and transnational families in Bulgaria, while Mancheva and Troeva studied the female Muslim immigrants in our country.

The third and the last year of the project was dedicated to the writing of several reports. In addition to two national reports, based on the fieldwork analysis and describing the situation in Bulgaria, comparative international reports were also produced. All reports were presented on various scholarly conferences in different European countries (the Czech Republic, Sweden, Italy, Greece). The reports were also presented at a national conference, which took place in November 2010 in Sofia. In addition to the team involved in the GeMIC project, other colleagues who are working on similar issues also presented their work at the conference. Their papers were published in the Bulgarian language version of this book.<sup>2</sup>

The chapter “Migrations To and From Bulgaria: The State of Research,” written by Mancheva and Troeva, represents a detailed overview of studies, conducted over the years on the topic of international migration processes and their manifestations in Bulgaria during the post-1989 period. Mancheva’s and Troeva’s study covers the works written by both Bulgarian and foreign authors, dealing with different aspect of Bulgarian migrations. The chapter begins with a short introduction to the history of migration in Bulgaria after 1989. The literature overview which follows is divided into two main parts – studies on emigration and studies on immigration. The part about emigration is much larger and is consequently further divided into sub-sections: studies of general migration tendencies and processes; Bulgarian emigrant communities around the world; migrations of ethnic and religious minorities; migration and gender; migration of highly educated and qualified people; impact of emigration on Bulgarian society; and return migration. The part dedicated to Bulgarian immigration studies is not divided into sub-

---

<sup>2</sup> Марко Хайдиняк, ed. *Миграции, пол и межкултурни взаимодействия в България* (Migrations, Gender and Intercultural Interactions in Bulgaria). Sofia: IMIR, 2011.



sections, because the volume of scholarly literature is much smaller compared to the emigration studies.

Nazarska and Hajdinjak analyse the migration policies in Bulgaria in the chapter "Gender, Migration and Intercultural Interactions: Policy Analysis on Bulgaria (1990-2010)." The introductory part brings forward some important statistical and demographic data about the Bulgarian emigrants and about the immigrant communities in the country. The central part of the chapter is divided into three sections. In the first one, the authors try to find out what is the place of gender (if gender indeed has any place at all) in the Bulgarian policies on migration. In addition to the existing legislation and policies on migration, the practical work of state institutions and non-governmental organisations was also analysed. The aim of the second section was to answer the question if, and if yes how, the Bulgarian policies on gender equality take the migration phenomenon into consideration. The path towards answering this question leads through a critical overview of the existing legalisation and gender equality policies, as well as an assessment of the work of the state administration and NGOs. The third section examines whether the intercultural interactions are considered a relevant policy objective by the Bulgarian state, and if this is the case, what are the measures the state is undertaking to improve the integration of immigrants.

The chapter "Mixed and Transnational Families in Bulgaria," written by Nazarska and Hajdinjak, is a result of a field research on mixed families (consisting of Bulgarians and foreigners) and on transnational families (families dispersed in two or more states). Mixed and transnational families are interesting research topics for several reasons. Intercultural cohabitation, racial, ethnic and gender conflicts and tensions, and formation of hybrid practices and identities can all be examined in their relation to the issues of identity, religion, language, traditional gender roles, racism and xenophobia, and acceptance and tolerance. The chapter analyses the main questions related to these two types of families in Bulgaria – impact of migrant mobility, integration into the

receiving country, influence of cultural differences on power relations in the families, and the effect of mixed and transnational families on the traditional model of family households.

Troeva and Mancheva present the results of their study on female immigrants professing Islam in the chapter “Migration, Religion and Gender: Female Muslim Immigrants in Bulgaria.” The main goal of the research is to study the links between migration, religion and gender in the case of the female Muslim immigrants in Bulgaria. The peculiarity of such study in the Bulgarian context comes on the one hand from the Bulgaria’s geopolitical position in the international migration matrix, and on the other hand from its specific ethno-religious profile. The country has a long history of inter-religious and inter-cultural relations and established institutions, catering to the needs of Christian and Muslim communities. These circumstances place the Muslim immigrants in Bulgaria in a context, which is quite different from the one in most western European countries, where Islam appeared as a minority religion only in recent decades. The main analytical questions the research is concerned with deal with the role of Islam in identity construction in the migration context; the role of gender in professing Islam in migration; the role Islam plays for the adaptation or marginalisation of female immigrants in the Bulgarian society. With these goals in mind, the levels and manifestations of continuity and change in religious practices and cultural norms of Muslim female immigrants in Bulgaria are studied.

The final chapter of this volume is a comparative study “Invisible Engines of Change and Self-sacrificing Tradition-breakers: Mixed and Transnational Families in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey.” In order to write it, Hajdinjak and Nazarska built upon and used the three national reports on the mixed and transnational families, which were based on the field research conducted in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey between February 2009 and January 2010. While the Bulgarian national report, written by Nazarska and Hajdinjak, is included in this book, the Greek (authors Annie Kavvadia and Maria Stratigaki) and Turkish reports (authors Dilek Cindoglu and Saime Ozcurumez) are available at the web site of the

GeMIC project: <http://www.gemic.eu/?cat=24>. The introductory section of the chapter explains the main objectives of the report, describes the methodology and defines the basic concepts and terms. The central part presents the analysis and compares the main findings of the field research on mixed and transnational families in all three countries. The conclusion summarises the main points and proposes some relevant policy recommendations. The two appendixes feature the profiles of the respondents from the interviews and focus groups.

A comparative report on gender, migration and religion, based on four national reports (including the report on female Muslim immigrants in Bulgaria written by Troeva and Mancheva) was written by Renata Pepicelli. Her comparative report, as well as the three other national reports for Italy, Greece and Turkey can be found on the GeMIC web site: <http://www.gemic.eu/?cat=16>

At the end of the three-year long academic adventure called GeMIC, I would like to thank everyone, who have contributed to the successful realisation of the project.

I am exceptionally grateful to all the respondents from the immigrant communities, as well as their families, for sharing with us their personal stories – both the happy and funny, as well as the sad and difficult moments; and to all the respondents from Bulgarian families, who gave us a chance to peek into the world of transnational families, for whom migration is at the same time a curse and a way to survive. A very special thanks goes to Peter and Marta – their help was priceless for the organisation of focus groups in Sofia and Sapareva banya.

I warmly thank the colleagues from the international consortium for the wonderful and full-valued cooperation.

My sincere gratitude and deep respect goes to Georgeta, Mila and Evgenia for their immaculate work. You were an extraordinary team and I hope we will soon have a chance to work together again.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks for my colleagues at IMIR – Antonina Zhelyazkova, Violeta Angelova, Zornica Karadzova, Maya Koseva and Lubomir Petkashev for all the support, precious help and good mood during the fieldwork, and for their help with the organisation of the Sofia conference and the publication of this volume.

*Marko Hajdinjak*

# MIGRATIONS TO AND FROM BULGARIA: THE STATE OF RESEARCH

*Mila Mancheva, Evgenia Troeva*

The present article offers an overview of the scholarship dealing with migration issues in Bulgaria. The text outlines the various methodological and conceptual approaches to the study of migration and the main topics that attracted the attention of researchers. The review includes studies dealing with international migration processes and phenomena of the post-1989 period, leaving aside scholarship on internal migrations and migrations of the previous period. The article offers a discussion of the development of the field of migration studies in Bulgaria and includes the works of both Bulgarian and non-Bulgarian scholars dealing with aspects of Bulgarian migrations.<sup>1</sup>

The text includes a short introduction to the history of Bulgaria's post-1989 migrations. The literature review that follows is structured by themes and includes a parallel discussion of the methodology, which is summarized in the conclusions. Studies on emigration and immigration are presented separately as the two phenomena have unequal share in the research literature.

## **Bulgarian migrations after the fall of the Berlin Wall**

The history of Bulgarian migrations of the post-1989 period is not written yet. A number of scholars have attempted to outline different aspects of Bulgaria's migration trends, yet there is no well justified periodization of the migration process and no comprehensive discussion on its demographic, social, cultural and economic aspects.<sup>2</sup> This can be explained with the process of gradual incorporation of relevant

---

<sup>1</sup> Two recent articles provide overviews of the development of migration scholarship in Bulgaria after 1989 (Ragaru, 2008; Elchinova, 2009). While M. Elchinova's article offers a critical assessment of Bulgarian migration studies from the field of anthropology, that of N. Ragaru attempts at comprehensive overview of the development of the field in the country.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter: Studies on general migration trends and processes.

conceptual and methodological tools of analysis on the part of social scientists and with the slow adjustment of country's statistical systems to the needs of adequate observation of migration trends. As a consequence, migration processes of the 1990s remained to a great extent unobserved by both social scientists and Bulgarian migration management institutions.

The fall of the Communist regime in 1989 marked the beginning of radical political and social transformations and signified a new period of Bulgaria's migration history. The liberalised border regime, the economic transformation of the country accompanied by high inflation, unemployment and political instability triggered intensive emigration flows. Estimates of the World Bank point to about one million Bulgarian emigrants by 2005 (937,341), which is roughly about 12% of Bulgaria's population.<sup>3</sup> Immigration into the country is of much smaller proportions with 107,245 international immigrants representing 1.4% of Bulgaria's population in 2010 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Population Division, 2009).

The first mass migration wave of 1989/90 was the outcome of ethnic tensions engineered in the late Communist period. In the context of ambitious assimilation campaign enacted by the communist regime, nearly 300,000 ethnic Turks were forced to leave the country to Turkey between May and August 1989.<sup>4</sup> Right after the political changes of November 10, 1989, Bulgaria's out-migration was diversified to include ethnic Bulgarians and members of other minorities, who headed west mainly relying on the refugee regimes in Western Europe and North America. The emigration flows of the 1990s were both regular (students, professionals, visiting family members) and irregular, as the Schengen border regime served to preclude travel of prospective economic migrants

---

<sup>3</sup> Bulgarian sources point to an outflow of about 600,000 to 800,000 Bulgarian emigrants in the period 1990-2007 (Министерство на външните работи на България, 2007, p. 9).

<sup>4</sup> Between 1984 and 1989, the Communist government of Bulgaria forced the ethnic Turks in the country to change their names with Bulgarian ones, to abandon their traditional clothing and to stop speaking Turkish in public places.

from Eastern Europe. The major factors influencing the intensity and the shape of Bulgaria's emigration flows include the country's economic and social realities and the changing migration regimes at European and national level.

A general look at the curve of Bulgaria's migrations outlines at least four periods of the migration process. The immediate post-1989 period was followed by emigrations of new intensity and practices in 1996, 2001 and 2007 respectively. The wave of 1996 was triggered by the economic collapse of the country in the winter of the same year and was dominated by irregular labour migrants. Subsequently, Bulgaria's placement on the so-called Schengen White List (April 2001) and the country's EU accession (January 2007) contributed to increasing emigration of the highly qualified, but also to mass low-skilled labour emigration and consequently to a rising inflow of remittances. Further changes involved a transformation from permanent and long-term migration practices to temporary and cyclical labour migration.

The main destination countries of the first and the second period involved Germany, Belgium, Austria, Sweden as well as the USA and Canada. South European countries, such as Greece, Spain and Italy, have emerged as the most attractive destinations due to the greater openness of their labour markets to immigrant workers since the late 1990s. The high intensity emigration after 1989 led to the formation of considerable Bulgarian communities in some European countries, the USA and Canada. Bulgarian emigrants today live transnationally and develop multiple attachments. By remittances and transfer of social capital and know-how, they have also played a role in Bulgaria's transition.

The immigration to Bulgaria remains at moderate levels, although the number of immigrants has been increasing gradually since the 1990s (from 21,500 officially registered foreigners in 1990 to five times that number by 2005). The majority of foreigners in Bulgaria in 2007 originated in European countries. Almost 60% come from non-EU countries of Europe, 11% from EU countries and 13.5% from countries

neighbouring Bulgaria. About 30% of the overall officially registered migration inflow represent foreigners from other continents. They are fragmented, however, into small communities with the most numerous being those coming from Syria, Armenia and China (Национален статистически институт, 2007).

Bulgaria is to be considered a sending country with a strong transit migration trend, a relatively low immigration inflow and a moderate refugee inflow.

## **Migration scholarship in Bulgaria**

The interest towards international migration in the years preceding 1989 was focused on historically formed Diasporas in present Romania, Moldova, Ukraine and the countries of Central Europe and Argentina. Those communities were composed of Bulgarian emigrants who left the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for political or economic reasons. Those studies were the outcome of dominant theoretical approaches to migration (in Bulgaria and Europe in general) as a one-way process from a sending to a receiving country associated with severing of ties with home communities and either integration or assimilation in the host societies.

The spectrum of novel practices and social processes associated with migration after the fall of the Berlin Wall required the appropriation of new methodological and theoretical tools of analysis. This need was relevant across Europe and was recognized by leading migration scholars who called for new conceptualization and for interdisciplinary approach in the study of migration to reflect the new migration realities worldwide (Massey et al., 1998; Brettell, Hollifield, 2000). In this context and in the context of the pre-1989 social science tradition firmly ingrained in Soviet academic paradigms, Bulgarian academia of the early 1990s appeared unprepared to study the new migration phenomena in spite of their intensity and high significance for Bulgarian society. A serious hindrance to informed migration research was posed



by the unsystematic statistical observation of cross-border movement in the country and by the absence of public information systems in migration management institutions, which made access to migration related data notoriously impossible. In these circumstances, migration studies in Bulgaria developed slowly and gradually with stronger interest placed on emigration rather than immigration.

During the 1990s, the field was dominated by surveys on potential migration and statistical investigations aimed to study general migration trends. Migration studies that employed more relevant methodologies have started appearing with greater frequency since the late 1990s. The field today is rather interdisciplinary, attracting the interest of demographers, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, political scientists, as well as historians. The methods of research are correspondingly diverse and produce knowledge on migration processes from a number of perspectives. The main topics of research include: trends and patterns of emigration, (im)migrant profiles and motivations, migrant economic practices and networks, issues of intercultural difference, ethnicity and identity.

## **Emigration**

### ***Studies on general migration trends and processes***

In the early and mid-1990s migration studies in Bulgaria showed interest mainly in the phenomena of emigration, relying on statistical, demographic and sociological methods of analysis. Studies of migration potential designed after representative sociological surveys were employed as one of the first tools for studying emigration. They were conducted annually in the 1990s and aimed to monitor the aptitudes and motives for emigration in Bulgaria, the demographic and social profile of potential emigrants, as well as the order of preference of potential destination countries (Migration Potential of Bulgaria, 1992, 1996, 2001; National Migration Potential Surveys, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999 and surveys from 2001 and 2003 used in: Калчев, 2001;

Калчев, 2002; Минчев и др., 2004). Providing data about subjective attitudes rather than real trends, these studies were methodologically limited. Irrespectively of that however, some social scientists tended to use them to analyse cross-border trends and patterns, as well as to investigate issues of highly qualified migration, gender dimensions of migration and other (Калчев, Цветарски, 1991, 1993; Zlatanova, 1991; Калчев, 2001, 2002; Минчев и др., 2004; Томова, 2006; Жекова, 2006; Rangelova et al., 2006). Still other scholars tried to analyse migration trends discussing the diverse and contradictory migration data in the country (Bobeva, 1994, 1996; Bobeva et al., 1994; Totev, Kalchev, 2000; Guentcheva et al., 2003; Stanchev, 2005).

An example of the first tendency is the study of J. Kalchev (2001) that offers an overview and analysis of Bulgarian emigration after 1989. Although the author discusses the relevance of the various data sources on migration (national censuses, population registers, administrative registers, border statistics and sociological surveys) he relies entirely on various sociological surveys (some new and some having been already published) supported by demographic comparison of census results from 1992 and 2001. Kalchev's main findings point to an absolute number of more than 680,000 emigrants from Bulgaria (1989-2001) and a negative net migration of 580,000-600 000 persons (Калчев, 2001, p. 213). The author identifies three periods of development with regard to migration in the country: largely politically motivated emigration dominated by ethnic Turks (1989-1992) followed by a less intensive flow of economic migrants with increasing shares of young and highly qualified people (1993-1996). The third period until 2001 was dominated by a labour migration trend (Калчев, 2001, pp. 214-215). Kalchev's study was the first that aimed to research Bulgarian emigration trends comprehensively but his choice of methodology posed restrictions on his analysis and placed his findings in a conditional framework.

A number of other studies tried to draw their analysis of migration trends on more diverse data sources. The study on transit migration in Bulgaria (commissioned by IOM) has been the only one on this topic

so far (Bobeva et al., 1994). It is based on quantitative and qualitative data and outlines the scales of migration to and through Bulgaria by countries of origin and modes of travel. Analysis is also provided on the demographic and socio-economic profile of transit migrants, their situations in Bulgaria and their migration plans. The study provides a very good “snapshot” with regard to transit migration in Bulgaria in the early 1990s. Two other studies by the same author provide an overview of Bulgarian migration trends in the early 1990s (Bobeva, 1994, 1996). What is outlined is the numbers of e/immigrants, the main destination and source countries and the reasons and motives to migrate. The articles are good source of Bulgaria’s migration trends in the very first post-Communist years – they are based on factual statistical data (from the NSI and the Bulgarian Mol) with migration potential surveys being cited only for prognostic purposes. The migration related data, however, is at points cited uncritically and the problems related to the collection of migration statistics in the country are not discussed.

An article by S. Totev and J. Kalchev is a similar attempt to present scales of Bulgarian emigration till 1998 (Totev, Kalchev, 2000). The authors point out but avoid discussion of the existing contradictions in migration data from various sources and use NSI estimates. An interesting aspect of this study is the attempt to make a region specific profile of migration in three categories, based on analysis of the demographic and economic conditions of Bulgaria’s administrative regions. It is claimed that peripheral regions produce complete emigration practices, regions with declining industries produce economic migration but also migration motivated by the desire for professional realization, while central and economically competitive regions have prevailingly “potential migration.”

The first serious attempt to provide a general view of the main migration tendencies in the country and to analyse their effects on the Bulgarian society was undertaken in 2003 (Guentcheva et al., 2003). The study is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of research and includes analysis of statistical data, normative documents regulating migration, relevant literature and interviews with

representatives of state institutions and migrants. The authors provide a summary of the Bulgarian migration related legislation and focus on the scales and patterns of migration, its push and pull factors and the main destination and source countries. Temporary seasonal emigration and transit immigration are identified as the two dominant migration patterns by the authors. In addition, they point that economic factors are the main push factors for both emigration and immigration and stress the role of migrant networks for maintaining a relatively stable flow of emigrants (Guentcheva et al., 2003, p. 47). With regard to the social influence of migration, the authors claim that emigration has a greater impact on the Bulgarian society than immigration. The authors trace the positive influences of emigration through indicators such as levels and use of remittances and transfer of know-how. At the same time, they identify a number of negative effects of emigration such as loss of highly qualified specialists, depopulation of some areas in Bulgaria, increased school drop-out rates among children with emigrant parents.

The study identifies important shortcomings in the existing databases on migration and advises on the development of a unified methodology for observing emigration trends, to be the basis for collection of reliable and correct migration related statistics (Guentcheva et al., 2003, p. 5). The study is valuable in the attempt to approach various data sources on migration and to use them critically while discussing their imperfections and limitations.

The problems in the statistical monitoring of migration processes in Bulgaria are studied in detail by N. Cholakov. He insists on re-conceptualization of the statistical monitoring of the external emigration of Bulgaria by introduction of an exit/entry border crossing registration along with the basic demographic indicators (Чолаков, 2003, p. 63).

Another, less successful, attempt to study comprehensively current migration trends in Bulgaria is conducted by the Open Society Institute (Stanchev et al., 2005). The report attempts to provide assessments

of emigration scales and a comparative macro economic analysis of Bulgaria and some host countries (Germany, Greece and Spain) as a tool of migration projections. In addition, it discusses remittance dynamics in Bulgaria and provides an overview of selected host country policy frameworks and migrant situations (Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany).

R. Sultanova (2006) offers an interesting account of the Bulgarian refugee flow trends in the post-1989 period. The author bases her analysis on statistical information. She outlines the three periods of migration (till 1993, 2001 and after 2002) and the main destination countries of Bulgarian refugee applicants.

A different perspective to this field is proposed by E. Jileva who is concerned with the effects of EU restrictive migration policies on Bulgaria's EU accession process and migration regime (Jileva, 2002a/b/c, 2003, 2004). E. Jileva offers critical analysis of the EU visa policies and procedures for candidate countries, the impact of the extension of these policies to Bulgaria and the impact of the establishment of a visa free regime between EU and Bulgaria (2001). The author also discusses the uneven free labour movement policies of the EU, which approach CEE candidate countries as members with regard to obligations and as third countries with regard to benefits.

### ***Bulgarian emigrant communities abroad***

The topic started attracting the interest of Bulgarian social scientists (mainly anthropologists) since the late 1990s. The emigration phenomenon is approached from the perspective of the home and host country alike, with field work being conducted both in Bulgaria and in selected destination countries such as: Austria, Greece, Germany, Spain, USA, Israel, UK, as well as Central European and Arab countries. The main research questions posed by the studies are centred on: socio-cultural adaptation in the host societies, dynamics of identity negotiation, issues of home and belonging, migrant (transnational) practices and networks, migrant families and family strategies. The preferred methods of research

are qualitative and include: open and semi-standardized interviews, biographic interviews, open conversation, standard questionnaires, participant observation, internet communication. Some of the studies rely on multi-sited ethnography and follow respondents in the country of origin and destination. The field comprises a number of edited volumes (Томова и гр., 1998; Zhelyazkova, 1998; Карамихова, 2003а, 2006; Eade, Valkanova, 2009; Генчева, 2010), a couple of books (Карамихова, 2004; Ганева-Раїчева, 2004а; Parla, 2005; Маева, 2006) and articles in various Bulgarian and international volumes and magazines.

Studies conducted in the home country: The first volumes dealing with Bulgarian emigration were based on field work conducted in Bulgarian emigration driven regions (Томова и гр., 1998; Карамихова, 2003а). Both studies were conducted in the Rhodopes region known for its mixed ethnic population and high migration aptitudes. The study from 1998 is based on sociological survey cards and deals with the country specific preferences for migration. Germany, Greece, USA and Turkey are identified as main destination countries in the preferences for migration.

The second study, conducted in 2003, deals with the migration intentions of the Rhodopes population distinguishing the specifics of each ethno-confessional group (Christian Bulgarians, Muslim Bulgarians, Turks). The authors identify two emigration waves: the first one of 1990-1992 included mainly Christian Bulgarians and Turks; the second one (1997-1998) included also many Muslim Bulgarians (Карамихова, 2003b, p. 48). The book studies the differences between temporary migration to Western Europe and permanent migration to the USA (Карамихова, 2003b, p. 64). The focus is placed on some gender aspects of migration, such as the prevailingly female migration to Greece (Карамихова, 2003b, p. 69; Александриева, 2003, p. 185) and the prevailingly male migration to Spain and Portugal (Троева, Грузоров, 2003, p. 114). Attention is paid to some new migration tendencies such as the "*gurbet*"<sup>5</sup> migration of whole families (Дечева, 2003, p. 138).

---

<sup>5</sup> Gurbet is a traditional name for temporary labour migration. See: Хрусноб, 2003.

Studies conducted in the host countries / multi-sited ethnology: One of the important contributions to this area of research is the book on the first generation Bulgarian immigrants in the USA (Karamihova, 2004). M. Karamihova identifies economic and social realities in the country of origin as main push factors for migration. The role of social networks and the processes of cultural interaction in migration are of central interest for the author. The levels of migrants' cultural adaptation, through indicators such as clothing, food, music, calendar and personal holidays are evaluated. The author considers that the Bulgarian female migrants in the USA preserve their social participation model that involves being mothers, housewives and working women at the same time (Karamihova, 2004, p. 57). She points that while marriage rates among immigrants appear high; the endogamy remains the norm for the first generation. The explanation for this trend is the imported model of male aspiration for domination in the family that is assumed to cause problems in potential mixed families (Karamihova, 2004, p. 135). The author's finding is that the first generation immigrants rather preserve their status in the host country and invest all their efforts and hopes into the social advancement of their children. Based on field work among migrant Bulgarian professionals both in the U.S. and Bulgaria, M. Stoilkova explores the impact of mobility on citizenship and the relationship between migration and post-Socialist transformation in Bulgaria (Stoilkova, 2001, 2003, 2005).

Studies of Bulgarian emigration to non-European countries have been focused on Australia (Цанева, 2005), the Middle East and Africa. E. Tsaneva deals with the holiday culture of Bulgarians in Australia. V. Lazarov deals with the situation of Bulgarians in the Arab countries during the Socialist period and the 1990s (Лазаров, 2006). The author's analysis relies on multi sited ethnography with interviews conducted mainly in the host countries and to a lesser extent with returned labour migrants ("gurbetchii") in Bulgaria. The labour migration is compared to the traditional "gurbet" practices of seasonal internal and external labour migration of agricultural and construction workers coming from rural regions and in the context of the social-political changes in Bulgaria.

The author studies the life of the labour migrants (“gurbetchii”) in the Arab countries in detail and claims that they have rather restricted contacts with the local culture and face difficult adaptation back in Bulgaria in the new economic situation of post-socialism.

Bulgarian emigration in the UK has attracted the interest of researchers after Bulgaria’s EU accession in 2007 (Markova, Black, 2008, 2010; Eade, Valkanova, 2009). The topic is studied prevalingly by scholars working in the UK, who explore migration dynamics from latest EU member states (Bulgaria and Romania). Bulgarian immigrants are studied together with, or in comparison to, other immigrants from Eastern Europe: Albanians, Serbs, Romanians, Poles, Russians and Ukrainians. Scholars are interested in the labour market performance of Bulgarian immigrants in the UK in relation to their education and professional training as well as to migrant attachments and identifications with their home and host contexts (Markova, Black, 2008; Markova, 2009). A recent volume edited by J. Eade and J. Valkanova presents an attempt to provide a comprehensive picture of British-Bulgarian post-accession migration realities, discussing both Bulgarian migration to Britain and British migration to Bulgaria (Eade, Valkanova, 2009). The topic is studied in the context of recent policy making in the two countries (Kotzeva, 2009; Sriskandarajah, Cooley, 2009) with two particular studies of Bulgarian immigrant occupation and housing (Markova, 2009) and Bulgarian immigrant children educational needs (Valkanova, 2009).

The recent Bulgarian migration in Austria has been studied by two authors who deal with questions of identity, religiosity and family structures in migration (Mapkoša, 2008; Kasabova, 2002, 2010). M. Markova is interested in the relationship between migration and identity. The author conceptualizes the processes of identity negotiation experienced by Bulgarian immigrants in Austria as “crisis of identity.” Respondents’ efforts for adaptation through the (im)migration process are analysed through the prism of “voluntary rejection of one’s roots” (Markova, 2008, p. 102) or preservation and celebration of one’s Bulgarian identity. The assumption of the existence of a monolithic Bulgarian identity as core



unit of analysis in the study of identity dynamics in migration, places the author's analysis in rather questionable framework. A. Kasabova studies the development of family structures (Kasabova, 2002) and East Orthodox religious organization of Bulgarian immigrants in Vienna (Kasabova, 2010) paying particular attention to the role of the state in the migration process.

Emigration of Bulgarians to South European countries has led to the formation of considerable immigrant communities in Greece, Spain and Italy, which gradually attracted the attention of researchers. Most numerous so far have been the studies dealing with Bulgarian emigrants in Greece conducted by both Bulgarian and Greek researchers (Markova, Sarris, 1997, 2001; Markova, 2001, 2004, 2004a, 2010; Грѳгоров, 2003; Желязкова, 2003; Hatziprokopiou, 2006a, 2006b; Gabärski, 2008; Angelidou, 2008). E. Markova studies the issues of labour market accommodation of Bulgarian ("illegal") migrants in Greece and the influence of regularization campaigns and labour market policies on their social and economic situation (Markova, Sarris, 1997, 2001; Markova, 2001, 2004, 2004a, 2010). These issues are studied from the perspective of the economist and are based on standard questionnaires.

The importance of illegal labour migration in the migration process of Bulgarians to Greece is stressed in the study of H. Gabarski (Gabärski, 2008). Other authors investigate the general migration trends to Greece observing a predominant trend of migration of middle aged women (Грѳгоров, 2003; Желязкова, 2003) streamed in the domestic service sector (Грѳгоров, 2003, p. 239). Both studies of V. Grigorov and A. Zhelyazkova point to the common Orthodox religion as a factor facilitating Bulgarian-Greek marriages. While Grigorov pays attention to the community life of the Bulgarian immigrants in Greece, Zhelyazkova observes a network of assistance between Albanian male and Bulgarian female immigrants (Желязкова, 2003, pp. 185-187). The perceptions about "Greece" and "Europe" among Bulgarian migrants in Athens are the subject of the study by A. Angelidou (Angelidou, 2008). The author also investigates the relationship between the economic practices

and the gender identities of the female Bulgarian migrants in Athens (Анжелугу, 2010).

Bulgarian emigration in Spain has been studied prevalingly by E. Markova who investigates the micro-level determinants of remittance behaviour based on a qualitative sample survey (Markova, Reilly, 2007, 2008; Markova, 2008, 2010). Analysed is the relationship between migrants' length of stay, status, family structure and remittances.

Bulgarian emigrant communities in the countries of Central Europe, and more particularly Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, also attract the interest of researchers. The main focus in the study of the Bulgarian community in Slovakia has been placed on the ethno-cultural characteristics and identity manifestations of its members (Паукова, Пенчев, 2005; Антова, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) as well as the social experiences of mixed Bulgarian-Slovak families (Антова, 2004). With regard to mixed families S. Antova identifies a number of potential conflict zones related to differences in values and habits as well as models of children's naming, number and upbringing (with or without grandparents' help). Differences are observed with regard to the gender roles within the family with the woman being considered to hold higher respect in Slovakia (Антова, 2004, p. 35).

In her next study dealing with the ethno-cultural identity of Bulgarian immigrants in Slovakia, the author analyses a set of ethno-cultural indicators that have been expressed in the context of inter-community relations. Such indicators include self-identification, the choice of citizenship, the choice of language for the children from mixed marriages, the role of religion, holidays, and free time, food practices and music. By paying attention to migrants' relations with the home country, Antova argues that Bulgarians in Slovakia are to be considered "transmigrants" with a double belonging (Антова, 2006, p. 105). Her conclusion is that the migration of Bulgarians to Slovakia is characterized by a quick adaptation and good image – a social behaviour that is conceptualized as "cultural bilingualism" (Антова, 2006). Two authors have studied the

history and present situation of the Bulgarian community in the Czech Republic (Гъргов, 2003) and the levels and forms of adaptation of the first generation of immigrants (Vladimirova, 2010).

The Bulgarian immigrant community in Hungary is studied by V. Ganeva-Raicheva, who is interested in the role of institutions in the process of cultural memory formation (Ганева-Раїчева, 2004a, 2004b). The study is based on interviews with emigrants from different waves: the old community of the gardeners, the second generation, as well as migrants from recent years. The role of the language, food and holidays as spheres of intercultural relations are analysed. The issue of the choice of religion in the mixed Bulgarian-Hungarian marriages is also interesting: girls of such families are baptized in the mother's confession and boys in that of the fathers (Ганева-Раїчева, 2004b, p. 163).

P. Hristov is interested in the labour migrations of the wider Balkan region, studying the seasonal migrations of Bulgarians, Macedonians and Serbs in historical and contemporary perspective (Хрусмов, 2007, 2010; Hristov, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008f, 2010). The author studies the role of labour migration in the process of transformation of material culture, social roles, calendar and rituals (Хрусмов, 2010, p. 16). He analyses the mutual influences between migration and culture (Hristov, 2008d; Хрусмов, 2008), the role of labour migration in the construction of trans-border identities (Hristov, 2008e) as well as the seasonal labour migration memory (Хрусмов, 2009).

### ***Studies on migration of Bulgaria's ethnic and religious minorities***

Scholars of Bulgarian emigrations tend to deal with questions of ethnicity and identity in the context of minority migrations. This trend is to be explained with the fact that migration studies in Bulgaria developed in the context of a well established field of ethnic studies (Кръснева, 2004, pp. 5-6). Migration research from the fields of anthropology and sociology borrowed the analytical and conceptual approaches of

ethnic studies. Many of scholars of ethnicity turned their attention to migration studies. In consequence, they appeared to approach emigration of old minorities as a new social context for the study of "old" analytical questions of identity formation and inter-cultural difference. Thus, the academic knowledge of old minorities and the methodological experience accumulated in the study of ethnicity both accounted for the significant interest on the part of the social scientists to the migrations of Bulgaria's old minorities.

An important set of literature has dealt with the topic of migration of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria to Turkey in the post-1989 period. It is focused on the volume of migration, its changing patterns and motivations, the socio-cultural aspects of immigrant integration and the double allegiances developed by the migrants. In the early 1990s, history scholars were the first to provide an account of the forced emigration wave of ethnic Turks to Turkey in 1989/1990 and the subsequent return migration (Hopken, 1989; Vasileva, 1992). They studied the first post-1989 migration waves of ethnic Turks against the background of the migration history of the minority since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The first study to explore and put focus on problems of the processes of adaptation of the Bulgarian Turkish immigrants into the Turkish society was the edited volume *Between Adaptation and Nostalgia. The Bulgarian Turks in Turkey* (Zhelyazkova, 1998). The study is based on multi-sited field work in both Bulgaria and Turkey and is engaged with identifying the nature of adaptation and integration of the immigrant group in the ancestral homeland. Ts. Georgieva studies the migration patterns between Bulgaria and Turkey throughout the 1990s (Georgieva, 1998). In the account of the author, the migration trajectory of Bulgarian Turks changed from a linear, politically motivated one-way process in 1989/90 to a trans-border practice that encompasses the economic and social spaces of the two states into one transnational field.

D. Dimitrova provides an account of the accommodation strategies of the post-1989 Bulgarian Turkish immigrants, their reception in the

Turkish society and their relationship with the host Turkish population (Dimitrova, 1998). The author studies the motives of the 150,000 return migrants and the main accommodation pillars of those who chose to stay. The author claims that the relationship of Bulgarian Turkish immigrants with the host society is marked by mutual distances and social isolation of the newcomers due to differences in the cultural norms, language, gender relations and religiosity.

P. Krastev provides an oral history analysis of the memory of the assimilation campaign in Communist Bulgaria, which was the trigger of the big emigration wave of 1989. Krastev's thesis is that the importance of the "renaming campaign"<sup>6</sup> is underrated in the memories of the Bulgarian Turkish immigrants due to the dynamics of identity negotiation that they underwent in Turkey. The author encounters a memory formation process that dictates selective remembrance of the positive characteristics of the past to serve as a generator of a positive self-image and a source of symbolic opposition to the host society (Krastev, 1998, pp. 177-180). The processes of identity transformation as result of migration are studied in the case of Bulgarian Turkish immigrant students in Bulgaria (Hodja, Milanov 1998, pp. 210-211). The authors identify double attachments of the group under study and a process of accentuation of different aspects of their identities according to their respectively Bulgarian or Turkish environments.

A study by P. Bochkov is based on bi-local ethnology among migrants in Izmir and their relatives in Bulgaria (Bochkov, 2004). The author focuses on trans-border migrant networks of Bulgarian Turks. His observation is that the family and family relations gain higher role and importance in emigration. The author analyses the various adaptation strategies of the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey and observes a process of group stratification with regard to the economic integration and a good political integration for the whole community.

Two young scholars, a Bulgarian and a Turk, have published the latest studies on Bulgarian Turkish immigrant communities in Turkey (Parla,

---

<sup>6</sup> See footnote 4.

2005; Maeβa, 2006). While M. Maeva aims to provide a comprehensive study of Bulgarian Turkish integration into the Turkish society (focusing on settlement patterns, mutual perceptions and images, social differences), A. Parla explores the dimensions of belonging and homeland in their experiences. The authors approach the questions of identity negotiation and dual attachments of the Bulgarian Turkish immigrant group from slightly different angles. Maeva employs a somewhat traditional approach (Maeβa, 2004, 2006, 2007b) tracing identity processes through account of religious and language practices, custom holiday celebrations and the use of names. To study the attachments to the host and home country, Maeva analyses the negative and positive images and the pragmatic strategies employed in Bulgaria and Turkey (Maeva, 2002, 2006).

Parla, whose studies are based on multi-sited ethnography (Parla, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009; Παρλα, 2009), places her analysis within the context of a critical discussion of the contemporary Turkish national discourse that approaches Bulgarian Turkish migrants with cultural essentialism, which places them at the margins of the national body. The author's thesis is that the imposition of ethnic and cultural sameness as grounds of acceptance of the Bulgarian Turkish immigrants in the ancestral homeland strongly shapes their dislocation experiences. Parla's ethnographic material demonstrates that the Bulgarian Turkish immigrants undergo a variety of homeland experiences and choices (both imaginary and real) that vary and interchange between the lived (Bulgaria) and the ancestral (Turkey) homelands. This, in turn, allows the author to question the static notions of culture and borders as insufficient approaches to the study of the complexity of migrant experiences.

Similarly, Maeva's conclusion is that the Bulgarian Turkish immigrant identity is to be analysed through the lenses of flexibility, multiplicity and situatedness (Maeβa, 2006). Both authors provide rich and fresh material on ethnic Turk migration and rigorous analysis of the relationship between migration, identity and belonging. Parla's work has also a gender focus (Parla, 2005, 2007, 2009). The author pays attention to the uneasy reception of Bulgarian Turkish female migrants in Turkey, the

result of contested understandings of proper gender roles. The author provides an account of the norms and practices of equal work and exposure into the public field that are defended by Bulgarian Turkish female migrants in opposition to the codes of honour and gender propriety in Turkey. The explanation of this behaviour is in the standard policies of emancipation during Communist Bulgaria, which affected the educational and social advancement of the Turkish minority and constructed a discourse of work that has become an “indispensable aspect of identity” for them (Parla, 2005, p. 154).

The migration of Bulgarian Turks to Western European countries has also drawn the attention of some authors, who use the case to study the realities of irregular migration and identity dynamics. D. Karabinova’s study is conducted among Bulgarian Turkish (irregular) labour migrants in Vienna (Карабинова, 2005). The author’s observation is that her respondents convey their “grey” market labour experience from Bulgaria. Karabinova’s finding is that Bulgarian Turkish immigrants in Vienna live isolated from the Austrian society and rely mainly on the co-ethnic networks of friends and relatives. Their status and the type of work they find do not allow this immigrant group to make long-term plans regarding their lives and residence in Austria.

M. Mancheva studies the irregular migration practices of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria to Germany, outlines the main trends in the labour migration since 1989 and analyses the role of ethnicity and culture in the formation of migrant networks and the maintenance of intra-network hierarchies between the host German Turks and the newcoming Bulgarian Turks (Манчева, 2008; Mancheva, 2008). The migrations of ethnic Turks to countries of the EU are the subject of a number of studies of M. Maeva (Maeva, 2005, 2007).

The migratory behaviour and practices of the Muslim Bulgarians in Spain are studied by N. Deneva. She explores questions of migrant networks and the role of borders in their mobilization (Deneva, 2006; Денева, 2009), migrants’ flexible self-identifications (Deneva, 2008),

as well as issues of transformation and preservation of rituals across states (Денева, 2010). The author argues that the new social context of Spain, where Muslim Bulgarian migrants are not distinguished from their Christian Bulgarian co-citizens (as the case at home is), enacts a “potentially different relational setting for their self-identification.” Deneva argues that a new process of identity formation is at place among the Muslim Bulgarians in Spain that “contributes to the broader process of fracture and fragmentation of their community in Bulgaria.” The process involves a stress of one’s Europeanness at the expense of one’s cultural and religious specificities (Deneva, 2008, p. 8).

Few scholars focused attention on specific aspects of Roma migration. E. Marushiakova and V. Popov deal with the migration of two Roma groups on the territory of Romania, Ukraine and Moldova. The study is based on oral histories and historical sources about the Roma migration in 19th and 20th century (Марушиакова, Попов, 2006). The same authors offer a study of Roma migration from Bulgaria and Romania to the countries of Western Europe (Marušiakova, Popov, 2008).

The contemporary migration of Bulgarian Roma to European countries attracts the attention of other authors (Томова, 2008; Слабкова, 2008; Slavkova, 2008). L. Peycheva and V. Dimov study the migration practices of the professional group of Roma musicians. The authors analyse the problems that arise out of the clash with other cultural models and conceptualize the Roma migrations as “trans-border nomadic lifestyle” that has old traditions in the Balkans (Пеїчева, Димов, 2006, p. 76). A short overview of Roma migration is also provided by I. Tomova. The study provides opinion on migrant motivations and destination countries but it is too general and based on migration potential surveys (Tomova, 2006).

F. Dekalo studies the emigration of Bulgarian Jews and ethnic Bulgarian labour migrants to Israel after 1989 (Декало, 2006). Employing a descriptive but rather vivid and lively approach, the author identifies dynamic stratification of the immigrant group by migration wave (“old” and “new” migrants), profession and ethnicity (Jewish or Bulgarian).



## *Migration and gender*

The relationship of gender and migration has been in the focus of only a few studies to date (Rangelova et al., 2006; Passerini et al., 2007; Αηγελιγγυ, 2010; Krasteva, 2010) but gender differentials tend to be accounted for in texts investigating particular migration issues. Migration potential surveys served as a basis for a study of the gender dimensions of Bulgarian emigration (Rangelova et al., 2006). The authors summarize the results of the surveys of 2001 and 2003 tracing the gender differences in the demographic, social and educational profile of potential migrants as well as in the motives for migration. The results show that aptitudes to migration are higher among men than among women and that there is no gender differentiation with regard to the relationship between professional skills and the labour market integration of Bulgarian migrants (Rangelova et al., 2006, p. 65).

Another study focused on the interrelation between gender and migration comes from scholars with background in oral history, feminist and literary studies. The edited volume *Women Migrants from East to West. Gender, Mobility and Belonging to Contemporary Europe* aims at analysing the new forms of identification that arise in Europe in relation to mobility and gender relations (Passerini et al., 2007). The Bulgarian literary scholar N. Alexandrova has two contributions in the volume based on oral history research of female migrants from Bulgaria in Italy and the Netherlands. N. Alexandrova explores the relationship between mobility and subjectivity and the ways in which it influences re-configurations of ideas of home and belonging. In her first contribution she provides an account of the cross-border experiences of female migrants that fuel the first set of impressions of the new transnational worlds they enter (Alexandrova, Lyon, 2007). Her second contribution is an exploration of the theme of love in migrant women's accounts. The author studies the topos of romantic love as legitimate explanation for female motives and actions across space, and discusses how identification with, or denial of, a romantic narrative can account for the migrant's sense of autonomy and for their own strategies of integration in a new society (Alexandrova, 2007).

A. Angelidou studies the motives for migration of Bulgarian female labour migrants in Athens (Αηγελιδου, 2010). The author examines critically the dominant thesis about the economically motivated migration from countries of the ex-Soviet block, claiming that the migration of Bulgarian female labour migrants in Greece is prompted by complex factors, such as family relations, gender role renegotiation in the family and changing perceptions of the “public” and “private” spheres.

A. Krasteva bases her discussion on the relationship between migration and gender on in-depth interviews and standard-survey questionnaires with immigrant women in Bulgaria. The author is interested in the advantages and disadvantages faced by immigrant women, as opposed by men, in the process of incorporation into the Bulgarian society (Krasteva, 2010).

### ***Migration of the highly qualified***

Bulgarian highly qualified migration has not been studied seriously yet. To date, the topic has been studied through the prism of “brain drain” (Zlatanova, 1991; Цεκοβα, 1993; Бoбeвa и γp., 1996) with the main focus of interest placed on Bulgarian students abroad (Cserjan, 1999; Λяκoвa, 2008; Karabinova, 2010). The study by V. Zlatanova is based on a sociological survey of aptitudes for migration among academics in Sofia and the correlation of its results with the political and economic situation in Bulgaria. The discussion is placed in the “brain drain” paradigm viewing the process as extremely negative for the Bulgarian society.

The work of K. Cserjan is a policy-oriented study based on statistical data and qualitative interviews. It offers a detailed statistical account of Bulgarian student migration in Austria and outlines its demographic profile and preferences, by disciplines of study and universities and the normative regulation of foreign student migration to Austria. The study outlines the positive aspects of student migration for both Austrian and Bulgarian societies and provides a summary of policy recommendations to the relevant institutions in both countries for the facilitation of this

flow. The strategies of adaptation and inclusion of Bulgarian students in Vienna are the focus of D. Karabinova, who bases her account of life-course interviews (Karabinova, 2010).

M. Liakova offers a qualitative study of the social reality of Bulgarian students in Germany. The author presents a typology of their motivations, social contacts and “hybrid” cultural attachments. Liakova outlines their visions for the future in a somewhat linear “stay or return” framework, but her analysis suggests (although not explicitly) the yet “undefined” and fluid character of their future professional decisions, dependent on a cluster of factors (Лякова, 2008, p. 59). In her conclusion the author questions the “brain drain” concept that dominates Bulgarian public discourse on highly qualified migration. The author claims that in the context of a globalizing and poly-centred society this type of migration is to be freed from the “national” domain and approached from the angle of assuring access to the “world society of knowledge” (Лякова, 2008, p. 61).

### ***Impact of emigration on Bulgarian society and return migration***

Irrespectively of the ongoing public debate on the effects of emigration on Bulgarian society, the academic studies in this field have been few so far (Guentcheva et al., 2003; Минчев, Бошнаков, 2006, 2007; Maleev, 2010; Генчева, 2010; Манчева, 2010). The main themes of interest in this field concern the economic and social effects of migration over the home society. While the economic effects of migration are studied through the prism of remittances, the social impacts of migration are explored through investigations of migrant distance memberships, migrant children left at home, as well as the social and professional realization of return migrants.

The first attempt to investigate the economic dynamics of Bulgarian emigration by V. Minchev and V. Boshnakov is based on remittance data from official sources and on a representative survey among migrant

households, conducted in 2005 (Минчев, Бошнаков, 2006, 2007). The authors' analysis is focused on the socio-demographic profile and the remittance behaviour of Bulgarian return migrants, as well as on the types of migrant investments and the impact of remittances over the migrant households at home. The findings of this investigation reveal that official data sources on remittances register about 45-50% of the real flow. The authors also identify a prevailing tendency of remitting through unofficial channels and strong saving behaviour with about only 35% of migrant incomes spent in the countries of destination (Минчев, Бошнаков, 2006, p. 32). The study is an efficient attempt to overcome the restrictions of the official sources on remittances as basis of investigation of the economic impact of emigration on Bulgarian society. This approach, however, needs to be complemented by qualitative micro studies in the field (such as the one by Markova, Reilly, 2007) to offer in-depth analysis of these phenomena.

M. Mancheva studies the influences of migration on one particular locality in Bulgaria – the Kardzhali region (Манчева, 2010). The author traces the history and levels of the post-1989 migration from the region and the types of relationships that migrants develop and the memberships they sustain within their home communities. R. Guentcheva investigates the social impact of migration on the home population by exploring the long distance relationships between migrant parents and their children at home (Генчева, 2010). The author observes a process of earlier maturation and empowerment on the part of migrant children in contrast to dominant public perceptions viewing the separation of migrant parents from their children as fully negative for the children. A. Maleev is the only author that focuses attention on the phenomenon of return migration by studying emigrants who have returned from Austria (Maleev, 2010).

## **Immigration**

The studies dealing with issues of immigration in Bulgaria are modest in number compared to those dealing with emigration. The interest in this

field has developed since the late 1990s and relies on both quantitative and qualitative methods of research. Studies on immigration approach topics such as institutional, policy and legislative frameworks (Влагинска, 1998; Костадинова, 2002; Рагева, 2003; Manfred Woerner Foundation, 2003; Guentcheva et al., 2003; Дрюке, 2004; Хюсменова, 2004; Рангелова, 2004; Jileva, Guiraudon, 2006; Кръстева, 2006; Христова, 2007), critical assessment of the human rights aspects of immigrant reception and treatment (Български Хелзинкски Комитет, 2004; Ilareva, 2007; Lewis, Daskalova, 2008), socio cultural situation of different immigrant groups (Кръстева, 2005; Исса, 2004; Бързинска, 2007; Ivanov, 2009; Krasteva, 2010; Elchinova, 2010). Interest to public attitudes to immigrants is unsystematic (Chongarova, 2009; Pamporov, 2010).

The edited volume *From Ethnicity to Migration* was the first study that turned attention to the immigration problems in Bulgaria (Кръстева, 2004). The book offers a summary and critical analysis of the Bulgarian social science literature dealing with issues of ethnicity, identity and minority/majority relations - topics that captured the attention of the social scientists in Bulgaria in the 1990s. Aiming to offer a transition of interest to a new pending research issue – that of migration, – the volume offers two articles that introduce the problems of asylum and immigration. L. Drucke, who was the head of the UNHCR office in Bulgaria at that time, offers a comparative overview of the asylum regimes in the countries of Central Europe and the CIS region and a critical analysis of the levels of harmonization with the international human rights standards (Дрюке, 2004).

F. Husmenova provides account of the institutional setting with regard to asylum in Bulgaria (Хюсменова, 2004). Having prepared the text in the capacity of a Minister responsible for refugee issues in Bulgaria, Husmenova offers an informative but rather uncritical account of the system at place.

A comprehensive overview of the refugee situation in Bulgaria is provided in the edited volume *The Refugee Figures* (Кръстева, 2006). The

book introduces the various aspects of the refugee situation worldwide and provides analysis of the Palestinian, Afghan and Iraqi refugee communities in Bulgaria. The specific identifications and professional paths of refugees in Bulgaria are traced by A. Tcholakova on the basis of analysis of three case studies. The author claims that the post-Socialist context of Bulgaria conditions a particular social reality and trajectory for refugees in the country, different from those experienced by migrants in general or refugees in Western Europe (Tcholakova, 2010).

The major research on the topic of immigration to date has been presented in the edited volume *The Immigration in Bulgaria* (Кръстева, 2005). The study is based on prevalingly qualitative methods of research, such as fieldwork, open and in-depth interviews, biographic stories, sociological surveys with indicative character, focus groups and media content analysis. The introductory chapter by A. Krasteva compares the levels of inter-group solidarity, the sociological characteristics, the occupations and the family strategies of the Chinese, Lebanese and African immigrant groups in Bulgaria (Кръстева, 2005a). Paying attention to the attitudes of the host Bulgarian society towards immigrants, the author concludes that there is “an absence of political instrumentalism of xenophobic attitudes in contrast to the negative attitude to the traditional minorities” (Кръстева, 2005, p. 14). The general conclusion of the author is that in comparison to other European countries immigration in Bulgaria is moderate in numbers with immigrants in generally better economic situation. (Кръстева, 2005a).

The volume includes studies on the immigrant communities from the Near and Middle East (Желязкова и др., 2005), from countries of Africa (Каменова, 2005), from Vietnam (Мицева, 2005a) and China (Кръстева, 2005b) as well as a study on the Kurdish migration in Bulgaria (Мицева, 2005b). The authors establish the social, cultural and demographic profile of the respective immigrant communities. The history of immigration and the respective distinctions between members of different immigrant waves as well as the factors generating migration are outlined. The authors follow the settlement strategies of

the different immigrant groups, the numbers of immigrant communities and their incorporation into the Bulgarian society through indicators such as: professional occupation and social-economic profiles, linguistic adaptation, religiosity, cultural practices and mixed marriage practices. Immigrants' relationships with their home countries as well as the mutual stereotypes shared with the host population are also traced.

Following similar methodology and conceptual approach, M. Barzinska studies the identity dynamics within the group of Macedonian foreign students in Bulgaria (Барзинска, 2007, 2009). The author investigates their religiosity and their perceptions of Bulgarians. While the author identifies a low religiosity among Macedonian students, she claims that it emerges as a lively identity marker in opposition to their Islamic Albanian co-citizens in Macedonia. Barzinska offers an analysis of the integration and labour market access policies in the case of young Macedonian citizens in Bulgaria (Барзинска, 2010). A. Ganchev deals with the situation of Ukrainians of Bulgarian origin studying in Bulgarian universities (Ганчев, 2008).

The issue of immigration in the context of mixed families is studied by K. Issa who offers an investigation of the naming strategies with regard to children of mixed Bulgarian-Arab couples (Исса, 2004). Naming of children in mixed Bulgarian-Arab couples is studied as a field of social-cultural tension and compromise with particular naming strategies being the result of the social-political background and the economic status of the parents. Those are the factors that explain the preferences for Bulgarian names among the old immigrants and for Arab names among the new ones.

Gradually, researchers start paying attention to the immigration of EU citizens. Studies in this field so far have been centred on the migration of British citizens, their economic strategies and the processes of adaptation and interaction with local communities in Bulgaria (Kaneff, 2006, 2009; Ivanov, 2009; Elchinova, 2010). The trans-border mobility of Greek tourists in Bulgaria is studied by D. Kofti, who provides analysis

of the role of borders (territorial and symbolic) in a complex process of renegotiation and reformulation of power and identity hierarchies (Kofti, 2009; Κοφmu, 2010).

## Conclusions

Migration research dealing with the topic of Bulgarian migrations after 1989 has been conducted by scholars coming from different disciplines and academic traditions. Greater interest is placed on emigration, while immigration and immigrants remain insufficiently studied. Bulgarian migration processes are studied mainly from the disciplinary perspectives of anthropology, sociology and economics and to a lesser extent from the perspectives of demography, political science and history. The field involves diverse methods: sample sociological surveys, standardized questionnaires, statistical and demographic data analysis, ethnological and anthropological methods. The studies based on qualitative methods are the most numerous.

The main focus of anthropological studies dealing with migration in the 1990s was placed on the questions of ethnicity, identity negotiation and inter-cultural difference (Elchinova, 2009, pp. 79-80). Bulgarian research, however, was in coherence with the field of migration studies in general that was dominated by the same analytical current (Brettell, 2000, pp. 113-118). After the turn of the century, the analytical perspective of anthropological research in migration was gradually diversified to introduce questions such as migrant networks, migration and gender, migrant families, migration and citizenship, migration and power, the impact of emigration on home communities.

Interdisciplinary studies that involve a combination of research methods and incorporation of historical, ethnographic and/or economic and sociological analysis were also produced and have proven to be very useful. At the same time, scholars from the fields of statistics, demography and economics continue discussing and analysing migration trends based on migration potential surveys (Totev, Kalchev, 2000;



Минчев и др., 2004; Tomova, 2006; Жекова, 2006; Rangelova et al., 2006; Галев, Чалъков, 2006; Макни, 2010). While these surveys are useful for prognostic purposes, they are rather irrelevant when it comes to (retrospective) analysis of migration processes and investigation of the economic and social impacts of migration.

Although knowledge of migration processes is gradually being accumulated in Bulgaria, some highly relevant topics such as gender, mobility of the highly qualified people, return migration and remittances remain understudied. In the context of Bulgaria's intensive emigration process, no systematic research has been conducted on the effects of emigration on the Bulgarian society and the role it played in the post-Socialist transformation of the country.

## Bibliography

Александруева, Лиляна. 2003. Човекът и предизвикателствата към неговото достойнство (The Man and the Challenges to One's Dignity). – In: *Да живееш там, да се сънуваш тук. Емиграционни процеси в началото на XXI век* (Living There, Dreaming Here. Emigration Processes in the Beginning of XXI Century). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 160-220.

Анастасова, Екатерина. 2005. Руснаци (Russians). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 156-191.

Ангелиду, Алики. 2010. Новите глави на семейството: икономически практики и джендър идентичности на българските мигрантки в Атина (New Heads of the Family: Economic Practices and Gender Identities of Bulgarian Female Migrants in Athens). – In: *Съвременни български миграции: маршрути и мрежи* (Contemporary Bulgarian Migrations: Routes and Networks). Gencheva, Rosica, ed. Sofia: Critique and Humanism.

Антова, Светлана. 2004. Смесените бракове между българи и словаци (The Mixed Marriages between Bulgarians and Slovaks). – In: *Българска етнология* (Bulgarian Ethnology), Vol. 1, pp. 28-39.

Антова, Светлана. 2006. Знаци на етнокултурната идентичност. Автопортрет на българите в Словакия (Ethnocultural Identity Markers. Self-portrait of Bulgarians in Slovakia). – In: *Градиво за етнология на миграциите* (Ethnology of Migrations). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: Institute of Ethnography at BAS, pp. 112-144.

Антова, Светлана. 2007а. *“Тук живеем, тукашен хляб ядем”*. Етнокултурна идентичност на българите в Словакия. (“We Live Here and Eat Our Bread Here.” Ethnocultural Identity of Bulgarians in Slovakia). Sofia: Paradigma.

Антова, Светлана. 2007b. Православието като етнокултурен знак в „конструирането“ на идентичността при българите в Словакия (Orthodoxy as Ethno-cultural Sign in Construction of Identity among Bulgarians in Slovakia). – In: *„Завръщане“ на религиозността в края на XX и началото на XXI век* (“Return” of Religiosity in the End of 20th and Beginning of 21st Century). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: Institute of Ethnography at BAS, pp. 159-167.

Баликси, Асен, Бонка Стоянова-Бонева. 1993. *Балкански бизнесмени в Канада*. (Balkan Businessmen in Canada). Sofia: LIK.

Бобева, Даниела, Иван Чальков, Йордан Марков. 1996. *Миграцията – европейската интеграция и изтичането на мозъци от България* (Migration – European Integration and the Brain Drain from Bulgaria). Sofia: Center for the Study of Democracy.

Бочков, Пламен. 2004. Българските турци, изселници в Измир – идентичност, адаптация и мрежи на солидарност (Bulgarian Turks Emigrants in Izmir – Identity, Adaptation and Assistance Networks). – In: *Антропологични изследвания* (Studies in Anthropology). Sofia: New Bulgarian University, Vol. 5, pp. 175-190.

БХК. 2004. *Изследване на правата на мигрантите в България. Финален доклад на Българския Хелзинкски комитет* (Survey on the Rights of Migrants in Bulgaria. Final Report of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee). Sofia: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee.

Бързинска, Мария. 2007. Религиозността сред македонските студенти в България или защо и как празната позиция е цяла позиция (Religiosity among Macedonian Students in Bulgaria or Why and How an Empty Position is a Full Standing Position). – In: *„Завръщане“ на религиозността в края на XX и началото на XXI век* (“Return” of Religiosity in the End of 20th and Beginning of 21st Century). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: Institute of Ethnography at BAS, pp. 178-194.

Бързинска, Мария. 2009. Македонските студенти в България и българският паспорт: прагматизъм срещу емоции (Macedonian Students in Bulgaria and Bulgarian Passport: Pragmatism Versus Emotions). – In: *Български фолклор* (Bulgarian Folklore), Vol. 2, pp. 70-82.

Бързинска, Мария. 2010. Актуални измерения на политиката на интеграция и достъпа до пазара на труда: на примера на македонските граждани в България (Current Dimensions of Integration Policy and Access to the Labour Market: Example of Macedonian Citizens in Bulgaria). – In: *Балканската миграционна култура: исторически и съвременни примери от България и Македония* (Balkan Migration Culture: Historical and Contemporary Examples from Bulgaria and Macedonia). Hristov, Petko, ed. Sofia: Paradigma, pp. 226-248.

Василева, Дарина. 1992. Изселническият въпрос в българо-турските отношения (The Migration Question in the Bulgarian-Turkish Relations). – In: *Аспекти на етнокултурната ситуация в България* (Aspects of the Ethno-cultural Situation in Bulgaria). Rusanov, Valeri, ed. Sofia: Center for the Study of Democracy & Friedrich Naumann Foundation, pp. 58-67.

Василева, Дарина. 1999. *Българската политическа емиграция след Втората световна война* (Bulgarian Political Emigration after WWII). Sofia: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

Владинска, Нели. 1998. Роля на системите за социално подпомагане и социални услуги при прилагане на политики и стратегии за интеграция на мигранти и етнически групи (The Impact of Systems of Social Solidarity in the Process of Applying the Policies and Strategies towards Integration of Migrants and Ethnic Groups). – In: *Годишник на Варненския свободен университет* (Annual of the Varna Free University), Vol. 4 (1).

Вогеничарова, Анастасия. 2003. Традицията в съвременните миграционни процеси сред българите мюсюлмани (The Tradition in the Modern Migration Processes among the Bulgarian Muslims). – In: *Да живееш там, да се сънуваш тук. Емиграционни процеси в началото на XXI век* (Living There, Dreaming Here. Emigration Processes in the Beginning of XXI Century). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 141-159.

Галев, Тодор, Иван Чалъков. 2006. Нагласи за емиграция сред студентите от информационни и комуникационни технологии в България (Emigration Attitudes among Students of Information and Communication Technologies in Bulgaria). – In: *Наука* (Science), Vol. 6, pp. 21-27.

Ганева-Райчева, Валентина. 2004a. *Българите в Унгария – проблеми на културната идентичност* (Bulgarians in Hungary – Issues of Cultural Identity). Sofia: Academic Press “Prof. Marin Drinov.”

Ганева-Райчева, Валентина. 2004b. Българската диаспора в Унгария – аспекти на интеркултурния диалог (The Bulgarian Diaspora in Hungary – Aspects of Inter-cultural Dialogue). – In: *Антропологични изследвания* (Studies in Anthropology), Vol. 5, pp. 145-172.

Ганчев, Александър. 2008. Българите от Украйна – студенти в България. Миграция или емиграция (Bulgarians from Ukraine – Students in Bulgaria: Migration or Emigration). – In: *Български фолклор* (Bulgarian Folklore), Vol. 1, pp. 86-98.

Генчева, Росица, ed. 2010. *Съвременни български миграции: маршрути и мрежи* (Contemporary Bulgarian Migrations: Routes and Networks). Sofia: Critique and Humanism.

Григоров, Валери. 2003. Икономическите имигранти в Гърция (The Economic Immigrants in Greece). – In: *Да живееш там, да се сънуваш тук. Емиграционни процеси в началото на XXI век* (Living There, Dreaming Here. Emigration Processes in the Beginning of XXI Century). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 236-247.

Грозева-Исса, Катя. 2004. Психо- и социо-лингвистични проблеми при избор на лични имена в българо-арабски семейства (Psycho- and Sociolinguistic Problems in Selection of Personal Names in Bulgarian-Arab Families). – In: *Наука* (Science), Vol. 5, pp. 49-52.

Гърдев, Костагин. 1992. Емигрирането на българите в Северна Америка (Emigration of Bulgarians in North America). – In: *Население* (Population), Vol. 3, pp. 21-33.

Гърдев, Костагин. 1994. *Българската емиграция в Канада* (Bulgarian Emigration in Canada). Sofia: Academic Press “Prof. Marin Drinov.”

Гърдев, Костагин. 2003. *Българските общности в Чехия и Словакия: Минало и настояще* (Bulgarian Communities in Czech Republic and Slovakia: Past and Present). Sofia: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

Дамьянов, Симеон, Любен Беров. 1986. *Българите в Австралия* (Bulgarians in Australia). Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Декало, Фани. 2006. „Българска работа“ в Израел означава прецизно свършено нещо (“Bulgarian job” in Israel Means a Precisely Done Job”). – In: *Градиво за етнология на миграциите* (Ethnology of Migrations). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: Institute of Ethnography at BAS, pp. 173-226.

Денева, Нега. 2009. Международни и вътрешни миграции: ролята на границите в мобилизацията на мрежи в едно рогопско село (International and Internal Migrations: Role of Borders in Network Mobilisation in One Rhodope Village). – In: *Български фолклор* (Bulgarian Folklore), Vol. 2, pp. 22-37.

Денева, Нега. 2010. Разтегляне на ритуала: сватбените видео записи при българите мюсюлмани в Испания (Expansion of a Ritual: Video Tapes of Marriages among Muslim Bulgarians in Spain). – In: *Съвременни български миграции: маршрути и мрежи* (Contemporary Bulgarian Migrations: Routes and Networks). Gencheva, Rosica, ed. Sofia: Critique and Humanism.

Дечева, Мирела. 2003. Новият стар път на гурбета (The New Old Path of the Gurbet). – In: *Да живееш там, да се сънуваш тук. Емиграционни процеси в началото на XXI век* (Living There, Dreaming Here. Emigration Processes in the Beginning of XXI Century). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 124-140.

Дичев, Ивайло. 2008. Мобилни идентичности? Мобилно гражданство? (Mobile Identities? Mobile Citizenship?). – In: *Критика и хуманизъм, „Култури в движение“* (Critique and Humanism, thematic issue “Cultures in Motion”), Vol. 25 (1), pp. 9-23.

Дичев, Ивайло. 2010. Граждани на местата (Citizens of Places). – In: *Съвременни български миграции: маршрути и мрежи* (Contemporary Bulgarian Migrations: Routes and Networks). Gencheva, Rosica, ed. Sofia: Critique and Humanism.

Дрюке, Луизе. 2004. Бежански режими в пост-комунистическите страни (Refugee Systems in the Post-communist Countries). – In: *От етничност към миграция* (From Ethnicity to Migration). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: New Bulgarian University, pp. 100-133.

Жекова, Вемка. 2006. Вътрешна и външна миграция на населението в България (Internal and External Migration of Bulgarian Population). – In: *Икономически изследвания* (Economic Studies), Vol. 2, pp. 175-204.

Желязкова, Антонина. 2003. *Албански перспективи. Теренни проучвания* (Albanian Prospects. Fieldwork). Sofia: IMIR.

Желязкова, Антонина, Валери Григоров, Донка Димитрова. 2005. Имигрантите от Близкия и Средния изток (Immigrants from the Near and Middle East). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 19-73.

Златанова, Валентина. 1991. *Социологически аспекти на миграцията в България* (Sociological Aspects of Migration in Bulgaria). Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Калчев, Йордан. 1992. *Вътрешна и външна миграция на населението през 90-те години* (Internal and External migration of the Population during the 1990s). Sofia: National Statistical Institute.

Калчев, Йордан. 2001. *Външната миграция на населението в България* (External Migration of Bulgarian Population). Sofia: Dunav Press.

Калчев, Йордан, Сергей Цветарски. 1991. *Потенциалната миграция на пътуващите в чужбина български граждани* (The Potential Migration of the Bulgarian Citizens Travelling Abroad). Sofia: National Statistical Institute, Vol. 1.

Калчев, Йордан, Сергей Цветарски. 1993. *Потенциалната миграция на пътуващите в чужбина български граждани* (The Potential Migration of the Bulgarian Citizens Travelling Abroad). Sofia: National Statistical Institute. Vol. 2.

Калчев, Йордан. 2002. Териториална мобилност на населението (Spatial Mobility of the Population). – In: *Преброяване на населението, жилищния фонд и земеделските стопанства през 2001* (Census of the Population, Housing and Agricultural Holdings). Sofia: National Statistical Institute. Vol. 6, Book 3.

Каменова, Деница. 2005. Африканската общност в България (The African Community in Bulgaria). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 74-88.

Карабинова, Диана. 2005. Мечти и реалност: животът на българските турци без документи (Dreams and Reality: the Life of Undocumented Bulgarian Turks). – In: *Антропологични изследвания* (Anthropological Studies), Vol. 6, pp. 76-92.

Карамихова, Маргарита, ed. 2003а. *Да живееш там, да се сънуваш тук. Емиграционни процеси в началото на XXI век* (Living There, Dreaming Here. Emigration Processes in the Beginning of XXI Century). Sofia: IMIR.

Карамихова, Маргарита. 2003b. Емиграцията от Родопите – нов феномен или временен отговор в периода на криза (Emigration from the Rhodopes – New Phenomena or Temporary Solution in the Period of Crisis). – In: *Да живееш там, да се сънуваш тук. Емиграционни процеси в началото на XXI век* (Living There, Dreaming Here. Emigration Processes in the Beginning of XXI Century). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 23-108.

Карамихова, Маргарита. 2004. *Американски мечти. Пътеводител сред първа генерация емигранти* (American Dreams. A Guide through the First Generation Emigrants). Sofia: IK Krotal.

Карамихова, Маргарита, ed. 2006. *Градиво за етнология на миграциите* (Ethnology of Migrations). Sofia: Institute of Ethnography at BAS,

Костадинова, Ралица. 2002. Наказателноправни въпроси на граничната сигурност на Република България (Penal and Legal Issues of Border Security of the Republic of Bulgaria). – In: *Правен преглед* (Legal Overview), Vol. 1, pp. 77-87.

Кофти, Димитра. 2010. Власт отвъд границата: гръцките туристи в България (Authority Beyond Border: Greek Tourists in Bulgaria). – In: *Съвременни български миграции: маршрути и мрежи* (Contemporary Bulgarian Migrations: Routes and Networks). Gencheva, Rosica, ed. Sofia: Critique and Humanism.

Кръстева, Анна, ed. 2004. *От етничност към миграция* (From Ethnicity to Migration). Sofia: New Bulgarian University.

Кръстева, Анна. 2005a. Българският имиграционен феномен (The Bulgarian Immigration Phenomenon). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 7-18.

Кръстева, Анна. 2005b. Китайците (The Chinese). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 105-136.

Кръстева, Анна, ed. 2006. *Фигурите на бежанеца* (The Refugee Figures). Sofia: New Bulgarian University.

Лазаров, Валентин. 2006. Гурбетчийството на поредната граница на прехода (The Gurbet at the Next Boundary of Transition). – In: *Градиво за етнология на миграциите* (Ethnology of Migrations). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: Institute of Ethnography at BAS, pp. 145-172.

Лякова, Марина. 2008. Хибридният жизнен свят на българските студенти в Германия (The Hybrid Life-world of the Bulgarian Students in Germany). – In: *Критика и хуманизъм, „Култури в движение“* (Critique and Humanism, thematic issue “Cultures in Motion”), Vol. 25, pp. 45-63.

Маева, Мила. 2002. Образът на турците в Р. Турция през погледа на българските турци-преселници (The Image of Turks in the Republic of Turkey Through the Eyes of Bulgarian Turks). – In: *Българска етнология* (Bulgarian Ethnology), Vol. 4, pp. 42-55.

Маева, Мила. 2004. Език и етнокултурна идентичност на българските турци в Р. Турция (Language and Ethnocultural Identity of Bulgarian Turks in Turkey). – In: *Българска етнология* (Bulgarian Ethnology), Vol. 2, pp. 59-74.

Маева, Мила. 2006. *Българските турци-преселници в Република Турция. Култура и идентичност* (The Bulgarian Turks – Emigrants in the Republic of Turkey: Culture and Identity). Sofia: IMIR.

Маева, Мила. 2007a. Емиграция на турци от България към ЕС (Emigration of Turks from Bulgaria to European Union). – In: *Човек в история и култура. Друк* (Man in the History and Culture). Odessa – Ternovka, pp. 376-385.

Маева, Мила. 2007b. Религия и идентичност на турците, преселници от България в Република Турция (Religion and Identity of Bulgarian Turks Emigrants in Turkey). – In: *„Завръщане“ на религиозността в края на XX и началото на XXI век* (Return of Religiousness at the End of 20th and at the Start of 21st Century). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: Institute of Ethnography at BAS, pp. 143-158.

Маева, Мила. 2008a. България и Турция през погледа на българските турци-преселници в Република Турция (Bulgaria and Turkey through the Eyes of Bulgarian Turks Emigrants in Turkey). – In: *Етнически и културни пространства на Балканите. Ч. II. Сборник в чест на проф. Цветана Георгиева* (Ethnic and Cultural Spaces on the Balkans. Volume in Honour of Prof. Tsvetana Georgieva). Sofia: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, pp. 481-514.

Маева, Мила. 2008b. Съвременните миграционни вълни на българските турци (New Migration Waves of Bulgarian Turks). – In: *Динамика на националните и транснационалните идентичности в процеса на европейската интеграция* (Dynamics of National and Transnational Identities in the Process of European Integration). Decheva, Mirella, ed. Sofia: Paradigma, pp. 333-356.

Макни, Валентина. 2010. *Интелектуалната емиграция: Ефект с две лица* (Intellectual Emigration: Two-faced Effect). Varna: Gea Print.

Манчева, Мила. 2008. Трудова миграция на българските турци в Германия. Съетнични мигрантски мрежи и култури (Labour Migration of Bulgarian Turks in Germany. Co-ethnic Migrant Networks and Cultures). – In: *Критика и хуманизъм, „Култури в движение“* (Critique and Humanism, thematic issue “Cultures in Motion”), Vol. 1, pp. 25-44.

Манчева, Мила. 2010. Емиграция и местни общности в област Кърджали (Emigration and Local Communities in Kardzhali Region). – In: *Съвременни български миграции: маршрути и мрежи* (Contemporary Bulgarian Migrations: Routes and Networks). Gencheva, Rosica, ed. Sofia: Critique and Humanism.

Маркова, Мила. 2008. Житейски истории и миграция – новите български емигранти в Австрия (Life Stories and Migration – New Bulgarian Emigrants in Austria). – In: *Български фолклор* (Bulgarian Folklore), Vol. 1, pp. 99-105.



- Марушиакова, Елена, Веселин Попов. 2006. Дългият и късият път го Одеса (миграцията на две цигански групи) (The Long and the Short Way to Odessa: The Migration of Two Gypsy Groups). – In: *Градиво за етнология на миграциите* (Ethnology of Migrations). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: Institute of Ethnography at BAS, pp. 7-30.
- МВНР. 2007. *Българите по света и държавната политика* (Bulgarians around the World and the State Policies). Sofia: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Минков, Минко. 1995. Международната миграция в България (The International Migration in Bulgaria). – In: *Годишник на Варненски свободен университет* (Annual of the Varna Free University), Vol. 1, pp. 127-139.
- Минчев, Веселин, Венелин Бошнаков, Йордан Калчев, Валентин Гоев. 2004. Българската емиграция в началото на XXI век: оценка на нагласите и профила на потенциалните емигранти (Bulgarian Emigration in the Beginning of the 21st Century: Assessment of Attitudes and Profile of Potential Migrants). – In: *Икономическа мисъл* (Economic Thought), Vol. 5, pp. 3-30.
- Минчев, Веселин, Венелин Бошнаков. 2006. Икономика на българската емиграция - емпирични оценки (The Economics of Bulgarian Emigration – Empirical Assessment). – In: *Икономическа мисъл* (Economic Thought), Vol. 2, pp. 23-47.
- Минчев, Веселин, Венелин Бошнаков. 2007. Емпирични оценки за нагласите на завърналите се български емигранти (Empirical Assessment of the Attitudes of Return Bulgarian Migrants). – In: *Икономическа мисъл* (Economic Thought), Vol. 5, pp. 13-32.
- Мицева, Евгения. 2005a. Виетнамци (Vietnamese). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 89-104.
- Мицева, Евгения. 2005b. Кюрди (Kurds). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 137-155.
- НСИ. 2005, 2006, 2007. *Население и демографски процеси* (Population and Demographic Processes). Sofia: National Statistical Institute.
- Нягулов, Благовест. 1995. Българите в Румъния - минало и настояще (Bulgarians in Romania – Past and Present). – In: *Българите в Средна и Източна Европа* (Bulgarians in Central and Eastern Europe). Donchev, Toshko, Svetla Kosseva, Petar Petrov, eds. Sofia: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, pp. 82-95.
- Парла, Айше. 2009. Работници без документи или етнически родственици? Трудовата миграция от България към Турция след 1990 г. (Workers without Documents or Ethnic Kin? Labour Migration from Bulgaria to Turkey after 1990) – In: *Български фолклор* (Bulgarian Folklore), Vol. 2, pp. 49-69.
- Пейчева, Лозанка, Венцислав Димов. 2006. Миграции и гурбети от България: музикални орбити (Migrations and Gurbets from Bulgaria: Musical Orbits). – In: *Градиво за етнология на миграциите* (Ethnology of Migrations). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: Institute of Ethnography at BAS, pp. 61-101.



Рагару, Нагез. 2010. *Преплетените времена на настоящето. България 20 години след 1989-та* (Interwoven Times of the Present. Bulgaria 20 Years after 1989). Sofia: Critique and Humanism.

Рагева, Мария. 2003. *Промени в политиката и дейностите по интеграция на бежанците в Република България. Доклад* (Changes of the Policy and Activities towards Integration of Refugees in Republic of Bulgaria. A Report). Sofia: State Agency for Refugees.

Рангелова, Вера. 2004. *Закрила на децата-бежанци в България* (Protection of Refugee Children in Bulgaria). Sofia: Bulgarian Red Cross.

Рашкова, Наталия, Владимир Пенчев. 2005. *Българи в Словакия. Етнокултурни характеристики и взаимодействия* (Bulgarians in Slovakia. Ethno-cultural Characteristics and Interactions). Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Славкова, Магдалена. 2008. Съвременни трудови миграции на български цигани към Испания и тяхното отражение върху идентичността им (Contemporary Labour Migrations of Bulgarian Gypsies to Spain and Their Impact on Their Identity). – In: *Динамика на националните и транснационалните идентичности в процеса на европейската интеграция* (Dynamics of National and Transnational Identities in the Process of European Integration). Decheva, Mirella, ed. Sofia: Paradigma, pp. 289- 318.

Стоянова-Бонева, Бонка. 1991. *Американци по български или българи по американски* (Americans the Bulgarian Way or Bulgarians the American Way). Sofia: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

Султанова, Ралица. 2003. Транснационализмът като подход при изучаването на постмиграционния опит на мигрантите (Transnationalism as Approach in Studying the Post Migration Experiences of Migrants). – In: *Да живееш там, да се сънуваш тук. Емиграционни процеси в началото на XXI век* (Living There, Dreaming Here. Emigration Processes in the Beginning of XXI Century). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 268-291.

Султанова, Ралица. 2006. Българите като бежанци (The Bulgarians as Refugees). – In: *Фигурите на бежанеца* (The Refugee Figures). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: New Bulgarian University, pp. 151-178.

Събева, Кина, Маринела Рагева. 2005. *Практически аспекти на заетостта в България на чужденци, получили статут на бежанец или хуманитарен статут* (Practical Aspects of Employment in Bulgaria among Foreigners with Refugee Status or Humanitarian Status). Sofia: State Agency for Refugees.

Томова, Илона, Валери Григоров, Мая Бебелекова, Илия Аманасов, Евгения Иванова. 1998. *Планината Родопи – усилията на прехода* (The Rhodope Mountains – the Transition Efforts). Sofia: Institute for East European Humanities.

Томова, Илона. 2008. Външни миграции при ромите в посткомунистическа България: причини, нагласи, поведение и последици (External Migrations of Roma in Post-Communist Bulgaria: Reasons, Attitudes, Behaviour and Consequences). – In: *Социологически проблеми* (Sociological Problems), special issue, pp. 154-177.

Тодоров, Тодор, Пламен Петков. 2006. Българската емиграция в периода на изграждане на пазарна икономика (1990 - 2005) (Bulgarian Emigration in the Period of Market Economy Development 1990 – 2005). – In: *Алманах научни изследвания Свищовска академия „Д. А. Ценов“* (Almanac of Academic Studies Svishtov Academy “D. A. Cenov”), Vol. 4, pp. 283-323.

Томев, Аманас. 1989. *Външна и вътрешна миграция на българското население* (External and Internal Migration of Bulgarian Population). Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Трайков, Веселин. 1993. *История на българската емиграция в Северна Америка* (History of Bulgarian Emigration to North America). Sofia: Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski.

Трайков, Тони, Христо Ганев. 1999. Състояние, особености на съвременната миграция в България (Condition and Specifics of Contemporary Migration in Bulgaria). – In: *Проблеми на географията* (Problems of Geography), Vol. 3-4, pp. 27-33.

Троева, Евгения, Валери Григоров. 2003. Гурбетчиството в Родопите – минало и настояще (The Gurbet Practices in the Rhodopes – Past and Present). – In: *Да живееш там, да се сънуваш тук. Емиграционни процеси в началото на XXI век* (Living There, Dreaming Here. Emigration Processes in the Beginning of XXI Century). Karamihova, Margarita, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 109-123.

Фондация Манфред Вьорнер. 2003. *Имигранти и бежанци в България и тяхната интеграция* (Immigrants and Refugees in Bulgaria and Their Integration). Sofia: Manfred Woerner Foundation.

Христов, Петко. 2007. “Влашко” като важна дестинация за сезонните работници (*печалбари*) от централната част на Балканите (“Vlach Lands” as Important Destination for Seasonal Workers from the Central Part of the Balkans). – In: *Probleme de filologie slava*, Vol. XV. Timisoara: Editura de Vest, pp. 465-473.

Христов, Петко. 2010. Балканският *гурбет* – традиционни и съвременни форми (Balkan Gurbet – Traditional and Contemporary Forms). – In: *Балканската миграционна култура: исторически и съвременни примери от България и Македония* (Balkan Migration Culture: Historical and Contemporary Examples from Bulgaria and Macedonia). Hristov, Petko, ed. Sofia: Paradigma, pp. 11-27.

Христова, Надежда. 2007. *Режим на пребиваване на чужденците на територията на България* (Residence Regime for Foreigners on the Territory of Bulgaria). Sofia: Ciela Publishing.

Хюсменова, Филiz. 2004. Взаимодействие между институциите в областта на убежището и бежанците (Inter-institutional Cooperation in the Area of Asylum and Refugees). – In: *От етничност към миграция* (From Ethnicity to Migration). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: New Bulgarian University, pp. 144 – 155.

Цанева, Еля. 2005. Какво и как празнуват българите в Австралия (How and What Do Bulgarians in Australia Celebrate). – In: *Българска етнология* (Bulgarian Ethnology), Vol. 1, pp. 35-48.

Цекова, Евгения. 1993. Загубите на научен потенциал от звената на БАН през 1990-1992 г. (The Loss of Academic Potential from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1990-1992) – In: *Население* (Population), Vol. 4, pp. 93-96.

Чолаков, Никола. 2003. Статистическите данни за външната миграция и демографската информация за българското население (Statistical Data for External Migration and Demographic Information on Bulgarian Population). – In: *Икономическа мисъл* (Economic Thought), Vol. 5, pp. 53-64.

Alexandrova, Nadejda and Dawn Lyon. 2007. Imaginary Geographies: Border-places and 'Home' in the Narratives of Migrant Women. – In: *Women Migrants from East to West. Gender, Mobility and Belonging in Contemporary Europe*. Passerini, Luisa, Dawn Lyon, Enrica Capussotti and Ioanna Laliotou, eds. Oxford – New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 95-110.

Alexandrova, Nadejda. 2007. The Topos of Love in the Life-stories of Migrant Women. – In: *Women Migrants from East to West. Gender, Mobility and Belonging in Contemporary Europe*. Passerini, Luisa, Dawn Lyon, Enrica Capussotti and Ioanna Laliotou, eds. Oxford – New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 138-151.

Angelidou, Aliki. 2008. Migrations in the 'Neighbourhood': Negotiations of Identities and Representations about 'Greece' and 'Europe' among Bulgarian Migrants in Athens. – In: *Balkanologie*, Vol. XI, No. 1-2, December.

Bobeва, Daniela et al. 1994. *Transit Migration in Bulgaria*. Budapest: International Organization for Migration – Migration Information Programme.

Bobeва, Daniela. 1994. Emigration from and Immigration to Bulgaria. – In: *European Migration in the Late Twentieth Century. Historical Patterns, Actual Trends and Social Implications*. Fassmann, Heinz and Rainer Münz, eds. Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, pp. 221-237.

Bobeва, Daniela. 1996. Migration aus und nach Bulgarien in Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft. – In: *Migration in Europa. Historische Entwicklung, aktuelle Trends und Politische Reaktionen*. Fassmann, Heinz and Rainer Münz, eds. Frankfurt/Main – New York: Campus Verlag, pp. 303-322.

- Brettell, Caroline B. and James F. Hollifield, eds. 2000. *Migration Theory. Talking Across Disciplines*. New York: Routledge.
- Brettell, Caroline B. 2000. Theorizing Migration in Anthropology. – In: *Migration Theory. Talking Across Disciplines*. Brettell, Caroline B. and James F. Hollifield, eds. New York: Routledge, pp. 97-137.
- Chongarova, Irina. 2009. From Foreigner to Neighbour: A Standard View of the Changing Patterns of Communication with British Settlers in Bulgaria. – In: *Accession and Migration: Changing Policy, Society, and Culture*. Eade, John and Yordanka Valkanova, eds. Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 77-92.
- Cserjan, Karoly et al. 1999. *Wirtschaftliche, soziale und kulturelle Auswirkungen der Studien bulgarischer Studentinnen und Studenten in Wien*. Wien: IAS (Institut fuer Angewandte Soziologie) - OIBF (Oesterreichsches Institut fuer Berufsbildungsforschung), <http://www.oeibf.at/db/calimero/tools/proxy.php?id=13602>
- Deneva, Neda. 2006. The Role of Ethnicity in the Reconstruction of the Community: Internal and International Migration in a Bulgarian Muslim Village. – In: *Migration Processes in Central and Eastern Europe: Unpacking the Diversity*. Szczepanikova, Alice, Marek Canek, Jan Grill, eds. Prague: Multicultural Center Prague, pp. 20-25.
- Deneva, Neda. 2008. *On the Margins of Two States: Flexible Self-identification Strategies of Bulgarian Muslims in Spain*, <http://www.migrationonline.cz/e-library/?x=2090875>
- Dimitrova, Donka. 1998. Bulgarian Turkish Immigrants of 1989 in the Republic of Turkey. – In: *Between Adaptation and Nostalgia. The Bulgarian Turks in Turkey*. Zhelyazkova, Antonina, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 76-139.
- Ditchev, Ivaylo. 2010. From a Socialism of Migrants Towards a Europe of Mobilities. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 15-14.
- Eade, John and Yordanka Valkanova, eds. 2009. *Accession and Migration. Changing Policy, Society, and Culture in an Enlarged Europe*. Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate.
- Elchinova, Magdalena. 2005. Alien by Default: The Identity of the Turks of Bulgaria at Home and in Immigration. – In: *Developing Cultural Identity in the Balkans: Convergences vs. Divergences*. Detrez, Raymond and Pieter Plas, eds. Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, pp. 87-110.
- Elchinova, Magdalena. 2009. Migration Studies in Bulgaria. Scope, Experiences and Developments. – In: *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, Vol. 10, pp. 69-85.
- Elchinova, Magdalena. 2010. The British are Coming!: a Bulgarian Village facing EU-Integration. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 177-190.

- Gabärski, Nikolaj. 2008. Les experiences migratoires bulgares en Grèce depuis 1989. – In: *Balkanologie*, Vol. XI, No. 1-2, December.
- Gachter, August. 2002. *The Ambiguities of Emigration: Bulgaria since 1988 – International Migration Papers No. 39*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- Georgjeva, Tsvetana. 1998. Motivation of the Bulgarian Turks to Migration. – In: *Between Adaptation and Nostalgia. The Bulgarian Turks in Turkey*. Zhelyazkova, Antonina, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 45-75.
- Guentcheva, Rossitza, Petya Kabakchieva and Plamen Kolarski. 2003. *Migration Trends in Selected EU Applicant Countries. Volume I – Bulgaria: The Social Impact of Seasonal Migration*. Vienna: International Organization for Migration. [http://www.pedz.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-k/gde/04/IOM\\_I\\_BG.pdf](http://www.pedz.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-k/gde/04/IOM_I_BG.pdf)
- Hatziprokopiou, Panos Arion. 2006a. *Globalisation, Migration and Socio-Economic Change in Contemporary Greece. Processes of Social Incorporation of Balkan Immigrants in Thessaloniki*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Hatziprokopiou, Panos Arion. 2006b. Migration and Changing Urban Geographies in the European South: Evidence from the Case of Immigrants in Thessaloniki. – In: *Migration and Ethnic Themes*. Vol. 1-2, pp. 113-136.
- Hristov, Petko. 2008a. *Wherever I go, I would return home...: Pechalbars' Routes on the Balkans*. – In: *Македонски фолклор*, Vol. 65, pp. 115-122.
- Hristov, Petko. 2008b. Mobilités du travail (gurbet), stratégies sociales et familiales: Une étude de cas dans les Balkans centraux. – In: *Balkanologie*, Vol. XI, No. 1-2, December.
- Hristov, Petko. 2008c. Family and Migrations in the Balkans (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century). – In: *Social Behavior and Family Strategies in the Balkans (16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*. Bucharest: New Europe College, pp. 273-295.
- Hristov, Petko. 2008d. Migration and Culture. – In: *Историја, историографија и настава по историја*. Skopje: SIRM, pp. 265-270.
- Hristov, Petko. 2008e. Labour Migrations and the Construction of (New) Transborder Identity. – In: *Kvalitet međuetničkih odnosa i kultura mira na Balkanu*. Niš: Filozofski fakultet, pp. 179-188.
- Hristov, Petko. 2008f. Trans-Border Exchange of Seasonal Workers in the Central Part of the Balkans (19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Century). – In: *Ethnologia Balkanica*, Vol. 12, pp. 215-230.
- Ilareva, Valeria. 2007. Bulgaria's Treatment of Asylum Seekers. – In: *Forced Migration Review*, Vol. 29, pp. 60-61. <http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR29/60-61.pdf>
- Ilchev, Ivan. 2000. Emigration and the Politics of Identity. – In: *The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-Communist Europe: Statebuilding, Democracy and Ethnic Mobilization*. Stein, Jonathan, ed. Armonk, New York: East-West Institute, pp. 237-268.

IME, 1999. *The Economic and Social Impact of Refugees on the Host Country: Bulgaria*. Sofia: Institute for Market Economics, <http://ime.bg/en/articles/the-economic-and-social-impact-of-refugees-on-the-host-country-bulgaria/>

IOM. 1992. *Migration Potential of Bulgaria*. Geneva: International Organisation for Migration

IOM. 1996. *Migration Potential of Bulgaria*. Sofia: International Organisation for Migration

IOM. 2001. *Migration Potential of Bulgaria*. Sofia: International Organisation for Migration

Ivanov, Zhivko. 2009. Britons in the Bulgarian Countryside: Social and Cultural Aspects of Adaptation and Intercommunication. – In: *Accession and Migration: Changing Policy, Society, and Culture*. Eade, John and Yordanka Valkanova, eds. Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 93-106.

Hodja, Jale and Emil Milanov. Relationship To Bulgaria, Bulgarians And Thing Bulgarian. – In: *Between Adaptation and Nostalgia. The Bulgarian Turks in Turkey*. Zhelyazkova, Antonina, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 182-211.

Jileva, Elena. 2002a. Insiders and Outsiders in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Bulgaria. – In: *In Search of Europe's Borders*. Groenendijk, Kees, Elspeth Guild and Paul Minderhoud, eds. Hague: Kluwer Law International, pp. 273-288.

Jileva, Elena. 2002b. Visa and Free Movement of Labour: the Uneven Imposition of the EU *Acquis* on the Accession States. – In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, special issue on "EU Enlargement and Migration in Central and East Europe."* Favell, Adrian and Randall Hansen, eds. Vol. 28, No. 4, October, pp. 277-300.

Jileva, Elena. 2002c. Larger than the European Union: The Emerging EU Migration Regime and Enlargement. – In: *Migration and the Externalities of European Integration*. Lavenex, Sandra and Emek M. Uçarar, eds. Lanham: Lexington Books, pp. 75-91.

Jileva, Elena. 2003. La mise en oeuvre de Schengen: la délivrance des visas en Bulgarie. – In: *Cultures & Conflicts*, No. 49-50, pp. 31-49.

Jileva, Elena. 2004. The Europeanisation of EU Visa Policy. – In: *Helsinki Monitor*, Vol. 15, No. 1, March, pp. 23-32.

Jileva, Elena and Virginie Guiraudon. 2006. Immigration and Asylum. – In: *Developments in European Politics*. Heywood, Paul M. et al, eds. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 280-298.

Jileva, Elena and Anna Krasteva. 2006. Teaching Ethnicity and Migration in Bulgarian Universities. – In: *Pedagogies of Teaching 'Race' in Higher Education: British and European Experiences*. Jacobs, Susie, ed. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, pp. 137-159.

- Kabakchieva, Petya. 2010. Temporary Migrants: Beyond Roles, Across Identities. – In: *Rules and Roles: Fluid Institutions, Hybrid Roles and Identities in East European Transformation Processes (1989 – 2005)*. Kiossev, Alexander and Petya Kabakchieva, eds. Freiburg: Lit Verlag.
- Kaneff, Deema. 2006. Holiday Location or Agricultural Village? British Property Owners in Rural Bulgaria. – In: *Eastern European Countryside*, Vol. 12, pp. 79-92.
- Kaneff, Deema. 2009. Property and Transitional Neoliberalism: The Case of British Migration in Bulgaria. – In: *Accession and Migration: Changing Policy, Society, and Culture*. Eade, John and Yordanka Valkanova, eds. Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 59-74.
- Karabinova, Diana. 2010. Bulgarian Students in Vienna. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 127-140.
- Karamihova, Margarita. 2008. Identities Palette in the Course of European Integration. A Case Study of Satovcha Village. – In: *Dynamics of National Identity and Transnational Identities in the Process of European Integration*. Marushiakova, Elena, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, pp. 248-270.
- Kasabova-Dintcheva, Anelia. 2002. *Migration und Familie. Familienforschung und Politik (am Beispiel Bulgariens)*. Sofia: Variant 2000.
- Kasabova, Anelia. 2010. National Churches in a Multicultural Setting: the Eastern Orthodoxy in Vienna. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 161-176.
- Kofti, Dimitra. 2009. Acquiring Power Across the Borders: Greek Tourists in Bulgaria. – In: *Greece in the Balkans: Memory, Conflict and Exchange*. Anastasakis, Othon, Dimitar Bechev and Nicholas Vrousalis, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 219-237.
- Kotzeva, Daryana. 2009. The Contemporary Development of the Bulgarian Policy towards Migration 2006-2007. – In: *Accession and Migration: Changing Policy, Society, and Culture*. Eade, John and Yordanka Valkanova, eds. Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 21-29.
- Krastev, Peter. 1998. Understated, Overexposed. – In: *Between Adaptation and Nostalgia. The Bulgarian Turks in Turkey*. Zhelyazkova, Antonina, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 104-181.
- Krasteva, Anna. 2007. Post-Communist Discovery of Immigration: The Case of Bulgaria. – In: *Irregular Labour and Community: A Challenge for Europe*. Berggren, Eric, Branka Likić-Brborić, Gulay Toksoz and Nicos Trimikiniotis, eds. Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, pp. 104-117.
- Krasteva, Anna. 2010. Being a Foreign Woman in Bulgaria. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 63-78.

- Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. 2010. *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Ravenna: Longo Editore.
- Krasteva-Blagoeva, Evgenia. 2010. Food and Migration: The Case of Bulgarians in Munich. – In: *Ethnologia Balkanica*, Vol. 13, pp. 247-269.
- Kubicová, Jana and William T. Bagatelas. 2003. Bulgarian Emigration – A Closer Look. – In: *South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs*, Vol. 4, pp. 27-36.
- Lewis, Themba and Diana Daskalova. 2008. Legal Dimensions of Immigrant Access to Employment in Bulgaria: A Context Analysis. – In: *The Implication of EU Membership on Immigration Trends and Immigrant Integration Policies for the Bulgarian Labour Market*. Spassova, Plamena, ed. Sofia: Economic Policy Institute, pp. 77-100. [http://epi-bg.org/dmdocuments/book-GMF-EPI\\_all.pdf](http://epi-bg.org/dmdocuments/book-GMF-EPI_all.pdf)
- Maeva, Mila. 2005. Bulgarian Turks and European Union. – In: *Integration Process from EAST to EAST: Civil Society and Ethnic Minorities in a Changing World. Proceedings from a round table for young social scientists*. Rusu, Horatiu and Bogdan Voicu, eds. Sibiu: Psihomedica Publishing House, pp. 119-126.
- Maeva, Mila. 2006. The Turks` Image Through Bulgarian Turks` Eyes. – In: *Ethnologia Bulgarica*, Vol. 3, pp. 103-112.
- Maeva, Mila. 2007. New Migration Waves of Bulgarian Turks. – In: *Dynamics of National Identity and Transnational Identities in the Process of European Integration*. Marushiakova, Elena, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, pp. 224-247.
- Maleev, Alexander. 2010. Bulgarian Return Migration. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 267-276.
- Mancheva, Mila. 2008. Practicing Identities Across Borders. The Case of Bulgarian Turkish Labour Migrants in Germany. – In: *Transnational Ties: Cities, Migrations and Identities (Comparative Urban and Community Research Vol. 9)*. Smith, Michael Peter and John Eade, eds. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Mancheva, Mila. 2010. Irregular Migration and Undocumented Migrant Work after Bulgaria's EU Accession. – In: *Ethnologia Balkanica*, Vol. 14.
- Markova, Eugenia. 2001. Bulgarian Migrants' Community in Greece. – In: *Migrants in Greece*. Marvakis, Athanasios, ed. Athens: Elinika Gramata.
- Markova, Eugenia. 2004. Recent Phenomena - Employment Initiatives towards Immigrants in Greece. – In: *Employment Strategies for Immigrants in the European Union*. Blaschke, Jochen and Vollmer, Bastian, eds. Berlin: Edition Parabolis, pp. 201-238.
- Markova, Eugenia. 2004a. *A Survey of Bulgarian Immigrants in Greece and Spain*. Sofia: Institute for Market Economics (IME), No. 164.



- Markova, Eugenia. 2009. Bulgarian Immigration and Community Cohesion in London and Brighton. – In: *Accession and Migration: Changing Policy, Society, and Culture*. Eade, John and Yordanka Valkanova, eds. Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 107-132.
- Markova, Eugenia. 2010. Legal Status and Migrant Economic Performance: The Case of Bulgarians in Spain and Greece. – In: *Bulgaria and Europe: Shifting Identities*. Katsikas, Stefanos, ed. London and New York: Anthem Press.
- Markova, Eugenia and Alexander Sarris. 1997. The Performance of Bulgarian Illegal Immigrants in the Greek Labour Market. – In: *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Autumn, pp. 55-77.
- Markova, Eugenia and Alexander Sarris. 2001. The Decision to Legalise by Bulgarian Illegal Immigrants in Greece. – In: *International Migration: Trends, Policy and Economic Impact*. Djajic, Slobodan, ed. London: Routledge Publishers.
- Markova, Eugenia and Barry Reilly. 2007. Bulgarian Migrant Remittances and Legal Status: Some Micro-level Evidence from Madrid. – In: *South-Eastern Europe Journal of Economics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 55-71, <http://www.asecu.gr/Seeje/issue08/markova.pdf>
- Markova, Eugenia and Barry Reilly. 2008. The Determinants of Labour Market Earnings for Bulgarian Migrants: Some Micro-Level Evidence from Madrid, Spain. – In: *Migration Letters*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 177-188.
- Markova, Eugenia and Richard Black. 2008. The Experiences of ‘New’ East European Immigrants in the UK Labour Market. – In: *Benefits: The Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 19-32.
- Markova, Eugenia and Richard Black. 2010. New European Immigrants and Community Cohesion in Britain. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore.
- Marushiakova, Elena, Vesselin Popov and Mirella Decheva. 2004. The Gypsies in Bulgaria and their Migrations. – In: *Roma Migration in Europe: Case Studies*. Guy, Will, Zdenek Uherek and Renata Weinerova, eds. Münster: Lit, pp. 135-142.
- Marušiakova, Elena and Vesselin Popov. 2008. Les migration des Roms balkaniques en Europe occidentale: mobilités passées et présentes. – In: *Balkanologie*, Vol. XI, No. 1-2, December.
- Massey, Douglas S. et al. 1998. *Worlds in Motion. Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millenium*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nikolova, Marina. 2006. Greece as a Sophistication of Necessary Reality: Perceptions and Images from the Narratives of Women Immigrants from Bulgaria. – In: *South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs*, Vol. 3, pp. 83-90.
- Pamporov, Alexey. 2010. Social Distances Towards the New Immigrants in Bulgaria. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 79-92.

- Parla, Ayse. 2003. Marking Time along the Bulgarian-Turkish Border. – In: *Ethnography*, Vol. 4, pp. 561-575.
- Parla, Ayse. 2005. *Terms of Belonging: Turkish Immigrants from Bulgaria in the Imagined Homeland. Dissertation Thesis*. New York: New York University – Department of Anthropology.
- Parla, Ayse. 2006. Longing, Belonging and Locations of Homeland among Turkish Immigrants from Bulgaria. – In: *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 6 (4), pp. 543-557.
- Parla, Ayse. 2007. Irregular Workers or Ethnic Kin? Post Nineties Labour Migration from Bulgaria to Turkey. – In: *International Migration*, Vol. 45 (3), pp. 157-180.
- Parla, Ayse. 2009. Remembering Across the Border: Postsocialist Nostalgia among Turkish Immigrants from Bulgaria. – In: *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 36 (4), pp. 750-767.
- Petrov, Petar. 2001. Coping with Strangeness: Adaptive Strategies of “Returnees”. – In: *Ethnologia Bulgarica. Yearbook of Bulgarian Ethnology and Folklore*, Vol. 2, pp. 25-36.
- Passerini, Luisa, Dawn Lyon, Enrica Capussotti and Ioanna Laliotou, eds. 2007. *Women Migrants from East to West. Gender, Mobility and Belonging in Contemporary Europe*. Oxford – New York: Berghahn Books.
- Ragaru, Nadege. 2008. Imaginaires et itinéraires migratoires bulgares en Europe. – In: *Balkanologie*, Vol. XI, No. 1-2, December.
- Rangelova, Rossitsa and Katya Vladimirova. 2004. Migration from Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Bulgaria. – In: *South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs*, Vol. 3, pp. 7-30.
- Rangelova, Rossitsa et al. 2006. Gender Dimension on the Bulgaria’s New Migration: Policy Implications. – In: *Икономически изследвания*, Vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 43-66.
- Scott, Wolf. 1991. *Ethnic Turks from Bulgaria: An Assessment of their Employment and Living Conditions in Turkey*. Geneva: International Labour Organization – World Employment Programme.
- Slavkova, Magdalena. 2008. Being Gypsy in Europe: The Case of Bulgarian Roma Workers in Spain. – In: *Balkanologie*, Vol. XI, No. 1-2, December.
- Spasova, Plamena, ed. 2008. *The Implication of EU Membership on Immigration Trends and immigrant Integration Policies for the Bulgarian Labour Market*. Sofia: Economic Policy Institute.
- Skiskandarajah, Dhananjayan, Laurence Cooley. 2009. Stemming the Flow? The Causes and Consequences of the UK’s “Closed Door” Policy towards Romanians and Bulgarians. – In: *Accession and Migration: Changing Policy, Society, and Culture*. Eade, John and Yordanka Valkanova, eds. Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 31-55.

- Stanchev, Krassen, ed. 2005. *Bulgarian Migration: Incentives and Constellations*. Sofia: Open Society Institute.
- Stoilkova, Maria. 2001. Exiles at Home and Abroad: The Bulgarian Intelligentsia in Emigration. – In: *Center for Slavic and Eastern European Studies Newsletter*, Vol. 18, No. 2
- Stoilkova, Maria. 2003. A New Generation of the Bulgarian Transition: In Search of a “Brighter Future”. – In: *The Paradoxes of Progress: Globalization and Postsocialist Cultures*. Stryker, Rachael and Jennifer Patico, eds. Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers, No. 86
- Stoilkova, Maria. 2005. A Quest for Belonging: The Bulgarian Demographic Crisis, Emigration, and the Postsocialist Generations. – In: *Barren States: The Population Imposition in Europe*. Douglass, Carrie, ed. Oxford – New York: Berg Publishers.
- Tcholakova, Albena. 2010. The Refugee as a Specific Figure of Post-Communist Immigration in Bulgaria. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 237-252.
- Tiniou, Platon and Eugenia Markova. 2001. The Bulgarian Pension System and Reform: A Perspective from Greece. – In: *Learning from the Partners*. Holzmann, Robert, ed. Washington: World Bank.
- Tomova, Ilona. 1998. The Migration Process in Bulgaria. – In: *Managing Diversity in Plural Societies: Minorities, Migration and Nation-Building in Post-Communist Europe*. Opalski, Magdalena, ed. Ontario: Forum Eastern Europe.
- Tomova, Ilona. 2006. Migration of Roma in Bulgaria. – In: *Forced Ethnic Migrations on the Balkans: Consequences and Rebuilding of Societies. Conference Proceedings*. Popova, Katerina and Marko Hajdinjak, eds. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 124–137.
- Totev, Stoyan and Yordan Kalchev. 2000. Emigration Processes and the Socio-economic Development in Bulgaria. – In: *Migration Studies*. Roma: Estratto.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2009. *Trends in International Migration Stock: The 2008 Revision*. <http://esa.un.org/migration/p2k0data.asp>
- Weeks, Gregory, Hazel Slinn, Ann Henry and Yoanna Dumanova. 2003. Four Accounts on “Brain Drain” in the Balkans. – In: *South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs*, Vol. 4, pp. 13-26.
- Valkanova, Yordanka. 2009. Being a Rara Avis: The Educational Experiences of Bulgarian Children in Schools in London. – In: *Accession and Migration: Changing Policy, Society, and Culture*. Eade, John and Yordanka Valkanova, eds. Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 133-142.
- Vasileva, Darina. 1992. Bulgarian Turkish Emigration and Return. – In: *International Migration Review*, Vol. 6 (2), pp. 342-352.

Vladimirova, Vesela. 2010. First Generation Bulgarian Migrants to the Czech Republic: Language Practice. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 191-198.

Zhelyazkova, Antonina, ed. 1998. *Between Adaptation and Nostalgia. The Bulgarian Turks in Turkey*. Sofia: IMIR.

Zhelyazkova, Antonina, Violeta Angelova and Zhelyu Vladimirov. 2007. *Undocumented Workers: Bulgarian National Report*. <http://www.imir-bg.org/imir/reports/Undocumented%20workers%20Bulgaria%20report.pdf>

Zlatanova, Valentina. 1991. The Bulgarian Brain Drain. – In: *A European Journal of International Migration and Ethnic Relations*, Vol. 11-12, pp. 133-142.

#### **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States

ILO – International Labour Organization

IOM - International Organization for Migration

Mol – Ministry of Interior

MWF – Manfred Woerner Foundation

NSI – National Statistical Institute

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# GENDER, MIGRATION AND INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS: POLICY ANALYSIS ON BULGARIA (1990 - 2010)

*Georgeta Nazarska, Marko Hajdinjak*

## Introduction: Policy Context

### *General Context*

Migrations were restricted and tightly controlled under the Bulgarian communist regime. The only exception were the first few years after the World War II, when numerous political emigrants managed to leave the country (they settled in Western Europe, the USA and Latin America), as did the majority of Bulgarian Jews (who emigrated to Israel) and many Armenians (who went to the USSR). Between 1950 and the late 1970s, it was very difficult for the Bulgarian citizens to travel abroad because obtaining an international passport largely depended on the political positions of individuals. In practice, legal emigration was not possible, and Bulgarians could “emigrate” only if a person managed to cross the border illegally or “disappear” while on a visit abroad. Legal emigration was permitted only to Bulgarian Turks in line with the special agreement between Bulgaria and Turkey. Hundreds of thousands of Turks emigrated to Turkey between 1950 and 1989.

**Table 1.** Turkish Migrations from Bulgaria, 1878–1992

<b>Years</b>	<b>Number</b>
1878–1912	350,000
1923–33	101,507
1934–39	97,181
1940–49	21,353
1950–51	154,198
1952–68	24
1969–78	114,356
1979–88	0
1989–92	321,800
Total	1,160,614

*Source:* Turan, 2006, p. 92.

Similarly, the immigration to communist Bulgaria was also very limited. The overall number of immigrants was relatively small and the majority among them represented those who came to the country for political reasons. In the late 1940s, the most numerous were the Greek communists – refugees after the Civil War. During the 1960s and 1970s, many students from Africa and the Arab countries arrived. In the 1970s, many political immigrants from Greece and Chile came to Bulgaria to escape persecution in their home countries. In the 1980s, Bulgaria welcomed a wave of immigrants from Palestine, along with a large number of construction workers from Vietnam. Throughout the entire communist period, many Soviet citizens, who had married Bulgarians, came to settle in the country. The communist authorities made no effort to integrate the immigrants, as they expected that they would return to their home countries and help spread the communist ideology there. This was in fact the case with many Greeks, Arabs and Vietnamese.

The political changes in 1989 led to changes in the migration context compared to the previous decades. A strong emigration wave was launched, motivated above all by economic reasons.

The emigrants have been very diverse. They included a large number of highly educated and qualified people in active age, looking for a professional career abroad that would provide them with a higher social-economic status based on their skills and competencies. Another large group consisted of young people attending universities in other countries. Many of them did not return to Bulgaria and remained to work in the host countries. The third relatively large group included Bulgarian citizens of minority origin (Turks, Roma, and Jews).

**Table 2.** Gender division of Bulgarian emigrants

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
All emigrants	57%	43%
Labour emigrants*	65%	35%
Short-term emigrants	60%	40%

\* Those looking for legal employment abroad

Source: NSI, 2001.

The education structure of Bulgarian emigrants is as follows: 18% of all emigrants have high education, 56% have secondary education, while 26% have elementary one. The largest share of those with high education is in the group of the short-term emigrants (21%), while the smallest is among the long-term labour emigrants (14%). The most difficult is the situation of the illegal emigrants, and especially of the women among them, who are usually with the lowest education or without such, and have no possibility to choose their employment (NSI, 2001; Кръстева, 2004; Минчев, 2004, pp. 3-30; Тодоров, 2006, pp. 283-323).

None of the Bulgarian governments during the 1990s undertook effective measures to decrease or stop the emigration. The economic emigration was accelerated by the economic collapse of Bulgaria in the first decade of the transition. A large number of state-owned enterprises in industry, agriculture, services, tourism and other branches were closed down. This caused mass unemployment, especially in the peripheral regions, in the villages, in the minority-populated areas, among women and among the people of pre-retirement age. Furthermore, in 1996 Bulgaria experienced hyperinflation and collapse of the banking sector. In the early years of 1990s, there was also some political emigration, caused by the fact that the former Communist Party stayed in power under a new name – the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

The influx of immigrants into Bulgaria also increased in the 1990s. The reasons for their arrival, though, had changed significantly. The majority of the post-1990s immigrants have been economic and not political. Considering their place in the Bulgarian economic landscape, three main groups can be observed. Chinese have occupied a specific niche in the market economy, especially in the trade sector, where they often walk (or step across) the line separating the legal from the grey economy. The majority of the immigrants from the Middle East arrived relying on networks and ties set up before 1989, when communist Bulgaria had very close links with many Middle Eastern countries. Many thus came to stay with their relatives – immigrants from the communist period,

and are employed mostly in the trade and restaurant sectors. In recent years, many left their home countries also due to political instability or war (Lebanese, Syrians, Palestinians, Iraqis, and Afghans). Immigrants from developed countries (EU and the USA) are the third group. They buy property in Bulgaria, invest, or work as experts or consultants. Most of them are short-term residents, staying in Bulgaria for a limited period of time and frequently travelling to their home countries and back. There is another group of immigrants, which deserves to be specially mentioned – people of Bulgarian descent from some countries of the former Soviet Union (most often Ukraine and Moldova).

Immigrants are typically employed in restaurants, small-size trade, real estate, construction, finances and even in health care. The studies have shown that most immigrants are well educated (24% have high education). Only one third of them are manual workers, others are entrepreneurs, managers, or officials (Кръстева, 2005, pp. 4-13).

There are no reliable data about the immigration flows into Bulgaria. There is no central and systemised statistical database on the number of foreigners in Bulgaria, but only partial and sometimes conflicting information provided by different institutions. Practically, the only exact numbers are those about the foreign citizens with permanent residence in Bulgaria. On December 31st, 2009, there were 69,423 foreigners with permanent residence in the country – a substantial increase from December 2004, when they were 50,756.



**Table 3.** Permanently resident foreigners in Bulgaria by citizenship as of 31.12.2009:

Citizenship	Permanently resident foreigners					
	31.12.2004	31.12.2005	31.12.2006	31.12.2007	31.12.2008	31.12.2009
<b>Total</b>	<b>50756</b>	<b>53197</b>	<b>55653</b>	<b>63615</b>	<b>66806</b>	<b>69423</b>
<b>Europe</b>	<b>35437</b>	<b>37051</b>	<b>38988</b>	<b>44261</b>	<b>47106</b>	<b>49379</b>
<b>EU - 27</b>	<b>5690</b>	<b>5949</b>	<b>6245</b>	<b>6861</b>	<b>6904</b>	<b>6948</b>
<b>Other European</b>	<b>29747</b>	<b>31102</b>	<b>32743</b>	<b>37400</b>	<b>40202</b>	<b>42431</b>
including:						
Albania	99	113	142	198	229	265
Belarus	283	306	326	351	362	377
Bosnia and Herze- govina	46	47	48	50	58	63
Macedonia	821	918	1115	2188	4375	5507
Moldova	1643	1626	1703	2071	2203	2403
Russian Federation	18639	18947	19216	21171	21309	21483
Serbia	1068	1116	1121	1326	355	593
Turkey	1880	2583	3361	3778	3828	4092
Ukraine	4500	4659	4861	5263	5350	5514
<b>Asia</b>	<b>7060</b>	<b>7700</b>	<b>8162</b>	<b>9308</b>	<b>9623</b>	<b>9888</b>
Armenia	873	1018	1142	1268	1322	1380
Viet Nam	796	832	867	1033	1043	1040
Iraq	359	366	369	430	437	443
China	1081	1421	1581	1785	1934	2011
Lebanon	794	817	832	913	932	953
Syria	1617	1648	1690	1929	1945	1987
<b>Other Asia</b>	<b>1540</b>	<b>1598</b>	<b>1681</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2074</b>
<b>Africa</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>651</b>
Algeria	80	79	85	89	90	91
Egypt	75	86	89	94	102	106
Libya	39	42	37	36	34	38
Morocco	50	49	50	51	56	57
Nigeria	87	86	91	92	92	96
Tunisia	43	45	50	46	46	47
<b>Other Africa</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>America</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>890</b>
Canada	38	41	40	43	45	49
Cuba	157	158	160	200	203	204

<b>Citizenship</b>	<b>Permanently resident foreigners</b>					
Nicaragua	55	55	54	58	57	58
Peru	20	19	22	24	23	25
United States of America	221	273	332	360	374	412
Chile	27	28	27	27	27	27
<b>Other America</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Australia and New Zealand</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Stateless</b>	<b>1749</b>	<b>1896</b>	<b>1903</b>	<b>2157</b>	<b>2167</b>	<b>2171</b>
<b>ex-USSR</b>	<b>5316</b>	<b>5285</b>	<b>5238</b>	<b>6404</b>	<b>6386</b>	<b>6372</b>
<b>Unknown citizenship</b>	-	-	-	13	14	23
<b>Release from citizenship</b>	-	-	-	1	1	1

Source: [http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop\\_5.8\\_Migration\\_DR\\_EN.xls](http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop_5.8_Migration_DR_EN.xls)

As it can be seen, Europeans (mostly from non-EU member states) represented 71.1% of the permanently residing foreigners, followed by immigrants from Asia (14.2%), North and South America (1.3%) and Africa (1%). The vast majority of foreign permanent residents came from the former Soviet Union (30.9% are from the Russian Federation alone). Immigrants from the countries neighbouring Bulgaria (especially Macedonia and Turkey) represent 14.7% of all foreign permanent residents.

According to the data of the Population Division at the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the overall number of immigrants in Bulgaria in 2010 was 107,245.

**Table 4.** Bulgaria Country profile (1990-2010) (*Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision*. United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2008).

Indicator	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Estimated number of international migrants	21 510	46 610	101 000	104 076	107 245
Estimated number of refugees	0	1 190	1 011	4 549	4 670
Population	8 819 000	8 357 000	8 006 000	7 739 000	7 497 000
Estimated number of female migrants	12 463	27 006	58 519	60 302	62 138
Estimated number of male migrants	9 047	19 604	42 481	43 774	45 107
International migrants as a percentage of the population	0.2	0.6	1.3	1.3	1.4
Female migrants as percentage of all international migrants	57.9	57.9	57.9	57.9	57.9
Refugees as a percentage of international migrants	0.0	2.6	1.0	4.4	4.4

Source: <http://esa.un.org/migration/index.asp?panel=2>

**Table 5.** Asylum seekers and refugees in Bulgaria

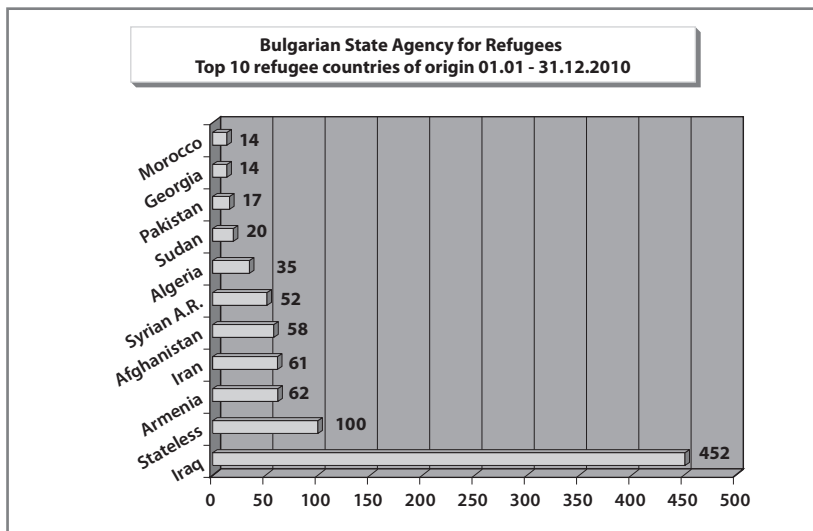
Information for asylum seekers and decisions taken 01.01.1993 - 28.02.2011								
Year	Applications submitted	Refugee status granted	Refugee status refusals	Humanitarian status granted	Prolonged humanitarian status	Terminated procedures	Terminated refugee or humanitarian status	Total number of decisions
1993	276	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1994	561	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1995	451	73	6	14	0	28	0	121
1996	283	144	28	13	0	132	8	325
1997	429	145	28	2	0	88	0	263
1998	834	87	104	7	0	235	3	436
1999	1349	180	198	380	5	760	250	1773
2000	1755	267	509	421	65	996	17	2275
2001	2428	385	633	1185	164	657	36	3060
2002	2888	75	781	646	138	1762	9	3411

Year	Applications submitted	Refugee status granted	Refugee status refusals	Humanitarian status granted	Prolonged humanitarian status	Terminated procedures	Terminated refugee or humanitarian status	Total number of decisions
2003	1549	19	1036	411	7	528	20	2021
2004	1127	17	335	257	2	366	12	989
2005	822	8	386	78	0	478	2	952
2006	639	12	215	83	0	284	0	594
2007	975	13	245	322	0	191	1	772
2008	746	27	381	267	0	70	0	745
2009	853	39	380	228	0	91	2	740
2010	1025	20	386	118	0	202	1	727
2011*	399	2	151	55	0	117	0	325
<b>Total</b>	<b>19389</b>	<b>1513</b>	<b>5802</b>	<b>4487</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>6985</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>19529</b>

\* until 31.05.2011

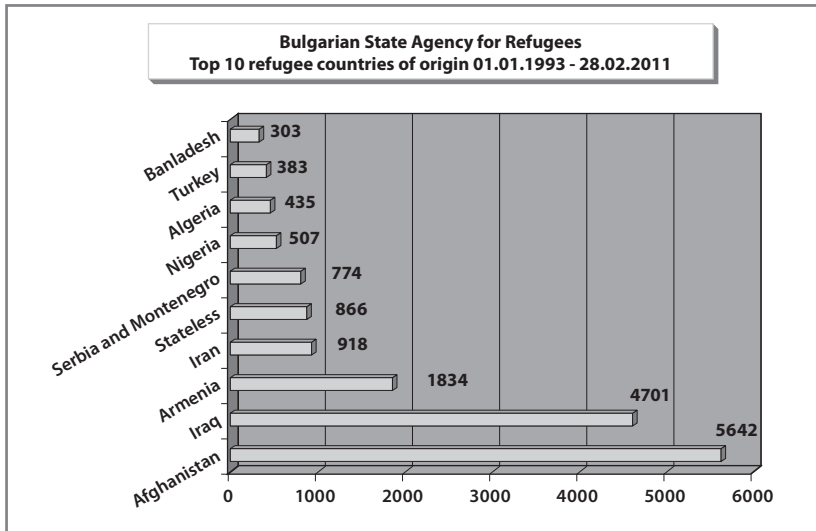
Source: [http://www.aref.government.bg/docs/Applications% 20and % 20decisions % 20taken % 2001.01.93 % 20-% 2031.05.2011.xls](http://www.aref.government.bg/docs/Applications%20and%20decisions%20taken%2001.01.93%20-%2031.05.2011.xls)

**Table 6.** Top 10 Refugee Countries by Origin January 1 – December 31, 2010



Source: [http://www.aref.government.bg/docs/1210Charts\\_website\\_english.doc](http://www.aref.government.bg/docs/1210Charts_website_english.doc)

**Table 7.** Top 10 Refugee Countries by Origin January 1, 1993 – February 28, 2011



Source: [http://www.eref.government.bg/docs/1102Charts\\_website\\_english.doc](http://www.eref.government.bg/docs/1102Charts_website_english.doc)

The data from the study of the demographic development of Bulgaria (conducted in 2005 on the sample of 767 immigrants) showed that 45% of the foreigners in Bulgaria have permanent residence permits (Иванов, Аманасов, 2005, pp. 91-92). This roughly corresponds to the comparison between the 2005 UN estimate about the overall number of immigrants in Bulgaria and the official data provided by the Ministry of Interior and the National Statistical Institute about the number of foreigners with permanent residence (51.1% - 53,197 permanent residence holders out of 104,076 immigrants). It is interesting to note that from 2005 to 2010, the overall number of immigrants in Bulgaria increased by only 3,169 people, while the number of permanent residents of foreign nationality increased by 16,226 in the same period (they now represent 64.7% of all immigrants). It is quite obvious that the overwhelming majority of people who acquired the permanent residence permits in the 2005-2010 period were not recent arrivals to the country, but had already resided there – most likely holding a long-term (up to one year) residence permits.

The annual increase of the number of permanent residence holders was usually between 2,500 and 3,000, with the notable exception of 2007 (the first year of Bulgaria's EU membership), when almost 8,000 new permits were issued (half of which to nationals of Russia, other former Soviet Union states and Macedonia).<sup>1</sup> There are no data in which months of 2007 the majority of these permits were issued, but an interesting fact is that in April 2007 the *Law for the Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria* was amended. More precisely, Article 25/2, which regulates granting of permission for permanent stay to foreigners who have married a Bulgarian citizen or a foreigner with a valid permanent residence permit, was changed and the minimum duration of marriage was increased from two to five years. Although it cannot be verified, it can be assumed that the rush to acquire permanent residence permits was motivated by the changes in the Law.

The above-mentioned study of the demographic development of Bulgaria further showed that, in addition to 45% permanent residence permit holders, 16% of the foreigners in the country had long-term residence permits (half of whom had obtained the permits because of their business – most often in trading sector) and 11% had the status of refugees or were granted asylum. Five percent of the foreigners had dual citizenship, 4% had short-term residence permits (despite that, the majority had resided in the country for 3-4 years), while 6% were in Bulgaria illegally. The remaining 13% declined to explain what their status was and it can thus be assumed that they were either without documents or used to have proper permits, but these had expired and they had also become illegal residents (Иванов, Аманасов, 2005, pp. 91-92).

Both the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the demographic development of Bulgaria study show that women represent

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Statistical Institute runs a rather inaccurate and illogical classification of permanently resident foreigners according to their original citizenship. The NSI table thus contains data on immigrants from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, as well as Armenia (which for some reason is listed as an Asian rather than European country), but at the bottom also has a special category for "ex-USSR," which presumably excludes nationals of those former Soviet countries, which are specifically mentioned. See Table 3 for details.

around 60% of immigrants in Bulgaria. This is above all consequence of the predominantly feminised immigration from Russia and other former Soviet republics. They represent by far the largest group of foreigners in Bulgaria, and the women among them represent a clear majority (80% in the case of Russia). The situation with immigrants from countries of Central and Eastern Europe is similar. Immigration from China, Armenia and Macedonia is more gender balanced, while in the cases of Arabian, African, Turkish, Kurdish, Afghani, Iranian and Vietnamese communities, the majority of immigrants are male. The reason for this are the prevalent cultural and social norms in the countries of origin, where female migration is considered appropriate only in the company of male family members (БХК, 2004, p. 21).

Women and men have very different reasons for leaving their home countries and coming to Bulgaria. Most men have arrived in search of work (44.2%), while the most common reasons for women are marriage or family unification (37.9%), although in practice, women also search for work once they have reunited with their families and settled in the country. In some more conservative communities, for example from some Arab countries, men emigrate alone and are later followed by their families. Their female partners thus usually arrive to a foreign and unfamiliar environment to which they struggle to adapt as their knowledge of the local language and customs is extremely limited. Many of them are housewives and as such, they have very few social contacts outside their own communities, which limits their possibilities for practicing the local language. As a result, such women become exceptionally dependent on their partners, who are often their only link with the “outside world” (БХК, 2004, p. 23).

The overwhelming majority of foreigners with permanent residence live in larger cities, which offer a more cosmopolitan atmosphere and better possibilities for employment and business. About a third (33.6%) of the permanently residing foreigners live in Sofia, followed by 8.8% in Plovdiv, 8% in Varna and 4.9% in Burgas (НСИ, 2005, p. 307).

A significant number of foreigners who have obtained Bulgarian citizenship or permanent residence permit had entered Bulgaria before 1989 as students and decided to remain in the country after graduation. Many have started families here and mixed marriages with Bulgarian citizens are not uncommon.

Due to the fact that many foreigners have come to Bulgaria to study, it is not surprising that the level of education among them is quite high and significantly higher than the average Bulgarian level. For example, while 12% of Bulgarians have higher education, this share among immigrants is 21% (Иванов, Аманасов, 2005, p. 93).

### ***Legal frame of the migration policies***

The Bulgarian legal framework is based on several principal international documents. The first group of these documents are those passed by the UN and its bodies: Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted on July 28, 1951 by the United Nations, ratified by Bulgaria on April 22, 1992 and in force since August 21, 1993); Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted in 1967 by the UN General Assembly, ratified by Bulgaria on April 22, 1992 and in force since May 12, 1993); Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1984, ratified by Bulgaria on October 9, 1986 and in force since June 26, 1987); Agreement on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Office in Bulgaria, signed on July 22, 1993 between the UNHCR and the government of Bulgaria.

A second group of international acts Bulgaria has ratified are various European documents: European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Council of Europe, 1950, ratified by Bulgaria on July 31, 1992 and in force since September 7, 1992); European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Council of Europe, November 26, 1987, ratified by Bulgaria on March 16, 1994 and in force since



September 1, 1994); Council of Europe Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to the Member States on the Harmonization of National Procedures – Recommendation 81/16 relating to the Harmonization of the State Procedures in Connection with Asylum, Recommendation 1236/1994 on the Right of Asylum, Recommendation 1237/1994 on the Situation of Individuals Seeking Asylum Whose Applications have been Rejected, Recommendation 98/13 on the Right of Rejected Asylum Seekers to an Effective Remedy against Decisions on Expulsion in the Context of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Recommendation 98/15 on the Training of Officials Who First Come into Contact with Asylum Seekers, in particular at Border Points (see UNHCR, 2002).

According to the Bulgarian Constitution (1991), foreigners residing in the country have the same rights and obligations as the local population, except those for which Bulgarian citizenship is required (Article 26/2).

There are three principal laws dealing with foreigners in Bulgaria. The Law for the Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria (1998, last amended in January 2011) divides the foreigners into three categories: those in transit, short-term residents and long-term residents. The administrative control over the residence right of the foreigners is in the jurisdiction of the Directorate “Migration” and its regional bureaus within the Ministry of Interior. The Law for the Asylum and Refugees (2002, last amended in October 2009) has introduced the established EU legal instruments into the Bulgarian legal system and set forth the administrative measures dealing with the rights and obligations of foreigners seeking protection in Bulgaria. The Law for the Bulgarian Citizenship (1999, last amended in April 2010) regulates the procedures for the acquisition of Bulgarian Citizenship through naturalization before the Directorate “Bulgarian Citizenship” and the Council for Citizenship at the Ministry of Justice.

In addition to these three main laws, foreigners are mentioned in several other laws: Law on Protection against Discrimination (2003); Law for Child Protection (2000); Law for Taxation of the Income of

Natural Persons (2004); Law for the Bulgarian Identification Documents (1998); Law on Municipal Ownership (1996); Law for Social Support (1998) and Law for the Family Support for Children (2002).

Foreigners in Bulgaria are subject also to several regulations and other legal acts. Some of them are: Regulations for Implementation of the Law for the Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria (2000); Ordinance on the Conditions and Procedures for the Issuing of Visas by Diplomatic and Consular Representative Offices of the Republic of Bulgaria (1999); Ordinance on the Conditions and Procedure for the Issuing of Work Permits to Foreigners (1992); Ordinance on the Conditions and Procedure for the Issuing of Permits to Self-Employed Foreigners (2002); Ordinance for the Conditions and the Order of Issuing Permits for Carrying Out Non-profit Activity by Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria (2002); Ordinance for the Temporary Settlement of Foreigners and on Organization and Activity of Special Homes for Temporary Settlement of Foreigners (2004).

## **Chapter 1: Gender in Migration Policies**

### ***1.1. Critical overview of the existing legislation and policies on migration***

Bulgaria's EU accession process has made the harmonization of the national legal order with the EU legislation a necessity. This is true also for the state policies on asylum and management of refugee processes, which have been brought in line with the EU standards and international legislation on protection and rights of foreign nationals (especially important here is the Dublin II Regulation on asylum from 2003).

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, foreigners residing in the country are vested with all rights and obligations proceeding from the Constitution, except those for which a Bulgarian citizenship is required by the Constitution or by another law (Article 26/2). The Constitution states that foreigners residing legally in the country cannot be expelled or

extradited to another state against their will, except in accordance with the provisions and the procedures established by the law (Article 27/1). The Republic of Bulgaria will grant asylum to foreigners persecuted for their opinions or activity in defence of internationally recognized rights and freedoms (Article 27/2). Everyone is free to choose a place of residence and has the right to freedom of movement on the territory of the country or across its borders (Article 35/1). This right is restricted only by virtue of the law in the name of the national security, public health, and the rights and freedoms of other citizens.

The Law for the Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria (LFRB) of 1998 envisages three possible regimes for foreigners to stay in Bulgaria: short-term residence (up to 90 days); long-term residence (up to one year); and permanent residence (unlimited term). Foreigners with permanent residence permits have the same rights and conditions for work as Bulgarian citizens. Foreigners falling under the other two regimes of residence may work as well, but only after receiving permission from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP). They can work only for the specific employer and for the time determined in their permission for work (Article 33 of LFRB). Foreigners working in Bulgaria have the same rights and obligations as Bulgarian citizens, except if internal legislation or an international treaty explicitly state otherwise (Zhelyazkova, Angelova, Vladimirov, 2007, p. 4-5).

When the Law for the Asylum and Refugees was passed in May 2002, it was made consistent with the demands of the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees from 1951, the UN Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees from 1967 and the EU legislation on asylum. Its amendments (April 2005, April 2006, June 2007, December 2007 and October 2009) were also consistent with the recommendations made in the EU's common position on Chapter 24 "Co-operation in the Fields of Justice and Home Affairs," adopted on October 15, 2003.

The amendments introduced a distinction between reasons for rejection of applications, reasons for discontinuance of the procedure for granting refugee status and humanitarian status, and reasons for cessation and

withdrawal of status. Respective EU legal instruments were introduced, as well as differentiation of administrative measures employed for granting of status (Ilieva, 2001).

The National Demographic Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2020 (MLSP, 2006) also deals with some of the migration related issues. For example, it outlines the steps the state should take to decrease the emigration of young people in reproductive age, and to develop an adequate immigration policy. The Strategy envisages the following measures the state should implement regarding the immigrants:

- to initiate a public debate and information campaign about immigrants among the Bulgarian population;
- to include immigrants in the normative base and administrative registers;
- to create conditions for their cultural and social integration;
- to make it easier for them to legalize their educational and professional certificates and diplomas.

Such measures represent a solid base. However, they are insufficient as they do not differentiate between specific problems of different communities, nor do they consider age or gender differences. A special attention in this strategy is given to ethnic Bulgarian communities abroad. Citizenship, scholarships and other incentives are envisaged for them. This again shows that the legislation is based on very old concepts, which are not in line with the multiculturalism of the modern global society. Another negative aspect is the unequal treatment of immigrants, as the legislation clearly favours immigrants of Bulgarian descent.

The Law on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings (2003-2004) introduced measures for prevention of trafficking in humans, improved coordination of work of various state institutions and NGOs and provided more protection to the victims of trafficking. The Law was written in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Bulgaria has ratified both documents. The Law envisages the establishment of National Commission, headed by a

Deputy Prime Minister. The National Commission and its municipal offices (headed by deputy mayors) would work as a link between various agencies and institutions and prepare programmes for implementation of the Law on national and local levels.

Despite the fact that the Law on Countering Trafficking has been in force for several years now, the process of establishment of the newly created institutions and of making them operative has been proceeding slowly. In order to implement the Law, the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB) adopts annual National Programme for Prevention and Counteraction of Trafficking in Human Beings and Protection of the Victims.<sup>2</sup> After the National Programme for 2006 was adopted, the Local Commissions for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (LCCTHB) were established in four municipalities in high-risk areas. As of September 2010, Local Commissions have been active in five municipalities – Varna, Burgas, Pazardjik, Sliven and Montana. The National Programme for 2010 places a strong emphasis on local policies to combat human trafficking, development of the work of the established Local Commissions and expansion of prevention activities (aiming above all at adolescents, their parents and teachers, and ethnic minorities). Special attention is also given to the protection and reintegration of the victims. Concrete measures are described in the chapter on “Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Victims,” which deals with overcoming the consequences of trafficking experience and reintegration of the victims back into the society. For this purpose, the government plans to establish a second shelter for temporary accommodation of victims of trafficking (in addition to the existing one in the city of Varna).

In the previous years, the main criticism of the National Programmes dealt with the fact that no specific budget was provided for the different activities foreseen in the Programme, as well as with the poor cooperation and coordination between the regional institutions. There was also no state financing for reintegration of the victims of trafficking, which was often the

---

<sup>2</sup> See for example National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, 2010.

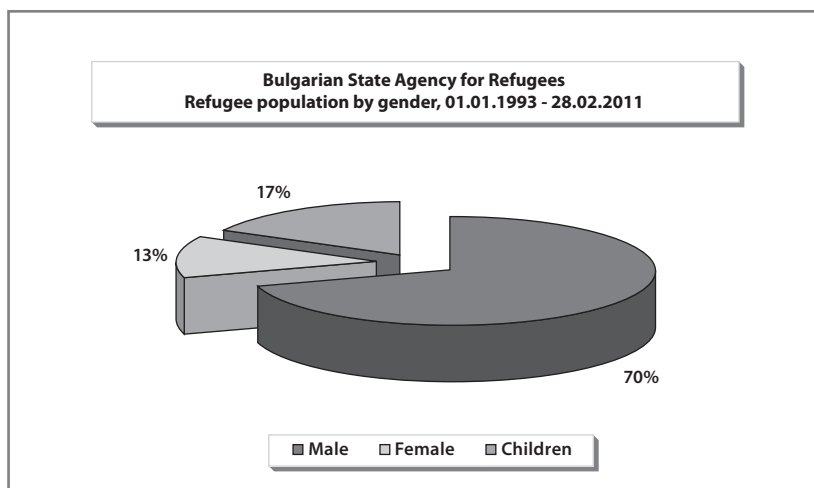
reason why they fell again into trafficker's nets (CWSP, 2007; USAID, ЖАР, 2004). The situation seems to have improved in the last couple of years, with both the National Commission and Local Commissions for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings playing a more active and publicly visible role.

The main problem regarding immigration in Bulgaria is the noticeable lack of well-formulated and consistently applied policies of migration management. The issue is still being sidelined in the public debates, and there is no political consensus regarding the necessity for management and stimulation of immigration. Until now, all the changes undertaken in the Bulgarian legislation have been motivated solely by the EU accession process. Despite the fact that the harmonization of Bulgarian legislation with the EU norms was a very positive development itself, it cannot be a substitute for the national migration policy, adapted to the specific Bulgarian economic and social environment (lack of large immigrant groups; presence of unoccupied economic "niches" on the market, where immigrants can find their place; impact of nationalism and xenophobia, exploited by certain political formations), in which such legislation would be implemented. This legal void results into inadequate actions undertaken by the police, border guards and other institutions, which as a rule, try to limit or prevent immigration flows rather than channel and manage them for the benefit of the country (Кръстева, 2007).

Gender and gender equality have yet to find their proper place in the Bulgarian political environment. A good example for this is the National Demographic Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2020 (MLSP, 2006). Gender equality is the main principle the Strategy is based on. The Strategy also outlines the mechanisms for stimulation of the successful combination of professional and family responsibilities, envisages concrete measures for decreasing the number of emigrants in reproductive age and for stimulating the return of young expatriates. It also stresses the importance of gender mainstreaming (gender equality in all spheres of political and public life). And yet, the whole document seems to represent merely a wish list, written in politically correct and anticipated phraseology, rather than a set of concrete measures.

Gender is an almost invisible category in the Bulgarian political literature on migration. Not a single legal text makes any gender division of immigrants and refugees. The only exception is the statistical data of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR). In addition to classifying refugees according to their country of origin and their status in Bulgaria, their charts also provide a gender structure (see Table 8). The otherwise complete absence of social gender category in the legal literature makes it impossible to draw any conclusions regarding the dominating gender stereotypes in different aspects and different levels of political decision-making. The seemingly gender-neutral language of Bulgarian legislation shows a gender bias, ignoring the problems that women face. Gender blindness is a problem in itself as it ignores gender inequalities within migrant communities and between migrants and the host society.

**Table 8.** Refugee population by gender:



Source: [http://www.eref.government.bg/docs/1102Charts\\_website\\_english.doc](http://www.eref.government.bg/docs/1102Charts_website_english.doc)

## ***1.2. State institutions and non-governmental organizations***

There is no independent body in charge of developing and implementing a clear immigration policy, which is the cause of much confusion and insecurity not only among immigrants, but also among experts and state administration.

A large number of various ministries and institutions are engaged in some way in the process of migration management. The largest part of responsibilities are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior (MI), yet the MI can hardly be described as a body tasked with the coordination of activities linked to migration management. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is indirectly involved with refugees through the National Action Plan for Employment. Refugees with permanent address in Bulgaria, who are registered in employment bureaus, can participate in the national programme for Bulgarian language education and general education; are entitled to consulting services (legal, social, psychological and other) in employment bureaus; and can obtain assistance in finding employment and vocational training.

The dispersion of responsibilities among a large number of state institutions is the precondition for low effectiveness, lack of transparency and accountability, and widespread corruption. The establishment of one autonomous and multi-disciplinary body responsible for the application and coordination of state migration policy and based on the existing model of the State Agency for Refugees would be a good solution. This would shift the focus from the current administrative control of immigrants to the much more important issue of their social integration, which is now unjustly neglected.

The non-governmental organizations are much more active and in most cases are the ones to initiate good practices of migration policies. The Bulgarian bureau of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) financed the production and publishing of the Handbook with Information about the Rights and Duties of Refugees in



the Republic of Bulgaria (2007). The Handbook outlines the jurisdictions and functions of various state institutions and NGOs dealing with the refugees.

Giving publicity to the problems and needs of the immigrants and making their integration a two-way process has not been a priority of the government to date. In a long-term perspective, the lack of legal and institutional frame for integration of immigrants can alienate them from most of the public issues and fuel their dissatisfaction over their underprivileged position in the society. At the same time, it can also increase the unjustified xenophobic feelings among the majority population. This can only lead to marginalization and social isolation of the immigrant community. There is no reason for the continuous exclusion of immigrants' organizations from participation in the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues. Such organizations should also be entitled to financial support for cultural-educational activities and publications as is the case with the organizations of Bulgarian traditional minorities (БХК, 2004, pp. 34-35).

## **Chapter 2: Migration in Policies on Gender Equality**

### ***2.1. Critical overview of the existing legislation and policies on gender equality***

Gender equality has been regulated by a number of EU legal acts, ranging from the European Community and European Union foundation treaties to several directives, resolutions and strategies. Gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men were proclaimed by the Treaty of Amsterdam (signed on October 2, 1997, in force since May 1, 1999). The Treaty emphasized the importance of fighting all forms of discrimination and providing genuine equal opportunities for women and men. These directions have been further developed by the Treaty of Nice (signed 2001; in force 2003) and the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (2004). They stressed the need for national

action plans for promotion of gender equality, which have been among the main EU priorities since the Treaty of Amsterdam.

During Bulgaria's EU accession process, most of EU legal texts dealing with gender equality have been incorporated into the Bulgarian legislation. These include (in addition to the ones mentioned above) also the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005) and the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010.

The Constitution of Bulgaria (1991) is based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. It states that all people are born free and with equal dignity and rights. They are equal under the law. The Constitution allows no privileges or restrictions of rights on the grounds of race, national or social origin, ethnic self-identity, gender, religion, education, opinion, political affiliation, personal or social status or property status (Article 6). Matrimony and family relations are based on equal rights and obligations (Article 46/2). Mothers are placed under a special protection of the State and are guaranteed prenatal and postnatal leaves, free obstetric care, alleviated working conditions and other forms of social assistance (Article 47/2). The Constitution however envisages no special legislation on gender equality.

The Labour Code (promulgated in 1986, last amended in December 2009) categorically forbids any direct or indirect discrimination, based on nationality, origin, gender, sexual orientation, race, colour of skin, age, political and religious beliefs, membership in syndicate and other social organizations and movements, family and material situation, existence of psychic or physical disorders (Article 8/3). Article 243 (Right to Equal Remuneration), added in 2001, introduced equal remuneration for women and men performing the same or equivalent labour. The amendments also introduced a definition of "indirect" discrimination – cases when decisions are seemingly admissible by law, but are applied in a manner, which actually renders some employees in a more disadvantaged or a more privileged position compared to others. Thus

the employers have no right to put any gender or age limitations on candidates for an open job position.

The new Family Code was passed in October 2009, substituting the 1985 Code. The Code is based on the principle of “equality between men and women.” The most important changes to the Code dealt with the issues of premarital contracts that regulate the division of property and payment of alimony in case of divorce, and the process of adoption. The amendment gives the authorities the right to put a child up for adoption in case biological parents have withheld contact for six months. One of the most controversial issues in the new Code proved to be the subject of cohabitation. Cohabitation or registered partnerships was initially planned to be recognised as the legal equivalent of marriage, but as a result of strong opposition in the Parliament, this article was removed from the final version of the Code passed by the Parliament. The debate about same-sex partnerships drew even fiercer opposition and also failed to find a place in the new Family Code.

The Code of Social Insurance (2000, last amended in December 2009) introduced the principles of mandatory participation and comprehensiveness of the social insurance, and equality of all insured persons (Article 3). The Penal Code (1968, last amended in December 2009) envisages punishment for the following gender-related crimes against persons: rape, forced sex (through use of victim’s material or employment dependence on a perpetrator), incest, sex with minors, persuading or compelling another person into prostituting, and human trafficking. In 2009, a number of articles in the Penal Code were amended, providing harsher penalties for various offences related to prostitution and human trafficking.

The Law on Protection against Discrimination (2003, last amended in June 2009) contains a large number of gender equality related clauses (equal right to employment and working conditions, equal remuneration for equal work and work of equal value, special protection for pregnant women and mothers, training on the problems of the equality of women

and men in educational curricula, balance in the participation of men and women in education and training, a policy to encourage the balanced participation of women and men in state and public bodies, and the bodies of local self-government). The Law envisaged a system of sanctions and served as a legal base for the creation of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination – an independent body with 9 members selected by the President and the National Assembly and answerable to the Assembly. The Commission works mostly with the cases of ethnic, racial and gender discrimination. The majority of people are still relatively unfamiliar with the Law and are not well acquainted with the rights the Law guarantees them, or with the possibilities for filing complaints against discrimination before the Commission or the court. The administrative capacity of the Commission also needs to be strengthened and its offices need to be opened across the country to make its work more popular outside the capital. This would significantly increase the sensitivity of the public about the existence of legal mechanisms for protection against discrimination (CWSP, 2007; MTCPI, 2007a).

The Law on Protection against Domestic Violence (2005, last amended in December 2009) has provided a legal definition of “domestic violence” and obliged the state to create conditions for the implementation of programmes for preventing domestic violence and assisting its victims. In 2006, the Government adopted a National Programme for the Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence for 2007-2008 Period. The Programme included a plan for the opening of a 24-hour telephone hotline for victims of domestic violence (until then a police telephone number had been used). The hotline became operative in August 2009 and was run by the non-governmental Animus Association. “Safe rooms” for victims of domestic violence are planned in 28 Bulgarian cities (centres of all 28 provinces). For this purpose, 270,000 BGN have been allocated. Development and introduction of special training courses for employees of specialized institutions, police and law-enforcing agencies is also foreseen in the Programme. The Ministry of Interior will publish a handbook, containing information and advice for victims of violence. The negative side of the Programme is that no special budget

was allocated for its implementation. Instead, the financing will come from the budgets of the responsible ministries. There is no centralized information system and no information is available on the initiated and finished legal proceedings in court under this law, which makes it impossible to assess how effective the law is.

The Draft Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and adopted by the Council of Ministers in July 2006. The Law was criticized in the Parliament for its complexity and unclear terminology and because it repeated many of the provisions of the Law on Protection against Discrimination. The Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Religions decided to postpone discussions on the draft in the Parliament and the Legislative Council (the legal consultative body of the Parliament) confirmed that the draft needed some improvements to avoid the legal contradictions in the text. According to the NGO representatives, the new Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men should achieve the following: introduce and determine the terminology on gender equality in compliance with the international legal documents; regulate the aims, the bodies and the institutional mechanisms for the implementation of the national policy on gender equality; regulate the main mechanisms for achieving gender equality and the mechanisms for applying affirmative measures and conducting gender analysis; create useful mechanism for introduction of gender mainstreaming in the state policy; regulate the mechanisms for the national gender equality policy planning, formulation, implementation, monitoring and assessment (CWSP, 2007). The revised version of the Draft Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men again entered the parliamentary procedure in November 2008. After discussing it, the Labour and Social Policy Committee advised the Parliament not to support the Draft on the first reading. To compensate for the delay in the passing of the law, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy prepared and begun to implement the annual National Action Plans for the Encouragement of Equality between Women and Men (since 2005; see Министърски съвет, 2005). The Plans are aimed at the entire society and encourage gender equality in a number of

areas, including access to health care and education, political and public decision-making and employment. They also try to raise public awareness regarding the importance of gender equality, and fight against prevailing gender stereotypes and roles (MTCП, 2007a).

The measures taken by the state for achieving gender equality in the labour market are included in the National Action Plans for Employment (annual since 2001; see MTCП 2007b; MTCП 2008; MTCП 2009; MTCП 2010). The Plans are prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and are approved by the Council of Ministers. A special section in the plans is dedicated to the encouragement of equal labour and employment opportunities for men and women. The plans have introduced several special measures for stimulating the participation of women on the labour market and for making it easier for them to combine their professional and family obligations. In 2003, a Consultative Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and Disadvantaged Groups on the Labour Market was set up within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. It consults the Ministry on the development of the annual Action Plan for Employment with the aim of reinforcing the administrative capacity of the state institutions and organizations responsible for the policy of gender and social equality (MLSP; Стоянова, Курова, 2004).

Despite the substantial progress that was achieved in providing conditions for equal opportunities for women and men, Bulgaria still lacks a comprehensive national strategy on equality and equal opportunities for both genders. Such strategy is needed for the successful coordination of work done by different state institutions on gender equality, for the effective and rational division of tasks among them, for the adoption of relevant legislation and the establishment of appropriate new institutions, as well as for securing their financing. The current lack of such strategy is responsible for the weak and ineffective coordination of work of different institutions, for the insufficient understanding of the division of their functions and for the delay in the establishment of the relevant institutions, envisaged by the legislation.

## ***2.2. State Institutions***

There is still no institutional mechanism for gender equality with clear purpose and tasks in Bulgaria. The working cooperation among various state structures is poor. For this reason, it is not clear who is responsible for the development of state policy on gender equality and for the monitoring and control over its implementation. Instead, it can be said that at the moment, a cluster of different and unconnected structures, set up according to a number of different laws, are working side by side, without a unifying common frame. The logical result is ineffectiveness, slowness and lack of accountability and transparency.

Most of the institutions, dealing with the issues of gender equality, have been based on the Law on Protection against Discrimination, Law on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Law on Ombudsman, but in most cases, they have been established much later than it was originally foreseen in these laws. In September 2004, the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was set up. It is under the jurisdiction of the Council of Ministers. In April 2005, (although the legal deadline was March 2004) the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (an independent body) and Ombudsman Institution (answerable to the National Assembly) were established.

The following institutions dealing with gender equality related issues were established in recent years and operate now:

1. Institutional mechanisms of the National Assembly:

- Human Rights and Religious Affairs Committee (with Sub-commission for Women's Rights and Gender Equality)
- Commission for Protection against Discrimination
- National Ombudsman

2. Institutional mechanisms of the Council of Ministers:

- National Council on Equality between Women and Men to the Council of Ministers
- National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

- Department “Equal Opportunities” in the Directorate “Demographic Policy, Social Investments and Equal Opportunities,” Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
  - Consultative Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and Disadvantaged Groups on the Labour Market
3. Institutional mechanisms of the local level:
- Experts on the issues of gender equality in municipalities
  - Public councils within the Municipal Councils
  - Local commissions for Counteraction to Trafficking in Human Beings
  - Local ombudsman offices

### ***2.3. Non-Governmental Organizations***

Over 100 non-governmental organizations in Bulgaria are working on women and gender issues. They play a very important role in popularizing the gender equality principle, raising public awareness and changing of the existing gender models and stereotypes. The work of these organizations has been supported by a number of international donor foundations and programmes: Open Society Institute (and its Women’s Programme), Centre of Women’s Studies and Policies, Global Fund for Women, Mama Cash, Stability Pact, Co-operating Netherlands Foundations for Central and Eastern Europe and PHARE. In 2004, the foundation “Gender Project for Bulgaria” initiated another donor organization – Bulgarian Fund for Women, which is providing support for women’s organizations in the country.

NGOs dealing with gender and women issues have a very important place in the public life in Bulgaria and strong influence over the policies and decisions made in the fields of equal treatment of women and women’s problems. They have a working relationship with the state institutions, public organizations and media. The pressure, exercised by these NGOs, was among the most important factors initiating a change in the state policies on gender with the goal to provide and guarantee a higher status of women in the public, economic and political life of the country (Илиева, Делинешева, 2005).



Based on the extensive overview of relevant policy documents, legislation and NGO findings, we can conclude that immigrants and in particular female immigrants have yet to be given a concrete place in the national legislation and in gender equality related policies. Only a very few of their problems (social adaptation, employment, health and social insurance) have been reflected in the relevant state policies. Despite being amended and adapted to the EU norms and standards, the Bulgarian legislation still has not properly addressed these particular issues. The current state of the Bulgarian legislation cannot be considered a factor assisting and stimulating migration policy, and even less so as one satisfactory addressing the gender aspects of migration.

### **Chapter 3: Intercultural interaction as a policy objective**

During the last decade, Bulgaria has started to change from an emigrant sending country into a host country, attracting immigrants. Unfortunately, the state administration has been very slow to react to these changes and even today, the statistic data about the number of foreigners, residing in the country, are incomplete and unreliable.

Bulgaria has made a significant step forward in recent years and has passed a number of laws, aiming to prevent both direct and indirect discrimination in labour, education, social protection, health care and other aspects of public life. Many sectors have contributed to these achievements: the state and its institutions, the general public, the business sector, the academic community and the media. As a result, the Bulgarian society has started moving from ethno-centricity towards ethno-relativity. There is, however, much work ahead in the fields of social and economic integration, intercultural awareness and intercultural education (Гълъбов, 2004; Дирекция „ЕДВ”, 2008). The concept of ethnic nationalism still dominates the perceptions of the Bulgarian society. The civic understanding of the nation and the concept of multiculturalism have been taking root very slowly. The predominant perception of a foreigner (including an immigrant) is still based on the negative stereotype of “distant other” or even of an “enemy.” The

nationalistic political groups, active in the early 1990s and again after 2005, continuously fuel the fears of Bulgarians that foreigners will take away their jobs, land and even their identity. At the same time, the insufficient progress regarding the gender equality has had additional negative impact on the way female immigrants are perceived and accepted.

The development and implementation of integration policies are crucial conditions for immigrants and refugees to become a genuine part of the civil society in Bulgaria (Владунска, 1998, pp. 311-316). Equal rights and opportunities can be achieved only through a comprehensive integration policy. Such policy should have the following goals: development of a relevant legal frame; effective implementation of the legislation and access to rights, freedoms and legal protection; inclusion of refugees and their organizations in the development of such policies; creation of active civil society aware of the goals and principles of integration policies; respect for cultural and religious differences and respect of the human rights of all those who reside in the country. Migration policy has to be based on the diversity of emigration and immigration processes in both Bulgaria and Europe and on the need to provide acceptable and successful integration models to those who have decided to make Bulgaria their second homeland for various reasons (Дупекция „ЕДВ”, 2008; ЕЦОК, 2006, pp. 31-32).

As being said, it seems that in Bulgaria the issue of integration of immigrants applies above all (if not only) to refugees and asylum seekers. Despite being a relatively small part of all foreigners in Bulgaria, refugees came to occupy a central place because of their natural vulnerability and the related fact that they are protected by international laws to which Bulgaria is a party. At the same time, the government feels that it is important to monitor them closely and to control their status. The government has set up a special State Agency for Refugees (the only state institution dealing exclusively with foreign nationals) and passed a national programme for their integration. The passing of the Law for the Asylum and Refugees in 2002 and the reorganization of the State Agency

for Refugees (see below) was influenced also by a sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers in the 1999-2002 period, which came as a result of the Kosovo conflict and the war in Afghanistan (see Table 4).

The National Programme for the Integration of Refugees (2005-2007, 2008-2010; see SAR, 2005) outlines the activities to be undertaken by the state institutions, non-governmental organizations and local authorities in order to create economic, social, political and cultural preconditions for the integration of refugees in the Bulgarian society. The Programme and the plan for action for its implementation were prepared by the National Task Force, consisting of representatives of state institutions and administration, local authorities, non-governmental organizations working with refugees, the UNHCR and associations of refugee communities in Bulgaria. The main body in charge with the implementation of the Programme is the State Agency for Refugees.

The State Agency for Refugees (SAR) of the Council of Ministers has a central bureau and a number of regional ones. It was established in October 1992 under the name of the National Bureau for Territorial Asylum and the Refugees and transformed into SAR when the Law for the Asylum and Refugees was adopted in 2002. SAR runs two Registration and Reception Centres at the village of Banya (Nova Zagora Municipality) and in Sofia, one Integration Centre in Sofia (opened in 2006) and one transit centre in Pustrorog (Svilengrad municipality; since 2008). Registration and Reception Centres offer accommodation, medical checks, social and medical assistance and are conducting procedures for granting the respective status to asylum-seekers. Sofia Integration Centre assists social integration of refugees and provides them with Bulgarian language training, vocational training and other activities.

Despite clearly formulated goals and tasks, the SAR still has an insufficient administrative capacity. The interaction and cooperation between SAR and the Border Police (its officials are usually the first to encounter illegal immigrants and refugees) is very poor and there is little, if any,

control over the decisions made by the Border Police staff. The new legislation has foreseen the presence of SAR representatives on border checkpoints so they could come into an immediate and direct contact with refugees and asylum-seekers upon their arrival to the country, but this has not been implemented yet.

Another large problem is the small capacity of Registration and Reception Centres. Whenever a larger group of refugees arrives, SAR has no capacity to accommodate them and they are usually sent to the Special Centre for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners at the village of Busmanci, which is basically a detention centre run by the Ministry of Interior. Thus refugees, who have applied for an asylum, find themselves literally locked up in a prison without committing any crime, as people accommodated in Busmanci have no right to the freedom of movement. Furthermore, many people detained in Busmanci are in a paradoxical situation. Bulgarian legislation forbids extradition of people to countries where their lives and freedom are under threat. At the same time, SAR has refused to grant them the status of refugees. Thus their “temporary accommodation” is indefinitely prolonged. In contrast with the European practice (in most EU countries, accommodation in similar establishments is no longer than 6 months), some people have been detained in Busmanci for over 2 years, accommodated in rooms for 10-15 people and separated from their families (Горчева, 2008).

SAR also runs an Integration Centre for Refugee Women (1997) that opened with the financial support of UNHCR. Its main goal is to assist refugee women by providing them with Bulgarian language training and professional training; assisting them to find proper employment or set up small business; and offering them psychological assistance and support. The Centre has workshops for fashion, design, cosmetics and hairdressing, where female immigrants can obtain professional degrees. There are places for social contacts, leisure, rest and games. It also has a video library and a variety of children games. However, the Centre regularly experiences difficulties with financing and with transportation of its clients. The Centre initiated a series of lectures *Adaptation and*

*Integration of Islamic Women in Bulgaria.* The lectures dealt mainly with the social-psychological aspects and problems of the modern woman and her good physical and aesthetic self-confidence.

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee conducts an annual monitoring of migration issues and has carried out a number of special studies, dealing with refugees and migrants. Its Refugees and Migrants Legal Protection Programme, operating since 1994, offers legal consultations and representation to refugees and asylum-seekers, takes part in the development of the refugee and migration policy of Bulgaria, assists for the successful integration of refugees in Bulgaria, and for their dignified return to the countries of origin.

The Refugee-Migrant Service of the Bulgarian Red Cross was established in 1997 and has branches in the cities of Haskovo, Sliven, Burgas, Blagoevgrad, and Vidin. It facilitates refugee integration and tries to prevent the isolation of migrants by promoting tolerance towards both groups in the Bulgarian society. It also provides financial assistance, assistance in kind (food and medicines), and housing assistance to refugees, humanitarian status holders, asylum seekers, and stranded migrants.

Caritas Bulgaria provides assistance in kind to refugees and helps them to find accommodation. The Association for Integration of Refugees and Migrants organizes training courses for refugees and migrants and works on the development of a national strategy for their integration. The Union of Refugee Women in Bulgaria offers social consulting and provides translation for rare and uncommon languages, spoken by refugees. Other NGOs dealing with immigrants include Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Nadja Centre Foundation for Women Victims of Violence, Assistance Centre for Torture Survivors and others.<sup>3</sup>

One of the few aspects of integration relevant for all immigrants, which has been quite well regulated, is the labour integration. Employment is

---

<sup>3</sup> More information about NGOs dealing with refugees and migrants can be found in BK500H, 2004.

also among the most important problems immigrants face and is therefore crucial for their successful integration. The employment regime for foreigners is determined by the Law on Encouragement of Employment (2001, last amended in 2011) and the Ordinance on conditions and manner of issuance, rejection and repeal of work permits of foreigners in Bulgaria. A foreigner can work in a Bulgarian company only after receiving a work permit. A work permit is issued for a certain period of time and for a specific workplace, position, employer and city. After expiring, the permit can be renewed for another year. The law is giving certain advantages to those foreign nationals with special professional competencies and skills, those on higher positions and those who are married to a Bulgarian citizen.

Foreign nationals with refugee status are in principle entitled to the same rights as Bulgarian citizens regarding labour and employment. However, as they have to find employment on their own, they experience a number of difficulties: the language barrier, lack of social network and lack of experience on the local labour market. Despite being equal on paper, refugees are thus marginalized. They therefore need support and encouragement through special programmes and a common policy for their integration and employment. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has not yet included the refugees among the groups for which special care is provided (unemployed youth, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, and Roma) (ЕЛЧОК, 2006, pp. 31-32; БХК, 2004; Παβλοβ, 1996, pp. 52-60).

Bulgaria has several highly active employers' organizations (Bulgarian International Business Association, Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Association of Organizations of Bulgarian Employers and others). They, as well as the entire business community, made important contributions to the development of the Law for the Foreigners and the rules for its implementation, and of the Law on Encouragement of Employment, which regulate the terms and conditions for issuance, rejection and repeal of work permits for foreigners in Bulgaria. The business community was the first to acknowledge the need for multi-cultural knowledge and skills.

In 2006, the Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA) proposed to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to introduce annual quotas for foreign specialists. The quotas would be based on recommendations from business sector and employers' organizations. "Green Card" system would be introduced for foreigners, temporarily employed on positions for which there is a shortage of Bulgarian workers. According to the BIA proposal and in line with the obligations from the Agreement of Bulgaria with the EU (2007) a priority regarding employment should be given to citizens of EU countries, to citizens of countries that have signed an agreement with the European Economic Area, to people of Bulgarian descent if they have the necessary professional qualifications and skills, and only then to citizens of other countries.

Many refugees and immigrants work in shops of different types, set up by other foreign nationals. A number of immigrants, who came to Bulgaria as students, have started a business, using the contacts they made during their student years. Some have started their own business, using the financial support of the UNHCR (Pageβα, 2003, pp. 1-8). A significant number of foreigners unable to obtain work permits and other documents also work in the sizable Bulgarian grey and black economy.

Foreign workers face many problems at their work places. The origin of these problems is the reluctance of both sides to take cultural differences into consideration and to make more effort to overcome them. Immigrants thus encounter problems related to communication in the local language, insufficient understanding and knowledge of local cultural codes and practices, and relations with other employees. The biggest problem at the work place in Bulgaria is often the ethno-centric attitude – the unwillingness of many people to respect the differences, as well as the related existence of stereotypes (Pageβα, 2004, pp. 1-8; Събеβα, Pageβα, 2005, pp. 1-5).

The legal frame regulating the education and training of foreigners applying for or having received asylum complies with the international

norms. The right to education of refugee children is regulated by the Law for the Asylum and Refugees and the Ordinance № 3 (2000) of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES). Children of refugees under the age of 18 have the right to full access to education and training in state and municipal schools in Bulgaria. Refugees-students pay the same fees as foreseen for Bulgarian citizens. The MES is providing the State Agency for Refugees with textbooks for introductory courses in Bulgarian language and for vocational training for foreigners.

Decree № 236 (1999) on vocational training of refugees-students has given them the possibility to acquire a profession and a certificate of qualification. Other refugees, wanting to acquire a profession, are also entitled to education in the MES Centres for Vocational Training. The forthcoming efforts to integrate the immigrants and refugees into the education system of Bulgaria should aim at achieving the following: creation of education programmes suitable for the age and skills of the refugees; better professional orientation and training; assistance and facilitation in finding employment. The education of immigrants and refugees in Bulgarian secondary and high schools is troubled by a number of obstacles: differences between Bulgarian and their native education system; insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian language; lack of necessary documents, including certificates for their previous education (ELÇOK, 2006).

In conclusion, it needs to be noted that the issue of intercultural interaction is considered only sporadically in the Bulgarian legislation on migration and gender equality. It has yet to provide satisfactory solutions for the main problems faced on a daily basis by the foreigners in the country and the refugees in particular. The efforts that have been made in recent years (in the process of Bulgaria's EU accession) for the country to reproduce "good practices" in the new legislation and development of migration policy have not been consistent and have not had the desired effect until now. Bulgarian migration policy has to date proved to be directed mainly towards migration management (although even to achieve this goal, the necessary mechanisms are still



missing), and intercultural cooperation and interaction have been largely left outside its sphere.

## **Conclusion**

After 45 years of Communist rule, when both emigration and immigration were tightly controlled by the state institutions, Bulgaria experienced an unprecedented emigration wave in the first years of democratic transition. For the first time in the history of the modern Bulgarian state (since its proclamation in 1878 until 1989 the population of the country was steadily rising), the number of people residing in Bulgaria has started decreasing sharply. During the 1990s, over one million people left Bulgaria, the majority of them forever. The population decreased from 8,948,649 (in 1985) to 7,928,901 (in 2001). The population of Bulgaria continued to fall in the recent years and at the end of 2007 stood at 7,640,238 people (HCI, 2008). The Bulgarian authorities have been slow in responding to this demographic crisis and in creating a modern legislation, consistent with the leading theories on migration and above all with the needs of the country and its residents in the face of the profound social, economic and political changes Bulgaria experienced during the transition period.

Bulgaria has therefore been a clear migrant-sending country, with a steady outflow of short-term and long-term emigrants since 1989. The process of Bulgaria's EU accession has on the one hand significantly contributed to the stabilization and gradual decrease of emigration flows from Bulgaria. On the other hand, it made Bulgaria much more attractive as an immigration destination and the number of immigrants in the country is continuously increasing. Unfortunately, the state administration has been again very slow to react to these changes. Although most of the needed and relevant legislation has been passed in recent years, this occurred mostly due to the clear EU directives and Bulgaria's need to harmonize its legislation with that of the EU. These changes occurred almost automatically, with relevant EU laws being copy-pasted into the Bulgarian legal environment, without participation

of independent experts from the NGO sector, academia and civil society.

The existing national strategies are still largely based on the understanding that migration is something the state can and must control, and rarely provide for any real integration practices. The issue has been sidelined in the public debates, and there is no political consensus regarding the necessity for management and stimulation of immigration. This situation logically results in inappropriate actions being taken by the police, border guards and other institutions, which still believe that their main task is to limit or prevent immigration rather than to try managing it for the benefit of the country in full compliance with the needs of the immigrants and in respect of their human rights.

Likewise, no special state body which would be responsible for integration of immigrants (apart from refugees, for which the State Agency for Refugees is responsible) exists. The dispersion of responsibilities among a large number of state institutions is a precondition for low effectiveness, lack of transparency and accountability, and widespread corruption. The establishment of such autonomous and multi-disciplinary body would shift the focus from the current administrative control of immigrants to the much more important issue of their social integration, which is now largely neglected.

The National Demographic Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2006-2020 was to some extent a good and positive development, as it outlined the tasks the state needs to fulfil to decrease the emigration of young people and to develop the adequate policies for dealing with immigration to the country. However, the Strategy largely ignores cultural, age or gender differences between immigrants and does not differentiate between the specific problems of different communities. Furthermore, the special attention given to ethnic Bulgarian communities from other countries shows that Bulgaria has entered the EU and the global multi-cultural society while still holding on to the outdated concepts of ethnic kinship and ethnic nationalism.

Gender and gender equality have yet to find their proper place in the Bulgarian political environment, despite the fact that most of the EU legal texts dealing with gender equality were incorporated into the national legislation during the Bulgaria's EU accession process. While the changes in legislation have created conditions for equal opportunities for women and men, implementation is still poor due to the weak and ineffective coordination of the work of different institutions responsible for achieving and safeguarding the genuine gender equality in all spheres of life. Furthermore, some of the relevant institutions, envisaged by the legislation, have yet to be established, while the existing ones have regular problems with insufficient funding.

Gender is an almost invisible category in the Bulgarian political literature on migration. There are almost no statistical data in Bulgaria regarding the gender of migrants and refugees (apart from the data provided by the State Agency for Refugees). None of the legislative acts and documents on migration makes special reference to women. The same is true for political documents such as programmes and strategies. None of the documents of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) makes any gender division of immigrants and refugees. State institutions only sporadically turn their attention to women immigrants, but they as a rule fail to properly address the problems of their social, labour and cultural integration. There is only one specialized state institution dealing with female immigrants, the SAR's Integration Centre for Refugee Women.

The seemingly gender-neutral language of Bulgarian legislation on immigration shows a gender bias, ignoring the problems that women immigrants face. This gender blindness completely ignores gender inequalities within migrant communities and between migrants and the host society. It also testifies about a strong presence of gender stereotypes in different aspects and different levels of political decision-making.

The conclusion regarding the legislation on gender equality is similar. Despite the developments in the last 10 years, when a number of laws,

aiming to prevent both direct and indirect discrimination in labour, education, social protection, health care and other aspects of public life have been passed, much work still lays ahead (the draft Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men has been rejected several times by the Parliament). The existing legislation on equality is often not properly utilized as there is no institution, which would oversee and implement it. None of the normative and political documents dealing with gender equality refers to migrants and migrant women. The only organizations interested in their problems and actively involved in trying to find solutions for them are the non-governmental organizations.

Bulgarian legislation on migration and gender equality has considered intercultural interaction only marginally and accidentally. It has yet to provide satisfactory solutions to the main problems foreigners in the country face on a daily basis. Bulgarian migration policy has been to date directed mainly towards migration management (although even to achieve this goal, the necessary mechanisms are still missing), and intercultural cooperation and interaction have been largely left outside its sphere.

A very serious problem with the state policy is the exclusion of immigrants and refugees from the decision-making processes. No state institution has even considered giving them a consultative or observation role, they have not been consulted when laws have been drafted, and (with very few exceptions) no links have been made between the state institutions and the organizations of migrants and refugees. The development and implementation of integration policies are crucial conditions for immigrants and refugees to become a genuine part of the Bulgarian society. Their integration will be a long, dynamic and multi-dimensional process, which has to secure their genuine inclusion in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the country.

## Bibliography:

БХК. 2004. *Изследване на правата на мигрантите в България. Финален доклад на Българския хелзинкски комитет* (Survey on the Rights of Migrants in Bulgaria. Final Report of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee). Sofia: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, [www.bghelsinki.org/upload/resources/MigrantsRightsReportBG-1.doc](http://www.bghelsinki.org/upload/resources/MigrantsRightsReportBG-1.doc)

ВКБООН. 2004. *Справочен доклад: Бежанците в България, Изграждане на националната система за закрила на бежанците, 1993–2003 г* (Reference Book: Refugees in Bulgaria, Building the National System for Refugee Protection 1993-2003). Sofia: UNHCR, [http://www.unhcr.bg/pubs/10\\_yr\\_report/10\\_yr\\_report.htm](http://www.unhcr.bg/pubs/10_yr_report/10_yr_report.htm)

Владинска, Нели. 1998. Роля на системите за социално подпомагане и социални услуги при прилагане на политики и стратегии за интеграция на мигранти и етнически групи (The Impact of Systems of Social Solidarity in the Process of Applying the Policies and Strategies towards Integration of Migrants and Ethnic Groups) – In: *Годишник на Варненския свободен университет*, т. 4 (1) (Annual of the Varna Free University, Vol. 4 (1). Varna: Varna Free University.

Горчева, Даниела. 2008. Настанени в ... затвор, интервю с адвокат Свилен Овчаров от Български хелзинкски комитет (Accommodated in a... Prison, Interview with an Attorney Svilen Ovcharov from Bulgarian Helsinki Committee). – In: *Dilmana*, [http://dilmana.web-log.nl/mijn\\_weblog/2008/05/post.html](http://dilmana.web-log.nl/mijn_weblog/2008/05/post.html)

Гълбов, Антоний. 2004. *Културна политика и културно разнообразие: национален доклад – България* (Cultural Policy and Cultural Diversity: Bulgarian National Report). Strasbourg: Council of Europe - Transversal Study Project.

Димова, Лиля, Полина Радева. 2006. *Жените в неформалната икономика на България* (Women in Informal Economy in Bulgaria). Sofia: Women's Alliance for Development, Agency for Social Analyses, [http://www.asa-bg.org/bg/publications/Women%20in%20the%20informal%20economy%20in%20Bulgaria\\_BG%202004.pdf](http://www.asa-bg.org/bg/publications/Women%20in%20the%20informal%20economy%20in%20Bulgaria_BG%202004.pdf)

Дирекция „ЕДВ“. 2008. *Доклад за състоянието на междуетническите отношения и интеркултурния диалог, противодействието на проявите на расизъм и ксенофобия и развитието на демографските процеси в Република България* (Report on Interethnic Relations and Intercultural Dialogue, Combating of Racism and Xenophobia and Development of Demographic Processes in Bulgaria). Sofia: Ethnic and Demographic Issues Department, [http://www.nccedi.government.bg/upload/docs/DEDI\\_2paper\\_2008.pdf](http://www.nccedi.government.bg/upload/docs/DEDI_2paper_2008.pdf)

ЕЦОК. 2006. *Европейско интеркултурно работно място* (European Inter-Cultural Workplace). Sofia: European Centre for Training and Qualification, [http://www.immi.se/eiw/texts/National\\_Report\\_Bulgarian.pdf](http://www.immi.se/eiw/texts/National_Report_Bulgarian.pdf)

Иванов, Михаил, Атанас Атанасов, eds. 2005. *Демографско развитие на република България* (Demographic Development of Bulgaria). Sofia: NCCEDI, BAS, NSI and UNFPA.

- Илиева, Гергана, Магдалена Делинешева. 2005. *Равни възможности за жените и мъжете: Законодателството и практиката в новите страни-членки и кандидат-членките на ЕС* (Equal Rights for Women and Men. Legislation and Practice in the New Member States and Associated Countries of the EU). Sofia: Center of Women's Studies and Policies, [http://www.cwsp.bg/upload/docs/Monitoring\\_Report\\_2005.pdf](http://www.cwsp.bg/upload/docs/Monitoring_Report_2005.pdf)
- Кметова, Татяна. 2008. Равни на мъжете? Все още не сме (Equal to Men? Not Yet). – In: *Политика* (Politics), No. 196, March 13.
- Кръстева, Анна. 2004. 10 мита за имиграцията (10 Myths about Immigration). – In: *Капитал* (Capital), No. 42, October 26-28.
- Кръстева, Анна. 2005. Българският имиграционен феномен (Bulgarian Immigration Phenomena). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR
- Кръстева, Анна. 2007. (Не)възможната миграционна политика ((Im)Possible Migration Policy). – In: *Класа* (Class), November 6.
- Луканова, Победа. 2004. *Жените и мъжете в пенсионната система в България* (Women and Men in the Pension System of Bulgaria). Sofia: Center of Women's Studies and Policies.
- Министерски съвет. 2005. *Национален план за действие за насърчване на равнопоставеността на жените и мъжете 2006* (National Action Plan for Encouragement of Equality between Women and Men 2006). Sofia: Council of Ministers, <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/equal/bglaw.asp?id=279>
- Минчев, Веселин. 2004. Българската емиграция в началото на XXI век. Оценка на нагласите и профила на потенциалните емигранти (Bulgarian Emigration in the Beginning of the 21st Century. Evaluation of Adjustments and Profile of Potential Emigrants). – In: *Икономическа мисъл* (Economic Thought), No. 5.
- МТСП. 2007а. *Насоки за постигане на равнопоставеност на жените и мъжете* (Guidelines for Achievement of Equity between Women and Men). Sofia: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, [www.mlsp.government.bg/equal/publ.asp?id=49](http://www.mlsp.government.bg/equal/publ.asp?id=49)
- МТСП. 2007б. *Национален план за действие по заетостта 2008 г* (The 2008 National Action Plan for Employment). Sofia: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/NPDZ/index.htm>
- МТСП. 2008. *Национален план за действие по заетостта 2009 г* (The 2009 National Action Plan for Employment). Sofia: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/NPDZ2009/index.htm>
- МТСП. 2009. *Национален план за действие по заетостта 2010 г* (The 2010 National Action Plan for Employment). Sofia: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/NPDZ2010/index.htm>

- МТСП. 2010. *Национален план за действие по заетостта 2011 г.* (The 2011 National Action Plan for Employment). Sofia: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/NPDZ-2011.pdf>
- НСИ. 2001. *Вътрешна и външна миграция на населението в България – Резултати от репрезентативно изучаване* (Internal and External Migration of Population in Bulgaria. Outcomes from Representative Survey). Sofia: National Statistical Institute, <http://www.nsi.bg/Census/Vivmigr.htm>
- НСИ. 2005. *Население и демографски процеси 2004* (Population and Demographic Processes 2004). Sofia: National Statistical Institute.
- НСИ. 2008. *Население и демографски процеси през 2007 година* (Population and Demographic Processes in 2007). Sofia: National Statistical Institute.
- НСИ. 2009. *Постоянно пребиваващи чужденци в Р България по гражданство – Данни* (Permanently Resident Foreigners in Bulgaria by Citizenship - Data). Sofia: National Statistical Institute, [http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop\\_5.8\\_Migration\\_DR.xls](http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop_5.8_Migration_DR.xls)
- Павлов, Борислав. 1996. *Права на работниците мигранти* (Civil Rights of Migrant Workers). – In: *Проблеми на труда* (Labour's Problems), No. 9.
- Партньорство в действие. 2000. *Международна конференция по програма за интеграция на бежанците в Република България* (International Conference on the Programme of Integration of Refugees in Republic of Bulgaria). Sofia: Partnership in Action.
- Рагева, Маринела. 2003. *Промени в политиката и дейностите по интеграция на бежанците в Република България. Доклад* (Changes of the Policy and Activities towards Integration of Refugees in Republic of Bulgaria. A Report). Sofia: State Agency for Refugees.
- Рагева, Маринела. 2004. *Интеграция на бежанците и мигрантите в Европейския съюз – част от общата политика в областта на миграцията и бежанците* (Integration of Refugees and Migrants in the EU – Part of the Common Policy in the Field of Migration and Refugees). Sofia: State Agency for Refugees.
- Рангелова, Росица. 2005. *Джендър измерения на миграцията от България* (Gender Dimensions of the Migration in Bulgaria). – In: *Икономическа мисъл* (Economic Thought), No. 2.
- Стоянова, Канка, Ала Кирова. 2004. *Социално-икономическа инфраструктура и гаранции за равнопоставеност на жените в България* (Socio-Economic Infrastructure and Guarantees for Equity of Bulgarian Women). Sofia: Center of Women's Studies and Policies.
- Събева, Кина, Маринела Рагева. 2005. *Практически аспекти на заетостта в България на чужденци, получили статут на бежанец или хуманитарен статут* (Practical Aspects of Employment in Bulgaria – of Foreigners with Refugee Status or Obtained Humanitarian Status). Sofia: State Agency for Refugees.

Тодоров, Тодор. 2006. Българската емиграция в периода на изграждане на пазарна икономика (1990 - 2005) (The Bulgarian Emigration during the Period of Establishment of Market Economy 1990 - 2005). – In: *Алманах научни изследвания* СА „Д. А. Ценов“ (D. Tsenov Academy of Economy Almanac), No. 4.

ЦИПЖ. 2007. *Пол и преход. Доклади от академична конференция* (Gender and Transition. Proceedings of Academic Conference). Sofia: Center of Women's Studies and Policies, <http://www.cwsp.bg/htmls/page.php?category=465>

CWSP. 2007. *Преглед на националното законодателство* (Overview of the National Legislation). Sofia: Center of Women's Studies and Policies, <http://www.cwsp.bg/en/htmls/page.php?category=121&page=3>

USAID, ЖАР. 2004. *Трафикът на хора – българският отговор* (Human Traffic – the Bulgarian Answer). Rouse: USAID, Women's Alliance for Development, [http://women-bg.org/images/stories/docs/Trafikat\\_horabg.pdf](http://women-bg.org/images/stories/docs/Trafikat_horabg.pdf)

Council of Ministers. 2004. *Bulgarian Government Report on Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe*. Sofia: Council of Ministers, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/responses/BULGARIA-English.pdf>

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). 2004. *Third Report on Bulgaria*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Ilieva, Margarita. 2001. Legal Analysis of National and European Anti-discrimination Legislation: A Comparison of the EU Racial Equality Directive & Protocol N° 12 with Anti-discrimination Legislation in Bulgaria. – In: *Interights, MRG, Implementing European Anti-Discrimination Law*. Budapest, London: European Roma Rights Center, Interights, Migration Policy Group.

IME. 1999. *The Economic and Social Impact of Refugees on the Host Country: Bulgaria*. Sofia: Institute for Market Economics, <http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00001466/01/refugees.pdf>

MLSP. *Equal Opportunities for Women and Men: Institutional Mechanisms*. Sofia: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/equal/equalen/overviewm.asp>

MLSP. 2006. *The National Demographic Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2006-2020*. Sofia: Council of Ministers, [http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/demography/Dem.%20Strategy\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/demography/Dem.%20Strategy_ENG.pdf)

National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. 2010. *National Programme for Prevention and Counteraction of Trafficking in Human Beings and Protection of the Victims for 2010*. Sofia, [http://antitraffic.government.bg/images/prog\\_files/1273647904.pdf](http://antitraffic.government.bg/images/prog_files/1273647904.pdf)



NSI. 2010. *Population by Districts, Municipalities, Place of Residence and Sex*. Sofia: National Statistical Institute, [# cont](http://www.nsi.bg/otrasalen.php?otr=53&a1=1583&a2=1584&a3=1585)

SAR. 2005. *The National Program for Integration of Refugees*. Sofia: State Agency for Refugees, <http://aref.government.bg/docs/text.doc>

SAR. 2011a. *Information for Asylum Seekers: Applications and Decisions Taken 01.01.93 - 31.05.11*. Sofia: State Agency for Refugees, <http://www.aref.government.bg/docs/Applications%20and%20decisions%20taken%2001.01.93%20-%2031.05.2011.xls>

SAR. 2011b. *Statistical Charts 31.05.2011*. Sofia: State Agency for Refugees, <http://www.aref.government.bg/docs/Charts%2031.05.2011.doc>

Turan, Omer. 2006. Turkish Migrations from Bulgaria. – In: *Forced Ethnic Migrations on the Balkans: Consequences and Rebuilding of Societies (Conference Proceedings)*. Popova, Katerina and Marko Hajdinjak, eds. Sofia: IMIR.

UNHCR. 2002. *Collection of Documents for the Academic Refugee Initiative in Bulgaria*. Sofia: UNHCR Representation in Bulgaria. September, First edition.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2009. *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org/migration/p2k0data.asp>

Zhelyazkova, Antonina, Violeta Angelova and Zhelyu Vladimirov. 2007. *Undocumented Workers: Bulgarian National Report*. Sofia: IMIR, <http://www.imir-bg.org/imir/reports/Undocumented%20workers%20Bulgaria%20report.pdf>

## ***Legal documents:***

### **Bulgarian legislation:**

*Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees*. Geneva: July 22, 1993. [http://aref.government.bg/docs/agreement\\_unhcr\\_government\\_bg\\_bg.pdf](http://aref.government.bg/docs/agreement_unhcr_government_bg_bg.pdf)

*Code of Social Insurance*. 1999, <http://www.noi.bg/en/content/legislation/SICode.pdf>

*Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria*, promulgated on July 13, 1991, <http://www.parliament.bg/en/const>

*Family Code*. 2009, [http://www.justice.government.bg/new/Documents/Legislation/Family\\_codex\\_2009\\_082.doc](http://www.justice.government.bg/new/Documents/Legislation/Family_codex_2009_082.doc)

*Labour Code*. 1986, <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/en/docs/labour/Labour%20code%20consolidated%20en.pdf>

*Law for the Asylum and Refugees.* 2002, [http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/BC96E947-6DF6-48F6-9872-85F94CE8FC6C/0/07\\_Law\\_Asylum\\_Refugees\\_EN.pdf](http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/BC96E947-6DF6-48F6-9872-85F94CE8FC6C/0/07_Law_Asylum_Refugees_EN.pdf)

*Law for the Bulgarian Citizenship.* 1998, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/49622ef32.pdf>

*Law for the Bulgarian Identification Documents.* 1998, [http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/C1CF73E2-D317-4F62-9762-17A7A329A15A/0/Law\\_BG\\_Identification\\_Documents\\_EN.pdf](http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/C1CF73E2-D317-4F62-9762-17A7A329A15A/0/Law_BG_Identification_Documents_EN.pdf)

*Law for Child Protection.* 2003, [http://cis-sacp.government.bg/sacp/CIS/content\\_en/law/item03.htm](http://cis-sacp.government.bg/sacp/CIS/content_en/law/item03.htm)

*Law for the Family Support for Children.* 2002, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SAFETYNETSANDTRANSFERS/Resources/281945-1138140795625/Bulgaria\\_SocialSupportAct.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SAFETYNETSANDTRANSFERS/Resources/281945-1138140795625/Bulgaria_SocialSupportAct.pdf)

*Law for the Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria.* 1998, [http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/8C3CCC42-3E72-4CBB-900A-E8CB6DE82CAD/0/ZVPNRBGESChTS\\_EN.pdf](http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/8C3CCC42-3E72-4CBB-900A-E8CB6DE82CAD/0/ZVPNRBGESChTS_EN.pdf)

*Law for Social Support.* 1998, [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SAFETYNETSANDTRANSFERS/Resources/281945-1138140795625/Bulgaria\\_SocialSupportAct.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SAFETYNETSANDTRANSFERS/Resources/281945-1138140795625/Bulgaria_SocialSupportAct.pdf)

*Law for Taxation of the Income of Natural Persons.* 2006, [http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/law/law/ZDDFL\\_16\\_10\\_09.rtf](http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/law/law/ZDDFL_16_10_09.rtf)

*Law on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings.* 2003, [http://www.mlsp.government.bg/equal/equalen/trafficking\\_Bulgaria\\_4.pdf](http://www.mlsp.government.bg/equal/equalen/trafficking_Bulgaria_4.pdf)

*Law on Encouragement of Employment.* 2001, <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/law/law/ZNZ.doc>

*Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men – proposal.* 2006, [www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/documents/GE\\_Bulgaria.doc](http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/documents/GE_Bulgaria.doc)

*Law on Municipal Ownership.* 1996, <http://www.mrrb.government.bg/download.php?id=dmlhbGl8MzkzMw==>

*Law on Protection against Discrimination.* 2006, [www.mlsp.government.bg/equal/equalen/anti-discrimination%20law%20en.doc](http://www.mlsp.government.bg/equal/equalen/anti-discrimination%20law%20en.doc)

*Law on Protection against Domestic Violence.* 2005, [http://www.mlsp.government.bg/equal/equalen/Protection\\_Against\\_Domestic\\_Violence\\_Act\\_BG.doc](http://www.mlsp.government.bg/equal/equalen/Protection_Against_Domestic_Violence_Act_BG.doc)

*Ordinance for the Conditions and the Order of Issuing, Refusal and Revoking Work Permits of Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria.* 2002, [www.az.government.bg/eng/Legislation/Naredba\\_razreshenia.doc](http://www.az.government.bg/eng/Legislation/Naredba_razreshenia.doc)

*Ordinance for the Temporary Settlement of Foreigners and on Organization and Activity of Special Homes for Temporary Settlement of Foreigners.* 2010, <http://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2135684112>

*Ordinance No. 2 Concerning the Conditions and Order for Issuing of Permits for Implementing of Freelance Practice of Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria.* 2002, [http://www.az.government.bg/eng/Legislation/Naredba2\\_razreshenia.doc](http://www.az.government.bg/eng/Legislation/Naredba2_razreshenia.doc)

*Ordinance on the Conditions and Procedures for the Issuing of Visas by Diplomatic and Consular Representative Offices of the Republic of Bulgaria.* 2002, [http://www.econ.bg/law/enactments/article141068/naredba\\_za\\_usloviyata\\_i\\_reda\\_za\\_izdavane\\_na\\_vizi\\_i\\_opredelyane\\_na\\_vizoviya\\_rejim](http://www.econ.bg/law/enactments/article141068/naredba_za_usloviyata_i_reda_za_izdavane_na_vizi_i_opredelyane_na_vizoviya_rejim)

*Penal Code.* 1968, [http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/330B548F-7504-433A-BE65-5686B7D7FCBB/0/04\\_Penal\\_Code\\_EN.pdf](http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/330B548F-7504-433A-BE65-5686B7D7FCBB/0/04_Penal_Code_EN.pdf)

*Regulations for Implementation of the Law on the Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria.* 2000, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,LEGAL,,LEGISLATION,BGR,4562d8b62,3de65a712,0.html>

### **Council of Europe:**

*Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.* Rome: November 4, 1950, <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/005.htm>

*European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.* Strasbourg: November 26, 1987, <http://www.cpt.coe.int/en/documents/ecpt.htm>

*Recommendation 1236 (1994) on the Right of Asylum.* Strasbourg: April 12, 1994, <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta94/EREC1236.htm>

*Recommendation 1237 (1994) on the Situation of Asylum-seekers whose Asylum Applications Have Been Rejected.* Strasbourg: April 12, 1994, <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta94/EREC1237.htm>

*Recommendation (81)16 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Harmonisation of National Procedures Relating to Asylum.* Strasbourg: November 5, 1981, <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=600460&SecMode=1&DocId=673554&Usage=2>

*Recommendation (98)13 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Right of Rejected Asylum Seekers to an Effective Remedy against Decisions on Expulsion in the Context of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.* Strasbourg: September 18, 1998, <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=532237&SecMode=1&DocId=485010&Usage=2>

*Recommendation (98)15 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Training of Officials Who First Come into Contact with Asylum Seekers, in Particular at Border Points.* Strasbourg: December 15, 1998, <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=533563&SecMode=1&DocId=504784&Usage=2>

## **United Nations:**

*Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.* 1951. United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. July 28, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/refugees.pdf>

*Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.* 1954. United Nations Conference on the Status of Stateless Persons, convened pursuant to resolution 526A (XVII)1 of April 26, 1954 of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. September 28, <http://www.unhcr.org/3d4ab67f4.html>

*Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.* 1967. President of the General Assembly and Secretary-General of the United Nations. January 31, <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>

*The Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.* 1950. United Nations General Assembly. December 14, <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c39e1.html>

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* 1948. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217 a(iii). December 10, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>

## **Web resources:**

Animus Association Foundation,  
<http://www.animusassociation.org/en/animus-association-foundation>

Assistance Centre for Torture Survivors,  
<http://www.acet-bg.org/index.php?lang=2&pid>

Association for Integration of Refugees and Migrants, <http://www.airm-bg.org>

Bulgarian Bureau of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), <http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/bulgaria>

Bulgarian Fund for Women, <http://www.bgfundforwomen.org>

Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, <http://www.bgrf.org>

Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, <http://www.bghelsinki.org/en>

Bulgarian Law Portal, <http://lex.bg/laws>

Caritas Bulgaria, <http://www.caritas-bg.org/index.php?lang=en>

Center of Women's Studies and Policies,  
<http://www.cwsp.bg/en/htmls/home.php>

Commission for Protection against Discrimination,  
<http://kzd-nondiscrimination.com/start/index.php?lang=en>

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy,  
<http://www.mlsp.government.bg/en/index.htm>

Nadja Centre Foundation for Women Victims of Violence,  
<http://www.centrenadja.hit.bg>

National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings,  
<http://antitraffic.government.bg/lang/en>

Ombudsman Institution, <http://www.ombudsman.bg>

Refugee-Migrant Service of the Bulgarian Red Cross,  
<http://en.redcross.bg/activities/activities8.html>

State Agency for Refugees (SAR), <http://www.aref.government.bg/?cat=2>



# MIXED AND TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES IN BULGARIA

*Georgeta Nazarska, Marko Hajdinjak*

## Introduction

The social scientists are interested in studying mixed and transnational families for a number of reasons. Multicultural coexistence, racial, ethnic and gender conflicts and tensions, and formation of hybrid practices and identities can all be analysed in their relation to the issues of identity, religion, language, traditional gender roles, racism and xenophobia, and acceptance and tolerance.

Of the two family types, the mixed families were the first to attract the attention of researchers (late 1960s), but the bulk of the research dates from the post-1990 period. The interest in transnational families has also intensified since 1990, when a number of key texts in anthropology have re-conceptualised the research on the international migration and introduced the concept of “transnationalism” (Glick Schiller et al, 1992; Basch et al, 1994; Vertovec and Cohen, 1999; Vertovec, 1999). Transnationalism influenced a new understanding not only of individual migrants and migrant communities, but of migrant families too. The traditional understanding of families as units based on co-residency at the same place had to be changed as it became clear that many of the families in today’s world were spatially dispersed and fragmented – the transnational families. Despite the rich body of literature, which has appeared during the last two decades, the field is still not well theorised and conceptualised as most of the existing studies on mixed and transnational families are empirical and contextual.

This is even more the case in south-eastern Europe, where little scholarly attention has been devoted to the subject of mixed and transnational families and where even the empirical studies have been very scarce to date. The Bulgarian research literature is most often interested in emigration while immigration and immigrants have been insufficiently studied. There are virtually no studies dedicated exclusively to the issue

of mixed or transnational families. Several authors have paid partial attention to transnational families while studying the emigration patterns of Bulgarian citizens, but have never made them the main focus of their studies. Few authors have looked into the phenomenon of mixed families, but again mostly in studies on emigration (mixed marriages of Bulgarians with nationals of destination countries – USA, Hungary, Slovakia) (Карамихова, 2004; Ганева-Раїчева, 2004a; Ганева-Раїчева, 2004b, pp. 145-172; Антова, 2004, pp. 28-39). The mixed marriages of Bulgarians with immigrants in Bulgaria have been only episodically included in the studies of immigrants (for example a study on the integration of Kurdish immigrants or the problem of children names' selection in the Bulgarian-Arab families) (Мицева, 2005, pp. 137-155; Грозева-Исса, 2004, pp. 49-52). For this reason, the current research is of significant importance as it generates a ground-breaking and previously unavailable knowledge.

The following report is based on the field research conducted by IMIR between February 2009 and January 2010. The introductory section of the report outlines the main objectives of the report; describes the methodology used during the fieldwork; presents the profiles of the respondents; and defines and explains the basic concepts and terms.

The central section of the report is divided into two parts. The first one presents the main findings and the analysis of the field research on mixed families, while the second one brings forward the study results on transnational families.

### ***Research Goals***

The main research goal was to investigate the intersections between gender and migration, and explore their influence on the relations between members of mixed and transnational families. The report analyses the way gender dynamics in these families is conditioned by external factors such as the levels of acceptance and rejection



in the specific national setting, institutional frameworks dealing with immigrants, and the prevailing traditional patterns of gender relations, and by internal factors such as interactions between people with different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds in a family environment. The changing gender relations within such families and their position in a broader social context are also assessed.

The research method selected for this field study was the analysis of qualitative data gathered through interviews and focus groups. Given the relatively limited number of respondents who were involved in the research, the findings cannot be used as a basis for making general comprehensive conclusions but rather to identify the prevailing trends and more precisely interconnections between gender, ethnicity, religion and intercultural integration, as they can be observed in the specific area of parental, family and social relations. Traditional ethnic/national and gender hierarchies suggest that local and male partners occupy the dominant position in the family hierarchy, while the migrant and female partners are in the position of dependency. However, the intersections of these two traditional sets of power relations may reveal some interesting and “unexpected” tendencies in the social and family relations.

Mixed families face a very specific set of problems and difficulties. These can be a consequence of the partners’ experiences with their extended families, the prevailing attitudes in the society, and the framework provided by the legal environment and the official institutions. These difficulties include (but are not limited to) the issue of citizenship or residence permit of the migrant spouse and children, unfamiliarity with the official language, access to social benefits and health insurance, access to kindergartens and schools, employment possibilities for the immigrant spouse, and prejudices and discrimination towards foreigners from certain countries/regions. All these issues influence the social status and the possibilities for integration of such families, and consequently also the gender roles and gender dynamics.

The lives of the transnational families have also been tremendously changed as a result of the migration experience. The transnational spouses, mothers and fathers have left behind their partners and children under the pressure of economic needs and have gone abroad in search of better employment. While providing the much needed economic and financial security for the families, the transnational family life has profoundly influenced and changed all family members. Our research has tried to establish how the prevailing traditional patterns of gender relations and the long separation from the partner and children influence the gender dynamics in transnational families.

The research has also explored mixed and transnational families as spaces of intercultural interaction. In particular, the experiences of mixed and transnational families as an indicator of tension and conflict in intercultural relations has been investigated in order to establish if and how such families could play a role of a factor contributing to intercultural dialogue, integration, tolerance and social cohesion.

### ***Research Methods***

The field research was conducted using the qualitative research methods. It was divided into three main parts: interviews with mixed families (in Sofia), interviews with transnational families (in several small towns and villages in south-west Bulgaria), and focus groups (two with participants from mixed and one with participants from transnational families). The qualitative research was based on semi-standardized in-depth interviews. Before the beginning of the actual fieldwork, the draft interview guides had been tested through pilot interviews. The results were analysed and the final versions were prepared and used during the fieldwork stage.

Altogether 28 in-depth interviews were conducted: 12 interviews with respondents from transnational families and 16 with mixed families (interviews with both spouses from 8 families).

In the case of mixed families, both spouses were interviewed at the same time at the same place, but in different rooms – independently of each other. A male interviewer talked to the male respondents and a female interviewer to the female ones to ensure the maximum level of comfort and willingness to discuss the often sensitive issues. The decision to interview both partners at the same time was made in order to prevent the possibility of one partner telling the other about the interview and the questions asked, which would significantly reduce the authenticity of the answers. The research team encountered certain difficulties during the fieldwork. The biggest problem was to motivate and persuade Bulgarian women married to foreigners to participate in the research. It was also difficult to find couples where both partners were willing or able to give interviews at the same time and place.

In the case of transnational families, only one spouse was interviewed. The respondents were those partners from transnational families, who have stayed behind at home and are relying on remittances sent by the partner who has emigrated. Two of the respondents had also their own emigration experience. This part of the fieldwork took place in several small towns and villages in south-west Bulgaria – an ethnically and religiously diverse region with unfavourable economic situation and high level of emigration.

After the interview stage, three focus groups were organised to gather additional information. The focus group participants were different from the interviewees, but had a similar social and demographic profile.

### **Mixed families**

The interviews with the mixed families were pre-arranged – the first contact was established on the telephone or through a mediator, and the time and place were agreed. Interviews with 5 mixed families were taken in the IMIR's office, while in three cases researchers visited the families and interviewed them in their homes. The interviews lasted between one hour and one hour and 45 minutes. All but one (for

technical difficulties) were recorded. The questions in the interview guides were divided into the following sections: Background on family characteristics; Contacts and experience of mixed families with the official institutions; Intercultural aspects of mixed family life; Gender dynamics in mixed family life.

The first section focused on respondents' personal data, the history of the relationship, and their social and demographic profile. The second section investigated their interactions and possible conflicts with the official institutions, and the issue of (potential) discrimination. The third section studied the levels of adaptation and the forms of integration of the immigrant spouse in the Bulgarian society, the family social environment (including extended family, friends, migrant networks, and professional surroundings), religious beliefs and practices, and identity and language issues of mixed families. The last part focused on gender relations and identities, social and gender roles, division of labour at home, family decision making, various potentially problematic areas of family life, and the upbringing of children.

The research team has focused on interviews with mixed families consisting of a Bulgarian woman and a man from a Middle Eastern or African country.<sup>1</sup> Although immigrants from Africa and the Middle East represent a relatively small share of immigrants in Bulgaria,<sup>2</sup> the researchers considered the selected family unions as an exceptionally interesting and challenging case for studying. Such families had been very rarely studied in Bulgaria before. What is known from various studies on ethnic and racial distances is that the immigrants from Africa and Middle Eastern Muslim countries are perceived as the least desired marital partners. Because of these negative public perceptions,

---

<sup>1</sup> One interview with a family Bulgarian wife – Austrian husband was added to provide a different perspective and comparison with the Bulgarian-Middle Eastern and Bulgarian-African families.

<sup>2</sup> According to the information of the National Statistical Institute, there have been 69,423 permanently residing foreign nationals in Bulgaria on December 31, 2009. Of this number, 49,379 were from Europe, 9888 from Asia and only 651 from Africa. [http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop\\_5.8\\_Migration\\_DR\\_EN.xls](http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop_5.8_Migration_DR_EN.xls)

such mixed families are subject to a strong social pressure and suffer a number of problems - from being rejected by friends and families through institutional discrimination to racist attacks.

After analysing the data from the interviews and establishing which areas were sufficiently covered and where additional information was needed, the interview guides were revised and shortened. Thus the questionnaires for the focus groups were designed, consisting of about 10 most relevant questions (each providing space for additional sub-questions if needed). The two focus groups for the mixed families were organised in IMIR's office. The group with male participants included 8 people. Because of the size of the group, it lasted almost three hours. The female group consisted of only 4 participants – 3 out of 7 women who have previously agreed to participate failed to attend excusing themselves with last-minute unavoidable obligations. In general, finding female respondents from mixed families proved to be quite difficult. In some cases, their male partners who were willing to participate in the project explained that they were shy, conservative or uncomfortable to speak about personal matters. The female focus group lasted about an hour and a half.

### **Transnational families**

The 12 interviews with the members of transnational families were taken during three field-trips to different areas in south-western Bulgaria. The villages the research team visited were selected because of the available information that a large number of their residents had emigrated to various Western European countries to work. This presupposed also a large number of transnational families in these villages. The interviews were not pre-arranged and respondents were found and selected on the spot – the information about where to find them was gathered in village shops, bars and other public spaces. The interviews were taken at different places – on the central village square, on children playground, in village pubs and at homes of the respondents. The interviews lasted less compared to the interviews with mixed families because they were

not pre-arranged and respondents could not devote too much of their time. They lasted from 30 minutes to a bit more than an hour.

The interview guides for transnational families were divided into the following sections: Background on family characteristics and migration history; Aspects of transnational family life; and Gender dynamics in transnational family life. The first section aimed at collecting data about the respondents' personal and family life, and some basic data about the migration experience of their partners. The second section focused on the experience of transnational family life: the ways and frequency of maintaining contacts, the changes in the lifestyle and workload, family decision-making processes, consequences for the children and predictions for the future. The third part sought answers to the following questions: changes in the traditional family gender roles and duties, the emotional consequences of transnational family experience, issues of trust and jealousy, the role of the extended family, and the advantages and disadvantages of transnational family life.

The focus group for transnational families was organized in the village of Sapareva Banya. It was organised with the help of a local mediator who found six women willing to participate in the discussion. The problem with the transnational focus group was that all six respondents had similar life stories and provided very similar answers. It would have been much more productive to organise a focus group with participants coming from different settlements and with a more diverse emigration experiences of their partners; however, this was not possible from the organisational point of view. The transnational focus group lasted just shorter than one hour.

### ***Basic Premises and Concepts***

The term "mixed marriages" is one of the most commonly used (in addition to "intercultural families," "cross-ethnic families" and "cross-cultural marriages") for referring to marital unions of partners coming from different countries and belonging to different religions and

ethnicities (Breger and Hill, 1998). Such marriages are often in the focus of studies exploring the processes of cultural adaptation, integration of immigrant groups, the nature of inter-group relations, social distances, and power relations between state institutions and different cultural groups.

Mixed marriages had first attracted the attention of the US scholars, but soon became a popular research topic also in Europe and other parts of the world. Scholars were interested in the various types of intermarriages: interethnic, interfaith, intercultural or interracial. Some authors are interested mainly in the demographic characteristics of individuals in mixed marriages and explore their links with the cultural and structural factors influencing intermarriage. Others center their research on the interplay of racial and gender variables in mixed marriages and explore the place of such marriages in the societal and cultural context. Special attention is paid to the question whether these contexts are permitting or discouraging mixed marriages. A considerable number of studies have dealt with marital unions of "Western" (usually North American and Western European) and "non-Western" (most often African and Asian) partners (Baker Cottrel, 1990, pp. 151-169; Khan, 1998, pp. 5-28; Roer-Strier and Ben Ezra, 2006, pp. 41-55; Imamura, 1990, pp. 171-191).

Another volume of research is interested in exploring how the state policies in the field of intermarriage influence (positively or negatively) the social discourses towards foreigners and mixed marriages (Breger and Hill, 1998; Roer-Strier and Ben Ezra, 2006, pp. 41-55). Various authors have studied the influence of different societal factors on the attitudes towards mixed marriages (Jakobson and Heaton, 2008, pp. 129-148; Johnson and Jacobson, 2005, pp. 387-399).

There are two main theoretical paradigms regarding the processes of cultural adaptation in intermarriage. Some authors perceive mixed marriages as a form of assimilation of immigrants into the dominating culture (Gordon, 1964). The acculturation paradigm is opposing the

assimilation theory. It states that intermarriage does not lead necessarily to a loss of ethnic or cultural identity and is rather a consequence of cultural mix and social tolerance (Cohen, 1988). Some authors believe that the process of cultural adaptation affects both partners (from the minority and the dominating culture) and thus talk about “mutual acculturation” (Jaes Falicov, 1995, pp. 231-246).

Another group of authors looks at mixed marriages as a challenge to the prevailing norms of endogamy and points out that as such, mixed families are often subject to a considerable social pressure and social sanctions (Ata, 2000; Johnson and Warren, 1994, pp. 1-13; Thode-Arora, 1999; Lauth Bacas, 2002). There are also authors who put their focus on the positive aspects of mixed marriages – greater degree of tolerance and respect, possibilities for education and growth of children, shortening of interethnic, interfaith and interracial distances (Breger and Hill, 1998; Ho, 1990).

The actual possibility to meet someone with a different cultural, religious or ethnic background through education, work or informal socializing is an exceptionally important precondition for a mixed marriage. Segregation, geographical isolation, separation based on differences in education and income, ethnic/national/religious animosities on group and individual level, and language and cultural differences are named as the most important factors contributing to high homogamy rates in a particular society (Jakobson and Heaton, 2008, pp. 129-148). Group identification, group sanctions, social and cultural distances between various groups, openness of a given society to cultural heterogeneity all play an important role in encouraging or discouraging intermarriages (Muhsam, 1990, pp. 307-324; Kalmijn, 1998, pp. 395-421).

The studies of mixed marriages are closely linked with the correlations between ethnic/racial endogamy and social/educational homogamy and with the correlations between gender, race, ethnicity and hypergamy. The number and acceptance of mixed marriages in a given society is thus for many authors an indication of integration of a given minority



or immigrant group into the dominating society. The more frequent the intermarriages are, the lesser are the structural and cultural distances between different groups. The main factors which intermarriages depend on are identified as ethnicity, race, religion and education. According to various authors, the racial divide is a much more substantial and difficult to overcome obstacle to mixed marriages than for example ethnic or national origin and religion (Douglas and Yancey, 2004, pp. 1-19). This has been confirmed also by the current research, which shows that mixed marriages involving a black person are socially much less accepted and tolerated than marriages with a Muslim. Consequently, the Bulgarian-African families suffer a wide range of problems – from discrimination at the hands of the official institutions, through family rejection to verbal and physical abuse on the streets.

Some of the critics to the existing scholarship on mixed marriages point out that usually little attention is paid to the cultural adaptation strategies of the partners belonging to the host or dominant group. Critics also note that too often the approach of researchers is too static and does not consider multiple adaptation strategies of mixed families, and that mixed families are usually studied as a passive indicator of inter-ethnic relations in a given society and not as an engine of social change (Goldstein, 1999, pp. 399-407; Yancey and Yancey, 1997, pp. 650-667). In the opinion of some authors, the influence of the power relations and ethnic/racial/cultural hierarchies over mixed families has yet to receive the attention it deserves (Roer-Strier and Ben Ezra, 2006, pp. 41-55).

Transnational families got in the focus of migration studies in the early 1990s. The new analytical framework introduced the concept of “transnationalism” and explained migration as a multi-sited social space, which is simultaneously experienced by communities across borders (Glick Schiller et al, 1992; Basch et al, 1994; Vertovec and Cohen, 1999). Unlike the traditional migration theories that treat the migration phenomena as limited to integration or assimilation in the receiving societies, transnationalism offers an alternative approach, where experiences of migrants are analysed through the prism of

multiple attachments and their simultaneous positioning in several social (and territorial) locations (Glick Schiller et al, 1992).

The main fields of study within the paradigm of transnationalism deal with transnational migrant networks, transnational political activity, transnational citizenship, remittances, and transnational families. The concept of transnationalism has influenced not only the new reading of migration and migrant communities, but has also changed the perspective on the traditional understanding of families – from families based on co-residency at the same place to ones that are spatially dispersed and fragmented. The members of transnational families maintain trans-border kinship relations to sustain livelihoods that span over two or more states (Glick Schiller et al, 1995, pp. 48-64).

According to the early authors of transnationalism, the family is a basic unit of the transnational relationships. The family and the need for its survival through remittances and other forms of assistance is the main factor triggering migration. Migration usually has an additional effect of widening family networks as migrants locate all possible relatives able to help in the process of migration (Schiller and Fouron, 2001, p.61).

The majority of existing studies on transnational families have focused on separations between family members – between spouses and between parents and their children: transnational parenting (Pribilsky, 2004, pp. 313-334; Gamburd, 2000; Nyberg Sorensen, 2005), transnational motherhood (Erel, 2002, pp. 127-146; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997, pp. 548-571; Salazar Parreñas, 2001) and transnational childhood (Salazar Parreñas, 2005; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Analysing transnational family life from the gendered perspective, some of these studies indicate that in the cases of families with migrant mothers (“transnational mothers”), the families come under more pressure and experience more difficulties than in the cases of migrant fathers.

There are two general approaches to the study of transnational families. One focuses on the negative and the other on the positive and

constructive aspects of transnational family life. The negative aspects revolve around the notion of “care drain” – the global transfer of care work from poor to rich countries, and the consequent transfer of emotional resources, which has exceptionally negative effects on the children left behind (Ehrenreich and Russell Hochschild, 2003). Among the positive aspects, different authors stress the durable practices of maintenance and reproduction of family ties, which are kept alive despite the great distances and prolonged separations (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Mason, 2004, pp. 421-429; Wilding, 2006, pp. 125-142; Zontini, 2006, pp. 325-345). The very existence of transnational families rests on kin ties being kept alive and maintained across time and space.

Some studies pay attention to the importance of transnational “productive,” “kin” and “caring work.” Productive work concerns the involvement of migrant women in the economic support of their families. Kin work refers to the role of women in maintaining transnational family relations and kin ties. Caring work involves the tasks related to looking after the young, the elderly and the ill. Studies dealing with the care work domain are interested in the ways in which caring tasks have been carried out across geographical distance (Baldassar and Baldock, 2000, pp. 61-89; Goulbourne and Chamberlain, 2001; Reynolds and Zontini, 2006; Zontini, 2006, pp. 325-345). The focus has been put on caring work that occurs both between and within generations. Research on transnational families thus aims at studying new ways of articulating family relationships as a result of migration and the changes that are produced by migration in the structure of the family, its functions and the gender roles within it.

## **The mixed families in Bulgaria – analysis of the field research**

### ***The main characteristics of the respondents***

By the end of January 2010 the IMIR team had conducted interviews with 8 mixed families, consisting of Bulgarian women and men from

various foreign countries. The foreign respondents were from the following countries: Iraq (2), Afghanistan (2), Lebanon (1), Zambia (1), Guinea (1), and Austria (1). Two focus groups were also conducted – one with four Bulgarian women married to foreigners (from Tanzania, Sudan, Syria, and Ireland) and with eight men (from Ghana, Guinea, Congo, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia, Syria, and Palestine).

Although immigrants coming from Africa and Middle East represent a relatively small share of immigrants in Bulgaria and the more typical mixed families in Bulgaria are those involving foreign spouses from Western European countries or the former Soviet Union, the Bulgarian team decided to focus on mixed marriages between Bulgarian women and men from Middle East and Africa for several reasons:

- 1) Although not the most numerous, marriages involving immigrants from these regions are quite typical, especially for the generations born in the 1960s and 1970s. Many Bulgarians born in that period studied with and formed friendships and relationships with students from Asian and African countries, who used to come to study in Bulgaria before 1989 in quite considerable numbers.
- 2) According to the recent studies conducted in Bulgaria, immigrants from Africa and Middle Eastern Muslim countries are perceived as the least desired marital partners.<sup>3</sup> Because of these negative public perceptions, such mixed families are subject to a strong social pressure and suffer a number of problems - from rejection of friends and families through institutional discrimination to racist attacks.
- 3) The cultural, linguistic and religious differences between the spouses in such families are much larger compared to families in which a Bulgarian citizen is married to a person from Western Europe or the former Soviet Union.

---

<sup>3</sup> The research conducted by the Open Society Institute Sofia showed that 42.7% of respondents would marry a person from an EU member state, and 36.9% would marry a person from Russia. In contrast, only 11.4% would marry an Arab, and only 10.3% would marry a person from Africa. See Памноров, 2009, p. 30.

All these circumstances make the selected family unions an exceptionally interesting and challenging case to study. In addition, such families have been very rarely studied in Bulgaria before and there is very little information on this matter available.

Most of the male respondents (in both the interviews and the focus group) were aged between 34 and 50 (with three exceptions – 55, 56 and 75), while all but three women were in their thirties and early forties (the three exceptions were aged 49, 50 and 67). The large majority were therefore born in the 1960s-1970s. This predetermined their more liberal perceptions (unlike those of the generation of their parents) regarding the selection of a spouse – even one with a different national, cultural and religious background. Their generation was also the first to truly have the possibility for establishing contacts, friendships and relationships with people from a large variety of countries (the Communist student exchange programmes before the fall of the Iron Curtain and the liberalisation of travel after that). The respondents belonging to the older generation have shared that their decision to marry a foreigner was a very difficult and untraditional one, and caused significant friction within their families and social environment. For these reasons, the mixed marriages in Bulgaria before the 1980s were rather rare and when they did occur, they were accompanied by a number of problems.

The majority of male respondents were Muslims (10), while 5 of them were Catholics (one declared he did not belong to any religion). All women except one (who was a Protestant) were Orthodox Christians. However, none of the respondents said he or she was deeply religious. They visit church or mosque from time to time, but do not follow the religious rules strictly (for example, almost all Muslim respondents drink alcohol and some even have had problems with other more religious people from their communities). This is a quite typical feature of the generation which our sample belongs to. Many of these men came to Bulgaria as scholarship students, sent to study abroad by leftist and Communist regimes and were as such selected from less religious

families, or came to the country as political refugees persecuted for their Communist beliefs. Reasonably, a family life with a partner belonging to a different religion also played a significant role in transforming their religious practices.

The majority of the respondents (both from the interviews and the focus groups) have a good education, i.e. high education in Journalism, Economics, Philology, Engineering, Musicology, Law, Political Sciences, Archaeology, etc. Only one was with incomplete university studies and two were with secondary school education. They have chosen a partner with a similar education. This choice was an individual act and was hardly at all influenced by their families. The majority of couples met during their student years through common friends. Only a few of them met later in their life under accidental circumstances.

The duration of the marriage or cohabitation of the interviewees and focus group participants was very diverse – one couple had married six months prior to the interview, while the longest-running marriage was in its 44<sup>th</sup> year at the time of the interview.

Almost all couples (with two exceptions) met and got married in Bulgaria. The majority of couples met in the student campus of Sofia and through common friends. The couple, which met in Austria, got together in similar circumstances. One couple met in Lebanon – the Bulgarian woman lived and worked there.

Many of them had previous relationships with foreigners (Bulgarian women had relations with Americans, Africans or Turks and foreigners - with Bulgarian women). Some men had even failed marriages in their country of origin, or were engaged to be married. They all see their previous relationships as a valuable experience which helped them in making the best out of their current marriage.

Unlike women, all men named outer appearance (face, body, exotic appearance) as a factor of attraction. Most men and all women mentioned

moral and individual qualities: calmness, idealism, modesty, kindness, sincerity, smartness and cheerfulness. All stressed the importance of mutual understanding and common interests – *“he is careful,” “he supports me,” “I could speak to him,” “she showed interest in me,” “we have always helped each other at difficult moments.”*

Most of them point out that their relationship grew naturally from friendship into *“natural love”* (Anna, 67; Peter, 40) and *“chemistry between two souls”* (Hayri, 48). Their relationships had lasted on average for three years before they decided to get married. During this time, all respondents were evaluating the possibilities for leading a normal family life with their partners. This suggests a significant social resistance against the exogamy in the Bulgarian society.

The majority of couples live in independent households, either in their own apartments or in rented ones. Only a few live with an elderly parent (of the Bulgarian spouse). The interviewees explained this with their desire to be independent, but from the subtext can be seen that another important reason can be the attitude of the parents – namely their sometimes hidden sometimes open resistance to the marriage.

### ***Integration into the host country***

Most of the foreign respondents said that when they came to Bulgaria they encountered a very different cultural environment from their own. They attended courses in Bulgarian language as foreign students but this was not enough to get acquainted with the customs, habits and traditions of the host country.

Most of the older respondents, who have been living in Bulgaria for over 20 years, have Bulgarian citizenship. Half of the respondents have permanent residence permit, one has a refugee status, one has recently arrived to the country and has applied for a residence permit, and one

has no documents at all<sup>4</sup> (he spent several years in the detention centre for illegal immigrants and was released on condition that he presents himself at the local police station daily for signature).

Although the majority of respondents are well educated (university level), they rarely work in the fields of their specialisation. The difficult economic situation in Bulgaria in 1990s and in some cases their personal preferences have directed them to other professions – quite often poorly paid and sometimes non-prestigious (construction workers, street vendors, workers at petrol stations).<sup>5</sup> In some interviews and especially during the focus group it was explicitly mentioned that when they tried to find employment in their field, they were rejected because of their origin and/or skin colour, and a Bulgarian candidate was given preference to them. The fact that they were “different” often hindered their professional development. Africans are usually rejected because of their race, and the Muslim respondents because of their names and religion. They point out the social stereotypes and prejudices in the Bulgarian society against Arabs, black people and Muslims, who are often looked upon as “*second class people*” (Mohammad, 48).

The economic aspect of mixed marriages is among the most significant factors shaping the family life. In some cases, pragmatic economic reasons influenced the decision on legal marriage. Although it is not explicitly mentioned, some of the male respondents (especially those who were at the time or still are with a temporary residence permit) considered the apartment and stable income of their partners as attractive incentives to live in partnership. During the interviews, the topics of family income, unemployment, job-seeking strategies, and plans for labour migration abroad were brought up over and over again. The economic instability of the life in a mixed marriage was the main reason to delay having children in two of the cases.

---

<sup>4</sup> His national passport expired several years ago and because of various problems with the authorities in his country, he was unable to renew it. Until this changes, he is also unable to acquire a Bulgarian residence permit and cannot marry his partner.

<sup>5</sup> This is not the case with the Austrian respondent who is well paid and works in the profession he selected.



From the economic point of view, mixed marriages were hypergamous for the males from our sample, i.e. they improved their social status by marrying women with permanent incomes and housing. For the females, however, these marriages were undoubtedly hypogamous, i.e. they were not conducive for the improvement of their social status.<sup>6</sup> As wives of immigrants, they often had no material and financial stability; they were deprived of emotional support from parents and relatives of their partners, and in the most extreme cases suffered the social stigmatisation and isolation.

The Bulgarian female respondents are from middle class families, which have relatively low social status, but nevertheless encouraged their children to study. Most of their sisters and brothers are also well educated. In a few cases their parents were separated, which made the respondents' matrimonial choice even more complicated. They feared not to repeat their parents' mistakes, as the separation in case of a mixed marriage could be very harsh (e.g. parting with the children).

Still, it is interesting that regardless of their matrimonial, economic and social status, the parents (especially mothers) of the interviewed women accept with tolerance their daughters' choice. The initial reaction was in most cases cautiousness, sometimes accompanied by fear and distrust. Gradually however, the focus shifted from the origin and different cultural background of their daughter's partner towards his personal qualities (*"they got used to him"; "they are happy"; "they accept him"; "they like him"; "he is made of gold to them"; "I became their favourite son-in-law"* – Elka, 38; Magdalena, 37; Anna, 67; Iva, 49; Jamil, 56) and the mothers accepted the choice of their daughters. The only exception of this was one case from the focus group, where the mother drastically rejected her son-in-law and faced her daughter with an ultimatum: to

---

<sup>6</sup> Somewhat paradoxically, this was even the case for Bulgarian-Austrian couple. She was often annoyed and offended by remarks that she has taken care of herself by marrying an Austrian, while in fact at the beginning of their relationship, she already had a good career and a well-paid job, while he was an unemployed student. She said that situation changed only eight years later – while on a maternity leave she became dependent on her husband's earnings.

chose either her husband or her parents. The result was that after five years of marriage and despite having a small child, the couple divorced and the respondent's ex-wife moved to another city to live with her parents (taking the child with her).

The fathers' attitude was usually more reserved, although the pattern was similar – predominantly (sometimes exceptionally) negative and disapproving in the beginning, and more accepting later. Especially after the birth of the grandchildren, the relationships father-in-law – son-in-law tend to become quite close and warm, although certain reservations remain, especially in cases when the mixed family is facing financial problems. In some cases, the female respondents were told (directly or indirectly) by their parents that they would not be in a difficult economic situation if they had married a Bulgarian.

Most of the mixed couples live in their own households (either own apartments or rented ones), but there are also cases when they share (or did in the past for a certain period of time) the household with (one or both) parents of the female partner. The majority maintain a regular contact with the family of the female partner – by the telephone and by visiting each other. The male respondents shared that the families of their partners are exceptionally important for them, as they represent a social network they can count on. They also positively evaluated the fact that the parents rarely interfere in their family matters and do not try to influence their lives the way parents usually do in their home countries.

Given the fact that the parents belong to the generation of 1930s-1940s, which has a very conservative mindset and which grew up in an environment very intolerant to foreigners, these data about the family approval and acceptance are quite a surprise. Obviously, the post-modern situation in which the traditional marriage patterns are disintegrating and

the parents' concern for their children's welfare played an important role in their acceptance of the mixed marriage.<sup>7</sup>

The male interviewees said that their families had accepted calmly the news about the foreign daughters-in-law – Christian women from Eastern Europe. The men who got married as students said that they had presented their families to a *fait accompli*, informing them about the already contracted marriage. This is logical, given the fact that the sons had been separated from their families for a very long time. On the other hand, their decisions were often made in conflict with their cultural environment. A respondent from Guinea said that in his family clan, marriages with Christians were absolutely banned, but his father preferred the French, secular model of relations (Guinea was a French colony) and brought his children up in such fashion.

Most respondents (both in the interviews and in focus groups) talked only about positive reactions from their brothers and sisters. In some cases, they live or used to live together with them and usually try to maintain close ties. Only in one case there was a clear negative reaction (*"Nobody from her family wanted to come to the wedding. Only her sister came, drank one small glass and in two minutes said she had to go."* – Hasan, 37).

The circle of friends was also described positively. This is understandable in those cases, where the couple met as students as they shared a wide circle of friends and acquaintances, who studied with them. Distrust and fear were most clearly expressed in those cases, when the immigrant partner was a Muslim (*"Because we girls in Bulgaria were brought up to believe that Muslims were terrible"* – Magdalena, 37), however they were also well accepted once their partners' friends got to know them.

---

<sup>7</sup> Of course, we should keep in mind that most of the respondents (especially women) probably preferred not to share with us all of the negative and troubling information and rather presented a "beautified" picture. In contrast, some of the men in the focus group (majority of them were from African countries) claimed that their wives' families were the most destructive factors in their relationship ("we always have problems" – Lusien, 44), especially in times when they shared the household with them.

The contacts and ties with friends (both Bulgarian and immigrant ones) represent an important social environment for socialisation and social legalisation of their marriage.

Almost all of the respondents believe that the social environment in Bulgaria is strongly hostile towards mixed marriages. This is explained through social stereotypes, conservatism and significant social distances towards marriages with foreigners, who are not from Europe and are not Christians. The men believe that their partners pay too much attention to the public opinion and the opinion of people around them (*“What the neighbours would say”* – Moussa, 39; Daniel, 40). According to the African respondents, over 80% of Bulgarians reject them – in contrast to the Western European countries, where people are more tolerant because they have had a much longer experience with immigrant communities. Some women shared that they felt offended by the attitude of others on numerous occasions, and in some cases they were even victims of aggressive behaviour. One respondent said: *“I’m ashamed to be Bulgarian, I’m so disappointed by the Bulgarian society”* (Daniela, 42). Another added: *“What I have gone through because of this relationship – I do not wish this to anyone”* (Iva, 49).

A very telling example for the social stigmatisation is the attitude of schoolchildren towards the children of mixed marriages. Most of them are victims of frequent verbal and physical abuse, ridicule and rejection. The children from Bulgarian-African families are attacked and abused because of their skin colour, while those whose father is a Muslim are victimised because of their first and/or family names, which other children sometimes compare to Turkish or Roma names.<sup>8</sup> The spreading islamophobia and the widespread prejudice linking Islam with terrorism further increase the stigmatisation of such children. A daughter of one couple was asked by other schoolchildren whether she was *“a Turk, Gypsy or a child of some terrorist”* and was told to *“go back to Turkey”* as

---

<sup>8</sup> Considering Turkish or Roma names as “inferior” shows that the Bulgarian society has deep-rooted prejudices not only against immigrants, but also towards the traditional minorities in the country.

*“Bulgaria was under the Turkish yoke long enough and there was no place for her here” (Daniela, 42).*

The only described cases of explicit exclusion, racism and violent acts were against the Africans. They spoke of the impossibility to find jobs because of their skin colour, and of frequent verbal and physical violence by skinhead gangs (attacks, robberies, insults, etc.). Their partners also talked about almost permanent harassment of their husbands by skinhead and similar groups, who frequently attack their husbands without any reason. Even more worrying is the fact that such attacks (although occurring in public spaces and even in the public transport) are as a rule ignored by the bystanders and even by the police. The women have been also victims of violence and verbal abuse on many occasions. When attacked, such couples usually reply passively – with silence and quick retreat to a more secure place. Many women are literally afraid for the lives of their husbands, who were victims of more violent attacks. They try to explain the rising xenophobia and racism among the younger generations with the lack of proper education and upbringing, and their highly limited exposure to foreign cultural influences. One of the older respondents said: *“The older people in Bulgaria are very good, but the young – they are terrible” (Said, 50).*

### ***Contacts and experience with the official institutions***

All mixed marriages are only civic, which can easily be explained with the differences in the religious affiliations. All are registered in Bulgaria, while registration of the marriage abroad (in the home country of the husband) has been done only in those cases when the couple visits the country relatively regularly. This is not the case with most Africans, Iraqis and Afghanis, who for political (and sometime economic) reasons rarely or never visit their home countries. In one of the cases the marriage was impeded for administrative reasons – the man has no documents and is actually residing in the country semi-illegally. A religious ceremony was mentioned only in two cases and even then, it was not a proper religious wedding, but rather certain

religious rituals were performed during the celebration following the civic marriage.

Concluding a civic marriage between a Bulgarian and a foreign citizen faced numerous obstacles in the past. During the 1960s and 1970s, such marriages were only exceptionally allowed by the authorities. In the 1980s, there was no official prohibition, but those Bulgarians wanting to marry a foreigner had to deal with a cumbersome and complicated bureaucratic procedure. Those who married after 1989 do not mention any administrative obstacles. As marriage with a Bulgarian citizen is among the reasons for obtaining a permanent residence in the country or a citizenship, the Bulgarian authorities often make vigorous checks to establish whether the marriage is genuine or fake. The registration of a marriage contracted abroad has been described as a clumsy, slow and corrupted administrative procedure.

Thinking about their civil status and their relations with the authorities (administrative, police, tax, health), most of the interviewed foreign men were unanimous that as a whole they had no problems. Some respondents (most notably those from Africa and to a smaller extent some of the Muslims) however complained that they were occasionally victims of sometimes hidden and sometimes open discrimination. For some of them it was employment problems (especially in the state administration), for others – unprovoked police checks of documents and even violence and abuse at police stations, with the obligatory remark *“go back to Africa”* (Daniel, 40). This used to be a permanent problem for the African respondents in the past – they say that the situation has improved in the recent years.

The female respondents generally answered that they had no problems with the authorities or state institutions. Only one mentioned the problems she experienced during the so-call Revival Process<sup>9</sup> (1985-

---

<sup>9</sup> The process of forced assimilation of Bulgarian Muslim minorities is known in Bulgarian language as *vuzroditelen proces* (most often translated as the revival process). The Muslim Bulgarians were forced to change their names for Christian/Bulgarian ones and abandon their religious beliefs. See Popova and Hajdinjak, 2006.

1989) because of her Arabic family name and the names of her children, which were perceived by the authorities as Turkish.

### ***Intercultural aspects of mixed family life***

All respondents agree that life in a mixed family is a challenge. They acknowledge its positive aspects, but at the same time they say that their happy marriage has been the result of many efforts and that it has its price. Very often one or both partners had to give up their professional career, resulting in a difficult financial situation for the family.

A large majority of the men spoke Bulgarian language relatively well when they met their partners and they most often use Bulgarian in the everyday life. The exceptions are the man from Togo who is a recent arrival to the country, and the man from Lebanon as he had lived with his wife in Lebanon for over 15 years before coming to Bulgaria (they speak Arabic at home). Despite their preference for the Bulgarian language, most couples use other languages as well – German, French, English and to a lesser extent Arabic and Persian/Dari. This bilingualism makes communication easier and is accepted as something natural by both partners. Most of them also prefer bilingual model for raising their children, thus giving them a linguistic diversity and a broader world-view. On the other hand, the male respondents whose mother tongue is Arabic or Persian shared that their children speak these languages only superficially and use only Bulgarian in their daily lives. In their opinion, the children are giving up on the comparative advantage they could have used to be more competitive on the labour market in this way.

None of the spouses expresses any fears of losing his/her national identity because of their mixed marriage. All foreigners describe themselves as different from the Bulgarians although they declare that they like the country very much and that they feel well here. They preserve their identity through the language and their religious practices. As much as it is possible, they maintain contacts with their families and friends in their home country. The majority also have numerous friends and

acquaintances among their fellow-countrymen residing in Bulgaria. This is especially true for Afghanis, Iraqis and Syrians,<sup>10</sup> while for Africans it hardly matters at all if a person comes from a specific country – they are all perceived as members of the unified African community (sometimes they also form groups based on the colonial past of their home countries, as they are in this way more closely connected by language – English, French, Portuguese, etc. – and culture). If possible, the respondents also travel to their home countries once or twice a year. For some this has been impossible for various reasons (wars, conflicts, political instability) and they have never returned home since coming to Bulgaria.

Some wives commented on how well their partners have integrated into the Bulgarian society. Two even remarked in a joking tone that they were *“more Bulgarian than Bulgarians”* (Anna, 67; Iva, 49). It does not seem that either women or men exert pressure on their partners to change and to abandon their national identity.

The religious and cultural differences in mixed families seem to be deliberately downplayed and pushed aside (this quite obviously seems to be a decision of both partners). The partners try to find a common ground or choose a third, neutral option. None of the interviewees had a religious wedding (only in two cases a small religious ritual was performed during the wedding celebration). Virtually none of our respondents is strongly religious and some are atheists. This is true also for many of those coming from Muslim countries. Most of them grew up in secular families with leftist political orientation, or were themselves active in Socialist or Communist parties. They therefore do not observe any food taboos (several Muslims said they eat pork, while all admitted they drink alcohol) nor do they strictly perform other religious duties.

Most Muslim respondents and their partners were very defensive regarding Islam, emphasising on few occasions that they did not

---

<sup>10</sup> All three communities have well functioning clubs and associations.



perform any “*extreme*” or “*fundamentalist religious practices*” (Lansana, 38; Kalina, 52). None of the respondents visit churches, mosques or other temples regularly. The main religious holidays (religions of both partners are respected) are celebrated in their typical fashion – meals are prepared and certain rituals performed. However, these celebrations are usually considered national rather than religious holidays. Christmas, for example, is predominantly seen as a family occasion and is rarely associated with religion. All Muslim respondents participate very actively in Christmas and Easter celebrations (for example, painting eggs and lighting candles), while the Catholics have started celebrating their name days in an Orthodox way. One of the Muslims said: “*We need to celebrate the Christian way, because I live in a Christian family*” (Jamil, 56).

Most of the respondents spoke about respecting both religions and some pointed out that “*God is one*” (Mohammad, 48; Iva, 49) regardless how He is named. They said that they have both the Quran and the Bible at their home, and that both partners visit churches and mosques. The question of religious conversion of one of the partners has never been even raised in any of the families. In the words of one of the respondents: “*Why should any of us convert – we believe in one and the same.*” (Mohammad, 48).

The social environment is exceptionally important for mixed families. Most of them speak about having many friends, whom they maintain close ties with, regardless whether they are Bulgarians or foreigners. The impression is, however, that there are only a few mixed families among their friends and that this is not a factor playing a significant role in establishing friendships. The partners rarely distinguish between old friends they had known before their relationship started and the newly acquired common friends. The old friends are equally welcome at their homes and have in time become common friends of both partners. None of the respondents mentioned any obstacles or demands made by their partners to stop seeing their old friends (the only exception was the respondent from Ghana, who was divorced and who said that his

ex-wife was not happy when he went out alone with his friends as she wanted him to spend all the time with her and their son).

The social network of friends is described as very “loose” in the case of African-Bulgarian families. This is to a certain extent a result of the economic problems all such families talked about, as the limited financial resources also significantly limit the possibilities for socialising, but it also points to the racism in the Bulgarian society. The responses given by the African-Bulgarian couples point to a certain deliberate alienation of the couples from social life, probably prompted by an instinct of self-preservation, as well as by hidden mechanisms of social exclusion, which in certain cases border on rejection.

The mixed families from our sample have from one to three children. In three cases they have no children, as pregnancy is deliberately delayed because of the financial difficulties the family has been experiencing. In one case, the couple has no children together, but have children from previous marriages.<sup>11</sup> All Muslim and African respondents come from large families and have many brothers and sisters; however, they did not duplicate this model in their own family. Obviously this is another consequence of the social adaptation and points to the lack of social support for reproducing the family patterns from their home countries.

Regarding the names of the children, all respondents describe the name selection as a result of mutual consent. However, the impression is that in the majority of cases the father’s will prevailed and the child was named after a grandfather or another male relative on the father’s side. Some families have come to an agreement to choose names with international sounding and some have given them several names (to both parents’ taste). There are also cases when the name of the child carried a national connotation (in relation with the national origin of the father). According to the mothers, foreign sounding and especially Muslim names (this includes not only their first, but also their family

---

<sup>11</sup> Man’s three children live with their mother abroad, while woman’s daughter lives with the couple.

names) have been causing a number of problems to the children at school, as they have been victims of abuse and rejection.

Encouraging children to learn more about the history and culture of the country of their fathers seems to be rare. From this viewpoint, it is not surprising that only in one case, the identity of the child was defined as mixed, while in all other cases it was only Bulgarian.

According to the respondents the number of the children in the family is not influenced by religious reasons, but only by economic ones. The religious affiliation of children is rarely discussed. Most respondents said that their children would choose their religion when they were old enough. In none of our cases but one (where the mother insisted on having all three children baptised in church) have the parents tried to influence the religion of the children. All respondents said that they raise their children (or will do that when they have children) in universal values without giving priority to a certain religion.

### ***Gender dynamics in mixed families***

When speaking about the gender relations in mixed families, it should be mentioned that the research team experienced numerous difficulties in finding female respondents both during the interview stage and while organising the focus groups. The preliminary contact has in most cases been established with the male partner and the arrangements for the interview or focus group participation of the women have been made with the men acting as mediators. Some of the Arab and some of the African respondents declined to introduce the researchers to their Bulgarian wives on the pretext that they were either conservative or too shy and did not want to speak. The discussions we had with the men with whom we tried to arrange interviews and focus groups left us with the impression that they had preserved many of the stereotypes from their African and/or Muslim environment regarding the place of women – hidden from the eyes of the outsiders and positioned deeply in the

domestic space. Yet, at the same time there was no doubt that these men tried to present themselves as liberal and cosmopolitan.

The majority of findings and conclusions in this section should be accepted with some caution and scepticism. In many of the interviews the respondents wanted to present the desired rather than the actual image of their partner and their relationship (the repeating reference to *“understanding and mutual trust”* – Petya, 38).

According to the female respondents, their husbands have completely cut with their traditional gender social role (it is difficult to say whether under the influence of life in intercultural environment or because of the hypergamous marriage). In some cases the women are those who have jobs and temporarily or permanently provide for the family. The aptitude of the husbands to take on a great part of the domestic work is assessed as chivalry and opportunity to consolidate the relations through common activities. Some respondents have compared this willingness of men to engage in household chores with the attitude of Bulgarian men towards housework – Bulgarians were described as absolutely disinterested in such activities, as lazy and even as prone to domestic violence.

All male respondents claimed that there was no gender division of labour in their families. They all rejected such division, some because of their personal inclination to engage in domestic work (especially cooking), some because they followed the model inherited by their cultural background. In their families, work is not divided according to gender, but strictly according to the possibilities, time and preferences of each partner. They believe that Bulgarian women should be reproached because they take too much domestic work upon themselves and thus encourage their husbands to be lazy.

Only in two interviews did the husbands share their disappointment that the traditional model of “male” and “female” work had no longer been working and expressed their preference for the re-establishment

of the clear gender labour division. One male respondent said that as he earned the money and had assumed an important “female work” (to take care of the children) he expected that his wife performed all the other “female obligations” (cleaning, cooking, washing and ironing, etc.).

In all interviews and focus groups, the decision-making processes in the family were described as being a result of mutual compromise, discussions and negotiations. However, the impression was that in many situations the wives were at the root of a number of initiatives (buying a house/apartment, applying for citizenship, plans for migration to Western Europe, etc.) and were often those who in fact made the actual decision. In some cases, especially among the older respondents, the husbands believed that because of their larger knowledge and experience their opinion should prevail. In this sense, the consensual management of the family life is more of a desire than a reality in mixed families. In this sense, mixed families are no different from the majority of ordinary families.

Many of the interviewees said that mixed marriage had changed their gender and religious stereotypes. One of the men said that he had thrown off the tradition of his homeland where only women assumed domestic responsibilities and that he shared them on equal footing with his wife. One of the female respondents said that she was happy that her partner was not jealous and did not look upon her as his ownership, as the tradition in his homeland was, but was providing her with full freedom to work and meet her friends. Another woman said that if her husband ever asked her to wear a veil and tried to limit her freedom of communication with others, she would divorce him.

In most of the interviews, the mixed marriage was positively evaluated with words like “support,” “confidence,” “understanding,” “calmness,” “safety,” and “stability” (Diana, 39; Petya, 38). Both partners spoke about how the mixed marriage had enriched them spiritually – through the contact with a different culture. “*I’m very pleased*” (Nasir, 50) and “*I have nothing to complain about*” (Daniela, 42) are the most typical statements.

Despite that, “difficulties” and “patience” (Diana, 39; Elena, 37; Petya, 38) are the key words respondents used to point out the negatives of mixed marriage. According to the respondents the lack of common memories and shared past is often an important obstacle, as the cultural background of the partners is different and can lead to gaps in understanding and perceptions. The pressure from the families and relatives, and the social rejection (especially in cases of Bulgarian-African families) were also named as exceptionally problematic areas. They also complained about financial difficulties, especially if these were the result of the inability of the male partner to find a (well paid) job because of his race or religion.

When asked what they would advise their children regarding a possible mixed marriage in future, most of the answers were evasive and cautious. They offered universal reflections on individual differences and choices, saying that they only wanted their children to be happy, and said that they would not prohibit such relationships. They would all give their children a chance to decide on their own.

## **Transnational families in Bulgaria – analysis of the field research**

### ***The main characteristics of respondents from transnational families***

The Bulgarian team conducted 12 interviews – 10 with spouses who have remained in Bulgaria, while their partners are working abroad and 2 with respondents who worked abroad themselves. All interviews but one (which was taken in the town of Blagoevgrad) were taken in villages in south-western Bulgaria: Dolno Dryanovo (3), Dolno Osenovo (3), Sapareva Banya (3), Cerovo (1), Ognyanovo (1). The gender division was as follows: 10 women, 2 men. The focus group was conducted in the village of Sapareva Banya and involved 6 women.

The region where the interviews and the focus group were conducted had been strongly affected by the post-1989 economic problems connected with the painful Bulgarian transition to market economy, and suffered even more because of the current global economic crisis. The marginalised economic situation of this region has also been a consequence of the strong dependence on traditional agriculture – especially tobacco growing, which has in recent years become highly unprofitable. The region has been additionally marginalised because of the ethnic-religious composition of the population (significant number of Roma and Pomaks - Muslim Bulgarians) and its mountainous landscape.

The age of respondents varied a lot – from 19 to 55. The large majority of them belong to a generation, which has been most affected by the political and economical transition. As they and their partners had no possibility of finding proper jobs in Bulgaria and providing for their families, they chose the alternative to look for employment abroad.

8 out of 12 respondents from the interview phase of the research were Muslim Bulgarians. This proportion reflects well the actual situation in the country. In view of their place at the social periphery, as well as their marginal position in the national economy, the Muslim Bulgarians have a very high emigration rate and there is a disproportionately high number of transnational families among them. All the respondents participating in the focus group were Orthodox Christians, but belonged to two different ethnic groups – Bulgarians (3) and Roma (3).

The main reason for the labour migration in case of all our respondents was the economic necessity. The decision was not influenced by the demographic or social characteristics of the families. Our respondents and their partners who have emigrated have different education levels (primary, secondary and higher education). They belong to different ethnic and religious groups (Christian Bulgarians, Muslim Bulgarians, Roma). Some had been married for only a few years, others for 30 or more years. Some were from nuclear households and had their own housing, and some lived in a collective household together with relatives

(parents, brothers, brothers-in-law, etc.). What they all had in common was the fact that they had lost their jobs and had no other options left but for one of the spouses to emigrate in search of a low qualified work abroad – work which as a rule was not linked to their education and specialisation.<sup>12</sup> The majority of spouses, who have remained in Bulgaria, also do not work in their fields of specialisation, but either look for a seasonal employment or are permanently unemployed and engaged in agriculture (in addition to looking after the children and taking care of the household, which in rural areas where the fieldwork was conducted amounts to a full day occupation).

The majority of the families from our sample have more than one child. Providing for the children is usually named among the most important reasons for emigration of one of the spouses.

### ***Aspects of transnational family life***

The majority of the partners of our interviewees live and work in Spain and Portugal (two have immigrated to the USA), while those of the focus group participants migrated to Italy. In general, the selection of the emigration destination widely depends on the social network of the people from the same town or village who have previously migrated to a given country and thus patterns are formed with people from the same village emigrating not only to the same country, but even to the same area or town.

All respondents said that the migration of their partners was intended to be temporary or short-term, but in some case the separation had lasted up to 10 years and the spouses were still uncertain when the migrant partner would return home. In fact, most of them do not know how long this situation will continue, saying that their partners will not return before the economic situation in Bulgaria improves. All expressed their desire that this would happen sooner than later, yet the majority were quite pessimistic in their predictions.

---

<sup>12</sup> The emigrants most often work in agriculture, restaurants, construction, take care for the elderly and ill, or work as domestic workers and as drivers.



Most of the migrant spouses visit their families in Bulgaria twice a year (in summer and for Christmas/New Year holidays). However, in some cases, they have not returned for several years.<sup>13</sup> The partners who have remained in Bulgaria rarely have the opportunity to visit their partners abroad, despite having a strong desire to do so. The main obstacles are usually the shortage of money and the need to take care for the children, elderly parents and property.

The communication between the two spouses directly depends on the way the decision for emigration was taken. If both spouses agreed that one of them should emigrate to find employment abroad, and if this decision continues to be supported by both in the course of time, then the communication is desired and unobstructed. Usually spouses use modern information and communication technologies (Internet, Skype, mobile phones) and often call each other, i.e. every day or several times a week. They speak about their lives in details and consult each other when making important decisions. In these cases it is obvious that the confidence between them has been preserved even in many years of actual separation. One woman (Silvena, 48) even spoke of a "*second honeymoon*" when her husband returned for the first time after several years of separation. Emigrants regularly send money and presents to their spouses and children who remained in Bulgaria, they are open to the problems of their families, they make mutual seasonal visits to each other and make plans for the family reunification (either in the host country or in Bulgaria). These families firmly believe that migration is a temporary situation and view it as a necessary but undesired way to solve the present financial problems. Usually such families make plans to have more children.

If, however, the decision to migrate was made against one of the spouses' will, the consequences for the marriage are fatal. All contacts are interrupted (even on the phone). In some cases partners became

---

<sup>13</sup> This is especially true for the two cases in which the emigrant spouse lives in the USA. In one, the spouse has returned to Bulgaria only twice in 7 years, and in the other, he has never returned since he emigrated 8 years ago.

openly hostile to each other, they started living with another person and in one of the cases they divorced. In the case when the female partner has migrated without the consent of her husband, she is rebuked for everything by him – *“she ignores my opinion”* (Georgi, 54), she is accused of harming the family and the children in particular, although she is the one who provides the economic resources for the family.

Usually the close relatives (the blood-related micro-group) look at such marriages negatively. The wider community (distant relatives, neighbours, and people from the same village) also often has a negative attitude. The negative reaction is exceptionally strong against the women who have gone to work abroad (*“in our village they look down on me with distrust”* – Kudrie, 31). They are seen as violators of several traditions: the woman must not separate from her family, the woman should look after her children, and the woman cannot be the “head” of the family and cannot make the money for the family.

### ***Gender dynamics in transnational families***

Living separately has significantly transformed the traditional gender hierarchy in transnational families. The decision-making, which previously used to be the male priority or a result of discussions and mutual agreement, has become almost completely a female responsibility. Although all the female respondents say that they consult their husbands over the phone, it can be deduced from their responses that they actually manage their families on their own – they take care of the household, bring up the children and distribute the family budget (*“a woman is in charge of the parade”* – Ginka, 33). For some women, who were previously used to their passive role in the family decision-making, the new and changed situation came as a burden and caused a number of difficulties. The most serious complaints refer to the strenuous domestic work (*“I do everything”* – Daniela, 36) and the fact that they have to be responsible for all important family decisions – from education and health care of the children to household repair work and maintenance.

According to respondents the labour migration and the separate life have a very bad effect on the children. Sometimes they do not really know their parent; they are in contact with him/her only on the phone or via Skype. This leads to depersonalization of his/her authority, lack of a role model, and an interrupted emotional tie, which can hardly be compensated for. The children lack the emotional support that is indispensable in difficult situations in which many of the families from our sample live.

The interviewees said that their children looked upon their parent who was abroad mainly as a financial sponsor whom they demanded and expected presents from. The absence of one of the parents loads the other one with too many responsibilities and often predetermines errors in his/her approach to the children's upbringing. One of the respondents blamed his wife for having "left" their son during his puberty, for causing an emotional deficit in him and turning him into a withdrawn, alienated and lonely person. Such cases of deviant behaviour are rare but most of the interviewees talked about the difficulties of raising children on their own. The possible decisions for a family reunion abroad were most often hindered by the thought of the stress the children would be subjected to (language learning, separation from friends and relatives, getting used to the new environment). The separation from one parent often makes the children excessively attached to the other parent, which in turn can become a cause for problems between the spouses. The difficulties in the children's upbringing are also a barrier for some couples to plan more children.

As regards the gains which transnational marriage brings to the children, they can be summarized in several directions – financial security, opportunity "to see the world" when they visit their parent abroad or even to live in a new environment in cases if the whole family decided to join the emigrant spouse. If the children are already grown up, they also have the possibility to join their parent to work at the same place.

According to the majority of respondents, their lives became very difficult after their partner's emigration. They had to assume, besides their own obligations, also all of the partner's duties ("*everything has fallen on my back*" – Reni, 50). Their stories clearly demonstrate that the traditional models of the social gender roles have been preserved along with the division of "male" and "female" work duties. However, the emigration and the transnational family life have put this preserved model to the test. Such a change is exceptionally dramatic for men as they look upon domestic work (cleaning, cooking, laundering, ironing, etc.) as an exclusively "female" activity. According to the answers of one male respondent, he realized only after his wife's migration how difficult it was to combine both work and household obligations.

In the families where the male partner has migrated, his absence is usually partially compensated by the assistance of an elderly parent, relative or the elder child, who help with the household and the upbringing of younger children. In those cases, where such support and assistance is unavailable, the respondents spoke about the exceptional difficulties they have in coping with their situation and about feeling desperate, lonely and caught in a situation which they cannot escape from.

A large majority of respondents said that such a family life "*is not normal.*" It has only shortcomings ("*how can you be happy when you are alone*" – Spaska, 40) and that is why it is perceived as a temporary state of affairs ("*until we improve our situation*" – Nevse, 24; "*until the crisis is over*" – Kudrie, 30; "*until the children grow up*" – Maria, 34; "*until her retirement*" – Georgi, 54). It is not a surprise that in the cases when the relations between the spouses have deteriorated or they have even been divorced, the emigration and the separate life are named as the main reason for such a development. In only two cases the temporary separation was described also as a stimulus for diversification of the family relations or for "*refreshing*" of emotions ("*we would probably argue much more if we were constantly together*" – Silvena, 48).

The female respondents say that in most cases their husbands have changed as a result of the separation. In some cases the change is perceived as a positive one – the husbands have become more responsible, they have come to appreciate the hardship and the amount of time and energy that needs to be invested in the domestic work (*“before he was mama’s boy, demanding and expecting to be served and to have everything prepared for him, but after having lived alone for two years, he changed drastically”* – Ayrie, 31). In other cases, the change was for the worse. The husbands have become nervous, bad tempered, jumpy, jealous and alienated from their families.

Speaking about jealousy and trust, most female respondents say that to a lesser or larger extent, they feel some jealousy, but they are somewhat reassured by the fact that their husbands are usually in the company of other relatives or other people from the same village who “keep an eye on them.” One respondent said that she did not think her husband would be unfaithful to her just because he was far away (*“if he wanted to cheat on me, he could do it also here”* – Gyultena, 26). Another said that there was no problem as long as she did *“not learn about it and he stays with the family”* (Aneta, 35). As for themselves, almost all of the respondents said that with all the obligations they have with the children and the household, they did not even have time to think about having an affair, although some admit that they miss human contact.

As a whole, the positive sides of transnational marriage are limited to its economic dimensions – *“It’s not easy but we need the money”* (Kudrie, 31). The money earned abroad and the savings in Euros are compared to the salaries in Bulgaria, always stressing on the great difference in the living standard. The separation is most often seen as a sacrifice made for the benefit of the children. Families usually invest most of the savings in the building of a house (for them and for their children) and in their children’s education. This usually prolongs the experience of the transnational family life almost indefinitely – more money is always needed for expansion and maintenance of the house and for further education.

## Bibliography

Антова, Светлана. 2004. Смесените бракове между българи и словаци (The Mixed Marriages between Bulgarians and Slovaks). – In: *Българска етнология* (Bulgarian Ethnology), Vol. 1, pp. 28-39.

Ганева-Райчева, Валентина. 2004а. *Българите в Унгария – проблеми на културната идентичност* (Bulgarians in Hungary – Issues of Cultural Identity). Sofia: Academic Press “Prof. Marin Drinov.”

Ганева-Райчева, Валентина. 2004b. Българската диаспора в Унгария – аспекти на интеркултурния диалог (The Bulgarian Diaspora in Hungary – Aspects of Inter-cultural Dialogue). – In: *Антропологични изследвания* (Studies in Anthropology), Vol. 5, pp. 145-172.

Грозева-Исса, Катя. 2004. Психо- и социо-лингвистични проблеми при избор на лични имена в българо-арабски семейства (Psycho- and Sociolinguistic Problems in Selection of Personal Names in Bulgarian-Arab Families). – In: *Наука* (Science), Vol. 5, pp. 49-52.

Карамихова, Маргарита. 2004. *Американски мечти. Пътеводител сред първа генерация емигранти* (American Dreams. A Guide through the First Generation Emigrants). Sofia: IK Krotal.

Мицева, Евгения. 2005. Кюрди (Kurds). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 137-155.

МТСП. 2009. *Национална стратегия на Република България по миграция и интеграция (2008–2015)* (National Strategy of Republic of Bulgaria on Migration and Integration 2008-2015). Sofia: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, [www.strategy.bg/FileHandler.ashx?fileId=570](http://www.strategy.bg/FileHandler.ashx?fileId=570)

НСИ. 2008. *Население и демографски процеси* (Population and Demographic Processes). Sofia: National Statistical Institute, <http://www.nsi.bg/population/Population07.htm>

НСИ. 2009. *Постоянно пребиваващи чужденци в Р България по гражданство – Данни* (Permanently Resident Foreigners in Bulgaria by Citizenship - Data). Sofia: National Statistical Institute, [http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop\\_5.8\\_Migration\\_DR.xls](http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop_5.8_Migration_DR.xls)

Пампоров, Алексей. 2009. *Социални дистанции и етнически стереотипи за малцинствата в България* (Social Distances and Ethnic Stereotypes about the Minorities in Bulgaria). Sofia: Open Society Institute.

- Ata, Abe W. 2000. *Intermarriage between Christians and Muslims: a West Bank Study*. Victoria, Australia: David Lovell.
- Baldassar, Loretta and Cora Baldock. 2000. Linking Migration and Family Studies: Transnational Migrants and the Care of Ageing Parents. – In: *Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Migration Research. Interdisciplinary and International Perspectives*. Agozino, Biko, ed. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 61-89.
- Basch, Linda, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc. 1994. *Nations Unbound. Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Breger, Rosemary and Rosanna Hill, eds. 1998. *Cross-Cultural Marriage: Identity and Choice*. Oxford, UK: Berg.
- Bryceson, Deborah and Ulla Vuorela, eds. 2002. *The Transnational Family. New European Frontiers and Global Networks*. Oxford: Berg.
- Cohen, Steven Martin. 1988. *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?*. Bloomington: Indiana University.
- Cottrel Baker, Ann. 1990. Cross-national Marriages: A Review of the Literature. – In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 21, pp. 151-169.
- Douglas, George and George Yancey. 2004. Taking Stock of America's Attitudes on Cultural Diversity: An Analysis of Public Deliberation on Multiculturalism, Assimilation and Inter-marriage. – In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 1-19.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds. 2003. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. London: Granta Books.
- Erel, Umut. 2002. Reconceptualising Motherhood: Experiences of Migrant Women from Turkey Living in Germany. – In: *The Transnational Family. New European Frontiers and Global Networks*. Bryceson, Deborah and Ulla Vuorela, eds. Oxford: Berg, pp. 127-146.
- Gamburd, Michele Ruth. 2000. *The Kitchen Spoon's Handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's Migrant Housemaids*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc Szanton, eds. 1992. *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration. Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences, July, Vol. 645.
- Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc Szanton. 1995. From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration. – In: *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 1, January, pp. 48-64.
- Glick Schiller, Nina and Georges Eugene Fouron. 2001. *Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Goldstein, Joshua R. 1999. Kinship Networks that Cross Racial Lines: The Exception or the Rule? – In: *Demography*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 399-407.
- Gordon, Milton M. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goulbourne, Harry and Mary Chamberlain, eds. 2001. *Caribbean Families in the Transatlantic World*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Ho, Man Keung. 1990. *Intermarried Couples in Therapy*. Springfield, IL: Thomas.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette and Ernestine Avila. 1997. I'm Here, But I'm There. The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood. – In: *Gender and Society*, Vol. 11, Issue 5, pp. 548-571.
- Imamura, Anne E. 1990. Strangers in a Strange Land: Coping with Marginality in International Marriage. – In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 21, pp. 171-191.
- Jaes Falicov, Celia. 1995. Cross-Cultural Marriages. – In: *Handbook of Couple Therapy*. Jacobson, Neil S. and Alan S. Gurman, eds. Clinical New York: Guilford, pp. 231-246.
- Jakobson, Cardell and Tim Heaton. 2008. Comparative Patterns of Interracial Marriage: Structural Opportunities, Third-party Factors, and Temporal Change in Immigrant Societies. – In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 39, Issue 2, pp. 129-148.
- Johnson, Bryan and Cardell Jacobson. 2005. Contact in Context: An Examination of Social Settings on Whites' Attitudes towards Interracial Marriage. – In: *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 68, pp. 387-399.
- Johnson, Walton R. and Michael D. Warren, eds. 1994. *Inside the Mixed Marriage: Accounts of Changing Attitudes, Perceptions of Cross-Cultural and Interracial Marriages*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Kalmijn, Matthijs. 1998. Inter-marriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends. – In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24, pp. 395-421.
- Khan, Dina. 1998. Mixed Marriages in Islam: An Anthropological Perspective on Pakistan. – In: *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, Vol. 29, pp. 5-28.
- Lauth Bacas, Jutta. 2002. *Cross-border Marriages and the Formation of Transnational Families: A Case Study of Greek-German Couples in Athens*. Oxford: University of Oxford, Working Paper. October.
- Mason, Jennifer. 2004. Managing Kinship Over Long Distances: The Significance of the Visit. – In: *Social Policy and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 421-429.
- Muhsam, Helmut. 1990. Social Distance and Asymmetry in Inter-marriage Patterns. – In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 21, pp. 307-324.



- Nyberg Sorensen, Ninna. 2005. *Transnational Family Life Across the Atlantic: The Experience of Colombian and Dominican Migrants in Europe*. Paper presented at the International Conference on migration and domestic work in a global perspective, Wassenaar. May.
- Popova, Katerina and Marko Hajdinjak, eds. 2006. *Forced Ethnic Migrations on the Balkans: Consequences and Rebuilding of Societies (Conference Proceedings)*. Sofia: IMIR. [http://www.imir-bg.org/imir/books/Forced\\_Ethnic\\_Migrations1.pdf](http://www.imir-bg.org/imir/books/Forced_Ethnic_Migrations1.pdf)
- Pribilsky, Jason. 2004. Aprendemos a Convivir: Conjugal Relations, Co-parenting, and Family Life among Ecuadorian Transnational Migrants in New York City and the Ecuadorian Andes. – In: *Global Networks*, Vol. 4, Issue 3, pp. 313-334.
- Reynolds, Tracey and Elisabetta Zontini. 2006. A Comparative Study of Care and Provision across Caribbean and Italian Transnational Families. – In: *Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group Working Paper No. 16*. London: South Bank University.
- Roer-Strier, Dorit and Dina Ben Ezra. 2006. Inter marriages between Western Women and Palestinian Men: Multidirectional Adaptation Process. – In: *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 68, Issue 1, February, pp. 41-54.
- Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. 2005. *Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Suarez-Orozco, Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco. 2001. *Children of Immigration*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Thode-Arora, Hilke. 1999. *Interethnic Marriage. Theoretical and Methodological Aspects*. Berlin: Reimer.
- Vertovec, Steven. 1999. Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism. – In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 22, Issue 2, March, pp. 447 – 462.
- Vertovec, Steven and Robin Cohen, eds. 1999. *Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism*. Cheltenham and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Wilding, Raelene. 2006. Virtual Intimacies? Families Communicating across Transnational Contexts. – In: *Global Networks*, Vol. 6, Issue 2, pp. 125-142.
- Yancey, George A. and Shereilyn W. Yancey. 1997. Black-White Differences in the Use of Personal Advertisements for Individuals Seeking Interracial Relationships. – In: *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 5, pp. 650-667.
- Zontini, Elisabetta. 2006. Italian Families and Social Capital: Care Provision in a Transnational World. – In: *Community, Work and Family*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 325-345.



## **MIGRATION, RELIGION AND GENDER: FEMALE MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS IN BULGARIA**

*Evgenia Troeva, Mila Mancheva*

The increasing immigration flows into Europe with significant shares of female migrants and Muslim migrants provoke a wide academic interest.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1980s, migration scholars have been paying attention to the social phenomena related to female migration (Krasteva, 2010, p. 63) and to the dynamics of religiosity in the migration process. In particular, they pay interest to the processes of integration of Muslim immigrant women in their host societies (Buijs, 1993; Anthias, Lazaridis, 2000; Freedman, Tarr, 2000; Knörr, Meier, 2000; Erel, 2003; Salih, 2003; Killian, 2006; Pojmann, 2006) and to the religious practices of immigrants (Hunter, 2002; Kastoryano, 2007; Al-Hamarneh, Thielmann, 2008). Considerable number of studies are particularly focused on immigrant women religiosity<sup>2</sup> (El Guindi, 1999; Leonard, Stepick, Vasquez, Holdaway, 2005; Martin-Muñoz, Lopez-Sala, 2005; Scott, 2007; Marranci, 2007; Gozdziaik, 2008; Jouili, 2008; Schmidt, 2008; Joppke, 2009). Researchers of female migration identify processes of identity reconstruction that involve interactions between tradition and the new social and cultural environment of immigrants with diversification of the Islamic practices being the outcome (Martin-Muñoz, Lopez-Sala, 2005, pp. 137-140).

The goal of the present paper is to investigate the relationship between migration, religion and gender in the case of Muslim immigrant women in Bulgaria. The relevance of such study in the context of Bulgaria is connected to the geo-political position of the country with regard to migration on the one hand and to its specific confessional profile on the other. Located on the transit routes from Asia and Africa to Europe, Bulgaria has also become an entry gate to the European Union in 2007.

---

<sup>1</sup> Between 1990 and 2010, the proportion of migrant population in Europe has risen from 6.9% to 9.5% with prevalence of female (52.3% in 2010) over male immigrants. (United Nations, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> On the relationship gender – religion see: Castelli, 2001.

The country that has traditionally been the corridor of transit migration now displays potential of becoming host to an increasing immigration. The majority of the Bulgarian population are Orthodox Christians, while the share of Muslim minorities is 12% (Turks, Muslim Bulgarians, Roma<sup>3</sup>, Tatars). The country has a long history of inter-religious and inter-cultural relations and well established institutional framework with regard to the Orthodox and Islamic professions. This context places Muslim immigrants in Bulgaria in a situation different from that of most West European countries where Islam has emerged as a minority religion only in the last decades.

The main analytical questions examined by the study concern the role of Muslim religion in the construction of identity in the context of migration; the role of gender in maintaining Muslim profession in this process; the role Islam plays for the adaptation / integration / marginalisation of the female immigrants in the Bulgarian society. To this aim, the study investigates the levels and types of continuity and change that have occurred in the realm of religious practices and cultural norms of Muslim female immigrants in the Bulgarian society.

## **Methodology**

The present study is based on qualitative research methods and was conducted among immigrants from both denominations of Islam (Shia and Sunni), as well as among representatives of local Islamic institutions in Bulgaria. The female respondents come from countries of the Middle East and Albania and are of different status (refugees or refugee applicants, temporary or permanent residents, citizens). The qualitative research was based on semi-standardized in-depth interviews and observation.

Interviews were conducted with a total of 18 respondents. Of them 14 are immigrants – 12 women and 2 men, and 4 are representatives of

---

<sup>3</sup> According to the 2001 Census, 27.9% of Roma in Bulgaria are Muslims. <http://www.nsi.bg/Census/Census.htm>

relevant Islamic institutions (Chief Mufti office, Sofia Mufti office and the Sofia mosque). The respondents were approached through three main channels of access: through immigrant institutions (The Iraqi Club in Sofia and the Council of Refugee Women), some key respondents, as well as researcher's personal contacts. The interviews with immigrants were conducted at the following sites: the Council of Refugee Women (3); the Humanitarian Office of the Ethiopian Association (2); the office of the Bulgarian language courses for refugees (2); respondents' private homes (3); IMIR's office (1); migrants' personal office (2); a café (1). Twelve interviews were conducted in Bulgarian and six in Arabic with the help of a translator. Our observation was conducted in the Sofia mosque, the Iraqi Club in Sofia, migrants' homes, the Council of Refugee Women and the Humanitarian Office of the Ethiopian Association.

We conducted the interviews using a semi-standardized questionnaire divided into four sections. Interviews lasted about 2 - 2.5 hours each. The first section of the questionnaire focused on the respondents' social and demographic profile, the second on their social environment and interactions in the host country, the third on the respondents' religious beliefs and practices and the fourth on their gender relations and identities in the context of migration and religion. The first two sections of the interview traced the relationship between social experiences of migrants in their home and host country, the levels of adaptation and the forms of integration in the Bulgarian society. The adaptation and integration were analyzed through indicators such as migrant networks, professional surroundings, forms of socialization, information sources, as well as leisure time routines.

The third section of the questionnaire traced the relationships between religion, migration and gender. These relationships were investigated through questions examining migrants' religious practices (related to the life cycle and the religious calendar) and religious performance (in private and in public) demonstrated through clothing practices, visits to prayer homes and immigrant gatherings. Another set of questions addressed respondents' perceptions about the changes in religious

performance and profession they had experienced in migration. To better understand the complexities in constructing religious and gender identities on the part of female migrants, particular questions traced religious practices with highly gendered implications. Finally, this section included questions examining the relationship between Muslim immigrants and local Islamic institutions.

The questionnaire's fourth section investigated gender dynamics in the private and public spheres through indicators such as housework, employment, childcare and family decision making. The analytical focus of the investigation was on the role of religion in the construction of gender identities and gender relations in migration.

Semi-standardized interviews with representatives of local Islamic institutions aimed to analyze their involvement with Muslim immigrants, their observations about the religious profession of immigrants and their views about the relationship between the local and the immigrant Islam.

## **The immigration context and the profile of respondents**

Compared to Western Europe, immigration into Bulgaria started later and is of much smaller proportions (Кръстева, 2005). Muslim immigrant communities in Bulgaria originating from Arab countries are the outcome of two major migration waves. The first one took place during the socialist period (between the 1960s and 1980s) in the framework of official bilateral agreements between Bulgaria and different Arab states. According to these agreements, Arab countries accepted Bulgarian specialists mainly in the health care and the construction sectors, while the Bulgarian state accepted foreign students in the country's universities. This wave of immigrants was dominated by highly educated, prevalingly male immigrants. Many of them were secular oriented or atheists as they professed communist beliefs. A significant number of the Arab immigrant students have married Bulgarian women.

The second migration wave took place after 1989 and differed considerably from the first one in a number of respects. The absence of centralized state control over trans-border movements and migration and the changed geopolitical realities influenced diversification of the channels of migration and the profiles of immigrants. Arab immigrants were now refugees,<sup>4</sup> irregulars and transit migrants – many of whom women. The post-1989 migration flow from Arab countries included single men, entire families and female immigrants with children entering Bulgaria for family reunion. While the first immigration flow included mainly students and university graduates, the second one was composed of self-employed entrepreneurs and traders, as well as of immigrants with lower education and qualifications, engaged in low-qualified sectors of the economy (Желязкова, Григоров, Димитрова, 2005). There are marked gender disproportions in the immigrant communities – while women dominate in some (for example the Russian community), men prevail in others (for example the African and the Arab communities) (Krasteva, 2010, p. 67).

The present study was conducted among the first generation immigrants who entered Bulgaria during both immigration waves: in the pre- and post-1989 periods. The study respondents originate from the following countries: Iraq (10), Palestine (2), Lebanon (1), Albania (1). Seven of the respondents have refugee status, three are refugee status applicants, one has permanent residence permit and three are naturalized Bulgarian citizens. Two of them are male and the rest (12) are female. The majority of female respondents are Muslims with only two of them professing Christian religion. The female respondents are of rather diverse age profile: three in the age group of 19 – 29; three in the age group of 30 – 33; three in the age group of 40 – 45; two in the age group of 50 – 55 and one aged 68. The educational profile of the respondents is also diverse. One is a university graduate; two were university students upon leaving their home country; one has an incomplete university education; three have graduated from colleges or professional schools; four have secondary education and one respondent had finished primary

<sup>4</sup> On the refugees from Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq see: Кръстева, 2006.

school only. Six of the respondents are employed (a cosmetician, two social workers, two teachers and an employee in the service sector). Six of the respondents were not working at the time of the interview but three of them had professional qualifications as a teacher, a nurse and an economist. Three of the interviewed women have no particular professional qualification.

The respondents have resided in the country for varying periods of time. Two of them for only 5-6 months; four for a period of 1 to 2.5 years; three for a period of 6 to 10 years and five for a period of 16 to 30 years.

The prevailing majority of female respondents are married and reside in Bulgaria with their husbands and families. One young woman is single, one is divorced and two are widows. Four entered Bulgaria for the purpose of family reunion. With the exception of three respondents, all have children with whom they arrived in the country. One respondent gave birth to a child after arrival to Bulgaria.

### **Immigrant networks and accommodation patterns**

Social interactions of Muslim immigrant women in Bulgaria appear confined to co-national and immigrant networks that usually comprise a limited circle of relatives and friends. In addition, their social routines are centred in the private sphere and they have very limited presence in the public sphere. These findings are confirmed by the analysis of a number of indicators such as: help upon arrival and support networks in migration, accommodation patterns, daily routines, sources of information, Bulgarian language proficiency, and partaking in migrant affiliations.

Initial orientation and help after arrival is provided to female migrants by very close relatives or by co-nationals who have resided longer in the country. Female immigrants who entered Bulgaria along family reunion schemes reported to have been helped by respective members



of their family: husband, father or son. Other respondents were closely guarded along all steps of the orientation and accommodation process by very close relatives. A refugee family from Iraq composed of a young couple, the wife's elderly parents and two children were supported by their aunt who had spent almost 30 years in the country. The woman reported that her aunt supported the family throughout the refugee application process, and helped them to find an apartment and employment. Daily support regarding care for the children and health care for the elderly parents was assured through a tight family network. A third group of respondents who arrived to the country together with their husbands, with no relatives already residing in the country, reported to have been helped by members of their own community. Only one respondent said that she and her family were provided for upon arrival by the existing immigrant support organisations in the country. In addition, job and employment for female immigrants and for their husbands appear to be provided prevalingly within co-ethnic or co-immigrant businesses.

Although migrants' social networks are almost exclusively confined to their own co-national communities, immigrants do not settle in compact areas or neighbourhoods. The majority of immigrants from Arab countries live dispersed in rented apartments throughout the suburban quarters of Sofia. Immigrant families appear to change rented apartments and city quarters many times. The system of landowner-tenant relations in Bulgaria that favours the rights of the owners over those of tenants contributes to a dynamic market of rented accommodation and high level of tenant instability. This results in a rather mobile accommodation pattern of immigrants who often change the neighbourhoods.<sup>5</sup>

None of the respondents reported to have any immigrant neighbours in their immediate living surroundings. Three of the respondents, however, reported to have a close immigrant friend living in the same quarter. Immigrant women report to have rather limited contacts with

---

<sup>5</sup> A female respondent from Lebanon reported that her family has changed apartments and neighbourhoods seven times during the 16-year long stay in the country.

their Bulgarian neighbours. Only one respondent reported to be in good relation with an old Bulgarian lady, living next door, who gave treats to her children and invited her occasionally for tea. Another female immigrant from Iraq (who has been in Bulgaria for 5 months only) reported to be making conscious efforts to communicate with her neighbours (in order to work on her Bulgarian) and every early afternoon went to the local park to communicate with the (mostly old) people there.

Muslim immigrant women report that migration has significantly changed the intensity of their social contacts. Lively and frequent social interactions within their extended families and with friends in the home country are contrasted to rather secluded and “quiet” daily routines spent within severely reduced social circles in immigration. Daily routines of female immigrants are almost fully focused on their home and children. Major daily engagements reported by respondents include cooking, cleaning, shopping, caring for the children and going to work (those who are employed). Divergence from this routine occurs for respondents who are enrolled in Bulgarian language courses. However, they reported to attend language courses irregularly. Although the uniform explanation given by immigrant women was that they could not afford paying for daily public transportation, the reasons for the insufficient attendance of language courses should be more complex.

Respondents report to spend their free time within their private homes, engaging in activities such as *“watching TV,” “sleeping,” “talking with my mother,” “studying,” “knitting,”* and *“writing.”* Muslim immigrant women tend to enter the public sphere only for specific activities: shopping at the local market, visiting a Bulgarian language course, going to work, visiting a doctor, contacting local immigrant support association for advice, financial help or other type of support. Female immigrants avoid leisure time activities outside their homes. They take walks in the city or the city parks, or visit cafés with their husbands only very rarely (usually on holidays).

Respondents say that they have no or only very few female friends (relatives and acquaintances from the Agency for Refugees or other immigrant support organisations), usually from their own community. They meet together only rarely, but talk over the phone more often. There is no practice among Muslim immigrant women of meeting female friends in cafés or other public places. All interviewed respondents explained that with the fact that there was no café or sweet shop “appropriate” for such meetings. Although there is a marked number of ethnic restaurants and fast food places around Sofia (Lebanese, Afghan, Turkish, Kurdish and other), female immigrants insisted that there is no café especially opened by and for members of their community. The preferred form of meetings among female friends is paying visits at home, where they usually cook and share meals together. Shared cooking thus appears important form of socialization of women who use the occasions to share present problems and joys as well as common culture<sup>6</sup> and memories.

Only three respondents reported to have Bulgarian friends. The first had graduated from a secondary school in Bulgaria and reported to have a wide social network of friends. However, her “best” friend is also an immigrant (from Ukraine). The second respondent is a teacher at the Palestinian school and considers two of her Bulgarian colleagues friends while the third reported to meet regularly with a young Bulgarian neighbour who is married to an Iraqi man.

Bulgarian language proficiency of Muslim immigrant women and the sources of information they use demonstrate that their social contacts are mostly limited within immigrant networks. Only three of the female respondents were proficient in Bulgarian. They have lived in the country for respectively 30, 15 and 6 years (one of them graduated from a Bulgarian secondary school). Another respondent spoke relatively good Bulgarian, but spoke with great insecurity, obviously having no regular practice. The rest of the respondents knew little or no Bulgarian. Thus

---

<sup>6</sup> Women usually cook traditional dishes.

it is not surprising that all respondents reported Arab news and TV channels as their main sources of information. None of the respondents reported to follow Bulgarian TV channels or newspapers. Internet is used by many immigrants as a source of information and communication with relatives in other parts of the world.

### **Immigrant women gathering**

Social interactions of Muslim immigrant women are additionally troubled by the absence of formal or informal female immigrant associations in the country. The Muslim immigrant women in Bulgaria have established only one active NGO (The Council of Refugee Women), have attempted but failed to establish a female social support organisation, and do not participate in any existing national immigrant association in the country.

Numerous Bulgarian immigrant communities have set up their associations (Syrians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Afghans and others). All these organisations, however, are male dominated and female migrants play no particular role in the associations' decision making or organisational life. None of the female respondents reported to have contacts with their respective national associations in Sofia. Additionally, Muslim immigrant women report to have no alternative forms of formal or informal gathering based on gender principle. Moreover, when attempts were made to establish a female immigrant support association, they encountered resistance on the part of the immigrant women.

In 2005, several migrant support NGOs in Sofia attempted to establish an organisation of the Arab female immigrants – to be named “Anur” (“Light”). The idea was that the organisation developed support activities especially tailored for female immigrants. The reason given by immigrant women who refused to take part in the organisation was that they did not have the time for this responsibility as they were very busy taking care for their families. Two different explanations were given by our respondents for the failure of this initiative. The first one claimed that Muslim immigrant women who were invited to take part in the new

organisation believed that it was to serve as a female club for informal gathering and socializing. As soon as they realized that it would involve social support activities and responsibilities, they felt rather discouraged and withdrew.

The second explanation was that the initiative was not supported by the men in the community. An organisation providing support and institutional networking to immigrant women was seen as potentially threatening the role of men and their informal business within the community. Additionally, some men in the community opposed the organisation, as they believed that the opportunity to contact and work with institutions would empower their wives and make them more independent.

At the time of the field research only two organisations existed attracting a limited number of Muslim immigrant women. The Council of Refugee Women, an immigrant support organisation hosted in the building of the Bulgarian Red Cross, attracted some female immigrant volunteer workers. The goal of the organisation is to help the refugee women and to facilitate their integration into the Bulgarian society. The organisation provides institutional orientation and advise to refugee applicants and refugees (both men and women, Muslim as well as Christian). In addition, it organises excursions, trainings and holiday celebrations for immigrants. Immigrant women volunteering at the organisation stated that their decision to join was directed by their desire to help –*“I like helping people.”* However, through observations we were able to see that the Council of Refugee Women provided its female volunteers the opportunity to socialize, to engage and feel needed, as well as to be closer to the support opportunities, provided by the organisation.

The second organisation attracting Muslim immigrant women was the Bulgarian branch of the Focolare Movement, founded by the Catholic Church in 1943 in Northern Italy. The major cause of the Movement is to maintain dialogue among all religions and for that purpose it welcomes members of different faiths. At present, it has hundreds of

thousands of members throughout the world. The Focolare movement was revived in Bulgaria in 1991 and at present is managed by four core Focolare representatives coming from Italy, Germany, Croatia and Slovenia. Our field study identified a number of Muslim immigrant women who were partaking in the activities of the movement. Focolare's main activities in Bulgaria include: regular gatherings in Sofia at the Catholic church "St. Joseph," the Uniate church near the "Ljulín Mountain" street and in the Focolare's headquarters. The major purpose of these meetings is the socialization of the members. In addition, Focolares organise annual meetings in chosen cities of the country that are called for the occasion "Mariapolis" ("Maria's city"). Followers of the movement from all over the country (women, men and children numbering up to 100 people) gather in this city and live "as one family" for three days.<sup>7</sup> Young people and children are organised into groups of particular activities. Muslim immigrant women who attend the Focolare meetings and gatherings appear attracted by the chance to extend and diversify their social contacts in a friendly environment, which facilitates their integration. At Focolare meetings, Muslim immigrant women and their children mix with Bulgarian families. They also prepare national dishes or make presentations about the culture and traditions in their home countries for members of the movement.<sup>8</sup> Muslim immigrant women are impressed by the respect that the Focolares pay to their religion and culture, as well as to their situation as refugees. Common meetings and visits are held on the occasion of religious holidays such as Christmas and Ramadan Bayram with congratulations and presents being exchanged.

The reduced social milieu of Muslim immigrant women in migration in both the private and the public sphere is verified by respondents through their recurring references about the limited contacts they have and the feelings of "loneliness" they encounter in the host country.

---

<sup>7</sup> The selected city for the years 2008 and 2009 was the city of Kazanlak.

<sup>8</sup> Respondents reported to have prepared sweets for 200 people for one of the big national meeting of the Movement held in the Red Cross Building in Sofia. During meetings women tell each other about their home places and show pictures from there.

## Muslim immigrants and local Islamic institutions

In spite of the well-developed institutional framework assuring the Islamic profession in Bulgaria, most respondents report to have no knowledge of the existence of local Muslim communities. Those few who are aware of them reported to have no particular contacts with members of these communities. According to both immigrants and members of the local Islamic institutions, Muslim immigrants in Bulgaria have no official or informal mosques, places of prayer or Quranic courses. Muslim immigrants are expected to turn to the existing Islamic institutions.

Islamic institutions in Bulgaria, such as the Chief Mufti office and the Sofia Mufti office, have no particular policy towards the Muslim immigrant communities. The Chief Mufti office was engaged with Muslim immigrants on very few occasions. Its Directorate on Islamic Profession was responsible for the construction and furnishing of a prayer home in the Busmantsi Centre for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners. Later the same Directorate organised *iftar* dinners for the fasting inmates of the Centre during Ramadan and granted them needed items such as bed sheets. While the first initiative was financed by the Bulgarian government (the Directorate of Denominations at the Council of Ministers), the second was financed by the Mufti office. There is no official imam for the Busmantsi prayer home and the prayers are conducted by an inmate from Senegal, a university graduate in philosophy from a Bulgarian University.

Muslim immigrants themselves turn to the official Islamic institutions in cases of death, marriage or divorce. However, for purposes of circumcision of a boy or washing the deceased before burial, immigrants turn to members of their own communities. Some Muslim immigrants contact the Mufti office to seek social support such as health care, purchase of medicine, help for return to the home country. The Mufti office, however, has no budget to satisfy such requests.

## Religious Duties and Practices

All interviewed women identify themselves as believers and consider women as more religious than men. They perceive religion as something one was born with – *“I was born with Muslim religion. My grandfather, my father, all are Muslims and I am a believer.”* *“Religion was born in man by inheritance, not by choice.”* Religion is understood and lived as a set of universal moral norms. It is also perceived as a social mark signifying one’s belonging to a certain social group.

There is one mosque in Sofia, located in the city centre. It has a section for women on the second floor. Muslim immigrant men visit the Sofia mosque more frequently than women do, most massively during the Friday prayer, when the mosque accommodates up to a few hundred Muslim men. As the first floor does not provide enough space for such a number of persons, they often use also the female section and the outside ground of the building. According to the Chief Imam of the Sofia mosque, immigrant men form up to 5% of the believers visiting the mosque. Sometimes men are accompanied for the Friday prayer by their wives, who do not enter the mosque but wait near by. The Friday prayer is a *“fars”* (i.e. is not compulsory for women). Officials in the Mufti office and in the Sofia mosque verified that some immigrant families (from Syria and Afghanistan) send their children to the weekend Quranic courses, organised by the Sofia mosque.

The conducted interviews showed that the majority of Muslim female immigrants do not go to mosques. This has been confirmed by the stories of our respondents, by the interviewed representatives of official Muslim institutions in Sofia, as well as by our observation of the Sofia mosque during the month of Ramadan. This is a practice inherited from immigrants’ home countries where they used to visit mosques only on the occasion of some holidays. Our female Shiite respondents reported to have visited certain holy places in their home countries such as Ali’s grave for example.



The minority of Muslim immigrant women who visit the mosque in Sofia tend to do it mainly during the Ramadan month. Only one of our respondents reported to have visited the mosque in Sofia several years ago about ten times for the evening prayers during the Ramadan fast. She explained her motivation with the free *iftar* dinner offered traditionally by the mosque as she obviously was in need at the time.

Our visit to the Sofia mosque during one of the Ramadan evenings in 2009 revealed a meagre number of seven Muslim women and three girls in the female section of the mosque that contrasted with the male section of the mosque, which was full. Only one of the present women was an immigrant from Egypt and one of the girls was from a mixed family (a Moroccan father and a Bulgarian mother). The rest were local Muslims.

The majority of the interviewed female immigrants go to the Bulgarian churches, where they pray and light candles. Visited are the central churches of "St. Alexander Nevski," "St. Nedelya" and the church "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" (located at the central market). There are also family visits to churches located in the neighbourhoods where immigrants live. A young Muslim who grew up in Bulgaria said: *"I cannot say that I do everything like the other Muslims. I am considered as such but what I am attracted to is something very different.... I believe in God but I like to go to church. And I do it very often. At the same time I have not visited a mosque."* The surprising practice of visiting Christian churches that was reported by the majority of our respondents appears to be rather a tradition conveyed from their origin countries (this applies especially for the Iraqi women) where the women used to visit Christian churches as well. According to one of our Iraqi respondents *"in Iraq we are not so (religious). Because we have many Christians. We live together. We have many churches in Iraq. And we are raised this way. There is no difference between Jesus and Mohammed. The Quran also speaks about Jesus."* Our respondents comply with the rule that women in monthly cycle cannot enter a temple – they apply it also to the Christian churches they visit in Bulgaria. Thus the observed practice of visiting Christian churches

by Muslim female immigrants in Bulgaria cannot be considered an innovation. What can be considered innovative is the fact that in Bulgaria, although rarely, men also visit the church with their wives.

Female immigrants pray in the church for solving different health problems – eye operation, sterility. *“I believe only in God, I go to church, there I pray because this attracts me in some way, gives me strength and this is why I do it.”* The same respondent said that she prayed in her home in front of an icon of Virgin Mary that was given to her as a present for her birthday. Some of the Iraqi immigrant women wear icons of Virgin Mary and turn to her with prayers for child birth. One of our respondents told us about a dream of hers. In her dream, she entered a church and stopped in front of the icon of Virgin Mary. The woman started praying with a Christian prayer while Virgin Mary from the icon raised her finger and answered her with a Muslim prayer. This dream occurred after a day when the respondent had visited and prayed in a church located in the central market in Sofia. Her interpretation of the dream was the following - *“The God of us all is one... This is why I think she returned my prayer in the same way. I (pray) their prayer and she prays ours.”*

The Christian churches appear to represent experiences that are familiar to migrants and were a part of their pre-migration lives. The openness and comfort demonstrated by Muslim female immigrants in approaching local Christian prayer homes indicate that they become elements that facilitate the adaptation in the host society and ease practicing immigrants' religion.

Prayers are the most strictly observed religious duties by the female immigrants. Our respondents had received religious education in schools of their home countries and they know the basics of their religion, as well as memorized texts of prayers. Most of the interviewees pray at home. One of our respondents said: *“I have my mosque in my house, I don't need to pay visits (to the mosque). ... in a tram, in a bus, in the subway, in bed you can pray.”* As part of our female respondents do not work, they have the opportunity to pray five times a day. The Shiite pray

three times a day (in the morning, at lunchtime and in the evening). At lunchtime and in the evening they make a double prayer, so in practice they also say five prayers. Muslim women buy religious calendars so that they know the exact hours of the prayer. They allocate particular spaces for prayer in their homes. To follow the requirement for orientation towards Mecca they use the direction of the sun. Women pray alone. If the husband prays in the same room – the wife is doing the prayer either before or after him as they share the same prayer carpets. Most of the women have special *sedjadeh* (a long cover, usually white) that covers the whole body when in a squatting position. Sometimes a long skirt is put on for the prayer. One of our respondents has no special clothing for the home prayers and puts on a nightgown especially allocated for this purpose. Sick people combine two prayers in one. Compared to women, men pray more rarely. Prayers could be done outside the official prayer hours. One of our respondents said that she prayed when she felt weak and hopeless.

Transformations occur with regard to the traditional rites connected with Friday. The interviewed Muslim women respect the Friday and they do not work on this day. Thus they follow the tradition from their home countries where the day was marked by mosque visits on the part of their husbands. The family and relatives of one of our female respondents used to meet regularly for a common lunch on Fridays in their country of origin (Iraq). At these lunches they were preparing special dishes (*dolma*, rice with various vegetables). As Friday is a regular working day in Bulgaria, the Friday special lunch has been moved to Sunday when all the family members could gather together.

Most of the Muslim female immigrants observe the fast during the Ramadan month. Only older men and women with health problems do not observe it. The *zakat* obligation for charity is more rarely observed with the argument that this is a religious duty required of people who have money and own home. One of our respondents reported to give *zakat* occasionally to blind persons or women with children. She considered that even if one gave little this is a way of preventing many

bad things from happening. Another respondent intended to do a *zakat* during the Ramadan by giving money to her nephews who did not live in Bulgaria, without telling them that she was doing a *zakat*.

All interviewees keep the Quran at home, usually more than one. The mother of one of our respondents keeps the Quran in her handbag and her young daughter carries a written prayer, a present from her grandfather. The Quran, the *hijab*, the rosaries, the prayer carpets are objects related to the religious cult, which female immigrants carry with them in migration from their countries. One of our respondents showed us her collection of rosaries that were brought to her by friends from various places. In most of the cases the special prayer clothing is also brought from the country of origin or is received as a gift from close relatives. One of our respondents reported to have her prayer clothing bought while on a pilgrimage to Mecca. She went there with her sisters. As they visited Mecca during *umrah* and not *hadj*, it was not necessary that they be accompanied by their husbands. Another respondent declared the intention to make *hadj* together with her husband and her mother in law. A young woman from Iraq who declared herself “*not very religious*” showed us a mobile phone picture of a mosque in her home town of Kerbala.

Most of the interviewed women dyed their hands with henna when they attended weddings in Iraq or Turkey. They ceased practicing this ritual in Bulgaria to avoid attracting attention. Another practice typical for Muslim women – that of depilation – is perceived by immigrant women as aesthetic rather than a religious requirement. Depilation of the girl in their home countries begins at the moment of sexual maturation and is transferred from mother to daughter.

Female immigrants continue to observe strictly the ban for eating pork. It is only among the immigrants who came to Bulgaria many years ago that there are people who do not observe this ban. All women said that their husbands and sons did not take alcoholic drinks. However, they referred to other people in the community who did not observe

the ban. Immigrants usually shop from open markets, which are the cheapest and where one can find Arabic shops. There they buy chicken, veal and lamb. As they are not sure if the meat salesmen said the prayer to the respective animals, their supposition is that they abuse their religious requirements. The cook of the Palestinian school in Sofia buys animals from the neighbouring villages, he reads them a prayer and slaughters and cooks them himself for the school canteen. Immigrants tend to buy meat, chocolates and waffles from Arab shops. In cases when they buy these products in regular shops respondents diligently read the product legends to identify whether they contain lard, which they are obliged to avoid.

## Holidays

Upon migration the ritual system of Muslim immigrant women undergoes changes in two major directions: incorporation and celebration of local (Christian and secular) holidays and reduction of the number of traditional holidays (these are celebrated rather modestly with a simplified cuisine).

All respondents indicate that in Bulgaria they started to celebrate the central local holidays – Christmas and Easter. A young Muslim woman says: *“We follow all that is marked as holiday. Whether Muslim or Christian – we regard it as a holiday and do it.”* Some of the women adopt Christian rituals such as dyeing of Easter eggs. Muslim women also visit church at Easter day. One of the channels of incorporation of the new holiday system in the immigrants’ life is the activity of the Council of Refugee Women. According to a female respondent, *“they tell us when there is a holiday and we try to do it at home so that we integrate.”* *“Christmas is my favourite holiday,”* says a Muslim female respondent who studied in Catholic school in Africa. She also reported that in her childhood her mother, although she was *“a true Muslim,”* was making the crèches of Jesus for Christmas.

The New Years’ Eve is another holiday that is celebrated by immigrants in their countries of origin and in Bulgaria. They decorate a New

Year's Tree. A new holiday that the family of one of our respondents celebrates is Saint George's Day – one of the most popular in Bulgaria. A possible explanation of this decision is the fact that St. George's day is associated with lamb offering, which resembles Kurban Bayram.

Another holiday that is celebrated by female respondents both in their countries of origin and in Bulgaria is the Woman's Day – the 8<sup>th</sup> of March. The Council of Refugee Women organises trips, concerts, cinema or restaurant visits for immigrant women on this occasion. Only women, without the company of their husbands and children, partake in these visits.

A popular holiday among the Arabs is the Mother's Day (21<sup>st</sup> of March). The custom requires that everyone, along with their families, visits his or her mother and brings her presents. The preferred presents are sweets, a scarf, a night-gown or a dress. In Bulgaria however, due to financial restrictions, one of our respondents gave her mother only a cake as a present on the occasion of this holiday.

Immigration changed the celebration of traditional Muslim holidays. The rites associated with Kurban Bayram and Ramadan Bayram (the two major Muslim holidays) have been limited by Muslim immigrants. The number of ritual offerings (kurban) is significantly reduced, the traditional cuisine prepared for the holidays is simplified and the number of guests is decreased. Immigrant women tend to explain this reduction with two reasons: the deteriorated financial situation of their families in the country of immigration and the fact that the traditional Muslim holidays are not official holidays in the host country and therefore family members go to work.

Immigrants make ritual offering in Bulgaria only on rare occasions. A mixed immigrant family (a Lebanese wife and a Palestinian husband) who used to make ritual offerings every two years in Africa has made an offering only once during their 16-year long stay in Bulgaria. A Shiite female respondent from Iraq has made a ritual offering only once in the

9 years of stay in the country. She bought the animal from a Muslim meat salesman. He made a prayer for the animal and then slaughtered it. The woman gave one third of the meat to her relatives and one third was given to the poor. The rest was retained for the woman herself. The part for the poor was given to the dormitory of the Agency for Refugees and was delivered directly from the meat-salesman. This ritual offering is made on the second day of Kurban Bayram usually by people whose relatives have recently passed away. The family of one of our respondents prepare a special dish (tomatoes with chick-peas, meat and onion) when they have a special request to God.

The immigrants prepare special meals (rice, sweets and stuffed vine leaves) for Ramadan Bayram but the invited guests are fewer than in the country of origin – only close friends or relatives are invited. At holidays the entire family often goes for a walk. Another religious holiday celebrated by immigrants is the Birth of Prophet Mohammed.

The most significant changes have occurred in the Shiites' ritual system, which involves numerous holidays. These are official holidays in Iraq – some lasting 5 days free of work. In Bulgaria however, most of these holidays are no longer celebrated. The traditional large Shiite holiday marking the martyrdom of Husein that includes flagellation of men is not practiced in Bulgaria. According to our respondents these customs are still performed in many other European countries hosting larger Shiite communities. There these customs are practiced in special ritual houses called *Hussainia*. No *Hussainia* exists in Bulgaria.

### **Rites related to the life cycle**

The Muslim immigrants in Bulgaria follow a simplified model with regard to religious rites related to the life cycle. The main reasons for this change are related to the deteriorated financial situation of immigrants, the reduced social circle of relatives and friends and the absence of own Islamic institutions.

Due to their relatively short stays in Bulgaria only a limited number of respondents have had occasions of birth, circumcision, marriage or burial in the country. Three of the respondents had grandsons born in Bulgaria from mixed marriages (two Bulgarian mothers and one Bulgarian father). In only one of these families the son was circumcised at the age of two. In another family the parents planned to circumcise their four-year-old son. Respondents reported that in their home countries circumcision is considered a big occasion, associated with festivities and many guests. In Bulgaria however, respondents celebrate the circumcision of their kids very modestly. One family of our respondents, whose boy was born in Bulgaria, did not make particular celebration on the occasion of his circumcision. It was marked very modestly within the family with no guests. Only chocolates were given to the father's colleagues at the Palestinian school. Muslim immigrants do not turn to the official circumcision doctors certified by the Chief Mufti office but use circumcision specialists from the immigrant community. A respondent reported that her son was circumcised by a Syrian specialist who used to spend six months a year in Bulgaria and the rest in Syria.

Only one of our respondents has given birth to a child in Bulgaria. Following the tradition, her newborn son was whispered a prayer by his father. According to the tradition, a prayer whisper is to be made by the oldest man in the family.

Muslim immigrants bury their deceased in Muslim or non-Muslim graveyards. Sofia obtained a separate Muslim graveyard (in the quarter of Botunets) only a few years ago. Before that immigrants who insisted on having burials in a Muslim cemetery, transported their dead to the town of Plovdiv (2 hours drive from Sofia). Others and especially atheist immigrants, choose to bury their dead in the Christian cemeteries of Sofia, without putting any cross on the grave. According to respondents burials are religious and conducted in the presence of an imam, irrespectively of the type of the cemetery – Muslim or Christian. However, officials at the Mufti office reported that some immigrants bury their dead without calling the imam. Some immigrants dress the



deceased in clothes while others follow the tradition and cover them in a white cloth – *“in the Islamic way.”* The act of washing the dead for burial is usually performed by particular figures (male and female) within the Muslim immigrant community. The woman who washes the dead women does not take money for this duty as she perceives it as a benevolence.

Regarding the marriage rituals, we were able to obtain information only about mixed marriages as all married children of our respondents were married to Bulgarians. Traditional rites related to marriage are also simplified. For example brides do not prepare many different marriage dresses as is the tradition in their home countries. When the bride is a Muslim immigrant, the rite of dyeing hands with henna is performed. When the husband is a Muslim, a religious marriage is conducted together with the civic one. Immigrants turn to the local Muslim institutions, as the religious marriage is a requirement in their home countries and they need the Mufti certificate for their marriage to be legitimate at home.

All of our respondents reported to celebrate the birthdays of the family members and especially those of the children. We encountered only one family where Islamic traditions were strictly preserved, where no birthdays were celebrated but only that of the Prophet Mohammed.

## **Migration, Religion and the Second Generation Immigrants**

The second generation Muslim immigrants in Bulgaria appear to have different attitudes to traditions and religion in comparison to their parents. A number of strategies have been identified in this regard. Some second generation immigrants pray, abstain from eating pork and speak well the language of their parents. Others fully accept the secular ways of life in Bulgaria. According to one of our respondents, her son does not feel Iraqi but Bulgarian.

Second generation immigrants often enter mixed marriages – most often men marry Bulgarian women as this is allowed by Islam. Some mixed marriages of this type involve conversion to Islam of the Bulgarian wives. We registered a case of conversion by a young Bulgarian woman who married a Palestinian man. Her decision to convert and veil was taken after the birth of their son and irrespectively of the fact that her Muslim mother-in-law has never veiled.

We were told about opposite cases of conversions to Christianity of Muslim male immigrants. Such conversions appear to be motivated by traumatic experiences on the part of the immigrants, such as executions of members of their family on religious grounds.

There are also cases of an increased interest in Christianity on the part of second generation immigrants. The 12-year old son of one of our respondents – a female Shiite from Iraq – is attracted by Christianity, likes going to the church and *“does not like the mosque.”* His mother, though worried, does not discourage his interest – a decision that was eased by the fact that her husband was not used to visiting mosques either in Bulgaria, or in Turkey or in his home country. He, however, was used to occasionally visiting churches. The boy did not want to study the Quran and to pray in the Muslim manner but he was interested in the Bible – he received one as a present from a Christian Iraqi woman. The boy dreamed that his mother was giving him a cross in the hand while he was in the park. His relatives’ interpretation of this dream is that someday he might decide to convert to Christianity.

Female immigrants worry that their children see in Bulgaria a different way of life, especially when they study in Bulgarian schools. They worry that if some day their children have to return to their home countries they would not be able to adapt to the way of life there. One of our respondents from Albania, who went to school in Turkey before coming to Bulgaria, reported that she experienced a shock from the liberal atmosphere observed in Bulgarian schools. She explained

her adaptation in the school in the following way: *“And when you start socializing you observe what is going on and you try, in order to enter their environment, you try to become like them (in terms of behaviour). And in this way I also changed.”* Another noticeable change that occurs for migrants is the greater freedom of communication with the other gender that is impossible in the country of origin of migrants and especially for the young girls.

To avoid the potential conflict between traditional values and ways of behaviour of the home country and these of the secular host country some Arab families send their children to the private Arab schools in Sofia. Besides the basic subjects, taught in Arabic, these schools provide also training in the Quran. The teacher in religion in the Palestinian school is a Muslim Bulgarian who has studied in Jordan. As these schools are private, only migrants who can afford paying the tuition send their children there.

## **Migration, Religion and Gender**

Field research revealed a number of clothing strategies of Muslim female immigrants. The first tendency is related to different degrees of the transformation of the dress code: from mild changes (lighter dress with brighter colours with keeping the headscarf) to full removal of the veiling and appropriation of modern dress with open bodily parts. Transformations in the dress code are taken with the approval on the part of the respective leading male figure in the family. In some cases the approval of close relatives in the country of origin is also taken before the change takes place. The second tendency is associated with preservation of the dress code of the home country with very minor changes in the direction of its liberalization. The third and most rare tendency is associated with veiling of immigrant women who did not use to veil in their home countries.

Most of our respondents used to wear long black dresses and veils (kind of hijab) in their home countries. Those of the respondents,

who spent some time in Turkey on their way to Bulgaria, retained the traditional style of clothing there. Once in Bulgaria however, they found themselves in a very different environment that influenced a gradual change of their dress. All of our respondents reported to have made changes in their dress style. The long black dress, covering the whole body is replaced with a long skirt or with a suit of black trousers and a longer coat, a blouse with long sleeves or a long jacket. After a time some women started wearing blouses with short sleeves, thus showing their hands and neck. The Iraqi immigrant women of Christian confession have also further liberated their style of clothing in Bulgaria. According to their own comparison, in Iraq those women used to dress like those Muslim immigrant women who unveiled in Bulgaria.

The stories of immigrant women from the older immigrant waves from Iraq stressed on the more liberated dress code for women (both Christian and Muslim) in their country of origin before Saddam's rise to power. The recent female Muslim immigrants reported distinctions in the dress code that they followed in their hometowns (for example a compulsory long black dress in the town of Kerbala), and in Baghdad (where they could wear jeans). Women working as teachers in the Arabic schools in Sofia (both immigrants and Bulgarians) are not allowed to wear open clothes *"revealing parts of their body, without sleeves."* A woman who transformed her dress style in Bulgaria returns to the traditional dress in black when she visits the mosque.

The transformation in the dress code of immigrant Muslim women is a gradual process. One of our respondents reported that first she took away the headscarf. Then she transformed her long black dress into a long skirt. After a time she shortened the skirt to a medium length. At the time of the interview she had substituted the skirt with trousers and reported to feel *"more at ease and more protected"* this way.

During the first months in immigration Muslim women usually keep wearing the headscarf.<sup>9</sup> After a time some women decide to take it off.<sup>10</sup> They reported that the decision to unveil their hair or face was very difficult. Very important and crucial in this respect appears to be the opinion of the man in the family (father, husband, brother, son). Respondents who have taken away the veil/ headscarf reported to have had the approval of their husbands. However, a case has been reported of an immigrant man who insisted on keeping the traditional style of clothing for the women in the family, but his two younger sisters (who took off the “*headscarf and everything*” and started dressing as “*common Bulgarian girls*”) and his mother (who changed her long black dress with trousers, a long blouse and a headscarf) did not obey him. Only his wife complied with his will, keeping the long dress and veil.

The motives to take off the headscarf are different. Some men give freedom to their wives in the decision whether to keep or take away their headscarf. Some women unveil as they are concerned that in the new liberal context of Bulgaria their husbands may be attracted by other women. Many of our respondents reported to have felt very uncomfortable in public transport or on the street, as they were insulted because of the way they were dressed. One of our respondents had her headscarf pulled off by an unknown man who also hit her leg. In addition, on one occasion she was refused service in a shop because of her headscarf. A case was reported about an immigrant woman whose headscarf was taken away by a group of youths who then poured beer over her head. Although these cases are not very frequent, they appear to motivate some of the immigrant men to agree with the wife’s unveiling. In their narratives our respondents make particular stress on the feeling of uneasiness that they experience as people stare upon them when they go out veiled.

---

<sup>9</sup> The issue of veiling among Muslims in European countries has become the focus of public debate at the end of the 1980s. On the issue see: El Guindi, 1999; Dayan-Herzbrun, 2000; Joppke, 2009. The veiling plays the function of a social code for the Muslims. It is being interpreted in different ways by those who practice it – as an instrument of (self)control, as a symbol of opposition to the dominating power (Dayan-Herzbrun, 2000, pp. 75-78).

<sup>10</sup> Such tendency is observed among the new young Muslim immigrant women in Spain who take off their veils (Martin-Muñoz, Lopez-Sala, 2005, p. 139).

In order to avoid this situation the female interviewees spoke of their attempts to become less visible in the public space. Instead of a headscarf some of them started wearing hats or hoods. One female respondent told us that she considered buying a wig to wear on the streets. Her intention was to buy a wig of synthetic hair different from her natural hair as Islam did not allow showing the own natural hair. Decisions about unveiling seem to be determined also by the country of origin of the immigrant women. In Iraq for example veiling is not compulsory while in Iran it is. Immigrant women from Palestine prefer to keep the veiling after migration. Our respondents recognize easily the origin country of immigrant Muslim women according to their veiling style.

We should note that most of the women have preserved the headscarf and they prefer to bear the inconvenience, caused by its wearing in a secular country. The decision of the woman to remain with her headscarf often leads to a greater isolation, as she prefers to stay at her home. One of our respondents reported that she did not go out with her husband because of her headscarf – *“Where I go I will be stared upon and will stick out so I prefer not to go out.”*

Although many of our respondents definitely see themselves as believers, they described themselves as not religious enough because they were not dressed in full compliance with the religious canon. Others accept the change in the dress code positively. A Shiite respondent said that she felt better with her new clothing because in Iraq she was pressed to dress in certain ways and this was no longer the case in Bulgaria. This interpretation however contradicted an earlier one made by her according to which she took off the headscarf because she was stared upon by the people. It seems that although her decision to take away the headscarf was determined by the new social context she encountered, she viewed the act as act of free will on her part. The same respondent told us that she would be executed if she went back to her home country as other men had seen uncovered parts of her body that are to be covered according to the tradition and seen only by her husband.

In some cases immigrant families seek to preserve tradition in the female clothing. An immigrant woman from Iraq initially kept fully veiled in Bulgaria with her hands in gloves. After a time she was allowed by her husband to take off the gloves while remaining fully veiled. Her husband on the other hand uses eye pencil and has a long hair-tail claiming that this is *"the Islamic tradition."*

The observed changes in the bodily strategies of Muslim immigrant women are the outcome of their encounter with a new secular environment in Bulgaria. The forms and degrees of this change depend on the social environments immigrants face in the different countries on their way to Bulgaria. Muslim immigrant women who spent some time in Turkey did not change their dressing style. The change is undertaken only after Muslim women arrive in Bulgaria and get in contact with the new social environment dominated by a secular society with predominantly Christian population.

Other changes in the appearance of the Muslim immigrant woman in Bulgaria concern the practices of using make up and nail polish. In Iraq they were allowed to use black eye pencil, while in Syria they used richer make up the way they do also in Bulgaria. A middle-aged woman with grandchildren in Iraq had no right to use nail polish or dress with bright clothes because of her status of grandmother. In Bulgaria however, this woman used nail polish in two colours and dressed with light-coloured clothes. Although she herself decided to keep the headscarf, she reported that she would give her young daughter the freedom to decide on her own whether to wear a headscarf in Bulgaria. If she were in Iraq however, the daughter would have to put on the headscarf and wear long sleeves as soon as she was 14 years of age.

The female immigrants' clothing is situational. Women, who usually do not wear headscarves put them on when they visit the Agency for Refugees. Their explanation is that *"there are many of our people there who will look at us, Bulgarians do not look at us, but our (men) when they see a woman – the eyes are right after her."* For this reason their husbands insist

that they go there veiled. Other women called their relatives in their home country to tell them that they would be killed in Bulgaria if they did not take away the headscarf. Then they got the consent of their father and brothers and they were able to take off their headscarves without worry. This is necessary because the information of the way women are dressed in the host country reaches the relatives in the homeland through the acquaintances.

Sometimes a return to the traditional model of covering hair takes place. Thus, for example, a woman who did not wear a headscarf in Iraq, veiled her head in Bulgaria. She made the change because of health problems that led her to believe that she was punished by God. When she returned to Iraq after the political change in the country, which took place in 2003, her relatives made her take off the headscarf again. Another respondent shared her feelings in relation to her veiling in Bulgaria: *“Upon my arrival I was a bit scared because I did not see many veiled women and I felt to be the only one veiled and I changed – I put on a hat, took away the headscarf and put on a hat with a turtle-neck blouse. When the weather got warmer I took the headscarf back and saw that no one makes remarks on me, that there is no problem in the headscarf, that all is normal and I remained veiled.”*

The situational approach with regard to the clothing is practiced also in the Arab countries. A respondent from Iraq who lived in Syria reported that she changed her clothing there – coming from Iraq with dark long dresses and skirts, she changed them with trousers in Syria.

Changes occur also in the behavioural culture of female immigrants. In their countries of origin Muslim women comply with a strict system that orders the ways of speaking, ways of proper reactions, ways of hand keeping and sitting. *“There (in the home country) you should consider everything – how you move, how you react, everything – especially if you are a woman.”* The behavioural culture in Bulgaria is different and makes immigrant women feel freer with respect to the bodily codes inherited from their countries of origin – *“it is freedom here – you feel that you*



*are free with yourself.”* One of our respondents reported to have started crossing her legs while travelling with the bus and to feel very well as nobody reproved her. She also reported to have talked to unknown men in Bulgaria, which was unthinkable in her home country - *“I feel freedom in Bulgaria, I am restricted in nothing.”*

The relationship between gender and religion is manifested in many practices and bodily strategies on the part of Muslim immigrant women. The mosque functions as a predominantly male space, while the religious practices of the woman appear centred in the private sphere at home. The body and the clothing of the immigrant woman are subject to religious prescriptions, while the frame of compliance with these prescriptions is subject to male control in the family.

The examination of immigrant women employment (considered an important indicator in the study of gender) revealed a considerable degree of female occupation outside the home. 50% of our respondents were employed. Half of those who did not work (3) were in working age. The rest had retired (2) or had health problems (1). The majority of the unemployed respondents (5) demonstrated professional experience in the past and they declared a desire to work in Bulgaria. All of them were provided for by their husbands. The non-working respondents declared a desire to work in professions considered typically female: cosmetics, hairdressing, sewing. These desires demonstrated a considerable decrease within the scale of the prestige in comparison with the professions they practiced in their home country and search of a labour niche where there is no male competition. The desired professions require skills that respondents have acquired within their families as a common component of the upbringing of girls in the Arab world - *“It was in my blood. When I was young I liked making haircuts and make up. When I was still 13 I prepared a bride – haircut, makeup and eyebrow threading.”*

Regarding the issue of gender division of duties at home – domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning, laundering, washing the dishes are

perceived as typical female work. The care for the children and the elderly is also considered a female responsibility. In cases when the tradition is not observed and the man takes some of these duties, this is appraised with the words *"he is not ashamed to do the laundering and to hang the laundry," "he does not mind washing the dishes."* Introducing the category "shame" shows the clear gender distinction of certain household activities. This is relevant also for some duties considered typically male – for example in some immigrant families the shopping is a duty of the man in the family. We observed many diversions from this rule, however, as many of our respondents appeared to shop together with their husbands or to do the shopping on their own. Some of the women may freely dispose of the money given to them by their husbands. Others have to ask them and get their approval before making a particular purchase. A female immigrant from Iraq, who back in her home country had worked in a non-governmental organisation in the field of women's rights, reported that she needed her husband's permission to go out or to buy something for herself.

In most of the families decisions appear to be jointly made. In some of the cases however, this shared responsibility does not appear genuine. One of our respondents said that *"he (the husband) pretends to respect my opinion but he is doing what he decides."* We encountered families where women have the leading role in the decision making and perceive themselves as *"the boss"* in the family. And yet, in most of the families, the man is the one to make the final decision on a given matter.

Our female respondents have asked their husbands for permission to become volunteers in the Council of Refugee Women and to enrol in the Bulgarian language courses organised by the Council. One of the main arguments used to convince the husbands was that women could not go out without knowing Bulgarian *"as somebody might tell them something (bad) and they would not be able to defend themselves."*

Some empirical data indicate traditional family constellations that condition considerably powerful position on the part of the Muslim

woman. Such power is traditionally exerted in the relationship mother – son. The mother's powerful position is transferred over to the son's family where she (now also the mother-in-law) is considered a strong factor. However, this traditional power constellation undergoes transformations in migration. Some of our female respondents shared their pain and regretted over the fact that they were not consulted and respected as they should be in their sons' families. This development is especially visible in mixed families with Bulgarian daughters-in-law. In these cases cultural differences become reinforced by the emancipation of the young family from the old couple and the dependence of the old parents on the young family, which is usually financially autonomous.

## **Conclusion**

The conducted study reveals a process of significant change in the social life of Muslim immigrant women as a result of migration to Bulgaria. At the same time research findings reveal a complex dynamics of continuity and a change in the religious practices and ritual system of female immigrants. The study results demonstrate that migration caused a significant reduction of immigrant women's social networks and contacts both in the private and in the public sphere. The very limited presence of Muslim immigrant women in the public sphere has social and symbolic dimensions that relate to the limited levels of their social interactions on the one hand and to their visible corporal presence of believers, professing Islam, on the other. Support with regard to employment, social orientation, accommodation and family subsistence is provided within co-national networks.

This pattern of social realization determines the household as the main occupational sphere for Muslim female immigrants. The prevailing tendency of unemployment and financial dependence on the male spouses reinforce traditional models of gender divisions of the activities and of power relations within the family. The life of immigrant women professing Islam is limited to the family, especially in the first years of immigration and is marked by feelings of isolation and loneliness. The

absence of formal and informal associations of female immigrants, the abstention from spending free time in public spaces, the limited visits to mosques, are the outcome of a complex set of factors. The immigrants from Arab countries, still in small numbers in Bulgaria, form communities with weak infrastructures that follow a dispersed accommodation model.

The deteriorated financial status of the post-1989 immigrants conditions modest daily routines, focused on covering family's immediate needs and allowing very limited social interactions outside the family. In addition, the uncertainties of immigrants' status – often in process of legalization, temporary or depending on family reunion, determine the uncertain place of immigrant women in the host society. All these factors explain the efforts on the part of immigrant women for unobtrusive presence in the host society.

These efforts appear to be partially triggered by immigrants' Islamic profession, which is sharply visible in the secular and Christian dominated public space of the host society. The Bulgarian public discourse does not identify Muslim immigrants as a "problem" for the country's identity. Still, Islam is perceived as a "threat" by many political and public actors who identify it with local Islamic communities, much bigger than those of the immigrants. Although Muslim immigrants do not appear targets in heated public debates, the public context of suspicion and hostility to visible manifestations of Islam exerts influence over them. The predominant tendency is that Muslim immigrant women concentrate the religious profession in the private sphere and at home.

In addition, some of them seek ways of making their Islamic identities "invisible" in the public sphere even at the expense of some Islamic requirements. "The different look" of veiled Muslim immigrant women contributes to feelings of uncertainty in public places that in turn makes some of them avoid public appearances or initiate changes in their traditional clothing. Such changes vary from appropriation of fully European dress style to decisions to veil among some women, who were previously not veiled. Manifestations of religious belonging of immigrant

women (through the clothing) in the public space are the outcome of a negotiation between the woman and the man in the family – a negotiation that is the outcome of different adaptation strategies in the host country, taken by the family as a whole. The relationship between gender and migration in this context leads to diverse forms of manifestation of confessional belonging that are placed along the axis of visible – invisible.

The observed openness of Muslim immigrant women with regard to local Christianity signifies heterogeneous religious practices that are often conveyed from immigrants' home countries. The visits to local Christian churches and the incorporation of some local Christian and secular holidays are practices that serve to reinforce immigrants' religiosity in a host society where Christianity is the dominant religion. Similarly the observed participation of some female Muslim immigrants in the Christian movement of the Focolares appears to serve as a strategy of one's adaptation into the host society.

Migration influences a complex process of transformation in the ritual system of Muslim immigrants – enrichment that involves an incorporation of holidays from the local calendar (both secular and Christian) and a reduction of the traditional Muslim holidays and more modest celebration of those that are preserved by migrants. The religious identity of female immigrants remains an important constituent part of their complex personal identities, however, it finds more "silent" forms of expression.

## Bibliography

Желязкова, Антонина, Валери Григоров, Донка Димитрова. 2005. Имигрантите от Близкия и Средния изток (Immigrants from the Near and Middle East). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 19-73.

Кръстева, Анна. 2005. Българският имиграционен феномен (The Bulgarian Immigration Phenomenon). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 7–18.

Кръстева, Анна, ed. 2006. *Фигурите на бежанеца* (The Refugee Figures). Sofia: New Bulgarian University.

Al-Hamarnah, Ala and Jörn Thielmann, eds. 2008. *Islam and Muslims in Germany*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

Anthias, Floya and Gabriella Lazaridis, eds. 2000. *Gender and Migration in Southern Europe: Women on the Move*. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Buijs, Gina, ed. 1993. *Migrant Women. Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities*. Oxford and Dulles: Berg.

Castelli, Elizabeth. 2001. Women, Gender, Religion: Troubling Categories and Transforming Knowledge. – In: *Women, Gender, Religion: a Reader*. Castelli, Elizabeth, ed. New York: Palgrave, pp. 3–28.

Dayan-Herzbrun, Sonia. 2000. The Issue of the Islamic Headscarf. – In: *Women, Immigration and Identities in France*. Freedman, Jane and Carrie Tarr, eds. Oxford: Berg, pp. 69–82.

El Guindi, Fadwa. 1999. *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance*. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Erel, Umut. 2003. The Politics of Identity and Community: Migrant Women from Turkey in Germany. – In: *Gender and Insecurity: Migrant Women in Europe*. Freedman, Jane, ed. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 153–171.

Freedman, Jane and Carrie Tarr, eds. 2000. *Women, Immigration and Identities in France*. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Gozdziak, Elzbieta. 2008. Pray God and Keep Walking: Religion, Gender, Identity, and Refugee Women. – In: *Not Born a Refugee Woman: Contesting Identities, Rethinking Practices*. Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Maroussia, Nazilla Khanlou and Helene Moussa, eds. USA: Berghahn Books, pp. 180–195.

Hunter, Shireen, ed. 2002. *Islam, Europe's Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural, and Political Landscape*. Westport, USA: Praeger Publishers.

- Joppke, Christian. 2009. *Veil: Mirror of Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jouili, Jeanette. 2008. Re-Fashioning the Self through Religious Knowledge: How Muslim Women become Pious in the German Diaspora. – In: *Islam and Muslims in Germany*. Al-Hamarneh, Ala and Jörn Thielmann, eds. Leiden and Boston: Brill, pp. 465–488.
- Kastoryano, Riva. 2007. Religion and Incorporation: Islam in France and Germany. – In: *Rethinking Migration: New Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives*. Portes, Alejandro and Josh DeWind, eds. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp. 419–440.
- Killian, Caitlin. 2006. *North African Women in France: Gender, Culture, and Identity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Knörr, Jacqueline, Meier, Barbara, ed. 2000. *Women and Migration: Anthropological Perspectives*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Krasteva, Anna. 2010. Being a Foreign Woman in Bulgaria. – In: *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*. Krasteva, Anna, Anelia Kasabova and Diana Karabinova, eds. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 63–78.
- Leonard, Karen, Alex Stepick, Manuel Vasquez and Jennifer Holdaway, eds. 2005. *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America*. Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Marranci, Gabriele. 2007. Migration and the Construction of Muslim Women's Identity in Northern Ireland. – In: *Geographies of Muslim Identities: Diaspora, Gender and Belonging*. Aitchison, Cara, Peter Hopkins and Mei-Po Kwan, eds. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 79–92.
- Martin-Muñoz, Gema and Ana Lopez-Sala. 2005. Migration and the Religiosity of Muslim Women in Spain. – In: *European Muslims and the Secular State*. Cesari, Jocelyne and Sean McLoughlin, eds. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, pp. 129–142.
- Pojmann, Wendy. 2006. *Immigrant Women and Feminism in Italy*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Salih, Ruba. 2003. *Gender in Transnationalism: Home, Longing and Belonging among Moroccan Migrant Women*. London: Routledge.
- Schmidt, Garbi. 2008. Being Seen by Many Eyes: Muslim Immigrant Women in the United States. – In: *Women and Religion in the West: Challenging Secularization*. Aune, Kristin, Sonya Sharma and Giselle Vincett, eds. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Company, pp. 207–220.
- Scott, Joan. 2007. *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2009. *Trends in International Migration Stock: The 2008 Revision*. <http://esa.un.org/migration/p2k0data.asp>





# INVISIBLE ENGINES OF CHANGE AND SELF-SACRIFICING TRADITION-BREAKERS: MIXED AND TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES IN BULGARIA, GREECE AND TURKEY

*Georgeta Nazarska, Marko Hajdinjak<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

The social scientists are interested in studying mixed and transnational families for a number of reasons. Multicultural coexistence, racial, ethnic and gender conflicts and tensions, and formation of hybrid practices and identities can all be analysed in their relation to the issues of identity, religion, language, traditional gender roles, racism and xenophobia, and acceptance and tolerance.

Of the two family types, the mixed families were the first to attract the attention of researchers (late 1960s), but the bulk of the research dates from the post-1990 period. The interest in transnational families also intensified after 1990, when a number of key texts in anthropology reconceptualised the research on the international migration and introduced the concept of “transnationalism” (Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc Szanton, 1992; Basch, Glick Schiller, Szanton Blanc, 1994; Vertovec and Cohen, 1999; Vertovec, 1999). Transnationalism influenced a new understanding not only of individual migrants and migrant communities, but also of migrant families. The traditional understanding of families as units based on co-residency at the same place had to be changed as it became clear that many of the families in today’s world are spatially

---

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on three national reports, which analysed the field research on mixed and transnational families in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. The Bulgarian report was written by Georgeta Nazarska and Marko Hajdinjak, while the fieldwork team included also Violeta Angelova, Lubomir Petkashev, Maya Kosseva, Antonina Zhelyazkova and Evgenia Troeva-Grigorova. The authors of the Greek report were Annie Kavvadia and Maria Stratigaki from Center for Gender Studies at the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens. During the fieldwork, they were helped by researchers Voula Touri and Alexandros Delistathis. Dilek Cindoglu and Saime Ozcurumez from Department of Political Science at Bilkent University in Ankara wrote the Turkish national report. They have conducted their fieldwork together with the following researchers: Nazli Senses, Tolga Bolukbasi and Adnan Boynukara.

dispersed and fragmented – the transnational families. Despite the rich body of literature, which has appeared during the last two decades, the field is still not well theorised and conceptualised as most of the existing studies on mixed and transnational families are empirical and contextual.

This is even more the case in south-eastern Europe, where so far little scholarly attention has been devoted to the subject of mixed and transnational families, and where even the empirical studies are scarce. The Bulgarian research literature, for example, is most often interested in emigration, while immigration and immigrants have been so far insufficiently studied. There are virtually no studies dedicated exclusively to the issue of mixed or transnational families. The transnational families have been touched upon by several authors while studying the emigration patterns of Bulgarian citizens, but were never the main focus of the study. Several authors have looked into the phenomenon of mixed families, but again mostly in studies on emigration (mixed marriages of Bulgarians with nationals of destination countries – USA, Hungary, Slovakia) (Карамихова, 2004; Ганева-Райчева, 2004a; Ганева-Райчева, 2004b, pp. 145-172; Антова, 2004, pp. 28-39). The mixed marriages of Bulgarians with immigrants in Bulgaria have been only episodically included in the studies of immigrants (for example a study on the integration of Kurdish immigrants or the problem of selection of children names in the Bulgarian-Arab families) (Муцева, 2005, pp. 137-155; Грозева-Исца, 2004, pp. 49-52).

In Greece, the issue of mixed and transnational families has so far received very little attention. Even the issue of transnationalism, despite monopolising a large part of the debates in the literature on international migration in the last two decades, is still under-explored in Greece. There are only a handful of exceptions (Ventoura, Troumbeta, 2006, pp. 21-86). Mixed and transnational families are an under-researched area also in Turkey and have not been addressed in the existing research on migration in the country.

For this reason, the current research is of significant importance as it generates a ground-breaking and previously unavailable knowledge. In addition to being among the very first studies conducted on this topic in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, the current research is also among the first attempts to produce a comparative study on gender and migration involving these three countries and to draw some region-valid conclusions.

The following report is based on the field research conducted in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey between February 2009 and January 2010 by three different teams, each doing a fieldwork in its country: IMIR in Bulgaria, Panteion University in Greece and Bilkent University in Turkey. The introductory section of the report outlines the main objectives of the report; describes the methodology used during the fieldwork; and defines and explains the basic concepts and terms.

The central section of the report is divided into two parts. One presents the main findings and the analysis of the field research on mixed families, while the other brings forward the results of the study on transnational families. In the conclusion, the main findings of the research are summarised and some relevant policy recommendations are proposed. In the two appendixes, the profiles of the respondents from the interviews and focus groups are presented.

### ***Research goals***

The goal of the present research is to investigate the intersections between gender and migration, and explore their influence on the relations between members of mixed and transnational families. The report will analyse the way gender dynamics in these families is conditioned by external factors such as the levels of acceptance and rejection in the specific national settings, the institutional frameworks dealing with immigrants, and the prevailing traditional patterns of gender relations, as well as by internal factors such as the interactions between people with different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds in a

family environment. The changing gender relations within such families and their position in a broader social context will also be assessed.

The research method selected for this field study was the analysis of qualitative data gathered through interviews and focus groups. Given the relatively limited number of respondents involved in the research, the findings cannot be used as a basis for making general comprehensive conclusions but rather for identifying the prevailing trends and more precisely interconnections between gender, ethnicity, religion and intercultural integration as they can be observed in the specific area of parental, family and social relations. Traditional ethnic/national and gender hierarchies suggest that local and male partners occupy the dominant position in the family hierarchy, while the migrant and female partners are in the position of dependency. However, the intersections of these two traditional sets of power relations may reveal some interesting and surprising tendencies in the social and family relations.

Mixed families face a very specific set of problems and difficulties. These can be a consequence of the partners' experiences with their extended families, the prevailing attitudes in the society, and the framework provided by the legal environment and the official institutions. These difficulties include (but are not limited to) the issue of citizenship/residence permit of the migrant spouse and children, unfamiliarity with the official language, access to social benefits and health insurance, access to kindergartens and schools, employment possibilities for immigrant spouse, and the prejudices and discrimination towards foreigners from certain countries/regions. All these issues influence the social status and the possibilities for integration of such families, and consequently also the gender roles and gender dynamics.

The lives of the transnational families have also been tremendously changed as a result of the migration experience. The transnational spouses, mothers and fathers have left behind their partners and children under the pressure of economic needs and have gone abroad in search

of better employment. Despite providing the much needed economic and financial security for their families, the transnational family life has profoundly influenced and changed all family members. Our research concentrated on exploring gender and social relations of the partners from transnational families. The research also tried to establish how the existing national policies and institutional frameworks dealing with immigrants, the prevailing traditional patterns of gender relations and the long separation from the partner and children influence the gender dynamics in the transnational families.

The research has also explored the mixed and transnational families as spaces of intercultural interaction. In particular, the experiences of mixed and transnational families as an indicator of tensions and conflicts in the intercultural relations was investigated in order to establish how and if such families could play a role of a factor contributing to intercultural dialogue, integration, tolerance and social cohesion.

### ***Research methods***

The field research was based on qualitative research methods – semi-standardized in-depth interviews and focus groups.

In the case of mixed families, both spouses were interviewed at the same time in the same place, but in different rooms – independently from each other. A male interviewer talked with the male respondents, and a female interviewer with the female ones to ensure the maximum level of comfort and willingness to discuss the often sensitive issues. The decision to interview both partners at the same time was made to prevent the possibility of one partner telling the other about the interview and the questions asked, which would have significantly reduced the authenticity of the answers. The interviews were pre-arranged. The first contact was usually established over the telephone or through a mediator, and the time and place were agreed. Some couples were contacted via the social environment of the researchers and some through a non-governmental organisation, which specialised

in migration issues. The teams encountered certain difficulties during the fieldwork. The Bulgarian team found it difficult to motivate and persuade Bulgarian women married to foreigners to participate in the research. It was also difficult to find couples where both partners were willing or able to give interviews at the same time and place. The Greek team had difficulties, after identifying mixed couples, to make them agree on simultaneous interviewing. In addition, husbands were more reluctant to expose their personal lives to the researchers. The Turkish team identified mixed couples by snow-balling technique. The main problem was establishing trust needed to be referred to other couples, but the team overcame this challenge after a few interviews.

In the case of transnational families, only one spouse was interviewed. In Turkey and Greece, the researchers interviewed the immigrant partners – women from the former socialist countries, who had left their families behind and had settled in Athens or Istanbul, where they now live and work (most often in domestic care work). In Bulgaria, the respondents were those partners from transnational families, who had stayed behind at home and were relying on remittances sent by the partner who has emigrated. This part of the fieldwork took place in several small towns and villages in south-west Bulgaria – an ethnically and religiously diverse region with unfavourable economic situation and high level of emigration.

After the interview stage, several focus groups were organised in all three countries to gather additional information. The focus group participants were different from the interviewees, but had a similar social and demographic profile.

#### Mixed families:

Prior to the start of the fieldwork, the research teams discussed and decided on the main characteristics of the respondents for each of the three countries. The interviews were taken at different places: some in the offices of the research teams, some at the homes of the families or at their work place, some in neutral places like coffee shops. The

interviews lasted from one hour to two hours. All were recorded and fully transcribed. The questions in the interview guides were divided into the following sections: Background on family characteristics; Contacts and experience of the mixed families with the official institutions; Intercultural aspects of mixed family life; Gender dynamics in mixed family life.

The first section focused on respondents' personal data, the history of the relationship, and their social and demographic profile. The second section investigated their interactions and possible conflicts with the official institutions, and the issue of (potential) discrimination. The third section studied the adaptation and integration of the immigrant spouse into the host society, the family social environment (including extended family, friends, migrant networks, professional surroundings), religious beliefs and practices, and identity and language issues of the mixed families. The last part focused on the gender relations and identities, social and gender roles, division of labour at home, family decision making, various potentially problematic areas of family life, and the upbringing of children.

After the data from the interviews had been analysed and it was established which areas were sufficiently covered and where additional information was needed, the interview guides were revised and shortened. Thus the questionnaires for the focus groups were designed, consisting of about 10 most relevant questions (each providing space for additional sub-questions if needed).

The Bulgarian team has focused on interviews with mixed families consisting of a Bulgarian woman and a man from a Middle Eastern or African country. All together 8 mixed families were interviewed (the men were from the following countries: Afghanistan - 2, Austria, Guinea, Iraq - 2, Lebanon, and Zambia).<sup>2</sup> Although immigrants from Africa and the

---

<sup>2</sup> The interview with a family Bulgarian wife – Austrian husband was added to provide a different perspective and comparison with the Bulgarian-Middle Eastern and Bulgarian-African families.

Middle East represent a relatively small share of immigrants in Bulgaria<sup>3</sup> and the more typical mixed families in Bulgaria are those involving foreign spouses from Western European countries or the former Soviet Union, the Bulgarian team considered the selected family unions as exceptionally interesting and challenging case study. Such families have been very rarely studied in Bulgaria before. What is known from various studies on ethnic and racial distances is that the immigrants from Africa and Middle Eastern Muslim countries are perceived as the least desired marital partners. Because of these negative public perceptions, such mixed families are subject to a strong social pressure and suffer from a number of problems - from being rejected by friends and families through institutional discrimination to racist attacks. Two focus groups were organised in IMIR's office in Sofia. The group with male participants included 8 people (from Congo, Ghana, Guinea, Palestine, Syria, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia) and lasted almost three hours. The female group consisted of 4 participants (all Bulgarians) and lasted about an hour and a half.

The Turkish team interviewed 8 couples – wives from the former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe and Turkish husbands. Such families/couples are the most common and typical mixed family type in Turkey. The female respondents were from the following countries: Georgia, Hungary, Moldova - 3, Russia, and Ukraine - 2. Two focus groups were held at a research office in Istanbul. The female group had 6 participants (from Armenia, Moldova - 2, Romania and Russia - 2), while the male group had 5 (all from Turkey).

In Greece, the selection of mixed families was different from Turkey and Bulgaria. In order to make comparisons and study the interplay between gender and nationality, the Greek team split the interviews into two groups. The researchers thus interviewed 6 couples composed of Greek husbands and wives of foreign origin (Albania, Czech Republic, Moldova and Romania - 3) and 5 couples with a foreign husband

---

<sup>3</sup> According to the information of the National Statistical Institute, there were 69,423 permanently residing foreign nationals in Bulgaria on December 31, 2009. Of this number, 49,379 were from Europe, 9,888 from Asia and only 651 from Africa. [http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop\\_5.8\\_Migration\\_DR\\_EN.xls](http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop_5.8_Migration_DR_EN.xls)



(Albania - 2, Colombia, Jordan and Turkey) and a Greek wife. One focus group was organised at the Centre for Gender Studies at the Panteion University. It included three immigrant women (from Bulgaria, Montenegro and Russia) married to Greek men.

#### Transnational families:

The interview guides for the transnational families were divided into the following sections: Background on family characteristics and migration history; Aspects of transnational family life; and Gender dynamics in transnational family life. The first section aimed at collecting data about the respondents' personal and family life, and some basic data about the migration experience of the respondents (or their partners in the Bulgarian case). The second section focused on the experience of transnational family life: the ways and frequency of maintaining contacts, the changes in the lifestyle and workload, family decision-making processes, consequences for the children and predictions for the future. The third part sought answers to the following questions: the changes in the traditional family gender roles and duties, the emotional consequences of the transnational family experience, issues of trust and jealousy, the role of the extended family, and the advantages and disadvantages of transnational family life.

In the Bulgarian case, 12 interviews with the members of transnational families were taken during the three field-trips to different areas in south-western Bulgaria. They were not pre-arranged. The respondents were found and selected on the spot – the information about where to find them was gathered in village shops, bars and other public spaces. The interviews were taken at different places – on the central village squares, on children playground, village pubs and at the homes of the respondents. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to a bit over an hour. A focus group was organised in the village of Sapareva Banya with six women participants – it lasted just short of one hour.

In the Greek case, 8 interviews with women who were working as in-house domestic workers in Athens were conducted. Four interviews

took place at the house where they worked (the employer was absent during the interviews), three took place at the office of the interviewer and one at her house. The interviewees came from Bulgaria - 2, Georgia - 2, Poland - 2 and Ukraine - 2.

The Turkish team interviewed 8 respondents who lived and worked as domestic help in Istanbul. The interviews took place either at the workplace of the respondent or a coffee shop and lasted up to one hour. They were from different countries (Bulgaria, Moldova - 6, Turkmenistan). The Turkish team organised also a focus group in Istanbul – four women participated (from Georgia - 2, Mongolia and Russia).

### ***Basic premises and concepts***

The term “mixed marriages” is one of the most commonly used (in addition to intercultural families, cross-ethnic families and cross-cultural marriages) for referring to marital unions of partners coming from different countries and belonging to different religions and ethnicities (Breger, Hill, 1998). Such marriages are often in the focus of studies exploring the processes of cultural adaptation, integration of immigrant groups, the nature of inter-group relations, social distances, and power relations between state institutions and different cultural groups.

Mixed marriages have first attracted the attention of the US scholars, but soon became a popular research topic also in Europe and other parts of the world. Scholars have been interested in the various types of intermarriages: interethnic, interfaith, intercultural or interracial. Some authors are interested mainly in the demographic characteristics of individuals in mixed marriages and explore their links with the cultural and structural factors influencing intermarriage. Others center their research on the interplay of racial and gender variables in mixed marriages and explore the place of such marriages in the societal and cultural context. Special attention is given to the question whether these contexts are permitting or discouraging mixed marriages. A considerable number of studies have dealt with marital unions of “western” (usually North American and Western

European) and “non-western (most often African and Asian) partners (Baker Cottrel, 1990, pp. 151-169; Khan, 1998, pp. 5-28; Roer-Strier and Ben Ezra, 2006, pp. 41-55; Imamura, 1990, pp. 171-191).

Another volume of research is interested in exploring how the state policies in the field of intermarriage influence (positively or negatively) the social discourses towards foreigners and mixed marriages (Breger, Hill, 1998; Roer-Strier and Ben Ezra, 2006). Various authors have studied the influence of different societal factors on the attitudes towards mixed marriages (Jakobson, Heaton, 2008, pp. 129-148; Johnson, Jacobson, 2005, pp. 387-399).

There are two main theoretical paradigms regarding the processes of cultural adaptation in intermarriage. Some authors perceive mixed marriages as a form of assimilation of immigrants into the dominating culture (Gordon, 1964). Opposing the assimilation theory is the acculturation paradigm, which states that intermarriage does not lead necessarily to loss of ethnic or cultural identity and is rather a consequence of cultural mix and social tolerance (Cohen, 1988). Some authors believe that the process of cultural adaptation affects both partners (from the minority and the dominating culture) and thus talk about “mutual acculturation” (Jaes Falicov, 1995, pp. 231-246).

Another group of authors looks at mixed marriages as a challenge to the prevailing norms of endogamy and points out that as such, mixed families are often subject to a considerable social pressure and social sanctions (Ata, 2000; Johnson, Warren, 1994, pp. 1-13; Thode-Arora, 1999; Lauth Bacas, 2002). There are also authors who put their focus on the positive aspects of mixed marriages – greater degree of tolerance and respect, possibilities for education and growth of children, shortening of interethnic, interfaith and interracial distances (Breger, Hill, 1998; Ho, 1990).

The actual possibility to meet someone with a different cultural, religious or ethnic background through education, work or informal socializing

is an exceptionally important precondition for a mixed marriage. Segregation, geographical isolation, separation based on differences in education and income, ethnic/national/religious animosities on group and individual level, and language and cultural differences are named as the most important factors contributing to the high homogamy rates in a particular society (Jakobson, Heaton, 2008). Group identification, group sanctions, social and cultural distances between various groups, openness of a given society to cultural heterogeneity all play an important role in encouraging or discouraging intermarriages (Muhsam, 1990, pp. 307-324; Kalmijn, 1998, pp. 395-421).

The studies of mixed marriages are closely linked with the correlations between ethnic/racial endogamy and social/educational homogamy and with the correlations between gender, race, ethnicity and hypergamy. The number and acceptance of mixed marriages in a given society is thus for many authors an indication of integration of a given minority or immigrant group into the dominating society. The more frequent the intermarriages, the lesser are the structural and cultural distances between different groups. The main factors on which intermarriages depend are identified as ethnicity, race, religion and education. According to various authors, the racial boundaries to mixed marriages are much more substantial and difficult to overcome than for example ethnic or national origin and religion (Douglas, Yancey, 2004, pp. 1-19).

Some of the critics to the existing scholarship on mixed marriages point out that usually little attention is paid to the cultural adaptation strategies of the partners belonging to the host or dominant group. Critics also note that too often the approach of researchers is too static and does not consider multiple adaptation strategies of mixed families, and that mixed families are usually studied as a passive indicator of inter-ethnic relations in a given society and not as an engine of social change (Goldstein, 1999, pp. 399-407; Yancey, Yancey, 1997, pp. 650-667). In the opinion of some authors, the influence of the power relations and ethnic/racial/cultural hierarchies over mixed families has yet to receive the attention it deserves (Roer-Strier and Ezra, 2006).

The transnational families got in the focus of the migration studies in the early 1990s. The new analytical framework introduced the concept of “transnationalism” (Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc Szanton, 1992; Basch, Glick Schiller, Szanton Blanc, 1994; Vertovec and Cohen, 1999) and explained migration as a multi-sited social space, which is simultaneously experienced by communities across borders. Unlike the traditional migration theories that treat the migration phenomena as limited to integration or assimilation in the receiving societies, transnationalism offers an alternative approach, where the experiences of migrants are analysed through the prism of multiple attachments and their simultaneous positioning in several social (and territorial) locations (Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc Szanton, 1992).

The main fields of study within the paradigm of transnationalism deal with transnational migrant networks, transnational political activity, transnational citizenship, remittances, and transnational families. The concept of transnationalism has influenced not only the new reading of migration and migrant communities, but has also changed a perspective on the traditional understanding of families – from families based on co-residency at the same place to ones that are spatially dispersed and fragmented. The members of transnational families maintain transborder kinship relations to sustain livelihoods that span over two or more states (Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc Szanton, 1995, pp. 48-64).

According to the early authors of transnationalism, the family is the basic unit of transnational relationships. The family and the need for its survival through remittances and other forms of assistance is the main factor triggering migration. Migration usually has an additional effect of widening family networks as migrants locate all possible relatives able to help in the process of migration (Glick Schiller, Fouron, 2001, p. 61).

The majority of existing studies on transnational families have focused on separations between family members – between spouses and between parents and their children: transnational parenting (Pribilsky, 2004, pp. 313-334; Gamburd, 2000; Nyberg Sorensen, 2005), transnational

motherhood (Erel, 2002, pp. 127-146; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997, pp. 548-571; Salazar Parreñas, 2001) and transnational childhood (Salazar Parreñas, 2005; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2002). Analysing the transnational family life from the gendered perspective, some of these studies indicate that in the case of families with migrant mothers (the “transnational mothers”), the families come under more pressure and experience more difficulties than in the cases of migrant fathers.

There are two general approaches to the study of transnational families. One focuses on the negative and the other on the positive and constructive aspects of transnational family life. The negative aspects revolve around the notion of “care drain” – the global transfer of care work from poor to rich countries, and the consequent transfer of emotional resources, which has exceptionally negative effects on the children left behind (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003). Among the positive aspects different authors stress the durable practices of maintenance and reproduction of family ties, which are kept alive despite the great distances and prolonged separations (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Mason, 2004, pp. 421-429; Wilding, 2006, pp. 125-142; Zontini, 2006, pp. 325-345). The very existence of transnational families rests on kin ties being kept alive and maintained across time and space. Some studies pay attention to the importance of transnational “productive,” “kin” and “caring work.” Productive work regards the involvement of migrant women in the economic support of their families. Kin work regards the role of women in maintaining transnational family relations and kin ties. Caring work involves the tasks related to looking after the young, the elderly and the sick. Studies dealing with the care work domain are interested in the ways in which caring tasks are being carried out across geographical distance (Baldassar and Baldock, 2000, pp. 61-89; Goulbourne and Chamberlain, 2001; Reynolds and Zontini, 2006; Zontini, 2006). The focus has been on caring work that occurs both between and within generations. Works on transnational families thus aim to study the new ways of articulating family relationships as a result of migration and the changes that are produced by migration in the structure of the family, its functions and gender roles within it.

## **Analysis of the field research on mixed families**

### ***The main characteristics of the respondents***

The three teams have conducted 54 interviews altogether (with both partners from 27 mixed families). In Bulgaria and Turkey, 8 families were interviewed, while in Greece 11. Several focus groups were also organised – in Bulgaria two (with Bulgarian women and with immigrant men), in Turkey two (with Turkish men and immigrant women) and in Greece one (with immigrant women).

The profile of the respondents can be outlined in the following way. Their ages range from 26 to 75 and thus the sample included representatives of relatively young, middle-aged and senior generations (Turkey: 29-57 for women, 26-65 for men; Greece: 40-57 for women, 40-64 for men; Bulgaria: 37-67 for women, 38-75 for men). The length of their marriages is very diverse too – from six months to 44 years in Bulgaria, from one and a half to 38 years in Greece and from 1 to 19 years in Turkey. In many cases, especially in Greece and Turkey, the current marriage is a second marriage for one or both partners. Those respondents with previous marriages evaluate their mixed marriages in a very positive light and compare them against their marriages with their compatriots, which have brought them only disappointment.

The majority of respondents in all three countries have higher than the average education level – especially in Bulgaria and Greece, where most of the respondents have high education (in Turkey the majority have secondary education). In Bulgaria there is usually no difference in the education level of the partners, while in Greece and Turkey in the majority of cases immigrant partners are with better education than the native ones.

Regarding their social status and professions, most respondents belong to the middle class and intelligentsia – they work as doctors, engineers, technicians, domestic workers, clerks, employees in restaurants, petrol

stations and other private businesses, lawyers, teachers, businesspersons, etc. It is worth noting that in Bulgaria, most often the male immigrants (despite having university degrees) do not work in their fields, but rather have low-paid manual jobs or are unemployed, which is closely connected with discrimination because of their racial origin or religion. In Greece, migrant men also often work in jobs shaped by their ethnicity – they rarely have jobs corresponding to their level of qualification.

Most of the families have met in the countries under study.<sup>4</sup> They usually met through common friends and social networks – in most cases in the university campus, at work or during leisure activities. The majority of respondents were attracted by the outside appearance and above all the moral qualities of their partners (honesty, responsibility, respect, humour, etc). In all three countries the period of dating before the marriage was relatively long – from 1 to 3 years, which is characteristic for this type of marriages, as partners are more careful with getting to know each other and have to overcome considerable social pressure.

All three teams have noticed the small number of children in the mixed marriages, which is a significant deviation from the traditional model for many of the countries our respondents were from. In most cases, the families have one or two children, while some have none.<sup>5</sup> In several cases, the reason for the small number of children are the persistent economic problems (especially in the cases when the immigrant partner is male), but from the context of the conversations can be deduced that the social exclusion and the resistance of the extended family also play a significant role.

---

<sup>4</sup> The exceptions are very few – one couple from Bulgaria met in Austria, and two from Greece in the USA and Czech Republic respectively.

<sup>5</sup> A partial exception to this rule were some of the families in Turkey, where spouses had several children from their previous marriages. However, they usually have no or one child together.



## *Integration into the host country*

Many of the interviewed foreigners from the mixed families in all three countries believe that the society is to a considerable extent unfriendly or even hostile and rejects those who are of different origin and culture. Such attitude is especially visible regarding the mixed marriages with Muslims (in Bulgaria and Greece), Albanians (in Greece), women from the former Soviet Union (in Turkey), and with Africans (in Bulgaria). *“Well, at first there was much fear and distrust. Because we Bulgarians are brought up to believe that Muslims are terrible. They were literally afraid for me. ...Another bad thing is that when they see a Bulgarian woman married to an Arab, they consider her an easy woman.”* (Iva, 49, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case).

Numerous negative stereotypes and prejudices have been formed regarding these immigrants. Some of the stereotypes (regarding Muslims in Greece and Bulgaria) have historic roots and are linked with the centuries when these two nations were under Ottoman rule. Some are a product of the modern times (racial prejudices against the Africans); others emerged after the end of the Cold War (about Albanians as terrorists and criminals, and “Russian” women as prostitutes). Some stereotypes lead to stigmatisation and strengthen the social distances, while others go even further and result in racist and xenophobic attitudes and policies of social exclusion. *“What I have gone through because of this relationship – I do not wish this to anyone”* (Iva, 49, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case).

Most of the respondents say that they have encountered the strongest resistance among the older generations, while in general the younger tend to be more liberal. *“I believe that nowadays the youth... at my daughter’s age, they don’t... they don’t have any difficulties, they don’t pay attention to nationality. I don’t think so.”* (Maria, 57, Czech Republic, Greek case).

On the other hand, the African immigrants in Bulgaria complain of being frequently attacked by gangs of skinheads – part of the youth

subculture, which often acts as a strike force of the extreme right political formations. *“And there are many skinheads, they curse you, attack you, even on buses. They have beaten me on a bus, followed me, I was hit on a bus station and had to go to the emergency hospital.”* (Lansana, 38, Guinea, Bulgarian case).

The attitudes towards immigrants are highly conditioned by the social-economic class and education of the people from the host society. *“So the people who are well educated, have good culture, from nice environment, they will not look down on you.”* (Nasir, 50, Iraq, Bulgarian case). *“In my student years, for example, at the university, in the libraries, we didn't have problems. But at the same time I lived and worked with the common people, so to say with the lower class. They pay much more attention to the racial issues, they call you a monkey.”* (Peter, 40, Zambia, Bulgarian case).

In this unfavourable social climate, mixed families can successfully integrate into the host society only if supported by a favourable micro-social milieu. The families of the immigrants, which remained behind in their home countries, usually fully support the mixed families. *“My parents are totally open-minded, regardless of who my partner would be, they simply wish me to be happy.”* (Maria, 33, Bulgaria, Greek case). The support of the mothers of the female immigrants is especially noticeable (Greece, Turkey). *“My mother was first afraid of my husband to be. However, when he came to visit, she really liked him.”* (Katinka, 50, Hungary, Turkish case) and *“My mom really liked him.”* (Olesya, 51, Russia, Turkish case). The parents have accepted and approved the fact that their children have married a person from the country to which they have migrated. There were only few examples of objections: *“And why are you going to get married to a Greek woman, and I don't know what.”* (Ervin, 36, Albania, Greek case).

In contrast, very often the families of the local partner reject or disapprove (at least initially) of their children's decision. Usually, the reaction of the fathers was much more negative and in some cases went to the extreme – refusal to be present at the wedding, cutting off contacts, disinheritance. *“He does not want to accept the fact, he openly tells*

*me – he not only shows it, but actually tells me when he is angry: I will never give you my approval. You have married my daughter in spite of my objections and you can't expect anything from me.*" (Mohammad, 48, Afghanistan, Bulgarian case). *"Basically, Sotiris's father disinherited him. That is, all the family fortune belongs to his sister."* (Corina, 49, Romania, Greek case).

The disapproval is often reflected in how the parents responded to the announcement of the marriage by these couples. *"My husband's family never wanted me, did not want to talk to me, did not want to meet with me and did not want to see me... when my husband announced that he wanted to marry me, they told him 'You cannot marry her, and if you ever do so, we will denounce you as our son.'"* (Elena, 30, Ukraine, Turkish case). *"They arrived at the wedding as guests, they were afraid that we might push them to have hashish, which [they believed was] a Turkish tradition to smoke."* (Sait, 50, Turkey-Kurdistan, Greek case). *"Nobody from her family wanted to come to the wedding. Only her sister came, drank one small glass and after two minutes said she had to go."* (Hasan, 37, Togo, Bulgarian case).

Mothers were as a rule much more open towards the new situation and were the first to break the deadlock, starting the communication and eventually accepting the newly-weds. *"My mother, for example, has no objections to this relationship."* (Elena, 37, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case) *"My mother accepted it instantly. And my sister as well."* (Anna, 67, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case). *"We lived two years with her parents. Her mother still cries because we moved away. I like to cook very much, to do the domestic work. We constantly ran into each other in the kitchen, behind the stove, at the sink. So I told her that we both needed a kitchen of our own. So don't think that we are moving out for some other reason, I just need to have my own kitchen. But she still keeps a room for us..."* (Jamil, 56, Syria, Bulgarian case).

Of course, there are also exceptions and some mothers reacted extremely negatively. *"We were married for three years without the knowledge of her mother. Our son was born without her knowing it. My wife used to tell me that if her mother found out about me, she would get a heart attack. After all, she eventually did find out. She almost fainted. And from then on, everything went*

wrong. They started pulling her away from me and giving her conditions – either to be with them or with me. And so we separated.” (Chisse, 45, Ghana, Bulgarian case).

The respondents evaluate the attitude of their friends and neighbours in a much more positive light. Very positive examples were provided in Greece and Bulgaria: both partners were usually well accepted and approved by their old friends and maintain close and friendly ties with them, they visit each other and often spend time together. They have also built friendly and trusting relations with their neighbours. Only the Muslim men in Greece and Bulgaria were initially received with certain distrust, but this was soon overcome and they integrated well into the social networks. The case of female immigrants in Turkey is usually quite different. Many have not managed to socialise well and lead a very isolated life. They rarely communicate with their neighbours and colleagues. This is partially explained with the strong social stigmatisation against wives from the former Soviet Union. The rejection is also a consequence of the fact that they are associated with a different religion (although the majority of them have converted to Islam).

An important role in the integration of the immigrants from mixed families is played by the associations of their compatriots. The fieldwork has revealed that male immigrants are much more active and interested in the work of such organisations – especially the men expressing political interests and ambitions (Arabs in Bulgaria, Kurds in Greece). Quite often, their wives also participate in various initiatives organised by the immigrant communities (poetry readings, national holidays, festivities and celebrations, etc). The female immigrants from mixed marriages say that they intentionally avoid contacts with their co-nationals, although they are certain that they would receive help from them if they asked for it. This decision is probably a result of their desire to cut ties with their roots and assimilate faster. *“I have been there two to three times, I didn’t like it at all, it was miserable.... It reminds me of the old Ceausescu regime, I had nothing in common with them, that is I never went back again..., too fake... I was getting bored....”* (Daniela, 41, Romania, Greek case). In

the case of Turkey, this is also partially due to the prioritisation of family life or work over socialization. *"I have a few friends. However, we are never able to schedule our meetings. I organize my time according to my husband's schedule."* (Alona, 29, Moldova, Turkish case). The African immigrants in Bulgaria cannot count on such social networks because their national communities are too small (with the exception of the Ethiopian one) to set up national associations, however they are informally connected through a general association of Africans in Bulgaria.

### ***Contacts and experience with official institutions***

A number of different models of behaviour regarding the possibilities of obtaining citizenship or residence permits in the host country have been observed among the foreigners from mixed families. Those who have resided in the host countries for many years and have (or would like to have) permanent employment are most eager to apply for citizenship or have in some cases already obtained it (immigrants from the Middle East in Bulgaria and women immigrants in Greece). The second group are those immigrants who are susceptible to assimilation, but do not look for employment outside the household and are thus more passive regarding the application for citizenship (majority of women in Turkey). There are also foreigners without citizenship. Some choose not to apply for it (because of the challenges related to the duration and complexity of bureaucratic procedures involved in acquisition of citizenship – female immigrants in Turkey, or because they have a strongly expressed sense of national identity – male immigrants in Greece).

Others face certain legal barriers to do so (like Africans in Bulgaria, who, for various reasons, cannot obtain the necessary documents from their home countries). Only few of the respondents complained regarding the procedures for obtaining citizenship or residence permits. In the opinion of the majority, if one has all the necessary documents, has a good command of the official language and takes the necessary exam, they are able to obtain the citizenship. Only the Africans in Bulgaria complained about racism and discrimination in the procedures. *"It is*

*very difficult to get citizenship here, especially if you are black.*" (Lansana, 38, Guinea, Bulgarian case).

All respondents in Bulgaria and Turkey have only a civil marriage, while in Greece almost one half were married also in church. The very low number of religious ceremonies is easily explained by the fact that the partners profess different religions. In addition, other factors like low religiosity of the partners (Bulgaria) and the resistance from the extended family also play a role. The high share of religious marriages in Greece is also easily explained by the fact that (unlike in Turkey and Bulgaria) partners in over half of mixed families in Greece belong to the same religion – Orthodox Christianity. The importance of religion in Greece is also much stronger than, for example, in Bulgaria.

According to the respondents, in all three countries conducting a mixed marriage is accompanied with a number of legal obstacles. In Greece and Bulgaria (as EU members), the couples need to provide a large number of different documents and certificates and after the marriage are subjected to strict monitoring to prevent cases of false marriages. In Turkey, the laws on citizenship acquisition changed in May 2009, making it more stringent to acquire citizenship through marriage. These circumstances have led some of the couples to the decision to marry earlier than they would normally want.

The respondents in Turkey were the only ones not to name any cases of discrimination against foreigners from the official institutions. In Bulgaria (Muslim and African respondents) and in Greece (women from Albania and Montenegro) complained about the discrimination on the labour market because of their differences (name, origin, skin colour). *"Oh, Muhammad! Are you really a Muslim? In other words, you are such a good person, you look nice, you are dressed well and are so intelligent, how you can be a Muslim. I'm supposed to be some kind of beast or what?"* (Mohammad, 48, Afghanistan, Bulgarian case). *"That is discrimination, I can't develop professionally. My name is not Markov nor Hristov nor I don't know what, I wasn't born here. I can't develop, that is absurd."* (Hayri, 48, Palestine, Bulgarian case)

Many were refused employment, lost jobs or were paid less. There were also cases of discrimination from police and other state institutions. A Romanian woman, married to a Greek, had problems with obtaining a driving licence because she kept her maiden name. Another female respondent said she started hating the Greek state because of her problems, although she loves the country as a place to live. A couple, a Bulgarian woman – an Iraqi man, spoke about the humiliation and insults their daughter is exposed to at school because of her Arabic family name and that the teachers and the principal refuse to take action to protect her. The Africans in Bulgaria spoke about the systematic harassment from the police and about how the police refused to interfere when they were attacked and maltreated on the street in broad daylight. *“There was a time when police used to beat me, the police stops me and beats me..”* (Lansana, 38, Guinea, Bulgarian case). The Kurdish political activist complained that he has no political rights and that the Greek police repeatedly searched his home. The principal expression used to describe the institutional attitude towards foreigners in Greece and Bulgaria was *“a very strong social and state racism.”* *“Generally speaking, in the first ten years we experienced very strong social and state racism. The state racism was mainly expressed through the legalization process, “clearing” processes of illegal immigration, check-outs conducted by the authorities and... through mass deportations. Personally, I have been sent back at least three times and I have returned by crossing the borders.”* (Ervin, 36, Albania, Greek case). *“The discrimination continues, although it is not so visible any more, it is not so open. It is a bit in the shadow, but it is still here. The fact that my name is Mohammad and not Ivan or Angel makes an immediate impression. Nobody asks directly, but simply thinks: Oh, there is an Arab employed in this company, God knows what kind of company this is.”* (Mohammad, 48, Afghanistan, Bulgarian case).

### ***Intercultural aspects of mixed family life***

Based on their personal experience, many respondents describe the mixed marriage as a “challenge” (Turkey, Bulgaria), while stressing the mutual understanding and respect as the main tools for building a harmonious family life. The respondents believe that the personality

of their partners is much more important than their ethnic origin and cultural background. *"It does not matter, if he is a decent human being, no difference."* (Maria, 56, Moldova, Turkish case). They underline that the mixed marriage has enriched them personally, expanded their worldview, helped them to overcome stereotypes. *"I benefited from a different culture, I have a broader world view, ...why? Because it is a different culture."* (Tatyana, 32, Ukraine, Turkish case). The mixed marriage is exceptionally beneficial to the children, who can draw the best from two cultures. The main negative aspects are the financial difficulties (especially in the families where immigrants are men), different cultural codes and experiences (such as dress code in the case of Turkey). *"As you know, Moldavians dress a bit more open... I am used to that... He tells me to wear a long t-shirt if I am wearing stretch jeans for example."* (Alona, 29, Moldova, Turkish case). Nostalgia for the homeland and families, and the hostile social environment are also a problem.

In most cases, the families communicate in the language of the local partner. According to the respondents, the decision for this came naturally. In Bulgaria, most of the immigrants from the field study learned Bulgarian as students, while in Greece the male immigrants had to learn the language to be able to find work. The female immigrants in Turkey and Greece spoke the local language to a certain extent before meeting their partners, but had to improve their language skills as their Turkish and Greek husbands usually do not speak (or do so on a very basic level) their languages. Very rarely (mostly in Bulgaria and less in Greece) a bilingual model of communication is used (English, German, French, Serbian-Croatian, Bulgarian), including for the upbringing of children. More common practice is to speak with the children only in the official language of the country. The awareness of the immigrant mothers that their mother tongue would not be practical and useful to their children plays a very important role for such decision. *"My child says that he doesn't need to know Romanian... He doesn't want to know Romanian. I also didn't want to push him [to learn the language] being aware of his attitude towards the issue... Under no circumstances does he want to have anything to do with Romania."* (Corina, 49, Romania, Greek case).



Learning the language of the other partner did not lead to the loss of the national identity of the immigrant partner. They maintain and use their native language, follow the news from and about their home country, keep in touch with their families and friends at home and meet other compatriots in the city where they live. When possible, they travel home, they teach their children about the language and history of their country and nation, cook traditional dishes. Some of the female immigrants have also preserved their maiden family names. *"I kept my Romanian family name, which immediately stands out... And whoever can accept this, that's fine. Whoever cannot accept that I'm Romanian is not welcome, and that's it."* (Daniela, 41, Romania, Greek case). In general, the male foreigners (in Greece and Bulgaria) and those female immigrants who are not economically dependent on their husbands are more determined and active in preserving the characteristic features of their national identity and passing them on to their children. On the other hand, no signs of pressure from inside or outside the family to change the national identity were observed during the fieldwork.

At the same time, multicultural identities are also being formed. Some of the immigrant spouses said that in addition to their national identity, they also have the civic identity of the country they live in. They perceive themselves also as Greeks or Bulgarians, because they live there and their children are brought up in the Greek / Bulgarian way. *"You declare [your nationality] based on the official papers you hold – but, in my personal life I feel Greek."* (Sifis Taiem, 42, Jordan, Greek case). *"In Bulgaria I say that I'm a Bulgarian from Iraq. If I'm abroad I say that I'm from Bulgaria."* (Nasir, 50, Iraq, Bulgarian case).

Religion was not named as a problem in the life of the mixed families. Most of the foreign women who have married in Turkey have changed their religion to Islam, but they describe this step as a natural one, made out of love and without any pressure. Originating from the former communist countries, the respondents do not describe themselves as deeply religious. For this reason, the conversions took place without concussions. The converts to Islam make an effort to perform their

religious duties properly and to observe the dress code. They believe that in this way they show that they adhere to the traditions of their new religion. *"...I said why not [become Muslim]? I will also make him happy, and it does not matter for me to be Muslim or Christian because there is only one God."* (Katinka, 57, Hungary, Turkish case). There is only one case of conversion in Greece – a Muslim Albanian woman was baptised into the Christian Orthodox faith.

In other cases in Greece and Bulgaria, the respondents say that they have kept their religion and practice it to the degree possible in the environment they live in (an important factor is the existence of the respective prayer homes). The Muslim interviewees in Bulgaria describe themselves as not very religious. Their behaviour shows signs of religious syncretism and numerous elements of assimilation – they rarely respect the food taboos, drink alcohol, rarely observe fasting during Ramadan, do not pray regularly, rarely visit the mosque and actively participate in the celebrations of Christian religious holidays. Some even visit churches with their wives. *"We follow both traditions. He respects the tradition of visiting my family for Easter very much, he also loves Easter eggs, I have even taught him how to paint them. And then he prepares the lamb meat in his way."* (Petya, 38, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case). *"On Easter I go to buy the Easter cake and eggs, and then we set the table and celebrate together."* (Said, 50, Afghanistan, Bulgarian case). *"We celebrate only the Bulgarian holidays. I love them very much, because these are beautiful traditions, it is when all loved ones get together and have fun."* (Lukman, 75, Iraq, Bulgarian case).

Muslim male respondents in Greece also consider themselves to be not that religious, but (contrary to Bulgaria) they live in a deeply religious environment, which provokes them and puts pressure on them. They say that in their families, they do not celebrate Christian holidays. The majority of the respondents demonstrate significant tolerance regarding the religious choices of their partners. Often both partners share the belief that "God is one." This also explains the absolute absence of any case of religious conversion, caused by pressure from the other partner. *"My wife is a Christian by religion, and I'm a Muslim, but if I tell you that we*

*both, regardless of differences in our religions, believe in one and the same Lord or God, or one and the same force, which controls the entire universe, it will not be incorrect. We believe in the same. My wife and I believe in one God. It doesn't matter to us if we call him Allah, Buda, Krishna, Lord.”* (Mohammad, 48, Afghanistan, Bulgarian case).

The raising of the children also provides an interesting viewpoint towards the intercultural interactions in the mixed families. As noted above, they rarely have more than two children, which is a deviation from the general standards and cultural traditions in Greece and Turkey, and in numerous countries of origin of the immigrants (especially in the Muslim and African countries). Apart from the explanations provided by the respondents (linked to the economic and social factors), the researchers believe that this also comes as a result of an agreement made between the spouses regarding the accommodation of their religious and cultural differences.

When selecting names for the children, most mixed families (with the exception of several couples in Bulgaria) did not turn to the neutral option (international sounding names or several names) or mutual compromise. The majority, wanting to protect the children from social exclusion and learning from their own negative experiences, preferred to give them names, which are consistent with the local traditions and acceptable for the ethnic majority. *“When we were selecting [our daughter's] name, we decided not to use his first name Mohammad as her second name.<sup>6</sup> I didn't want it to be included in her name. Because Mohammad is somehow a very religious name..”* (Magdalena, 37, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case). In most cases, the name was selected by or on the initiative of the father – often the child is named after the grandfather or other male relative on the father's side. This is very characteristic for foreign women, who are married to Greek or Turkish men. In those cases in Bulgaria, where the fathers came from a Muslim country, and where the children were given Muslim names, the respondents often spoke about racist attitudes, verbal abuse and stigmatisation against the children at school.

---

<sup>6</sup> In Bulgarian tradition, father's first name is usually used as child's second name.

The children from mixed families speak predominantly the official language of the country of their residence. This decision of their parents is dictated both by the more influential position of the local partner and by considerations for a more efficient and faster socialisation in the formal (school, work) and informal (friends, classmates) surroundings. The domination of the Greek and Turkish languages in the mixed families in these two countries respectively is unconditional. Here mothers play the principal role – the immigrant mothers do not teach their children their native language, while the Greek mothers object to their children speaking with their fathers in their language. In Bulgaria, the situation is more liberal. In some cases, Bulgarian mothers encourage their children to learn the language of their fathers – not just in cases of more popular and potentially economically beneficial languages like German, English and French, but also in cases of Arab and Persian languages.

Religion of the children is an important issue in Greece and Turkey – both countries are with a high degree of religiosity of the population. All mixed marriage children in Turkey are Muslims – in conformity with the religion of their fathers and in harmony with the prevailing religious environment. In Greece, despite the desire of most mixed families not to influence the religious choice of their children, the extended families of the Greek wives have exercised considerable pressure on them to have their children baptised in the Greek Orthodox Church. According to the male respondents, this has caused considerable tensions among the spouses. The religion in Bulgaria has been pushed aside, most likely due to the high level of secularisation of the population. All respondents have stated that they do not interfere in the decisions of their children and that they will provide them with the complete freedom to make their religious choice. For this reason, the children were baptised in only one family (on the mother's insistence). *"We didn't influence the child to become a Muslim or a Christian, she is not baptised. We have actually both told her that she needs to make her own choice in what she wants to believe."* (Magdalena, 37, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case).

## *Gender dynamics in mixed families*

The Greek team has encountered in its fieldwork a clear link between the ethnic and gender hierarchies based on comparisons between the two groups of mixed families (foreign husband/local wife and local husband/foreign wife). In the families in which women are of foreign origin, gender hierarchies have been strengthened by the ethnic hierarchies. For example, the Albanian and Romanian women are immigrants from countries, which are economically less developed compared to Greece. For these women, a marriage with a Greek man is most often hypergamous (it increases their social standing) and they demonstrate highly traditionalist viewpoints. They believe it is completely normal if a woman is restricted to the role of a housewife and to taking care of the children, while men are the heads of the family and play the leading role. *"I prefer the man to hold the leading role at home. Because, it feels in a way that he's the master of the household, and we respect him, but we are not afraid of him, right? It's just the way it should be.."* (Cozeta, 40, Albania, Greek case). In the mixed families with husbands of foreign origin, their cultural, social, political or professional status seems to be more important than their ethnic or national origin. Social hierarchy is in their case more important than the ethnic one and has a decisive influence on gender hierarchy. In other words, their social status allows them to acquire the dominant position in the gender relation hierarchy.

Somewhat similar are the relations in the Turkish mixed families, although in the Turkish case both men and women can claim that they have entered a hypergamous marriage. Men have married a foreigner, which is seen as prestigious (despite the widespread stigma against the blond Russian-speaking women) and because their wives are in most cases with better education, thus bringing into the family a certain class and behaviour. Women are in a socially and economically subordinate position and show a tendency towards submission in the private sphere – they change their religion, give Turkish names to their children, do not teach them their mother tongue, do not work in their previous professions and are content with being housewives.

In most of the Bulgarian cases, the mixed marriages were hypergamous for the immigrant males, i.e. they had improved their social status by marrying women with permanent incomes and housing. For the women, these marriages were undoubtedly hypogamous, i.e. they were not conducive for the improvement of their social status (an important issue here are the prejudices and negative social attitudes towards immigrants from certain regions/countries).

The gender segregation in the society is rarely mentioned. The foreign women in Greece note that it exists, especially on the labour market, but deny that they feel it in any way in their families. They believe that the “double role / double burden” of women (at home and at work) is something natural, stemming from the expectations of the men that their wives should take care of the household.

The responses regarding the gender hierarchy within the families are very diverse and show that this process is a very dynamic one. Although the female immigrants in Greece say that their Greek husbands are more involved in the household work than the average Greek men, the Greek male respondents describe the traditional gender division of labour with male and female roles as natural. *“...each one is doing what s/he has to do without any rational explanation... For a strange reason, things are done in this way.”* (Kostas, 50, Greece, Greek case). Some of the foreign men married to Greek women share this opinion. *“I don’t cook at home because I have the feeling that it’s my wife’s responsibility to cook, I was brought up with such trends (...). I told you, the cooking is my wife’s responsibility, part of the household, despite the fact that I’m a cook. Laundry is de facto her responsibility, ironing, anything related to clothing. My responsibilities are, in a sense, “male” responsibilities: shopping in the market and the supermarket, cleaning the verandas, hovering. Things like strewing the beds are her responsibility.”* (Sifis Taiem, 42, Jordan, Greek case). In the opinion of these husbands, taking care of the children is female obligation. Women should also strive to preserve their femininity and not get involved with inappropriate work. For these reasons, men should only occasionally help with certain “female” household activities.

In contrast, in the Bulgarian families with a foreign husband, the traditional gendered labour division at home has changed significantly. Many such men say that they evenly share the household work with their wives and they do not divide it into “male” and “female.” In their opinion, since their wives are employed, they should not do all the housework alone. *“We do everything together. I cook – I like cooking, washing dishes, I like to have everything in order, to think up a new dish, something to make the children happy.”* (Nasir, 50, Iraq, Bulgarian case). *“The biggest difference [with my home country] is that a woman there has to do many things – cooking, washing; here we do everything together. You shouldn’t wait for one person to do everything.”* (Lansana, 38, Guinea, Bulgarian case). *“He doesn’t hide from work. He is hard-working and helps a lot. He does the male work and if I ask him to do some female work, he won’t say ‘that is woman’s work’ but will go ahead and do it.”* (Elena, 37, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case)

Similar, non-traditional gender division of domestic labour seems to be common among the mixed families in Turkey. The Turkish men married to foreigners appear to be very active in the household work – at least in the accounts of their wives, who compare them to the men in their home countries (Moldova, Russia). Although these women largely reproduce the traditional gender roles, they share with delight that their husbands help them very much with the domestic work, do not drink alcohol and do not abuse them. *“Moldovan men do not work... you work and come home and they are drunk, they beat you...”* (Katrina, 32, Moldova, Turkish case). *“I tell him to do this (pay the bills) and he does so, not like the Moldovan men.”* (Katrina, 32, Moldova, Turkish case). *“We do not really have a big role differentiation... Sometimes I do the salad and he does the meat.”* (Katinka, 57, Hungary, Turkish case).

The decision-making processes in the mixed families differ from the traditional for the region models of gender hierarchy, in which the decisions are taken by the husbands. Before making the decision, the mixed families discuss, negotiate, make compromises and try to achieve agreement on all issues dealing with finances, property, raising and education of the children. *“None of us insists on his or her position,*

*uncompromisingly and without grounds. This is how I want it and that's it. I'm the head of the family and it has to be as I say. It is not like that with us. We discuss things and find a common ground."* (Mohammad, 48, Afghanistan, Bulgarian case).

Only in a few interviews, there were indications that this balanced model is occasionally disturbed by one of the spouses. Some of the interviewed Greek men have shared that according to them, the important decisions should be made by men. In Bulgaria, one of the Arab respondents (who is considerably older than his wife) believed that the fact that he had a richer experience in life gave him the right to impose his opinion in most cases. On the other hand, some of the female Bulgarian respondents said that they were more active and decisive regarding certain family decisions. However, these examples seem to be more dependent on the individual features of the respondents and do not represent a rule.

Of the three teams, only the Greek one has explored to what extent the cultural differences influence the sexual life of the mixed families. As can be expected from the nature of the fieldwork, the answers to such questions were general and cannot be taken as entirely reliable. All the main groups of respondents (local and foreign men, local and foreign women) said that they have very good sexual relations and were pleased with their partners. One interesting aspect that deserves to be mentioned is the evaluation of men regarding the accessibility of women for sexual contact and their attitude towards the pre-marital sexual relations. The Greek men, who were interviewed, believe that Eastern European women are much more open, informed and easier to establish contact with. They make a clear difference between the non-binding sexual affair and serious relationship and, unlike Greek women, can enter a relationship without having marriage in mind. The foreign male respondents compared Greek women with the women in their home countries and came up with similar conclusions.

When asked to compare their family life with other families (in their home countries or in the country of residence), the respondents



provided some interesting answers. On the one hand, most respondents say there are no significant differences because they all live in the same social and economic surroundings. On the other hand, they believe that the partners from the mixed families have the possibility to build significantly more trust and a deeper relationship among themselves because they are under a constant social monitoring and have to rely much more on their internal resources. They are much more active in their search for mutual understanding, compromises, and common grounds. The quarrels and misunderstandings are less frequent, the cases of domestic violence and separation are very rare. The foreign spouses evaluate their own family experience in a more favourable light compared to those of their parents. Many concluded that they would not feel comfortable if married to a person of the same nationality and religion. For this reason, the majority concluded that they would also advise their children to follow their example and form mixed families. Only exceptionally, respondents said that they regret the choice they have made and that they would advise their children against it.

## **Analysis of the field research on transnational families**

### ***The main characteristics of the respondents***

The three teams have conducted 28 interviews altogether (12 in Bulgaria, 8 in Greece and 8 in Turkey) with spouses from transnational families. The Bulgarian team interviewed 10 women and 2 men, whose partners have left to live and work abroad (some of the respondents also had their own labour migration experience). The task of the Greek and Turkish teams was to investigate those transnational spouses, who live and work in the host country and support financially their families who remained back home. For this purpose, the teams conducted interviews with women who work as domestic servants or take care of the elderly or ill persons in the households of the upper middle and middle class in Athens and Istanbul. The Bulgarian and Turkish teams also organised two focus groups – respectively with 6 women in Sapareva Banya and with 4 women in Istanbul.

The Bulgarian respondents live in small towns and villages<sup>7</sup> in the south-western Bulgaria, a region significantly affected by the economic crisis, with high level of unemployment and with ethnically and religiously mixed population (Bulgarians, Pomaks – Muslim Bulgarians, and Roma). The partners of the respondents have left to find employment in various countries – mostly Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece, but also as far as the USA. Most of them work in agriculture, construction, timber industry, and in restaurants. Greek and Turkish respondents come from the former socialist countries like Bulgaria, Georgia, Poland and Ukraine (in the case of Greece) and Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia and Turkmenistan (in the case of Turkey).

The respondents belong to different religions. In Bulgaria they include Orthodox Christians and Muslims, in Greece – Orthodox Christians and Catholics, in Turkey – Christians and Muslims.

The age of the respondents varies considerably – from 19 to 54 in Bulgaria, from 46 to 63 in Greece and from 23 to 53 in Turkey. For this reason they can be considered as a representative sample of people, who have been affected in their active age by the economic transition in the former socialist countries and forced to look for employment abroad.

The level of education of respondents is also very different. The ones in Greece and Turkey have predominantly secondary and high education, while the majority of the Bulgarian respondents have secondary or lower than secondary education.

In all three countries, the separation was intended to be temporary, but in many cases at the time of the interviews it was in its 10<sup>th</sup> (Bulgaria), 11<sup>th</sup> (Turkey) or even 15<sup>th</sup> year (Greece). The respondents said that they or their partners return to their home countries once or twice a year at the most – usually for a couple of weeks. Some transnational spouses have not returned home even once since departing.

---

<sup>7</sup> One interview was taken in the larger town of Blagoevgrad

All respondents said that the reasons for the family separation were strictly financial. One or both spouses have lost their job, wages were too low, the children needed money for education. The decision for emigration was usually made after consulting other relatives and friends, as the partner who remained at home with the children often had to rely on their support and assistance.

### ***Integration into the host country***

The interviews showed that most of the labour migrants from transnational families arrived to their host countries with tourist visas and remained there illegally after the visas expired. In time, most of them succeeded (usually with the assistance of their employers) to obtain work and residence permits and the right to social and medical insurance. Some prefer to work and live without any insurance in order to save more money for their families. A small number (mainly women in Turkey and some of the partners of the Bulgarian respondents<sup>8</sup>) continue to live and work without documents.

The relations with the employers were described in all countries as very good. The women working in domestic aid in Greece and Turkey often described the relations as being almost like in a family – they refer to their employers as “aunts, sisters, mothers,” say that they feel like being at home and love the families of their employers like their own. *“I feel as if I were at home, I work as if I worked at home, I love them as if they were my family since I do not have my family here.”* (Zira, 57, Georgia, Greek case). The wives of the Bulgarian immigrants spoke with gratitude about how the employers in Spain and Portugal had taken care of their husbands in the time of illness and about treating them as their relatives.

---

<sup>8</sup> Most notably those residing in the USA. Many used to live and work illegally in the EU countries, but this has changed after Bulgarian EU accession when Bulgarian workers were granted legal access to employment in most EU countries.

The social behaviour of the immigrants is conditioned by the nature of their work and place of residence. The Bulgarian emigrants usually work in peripheral regions, on construction sites, on farms or in kitchens of restaurants. As such, they usually live with other Bulgarian migrants and migrants from other countries and rarely speak the official language beyond the elementary level. The migrants in Turkey and Greece work in private homes in big cities like Athens and Istanbul. They have a very good command of the local language, despite learning it on their own through watching TV and communication with the host family. In general, their interaction with the people outside the place where they live and work and their level of socialisation are very limited.

In most cases, immigrants communicate with the authorities only through the mediation of their employers, which increases their dependency. The unregulated status of some migrants and their fear of being exposed by the authorities make them very cautious and withdrawn. They are not interested in the initiatives of the immigrant communities and rely exclusively on the informal networks and contacts – at private homes, churches and other places where they can meet in private. *“We gather there, ten women, we cook our own meal, we sing, we watch television... We receive videotapes from Ukraine and we see our family, that’s the way it is.”* (Alexandra, 63, Ukraine, Greek case). Many of the women working as live-in maids are uneasy about spending much time outside the home where they work and live. In Turkey, this is very much connected with the widespread stereotype about Russians (usually all women from the former Soviet Union are referred to as “Russians”) as “Natashas” (prostitutes) and the related social stigmatisation.

A common feature in all three countries is that the immigrants do not want to apply for the citizenship of the host country. They all see their migration as temporary and are convinced that sometime in the future they would return to their families in the home country. This is another explanation for their reluctance to integrate into the host society, form lasting attachments and participate more actively in the life outside the realm of their home / work place.

## *Aspects of transnational family life*

Although the migrations were planned as temporary and short-time, in many cases the separation of the families has lasted up to 10 and more years. During this time, the migrants have rarely returned home – in most cases once or twice a year for a short period (about 2-3 weeks). They usually visit their families during the winter holidays and/or in the summer. The cases when the families of the migrants have visited them in the host country are very rare. The reasons for this are mostly financial – their spouses are frequently unemployed or have low salaries and cannot afford the costs of travel and accommodation.

The transnational spouses maintain contacts by communicating frequently on the phone, mobile phones and Skype. Most of the interviewed women in Athens and Istanbul say that a large part of their savings is spent for communication costs. Because of the relatively isolated and withdrawn life of many immigrant spouses, the regular communication with their families often becomes their main source of emotional support. *“He has no one to talk to. He talks only with me over the phone. He has no TV, nor has the time to watch TV because he works all night, and during the day he needs to wash clothes, cook, sleep.”* (Daniela, 36, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case).

According to the answers of the respondents, the immigrants send from 60 to 90% of their savings to their families. Although some send the money home through bank accounts, many do not trust the banking sector in their home countries and prefer to bring money home themselves when they visit or send it through informal channels and trusted people. In practice, the immigrants hardly save anything for themselves, spend money only on the most essential items, and do not set apart any money for leisure time, culture or travel. All the money they earn goes for their families at home – to support their children and spouses (who are in many cases unemployed), for the present or future education of the children, and for construction or payment of the house. *“It’s the money I earn here that I send over to them. I don’t even*

*save 5 euros for myself. We used to follow different trends and I brought them up very well and now I'm thinking that even nowadays I don't want them to lack anything. And I'm thinking, I want them to be happy, even if this means that I remain by myself for the rest of my life."* (Madonna, 51, Georgia, Greek case). *"The separation is hard to cope with, but we need the money..."* (Ayrle, 31, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case).

It is interesting to note that those respondents, who are divorced, said that they do not count at all on any financial support for the children from their ex-husbands, but have taken on the task of providing for the children entirely upon themselves. *"Two years ago during the summer he came to see the children. He said he worked in the construction and that he was earning 9 euros per hour, but when I asked him to send some money – nothing and nothing. He only sends the alimentation through bank transfer. 25 euro per month. I talked with a lawyer and she told me that [in Bulgaria] legal upper limit was 40 euro."* (Kristina, 37, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case).

The plans for reunification of the families depend to a great extent on the achievement of financial security. With the exception of several husbands of respondents from Bulgaria, who are making plans to stay abroad and have their families join them, most immigrants see their situation as strictly temporary. They do not want to remain in the host country, nor do they plan to bring their families there to live with them while they are abroad. Their principal plan is to earn enough money to return home one day and live the rest of their lives there without financial problems and worries. In general, despite the considerable nostalgic feelings for their families, migrant women in Greece and Turkey reject the idea of their husbands joining them. This would destabilise the family's economic plan and leave their children unattended. Respondents in Bulgaria provided similar reasoning. *"I can't go and live with him because the child is too young. If I went there, I would have to find work. So I would have to leave her at the kindergarten or hire a babysitter. She would talk to her in Portuguese, and in the evening I would speak with her in Bulgarian and she would get all confused... that is why I do not want."* (Gyultena, 26, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case).

Evaluating the family life in transnational families, the respondents in all three countries make the following conclusions. Such family life is not “normal,” because it creates numerous problems between the spouses (alienation, distrust, jealousy) and has a very negative effect on the children. They feel abandoned (especially when the migrants are their mothers), and suffer from emotional deficit. *“Now when our son turned 20, I’m beginning to realise that he didn’t learn anything – he is withdrawn, can’t communicate with others, disordered, has no sense of order and discipline. I blame his mother for that, because she was not there for him.”* (Georgi, 54, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case). The lack of emotional support of one of the parents cannot be compensated with the financial means and presents.

In Greece, most of the women underlined that in addition to suffering from the separation from the children, they also strongly miss their partners – physically, emotionally and personally. *“I feel the pain inside of me, too much pain! I cry easily, very often. I’m mentally tired and I have lost my faith. You don’t want to know...”* (Madonna, 51, Georgia, Greek case).

In many cases, especially when they come from small towns or villages, the migrant wives are stigmatised and criticised by the relatives and neighbours for breaking the traditional model of women-housewives and for abandoning their children. *“Generally speaking, in the village they look with distrust and disapproval on women who work abroad.”* (Ayrice, 31, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case). *“My father! My father was jumping out of his skin: ‘You are crazy, where do you want to go, you will destroy the family... He [husband] will go on the wrong paths, you will break up the family, what will the children do without parents?’* (Aneta, 35, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case). In case of women immigrants in Turkey, they can be further stigmatized because the society back home often associates the migration to Turkey with sex work.

### ***Gender dynamics in transnational families***

The prolonged separate life has led to significant changes in the gender hierarchy in the transnational families. In the Bulgarian transnational

families, the decision-making, which previously used to be a male priority or a result of discussion and mutual agreement, has become almost completely a female responsibility. Although all the female respondents say that they consult their husbands on the phone, it can be deduced from their responses that they actually manage their families on their own – they take care of the household, bring up the children and distribute the family budget. Their replies show that the telephone communication cannot adequately substitute the face-to-face contact and that the “virtual” partner cannot provide a genuine contribution for making important and difficult decisions. *“I decide everything. He tells me: ‘I can’t make a judgement from here, you decide.’”* (Ayrie, 31, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case). *“We discuss things, but it’s entirely up to me. In the end, I decide.”* (Nevse, 24, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case).

For some women, who were previously used to their passive role in the family decision-making, the new and changed situation came as a burden and caused them a number of difficulties. The most serious complaints refer to the strenuous domestic work and the fact that they have to be responsible for all important family decisions – from education and health care of the children to household repair work and maintenance. *“Well, we manage. It’s more difficult, as I have to take up his responsibilities too, you need to be in charge of everything when he is not around. But for more important decisions, we talk on the phone, you know, to agree.”* (Dzhamile, 44, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case).

The changing gender relations and the burden of being the actual head of the family weights heavily also on many female immigrant respondents in Greece and Turkey. There is a general contradiction between their beliefs and opinions and their evaluation of the current situation. Most of them are strong supporters of the traditional perception of the family in which the man is the indisputable head of the household and where there is a clear traditional gender division of labour (man - breadwinner / woman - carer). *“A woman shouldn’t be the leader of the household because she’s getting tired. A woman should cook, stay at home with the children... No, it’s not the mother’s responsibility what to eat today, how*



*much money have we got, what are we in need of, how do we get it. This is what I have been doing throughout my life, and I'm very tired.*" (Madonna 51, Georgia, Greek case). Most of the respondents noted that when they visited their homes they resumed their "wifely duties" such as cooking and cleaning as if they had never left and as if their role never changed from home-maker to bread-winner.

And yet, by becoming the main or the only bread-winners in their families, they are actively involved not only in the decisions concerning their nuclear families, but also in those of the families of their grown-up children. They say that they feel responsible for all actions of their families and insist on being consulted on all important issues, especially those concerning children and family finances. *"Without me, my family is not capable of doing anything at all. I'm the mother who must be asked before taking any action... This has always been a family characteristic. You can feel this even today... I have always been the family leader."* (Madonna, 51, Georgia, Greek case).

Both the answers of women in emigration and those at home show that wives and mothers are the main decision-makers in the family, especially on issues concerning children, regardless of the fact if they are at home or several thousand kilometres away.

In many cases, the entire extended families rely exclusively on the financial support provided by these transnational wives and mothers. They act as a social welfare agency not only to their children, but also to their economically disadvantaged parents and siblings. Despite that, they often experience overwhelming guilt and sadness from not performing the "classical sit-at-home" mothering. The majority of the respondents noted that the transnational family life had the most negative consequences for the children. The children lacked the emotional support and had difficulty forming an emotional bond with the absent parent. Some highlighted the problem of communication with their children, while others spoke about the deviant behaviour of the children as a result of mother's / father's absence. *"I feel like a*

*stranger in my own family. When I returned four years later, I went back to my house and feared that I had to face the result of the distance.”* (Alexandra, 63, Ukraine, Greek case).

In contrast, a significant majority of the female respondents believe that their relations with their spouses have remained unchanged. Only a few have noticed signs of destabilisation in the relations, alienation or even admit that the contacts have been cut off. Some also talk about the jealous fits, which their husbands show from time to time. To avoid this, they prefer to work in the houses where there are no men so that their husbands would feel more confident. Some respondents have also been jealous toward their husbands in certain periods, while some (especially those a bit older) noted that their marriages were already stabilised and that they trusted each other. However, being absent from their families for such a long period of time, they most likely do not grasp fully the changes, which have occurred during this time in their relations.

According to the wives of the Bulgarian immigrants, the separation has significantly influenced their partners and as a result, they have changed. In some cases the change is perceived as positive – the husbands have become more responsible, they have come to appreciate the hardship of the domestic work and are willing to help with it. In other cases, the change was for the worse. The husbands have become nervous, bad tempered, jumpy, jealous and alienated from their families.

In general, the advantages of trans-national family life are reduced to better salaries and financial security. *“The only gain is that in the period of economic crisis, we live relatively calmly and that she is saving money to buy another apartment for the old age.”* (Georgi, 54, Bulgaria, Bulgarian case).

After the migration, the original expectations for the family life were completely reversed. Despite providing the financial stability and security for their families, the respondents are very disappointed and unhappy with the decision they were forced to make. *“I had dreamed of a life like a*

*fairy tale, but things turned upside down.*" (Veska, 48, Bulgaria, Greek case). However, they see their situation as a necessary sacrifice that had to be made to improve their children's opportunities for a better life and above all for better education. They hope their children would never have to make a similar decision and would strongly advise them not to repeat their experience.

## **Conclusion**

### ***Prejudice, rejection and the art of becoming invisible***

The research on mixed families in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey has presented a rather gloomy picture of societies in all three countries, marked by the low levels of acceptance of otherness, sometimes latent and sometimes openly displayed racism and xenophobia, and widespread stereotypes and prejudices against immigrants. On personal level, there is a problem of (at least initial) rejection of the mixed family by the parents and relatives. This is above all the case with the parents of local female partners, who in the majority of cases disapproved of the fact that their daughters were marrying foreigners. In the most extreme cases (usually if the immigrant partner was black or a Muslim), all contacts between parents and the mixed couple were cut off. However, in most cases the strained relations improved in time, when the personal qualities of the immigrant partner overpowered the distrust based on general group stereotypes. A birth of a child is the most important landmark after which the mixed marriages are usually accepted by all parents and family relations reach an acceptable *modus vivendi*.

On social level, the rejection of otherness is manifested most clearly in the fields of employment and education. The male immigrants rarely have jobs corresponding to their qualification and work in professions shaped by their ethnicity. They are often victims of discrimination on the labour market – Africans because of their race and Muslims because of their names and religion. The situation is quite different with the

female immigrants. Those who are employed outside home usually have jobs in line with their education and qualification. On the whole, the wives of foreign origin encounter less social resistance than foreign husbands. One reason is that they seem to be willing to sacrifice much more to “blend in” the dominating society. The second reason is the still predominantly conservative and patriarchal nature of societies in all three countries. The foreign husbands are thus seen as a threat – not just as someone coming to take “our” jobs away, but also “our women.” In contrast, the foreign wives are coming here to “become one of us.” This is especially evident in Turkey, where women who have married Turks rarely work outside their homes, have very limited contacts with people outside (their husbands’) families, often change their religion and bring up their children without any contact with the culture, language and religion of their home countries. In short – women do all in their power to become invisible for the society.

Rejection and prejudices are also very visible in the education system. Children from mixed families whose otherness is visible (black or darker skin colour, a different name – especially if it is a Muslim name in Bulgaria or Greece) are often stigmatised by other schoolchildren. They are verbally and sometimes physically abused and rarely find help and support among teachers and principals. To prevent this, parents often deliberately select names, which are considered to be in line with the local traditions. The children are most often brought up by stressing the local culture, religion and language and neglecting those of the immigrant partner (this is much more often the case with immigrant wives than husbands). In some cases, the result of such decision was the child’s deliberate and firm rejection to be associated in any way with the nationality and other identity markers of the immigrant parent.

The predominantly negative attitudes towards immigrants (especially those from certain countries or regions) have been reflected also in the work of various state institutions. Although the majority of immigrant respondents stated that they had no problems with the official institutions, this partially comes as a result of the fact that they largely avoid contacts

with them and that such matters are usually handled by the local partner. However, some respondents did complain over the delays in obtaining various documents due to racist attitudes of civil servants and complications caused by cumbersome bureaucratic procedures. African immigrants said that they were victims of discrimination regarding the employment and unprovoked police checks of documents. In most drastic cases, some were victims of violence and abuse at police stations in the past.

### ***Mixed families as the engine of social change: Intercultural and gender aspects***

The gloomy cloud described above fortunately has its silver lining. On a person-to-person level, an encouraging finding is that the friends of both partners usually accept the mixed couple positively. In most cases, the couples said that the network of friends is exceptionally important for them and that they very much rely on their support.

The pattern of distrusting / disliking immigrants as a group, but approving of a particular immigrant friend largely copies the model of perception of traditional minorities in the three countries. Very often, certain negative stereotypes are ascribed to minority groups as a whole, while a particular person of minority origin can be our friend or neighbour because of their good personal qualities, which are acknowledged. The key word here is visibility. The traditional minorities in all three countries are today in a much better position regarding the respect of their rights than was the case a couple of decades ago. Their stepping out of “invisibility” and into the social spotlight through political parties, NGOs, media and other forms of public participation has caused an initial negative backlash, but in time has led to a gradual recognition and legal regulation of minority rights.

In the same way, the immigrant communities should step out of the private realm and make themselves more visible. The state institutions should of course also play their part. By drawing from the experience of

the EU as a whole and those EU countries with a much longer history of immigration in particular, the three SEE countries studied in this research should strive to provide a much more accommodating and welcoming environment to immigrants as is currently the case. The experiences of mixed families as bridges and catalysts of cultural interactions between the host and immigrant societies can be indispensable in these efforts.

Another area where mixed families are challenging the traditions are gender hierarchies and gender roles. Although there is no doubt that the societies in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey are gradually moving in the direction of establishing genuine gender equality and away from the traditional patriarchal arrangement, it seems that in this respect mixed families are quite a few steps ahead of the majority of “ordinary” non-mixed families. Even in Turkey, where most of the mixed families seem to follow the traditional gender pattern in which the man is the head of the family and the woman willingly restricts herself to the role of a housewife and mother, the domestic work and the decision-making processes and strategies in the mixed families tend to be shared much more evenly than in the marriages of co-nationals.

In the families where the husband is an immigrant (in the majority of our cases, they come from countries, which are in fact even more traditionalist and patriarchal than the three destination countries), the traditional gender roles are most often completely abandoned. The domestic work is shared on personal preferences and time availability and not based on gender “predispositions.” Both parents are involved in the upbringing of the children. The decision-making processes in the family are described as a result of mutual compromise, discussions, and negotiations. However, it seems that the local spouses (both wives and husbands) were often at the root of a number of initiatives and were the ones who in fact made the actual decision. In some cases, the local women are the main bread-winners of the family, and the immigrant husbands take over the larger share of the domestic work.

Life in a mixed family has numerous positive aspects (described with words like “support,” “confidence,” “understanding,” “calmness,” “safety,” and “stability”), but at the same time it is also a challenge. A happy marriage is a result of many efforts and has its price. Knowing and sharing a different culture can be a positive element of a marriage, as reported by several spouses, especially when one considers that the new situation provides for more open and relaxed life. A large number of both local and migrant spouses recognize that living in mixed families can broaden their children’s culture horizons and make them more open-minded.

### ***In the name of the children: A transnational sacrifice***

The life of mixed families can be very strenuous. Often faced with unfriendly or sometimes even hostile social environment, the partners from mixed marriages are required to invest much more effort and energy into building a trusting and strong relationship. However, they can count on each other’s support and strength in this process. In contrast, the transnational spouses stand alone in their struggle. Separated from their loved ones for five, ten, twenty or even more years, they deprive themselves of most of the little luxuries ordinary people take for granted (friends, social life, leisure time, holidays, culture) and spin in the endless cycle of working and saving money, offering one single universal explanation: it is a sacrifice they are consciously making in the name of their children.

The one and only reason for leaving behind their families, relatives, friends and homes and going abroad was to find employment and earn enough money not just to support their families at home, but save in order to build or expand the family house, and to provide for the children’s education. Any personal preferences and desires are subordinated to this goal and the transnational migrant spouses are as a rule employed in jobs that are not consistent with their education or previous work experience.

The transnational husbands and wives lead a very solitary, isolated life. The husbands of the Bulgarian respondents usually work in relatively closed environment like farms or construction sites and rarely communicate with anyone outside the circle of their co-workers (who are also mostly immigrants), while the female immigrant respondents in Turkey and Greece spend most of their time in the confines of the homes where they work and live. There are many reasons for this self-isolation: many are occupied full-time six or seven days a week with the household, some are without residence or work permits and avoid going to places where their documents might be checked, others feel uncomfortable with the frequently displayed stereotypical and discriminative behaviour and attitude considering single women immigrants as being sexually available. However, the two most important reasons for the intentional withdrawal from social life are the determination to save every last penny for the family and the absolute confidence that their stay abroad is temporary – hence, there is no need for integration and attachment to the life in the host country. All respondents say that once enough money is saved and the financial problems of the family resolved, they would return home and resume their normal family life.

The only “luxury” the transnational spouses usually permit themselves are the communication costs. Some use modern and cheap communication technologies (Internet, Skype) to be in touch with their families, although this is not always possible since their families usually live in rural and less developed regions, where modern information technologies are not easily available. The majority rely on telephones and mobile phones, which can be quite costly (especially since most of the immigrants come from outside the EU), but the desire to communicate is sublime as this is a way to reduce the sentimental pressure of nostalgia and the fear of losing control concerning the participation in the decision making in the family.

As mentioned above, the one and only benefit of the transnational family life is the financial security. The money earned abroad is essential for the family. The transnational spouses (especially the wives/mothers)



feel that they are obliged to safeguard the family and are prepared to make any sacrifices necessary for the benefit of their children. Despite being fully aware that their families could not survive without their work and their remittances, they are usually torn apart by feelings of guilt for abandoning their loved ones. The prolonged separation always takes its toll: the impact on the children and the relationship with the spouse. The children grow up without really knowing the immigrant parent. They are in contact with him/her only on the phone or via Skype. This leads to depersonalization of his/her authority, lack of a model to follow, and disrupted emotional ties. The absence of one of the parents loads the other one with too many responsibilities and often predetermines errors in his/her approach to the children's upbringing. The separation from one parent often leads to a too strong attachment of the children to the other parent, which in turn can become a cause for problems between the spouses. The spouses in time also grow apart from each other and sometimes find the alienation too difficult to overcome. In rare cases, the long periods of separation have a reverse effect – some respondents describe the periods of reunification as “second honeymoon,” but acknowledge that this usually happens in the first years of separation, and is less likely to occur later.

### ***Mothers in charge: A transnational challenge to traditionalist gender models***

The socio-political and economic changes that occurred in the former communist countries have completely overturned the traditional family and gender models, forcing many women to migrate as job seekers. The new transnational family model was not easily accepted by the wider society – the idea of a woman working abroad and providing for the family directly challenges the traditional family gender roles.

Transnational families often have to overpower the resistance and opposition of the extended family, especially their own parents. Despite acknowledging the difficult financial situation, the parents believe that the family should stay together no matter what and find alternative ways

to support itself. Their main concern are the grandchildren, who have to grow up without one of the parents. Nevertheless, after the initial opposition to the migration, the parents and especially the mothers of the migrants most often become very supportive and helpful after the migration takes place. They act as substitute mothers to their grandchildren and contribute to or completely take over the household work in the home of the transnational family. Likewise, the absence of the male partner is usually partially compensated by the assistance of an elderly parent, who helps with the household.

Nearly all interviewees say that they support and believe in the traditional gender roles – the husband-father should be responsible for the financial situation of the family and the wife-mother responsible for the household and the children's upbringing. The transnational family life has reversed these roles and many transnational spouses are deeply troubled by this change. The female respondents in Turkey and Greece stress the importance of motherhood as a social obligation and defend their (female) role by demonstrating that they are good mothers despite being absent from the family. They feel guilty because they have burdened their husbands with the sole responsibility for the children and the household, yet at the same time they say that they have the leading role in the important family decisions. They consult their husbands on everything related to their children (health care, education, upbringing), management of the household and even distribution of the family budget. The female respondents in Bulgaria, whose husbands work and live abroad, have taken these tasks entirely upon themselves. For some of them, who were previously used to their passive role and are now entirely in charge of all family affairs, the new situation comes as a burden and they often feel alone, mentally and physically exhausted, and caught in a situation from which they cannot escape.

And yet, despite the disapproval of the social environment and their own anxieties regarding the new situation, the transnational family life has challenged and started to change the traditional gender roles and hierarchies in the region. After the wives/mothers departed to

work abroad, the husbands had to take on a more active role in the household work (although in many cases an older daughter or a grandmother was there to lend a helping hand). While husbands have (to a smaller or larger extent) turned into home-makers, the transnational mothers have become the main bread-winners and thus the titular heads of the family, who have the last word on the important family matters. In cases where husbands/fathers have emigrated, the traditional gender roles have been seemingly preserved. The man is still a bread-winner and the woman is a home-maker, mother, housewife. And yet, quite unlike the female migrants, who stay very much involved in the family matters from afar, the role of migrant husbands is reduced to providing financial means to the family, while they delegate all the responsibilities and decision-making duties to the wives-mothers, thus making them de facto heads of the families. This shows that in the world of transnational families, the traditional gender hierarchy has been turned upside down. The wives and mothers are the center around which the family life revolves, regardless of the fact whether they are at home or several thousand kilometres away.

## **Policy recommendations**

### Mixed families:

- Strict prosecution of cases of hate speech and racially, religiously or ethnically motivated attacks.
- Effective and genuine prevention of discrimination in education, employment, health care, work of state institution.
- Better coordination of work between state and non-state agencies concerned with immigrants (central and local authorities, churches, mosques and other places of worship, schools, centres for social work, health care facilities).
- Encourage dialogue and partnership between state agencies and immigrant associations and organisations; immigrants from mixed families should be motivated to play an active role in the formation and maintenance of such partnerships.

- Education and training for personnel in state agencies working with immigrants.
- Introduction of additional classes in multicultural education in schools attended by immigrant children and mixed family children with special attention on the culture of the communities the children belong to. The children need to be encouraged to develop the language and learn about the culture of their immigrant parent.
- A more efficient and reliable collection of statistical data about the number of immigrants in the country, especially introduction of gender-sensitive indicators in data on immigration and migration-sensitive indicators in gender and family statistical data.

#### Transnational families:

- Provide easier, inexpensive and renewable short-term residence and work permits to migrants who are already in the country, have work and demonstrate the intention to return to their home countries.
- Provide easier and cheaper short-term visas to family members of immigrants so that they can visit them more frequently
- Amend immigration policies to facilitate parent-child reunification and remove legal obstacles that prolong family separation.
- Seek partnership and assistance of immigrant associations, places of worship and other formal organisations where immigrants gather and enlist their help in reaching out to transnational parents and especially transnational mothers.
- Establish help and support centres for transnational families with the awareness that many transnational mothers are very cautious in seeking assistance due to social prejudices and stigmatisation. Special attention should be given to the women who were potential victims of violence – either in their families or during their migration experience.
- Prevent the double taxation of remittances sent by immigrants to their families.
- Recognition of domestic care work, especially the inclusion of those employed in the domestic care work into the system of health and retirement insurance.

## Bibliography

- Антова, Светлана. 2004. Смесените бракове между българи и словаци (The Mixed Marriages between Bulgarians and Slovaks). – In: *Българска етнология* (Bulgarian Ethnology), Vol. 1, pp. 28-39.
- Ганева-Райчева, Валентина. 2004а. *Българите в Унгария – проблеми на културната идентичност* (Bulgarians in Hungary – Issues of Cultural Identity). Sofia: Academic Press “Prof. Marin Drinov.”
- Ганева-Райчева, Валентина. 2004b. Българската диаспора в Унгария – аспекти на интеркултурния диалог (The Bulgarian Diaspora in Hungary – Aspects of Inter-cultural Dialogue). – In: *Антропологични изследвания* (Studies in Anthropology), Vol. 5, pp. 145-172.
- Грозева-Исса, Катя. 2004. Психо- и социо-лингвистични проблеми при избор на лични имена в българо-арабски семейства (Psycho- and Sociolinguistic Problems in Selection of Personal Names in Bulgarian-Arab Families). – In: *Наука* (Science), Vol. 5, pp. 49-52.
- Карамихова, Маргарита. 2004. *Американски мечти. Пътеводител сред първа генерация емигранти* (American Dreams. A Guide through the First Generation Emigrants). Sofia: IK Krotal.
- Мицева, Евгения. 2005. Кюрди (Kurds). – In: *Имиграцията в България* (Immigration in Bulgaria). Krasteva, Anna, ed. Sofia: IMIR, pp. 137-155.
- Ata, Abe W. 2000. *Intermarriage between Christians and Muslims: a West Bank Study*. Victoria, Australia: David Lovell.
- Bacas, Jutta Lauth. 2002. *Cross-border Marriages and the Formation of Transnational Families: A Case Study of Greek-German Couples in Athens*. Oxford: University of Oxford, Working Paper, October, <http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/WPTC-02-10%20Bacas.pdf>
- Baldassar, Loretta and Cora Baldock. 2000. Linking Migration and Family Studies: Transnational Migrants and the Care of Ageing Parents. – In: *Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Migration Research. Interdisciplinary and International Perspectives*. Agozino, Biko, ed. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 61-89.
- Basch, Linda, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc. 1994. *Nations Unbound. Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Breger, Rosemary and Rosanna Hill, eds. 1998. *Cross-Cultural Marriage: Identity and Choice*. Oxford, UK: Berg.

- Bryceson, Deborah and Ulla Vuorela, eds. 2002. *The Transnational Family. New European Frontiers and Global Networks*. Oxford: Berg.
- Cohen, Steven Martin. 1988. *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?*. Bloomington: Indiana University.
- Cottrel Baker, Ann. 1990. Cross-national Marriages: A Review of the Literature. – In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 21, pp. 151-169.
- Douglas, George and George Yancey. 2004. Taking Stock of America's Attitudes on Cultural Diversity: An Analysis of Public Deliberation on Multiculturalism, Assimilation and Inter-marriage. – In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 1-19.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds. 2003. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. London: Granta Books.
- Erel, Umut. 2002. Reconceptualising Motherhood: Experiences of Migrant Women from Turkey Living in Germany. – In: *The Transnational Family. New European Frontiers and Global Networks*. Bryceson, Deborah and Ulla Vuorela, eds. Oxford: Berg, pp. 127-146.
- Gamburd, Michele Ruth. 2000. *The Kitchen Spoon's Handle: Transnationalism and Sri Lanka's Migrant Housemaids*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc Szanton, eds. 1992. *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration. Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences, July, Vol. 645.
- Glick Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc Szanton. 1995. From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration. – In: *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 1, January, pp. 48-64.
- Glick Schiller, Nina and Georges Eugene Fouron. 2001. *Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Goldstein, Joshua R. 1999. Kinship Networks that Cross Racial Lines: The Exception or the Rule? – In: *Demography*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 399-407.
- Gordon, Milton M. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goulbourne, Harry and Mary Chamberlain, eds. 2001. *Caribbean Families in the Transatlantic World*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Ho, Man Keung. 1990. *Intermarried Couples in Therapy*. Springfield, IL: Thomas.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette and Avila, Ernestine. 1997. I'm Here, But I'm There. The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood. – In: *Gender and Society*, Vol. 11, Issue 5, pp. 548-571.

- Imamura, Anne E. 1990. Strangers in a Strange Land: Coping with Marginality in International Marriage. – In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 21, pp. 171-191.
- Jaes Falicov, Celia. 1995. Cross-Cultural Marriages. – In: *Handbook of Couple Therapy*. Jacobson, Neil S. and Alan S. Gurman, eds. New York: Guilford, pp. 231-246.
- Jakobson, Cardell and Tim Heaton. 2008. Comparative Patterns of Interracial Marriage: Structural Opportunities, Third-party Factors, and Temporal Change in Immigrant Societies. – In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 39, Issue 2, pp. 129-148.
- Johnson, Bryan and Cardell Jacobson. 2005. Contact in Context: An Examination of Social Settings on Whites' Attitudes towards Interracial Marriage. – In: *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 68, pp. 387-399.
- Johnson, Walton R. and Michael D. Warren, eds. 1994. *Inside the Mixed Marriage: Accounts of Changing Attitudes, Perceptions of Cross-Cultural and Interracial Marriages*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Kalmijn, Matthijs. 1998. Inter-marriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends. – In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 24, pp. 395-421.
- Khan, Dina. 1998. Mixed Marriages in Islam: An Anthropological Perspective on Pakistan. – In: *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, Vol. 29, pp. 5-28.
- Mason, Jennifer. 2004. Managing Kinship Over Long Distances: The Significance of the Visit. – In: *Social Policy and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 421-429.
- Muhsam, Helmut. 1990. Social Distance and Asymmetry in Inter-marriage Patterns. – In: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 21, pp. 307-324.
- National Statistical Institute. 2009. *Permanent Resident Foreigners in Bulgaria by Citizenship as of 31.12.2009*. [http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop\\_5.8\\_Migration\\_DR\\_EN.xls](http://www.nsi.bg/ORPDOCS/Pop_5.8_Migration_DR_EN.xls)
- Nyberg Sorensen, Ninna and Karen Fog Olwig, eds. 2001. *Work and Migration. Life and Livelihoods in a Globalizing World*. London-New York: Routledge.
- Nyberg Sorensen, Ninna. 2005. *Transnational Family Life Across the Atlantic: The Experience of Colombian and Dominican Migrants in Europe*. Paper presented at the International Conference on migration and domestic work in a global perspective, Wassenaar. May.
- Pribilsky, Jason. 2004. Aprendemos a Convivir: Conjugal Relations, Co-parenting, and Family Life among Ecuadorian Transnational Migrants in New York City and the Ecuadorian Andes. – In: *Global Networks*, Vol. 4, Issue 3, pp. 313-334.
- Reynolds, Tracey and Elisabetta Zontini. 2006. A Comparative Study of Care and Provision across Caribbean and Italian Transnational Families. – In: *Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group Working Paper No. 16*. London: South Bank University.

- Roer-Strier, Dorit and Dina Ben Ezra. 2006. Intermarriages between Western Women and Palestinian Men: Multidirectional Adaptation Process. – In: *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 68, Issue 1, February, pp. 41-54.
- Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. 2001. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Salazar Parreñas, Rhacel. 2005. *Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Suarez-Orozco, Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco. 2001. *Children of Immigration*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Thode-Arora, Hilke. 1999. *Interethnic Marriage. Theoretical and Methodological Aspects*. Berlin: Reimer.
- Ventoura, Lina and Sevasti Troumbeta, eds. 2006. Σύγχρονες Θεωρήσεις του Μεταναστευτικού Φαινομένου“ (Contemporary Approaches to Migration). – In: Σύγχρονα Θέματα τευχ. 92 (Synchrona Themata, special issue), No. 92, pp. 21-86.
- Vertovec, Steven and Robin Cohen. 1999. Introduction. – In: *Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism*. Vertovec, Steven and Robin Cohen, eds. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Vertovec, Steven. 1999. Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism. – In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 22, Issue 2, March, pp. 447 – 462.
- Wilding, Raelene. 2006. Virtual Intimacies? Families Communicating across Transnational Contexts. – In: *Global Networks*, Vol. 6, Issue 2, pp. 125-142.
- Yancey, George A. and Sherelyn W. Yancey. 1997. Black-White Differences in the Use of Personal Advertisements for Individuals Seeking Interracial Relationships. – In: *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 5, pp. 650-667.
- Zontini, Elisabetta. 2006. Italian Families and Social Capital: Care Provision in a Transnational World. – In: *Community, Work and Family*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 325-345.



## Appendix 1: Respondents' profiles – mixed families

### Bulgaria:

#### Interviews:

1. Mohammad, 48, Afghanistan, Muslim and Magdalena, 37, Bulgaria, Orthodox Christian: 16 years of marriage, 1 child
2. Said, 50, Afghanistan, Muslim and Daniela, 42, Bulgaria, Orthodox Christian: 14 years of marriage, 2 children
3. Felix, 38, Austria, Catholic and Diana, 39, Bulgaria, Orthodox Christian: 8 years of marriage, 2 children
4. Lansana, 38, Guinea, Muslim and Petya, 38, Bulgaria, Orthodox Christian: 7 years of marriage, no children
5. Lukman, 75, Iraq, Muslim and Anna, 67, Bulgaria, Orthodox Christian: 44 years of marriage, 2 children
6. Nasir, 50, Iraq, Muslim and Iva, 49, Bulgaria, Orthodox Christian: 29 years of marriage, 3 children
7. Ali, 39, Lebanon, Muslim and Elena, 42, Bulgaria, Orthodox Christian: 18 years of marriage, 2 children
8. Peter, 40, Zambia, Catholic and Elena, 37, Bulgaria, Protestant: 6 years relationship, no children

#### Focus group – men:

1. Lusien, 44, Congo, Catholic, 16 years of marriage, 1 child
2. Chisse, 45, Ghana, non-religious, married in 1991, divorced since 1996, 1 child
3. Moussa, 39, Guinea, Muslim, 8 years of marriage, 1 child
4. Hayri, 48, Palestine, Muslim, 26 years of marriage, 3 children
5. Jamil, 56, Syria, Muslim, 10 years relationship, 3 children from previous marriage
6. Daniel, 40, Tanzania, Catholic, 6 years of marriage, 1 child
7. Hasan, 37, Togo, Muslim, 6 months of marriage, expecting a child
8. Frederick, 42, Zambia, Catholic, 5 years of marriage, 1 child

#### Focus groups – women (all are Bulgarians):

1. Maya, 37, Orthodox Christian, 5 years of marriage, 1 child
2. Zvezdica, 40, Orthodox Christian, 15 years of marriage, 2 children
3. Fidanka, 32, Orthodox Christian, 3 years of marriage, 1 child
4. Elka, 38, Orthodox Christian, 8 years of marriage, 1 child

## Greece:

### Interviews with couples immigrant wives – local husbands:

1. Savvas, 40, Greece, Orthodox Christian and Marianna, 42, Romania, Orthodox Christian: 10 years of marriage, one child
2. Kostas, 50, Greece, Orthodox Christian and Daniela, 41, Romania, Orthodox Christian: 5 years of marriage, one child (and one child from the first marriage of the husband)
3. Hercules, 60, Greece, Orthodox Christian and Maria, 57, Czech Republic, Orthodox Christian: 38 years of marriage, one child
4. Giorgos, 45, Greece, Orthodox Christian and Cozeta, 40, Albania, Orthodox Christian (converted Muslim): 8 years of marriage, one child (and two children from the first marriage of the wife)
5. Kostas, 64, Greece, Orthodox Christian and Eleni, 57, Moldova, Orthodox Christian: 2 and 1/2 years of marriage, no children (two children from the first marriage of the wife)
6. Sotiris, 51, Greece, Orthodox Christian and Corina, 49, Romania, Orthodox Christian: 24 years of marriage, two children

### Interviews with couples immigrant husbands – local wives:

1. Sait, 50, Turkey-Kurdistan, Muslim and Vaso, 40, Greece, Orthodox Christian: 16 years of marriage, two children (and one child from the first marriage of the wife)
2. Betin, 33, Albania, Muslim and Nancy, 37, Greece, Orthodox Christian: 1 and 1/2 years of marriage, one child
3. Ervin, 36, Albania, Muslim (Orthodox Christian mother, Muslim father) and Aggeliki, 28, Greece, Orthodox Christian: 3 years of marriage, no children
4. Sifis Taiem, 42, Jordan, Muslim and Vaso, 47, Greece, Orthodox Christian: 15 years of marriage, one child
5. Alvaro, 53, Colombia, Catholic and Mary, 48, Greece, Orthodox Christian: 21 years of marriage, two children

### Focus group – immigrant wives:

1. Bebe, 29, Montenegro, Catholic, 4 years of cohabitation, no children
2. Raisa, 46, Northern Russia, Orthodox Christian, 8 years of marriage, one child from her first marriage
3. Maria, 33, Bulgaria, Orthodox Christian, 3 years of marriage, one child

## Turkey:

### Interviews:

1. Mustafa, 53, Turkey, Muslim, and Olesya, 51, Russia, Christian: 6 years of marriage (her second marriage), 1 child.
2. Mehmet, 65, Turkey, Muslim, and Maria, 56, Moldova, Christian: 2 years of marriage (his and her second marriage), he has 6 children from the first marriage, she has 3 children from the first marriage.
3. Hakan, 26, Turkey, Muslim and Elena, 30, Ukraine, Christian: 4 years of marriage (her second marriage), 1 child (she has one more child from the first marriage).
4. Tuncay, 47, Turkey, Muslim and Katrina, 32, Moldova, Christian: 3,5 years of marriage (his second marriage), he has 1 child from the first marriage.
5. Cevdet, 58, Turkey, Muslim and Katinka, 57, Hungary, Christian: 19 years of marriage, no children.
6. Hasan, 54, Turkey, Muslim and Olga, 30, Georgia, Muslim: 4 years of marriage (his third and her second marriage), he has 3 children from the first marriage, she has 1 child from the first marriage.
7. Kemal, 32, Turkey, Muslim and Tatyana, 32, Ukraine, Christian: 13 years of marriage, 2 children.
8. Seckin, 40, Turkey, Muslim and Alona, 29, Moldova, Christian, 1 year of marriage (her second marriage), 1 child (from the first marriage).

### Focus groups – women:

1. Natalia, 36, Russia, Christian, Married, 2 children
2. Suzan, 32, Moldova, Christian, Married, 2 children
3. Valentina, 48, Armenia, Christian, Married, 1 child
4. Carmen, 36, Romania, Christian, Married, 1 child
5. Irina (Irem), 42, Russia, Converted from Christianity to Islam, Married, 4 children
6. Dalina, 33, Moldova, Christian, Married, 4 children

### Focus group – men (all are Turks):

1. Ahmet, 36, Married, 2 children
2. Hakan, 31, Married
3. Muzaffer, 41, Married, 2 children
4. Ihsan, 45, Married
5. Fatih, 37, Married

## Appendix 2: Respondents' profiles – transnational families

### Bulgaria:

#### Interviews:

Women (all are Bulgarians)
1. Aneta, 35, Muslim, 13 years of marriage, 2 children
2. Ayrie, 31, Muslim, 8 years of marriage, 2 children
3. Dzhamile, 44, Muslim, 27 years of marriage, 2 children
4. Silvena, 48, Muslim, 28 years of marriage, 2 children
5. Nevse, 24, Muslim, 5 years of marriage, 2 children
6. Gyultena, 26, Muslim, 3 years of marriage, 1 child
7. Kudrie, 31, Muslim, 10 years of marriage, 2 children
8. Maria, 34, Orthodox Christian, 10 years of marriage, 1 child
9. Kristina, 37, Orthodox Christian, had been married for 12 years (divorced since 2002), 2 children
10. Daniela, 36, Orthodox Christian, 18 years of marriage, 2 children

Men (all are Bulgarians)
1. Georgi, 54, Orthodox Christian, 30 years of marriage, 2 children
2. Borislav, 53, Muslim, 28 years of marriage, 2 children

#### Focus group – women (all are Bulgarians):

1. Reni, 50, Orthodox Christian, 32 years of marriage, 2 children
2. Ginka, 33, Orthodox Christian, 16 years of marriage, 1 child
3. Spaska, 40, Orthodox Christian, 18 years of marriage, 1 child
4. Natasha, 39, Orthodox Christian, 21 years of marriage, 3 children
5. Daniela, 36, Orthodox Christian, 10 years of marriage, 2 children
6. Snezhana, 19, Orthodox Christian, 3 years of marriage, 1 child

### Greece:

#### Interviews:

1. Liuba, 54, Ukraine, Christian, 36 years of marriage, four children and two grandchildren
2. Madonna, 51, Georgia, Christian, 30 years of marriage, two children and four grandchildren
3. Zira, 57, Georgia, Christian, 24 years of marriage, two children and four grandchildren
4. Gianna, 54, Poland, Christian, 31 years of marriage, two children
5. Anna, 62, Poland, Christian, 27 years of marriage, one child and three children from the first marriage, two grandchildren
6. Veska, 48, Bulgaria, Christian, 25 years of marriage, one child, one grandchild
7. Alexandra, 63, Ukraine, Christian, 35 years of marriage, two children, three grandchildren
8. Marianna, 46, Bulgaria, Christian, widow, one child

## Turkey:

### Interviews – women:

1. Aksana, 26, Turkmenistan, Muslim , separated, 1 child
2. Maria, 36, Moldova, Religion N/A, divorced, 2 child
3. Nadya, 45, Moldova, Christian, married, 1 child
4. Roza, 27, Bulgaria, Muslim, married, 1 child
5. Sacha, 23, Moldova, Christian, single, no child
6. Sev, 53, Moldova, Muslim, married, 2 children
7. Tanya, 42, Moldova, Christian, married, 2 children
8. Terzi, 40, Moldova, Christian, married, 1 child

### Focus group – women:

1. Tamara, 52, Georgia, Christian, married, 2 children
2. Irma, 41, Georgia, Christian, widow, 1 child
3. Oha, 41, Mongolia, Christian, divorced, 2 children
4. Alona, 39, Russia, Christian, married, 1 child





MIGRATIONS, GENDER AND  
INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN BULGARIA

English  
First edition

*Edited by: Marko Hajdinjak*  
*Authors: Georgeta Nazarska, Mila Mancheva, Evgenia Troeva, Marko Hajdinjak*  
*Language editor: Nevena Tosheva-Hajdinjak*  
*Design of the cover: Fanika Vangelova*

FREE COPY – NOT FOR SALE  
Format 145/203 mm

International Center for Minority Studies  
and Intercultural Relations  
[www.imir-bg.org](http://www.imir-bg.org)