

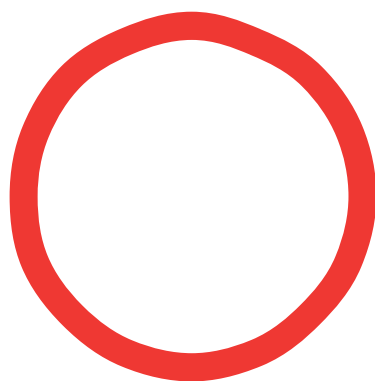


Effective migration for sustainable development: Benefits and disadvantages for Bulgaria

Case studies

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*Author: Nancy Borisova
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FACES OF MIGRATION

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Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to show the link between the UN Sustainable Development Goals and migration flows to and from Europe. The survey will be used to inform the public and provide a broader perspective on the migration processes of third-country citizens within the EU. Furthermore, it will focus on the various methods of improving integration and reducing inequality, as well as on labour mobility. The methodology of development of the materials includes a desktop research, as well as information gathered from in-depth interviews with Bulgarians living abroad and foreigners living in Bulgaria. Recommendations are included in the report and focus on improving the living conditions of emigrants and immigrants and the effective use of all migration benefits in order to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Introduction

In the last year alone, Bulgarian citizens made 7,006,585 trips abroad. Many of them travel short-term for work, excursions or holidays, while others emigrate permanently. According to the National Statistical Institute¹ in 2019, 39,941 people have left our country permanently, and over 90% of them are Bulgarian citizens. In Bulgaria, 37,929 people have settled in during the past year, most of them Bulgarians, 1,222 EU citizens and 13,152 citizens of non-EU countries. The tendency of predominantly young Bulgarians leaving the country is interesting, while those who return are most often over the working age. At the same time, the majority of immigrants in our country are aged between 20 and 60 years.

2019 marked the highest number of residence permits being issued to third-country nationals compared to the past 5 years. Moreover, the highest number of "blue card" type of permits issued has also been recorded in 2019, compared to the same period. All this speaks highly about the improvement of the immigration experience in our country. Investing more efforts and resources to enhance the integration of foreign citizens in our country would also have a positive impact on the country's labour market.

¹External migration by age and citizenship of migrants in 2019
<https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/13036/>

Schengen visa regime


Citizens of the EU and the Schengen countries and their family members have the right to enter EU Member States territory without prior authorization. They may be deprived of this right only on grounds of public policy, public security or public health.

Under EU law, citizens of the countries included in Annex 1 of the Schengen Visa List (Regulation (EC) N° 539/2001, see also amendments) have access to EU territory with a visa issued before entry. The European Commission's website contains an updated map of the Schengen visa requirements. Visas cannot be demanded from EU Member States for Turkish citizens who were not required to have a visa at the time the provisions of the suspension clause became active.

The personal information of individuals applying for a short-stay visa shall be stored in the Visa Information System (Regulation (EC) N° 767/2008 of the Visa Information System, as amended by Regulation (EC) N° 81/2009) - a central IT system connecting consulates and border crossing points at the external borders.

Visits lasting up to three months to countries that are part of the Schengen area are subject to the requirements of the Visa Code with (Regulation (EC) N° 810/2009, also see amendments). And vice-versa, with regards to the conditions for longer stays and residence, it is up to the individual Member States, which have the right to regulate this issue in their domestic law. Citizens of countries that are exempted from a compulsory visa under the Visa List may apply for a visa before their visit, if their travel purpose is different from a short-term visit. All mandatory visas must be obtained before the trip. Only certain specific categories of third-country nationals are exempted from this requirement.

Pursuant to Article 21 of the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement, third-country nationals who hold uniform visas and have legally entered the territory of one of the Schengen States may move freely throughout the Schengen area as long as their visas are valid. According to the same article, a residence permit accompanied by travel documents may in certain circumstances replace a visa. Regulation (EC) N° 1030/2002 establishes a uniform format for residence permits. Foreigners who are exempted from the visa requirement may move freely within the Schengen territory for a maximum period of three months within a period of six months from the date of their first entry, if they meet the entry conditions.



The Schengen Borders Code (Regulation (EC) N° 562/2006), as amended by Regulation (EU) N° 1051/2013, abolished border controls at internal borders, except in special circumstances. The European Court of Justice has ruled that states cannot monitor internal borders, which has the same consequences for border checks. Surveillance, including by electronic means, of the internal Schengen borders is allowed when it is based on an evidence of unauthorized residence, but it is subject to certain restrictions, for example in terms of intensity and frequency.

Integration policy of Bulgaria

According to the National Strategy in the field of migration, asylum and integration 2015 - 2020, the Republic of Bulgaria has modern, well-developed and effective legislation in terms of equal opportunities, social inclusion and non-discrimination, which is in full compliance with the European standards. Immediately after Bulgaria's acceptance to the EU in 2007, statistics show that the five third countries with the largest number of permanent residents in the country are as follows: Russia, Ukraine, Macedonia, Turkey and Moldova.

The implementation of immigration integration policies is supported by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. During the implementation of projects under the European Fund for Integration of Third-Country Nationals, information and integration centres have been opened in Sofia and three of the largest cities in the country, which provide newly arrived foreigners information necessary for their stay in Bulgaria. Several mobile groups also had the function to provide information. Several analyses were also carried out, a number of information campaigns were carried out, as well as relevant trainings in Bulgarian and trainings for social orientation. The Sofia municipality has launched projects such as the Open Cities project, which aims to prepare a local action plan in the field of migration.²

The State Agency for Refugees in cooperation with the Bulgarian Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations provides assistance to asylum seekers and people who already received protection for their adaptation to Bulgarian conditions. Moreover, they organize Bulgarian language courses, provide social, medical and psychological assistance to foreigners who have applied for status or received protection and helps the integration of foreigners who have received protection.

The State Agency for Refugees prepares integration profiles of people who have received international protection. In addition to personal information, the profiles contain name, gender, age, marital status, dependent persons, country of origin, data on education, professional qualification, preferred field of realization and expectations. The prepared profiles are submitted to the Employment Agency (EA) and interested employers in order to guide the qualification and re-qualification of the protection recipients and their orientation to the labour market in the places of permanent accommodation. During the proceedings for granting protection, initial

² National Strategy for Migration, Asylum and Integration 2015 - 2020

training in Bulgarian language is provided when the person is accommodated in a registration and reception centre of the State Agency for Refugees. If the person is based at an external address, opportunities for providing training in Bulgarian should also be sought.³

After the decision to grant the status of protection has been served, people are given the opportunity to participate in the National Action Plan for Integration (NAPI)⁴. The main instrument for integration is the integration agreement – an application needs to be submitted for participation. It is judged by a competent authority and an Individual Integration Plan is identified, which includes a package of integration measures. An Agreement defining the rights and obligations of the parties is signed. Recipients of international protection can be enrolled in a Bulgarian language course if the permanent residence lasts at least 6 months - 600 teaching hours to reach level A-2 or B-1 of the European Language Framework, depending on the educational level. During the language training, classes on social orientation are organized, aimed at getting acquainted with the social and political systems in the country, cultural traditions and customs, etc. The children enrol in school. The provision of full access to the educational system to all minors who have been granted international protection is carried out under the same conditions as for Bulgarian citizens.


During the participation in the NAPI, the individuals have the right to health insurance and access to social services provided by the Labour Office Directorate and the Social Assistance Directorate. After the end of the participation in the NAPI, the recipients of protection can settle wherever they want in the country, as they themselves are already responsible for their finances and supporting themselves and their families. They have the right to register as job seekers and receive social assistance in accordance with the procedure provided for Bulgarian citizens.⁵

The forecasts of the National Strategy in the field of migration, asylum and integration 2015 - 2020 clearly state that Bulgaria is being transformed from a country of origin and transit into a country attracting migration. This means that the national policy of the state must be ready to successfully manage immigration processes, including the integration of immigrants, as to maintain its sustainability and effectiveness in such medium and long-term development. The demographic picture across Europe shows

³ Ibid., p. 31

⁴ Each calendar year, the Council of Ministers adopts a National Action Plan for Integration with specific measures aimed at the integration of persons who have received international protection in Bulgaria.

⁵ Ibid.



an aging population. In economic terms, this means a reduction in the workforce, which should be offset by the recruitment of third country nationals.

To what extent the policies introduced in our country give results in terms of integration, it will become clear from the in-depth interviews in this analysis.

Labour mobility in the EU

According to the 2019 Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility, labour mobility within the Union continues to grow, but at a slower pace than in previous years. In 2018, there were 17.6 million people moving into the EU, of which 12.9 million were of working age. About half of all migrants in the EU reside in the UK and Germany, and a quarter in Italy, Spain and France. The five countries with the highest number of emigrants from the Union in 2018 are Romania, Poland, Italy, Portugal and Bulgaria⁶


The report also shows that the employment rate among newly arrived migrants is higher than the overall employment rate in the EU. Among them there are professionals (23%), people with elementary professions (22%), service workers in shops and markets (14%) and others. The data for Bulgaria shows that in the interval from 2013 to 2017, Bulgarians aged 20 to 29 who leave Bulgaria for mobile work are approximately one third of all citizens who travel for mobile work. Many of them remain for a long time in other countries.

The lack of skilled labour is one of the most severe constraints affecting economic growth in Bulgaria in recent years. This is a constantly recurring problem posed by employers' organisations, and it gradually embraces all professions and sectors of the economy, but also different companies - from micro-enterprises to large companies. There are various reasons for this - a permanently deteriorating demographic picture, demotivation of a significant number of the working-age population (analysed in a study by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Institute of Economics and International Relations in a survey in 2017), and the quality education and professional training that is not in compliance with the labour market.⁷

Labour emigration has a direct and negative effect on the Bulgarian economy. It deprives the economy of some of the most competitive and potentially positive workforce. The objective assessment requires that both the negative and the positive effects of labour migration are taken into account. The latter include the economic and social "valve" in times of economic hardship and severe unemployment. Rather

⁶ 2019 Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility

⁷ 'How does labor migration affect the Bulgarian economy?' (<https://cscd-bg.org/en/projects/project-bright/how-does-labor-migration-affect-the-bulgarian-economy>)



than exerting pressure on social systems during periods of unemployment, labour emigration provides a solution on an individual level, and alleviates public spending. This effect should not be overestimated, because usually the state of the Bulgarian economy is related to that of the European economy. In this sense, migration into the EU, which has been a major destination in recent years, does not provide a solution to the problem. The second positive consequence of labour migration is the cash transfers of emigrants to their families in Bulgaria. These transfers are a significant economic factor, since they are significantly more than direct foreign investment, increasing the demand of paying consumers and decreasing severe social inequalities. These are positive effects, but they can hardly compensate for the long-term negative effects associated with labour migration, such as the deteriorating demographic picture, the constraints on the development of the economy and the negative consequences of the selection process, leaving less qualified and poorly educated workers in Bulgaria. At present, Bulgaria has no specific policy to regulate labour migration. There are different analyses and statistics on labour movement which quote the employment in the economy but there is a lack of a comprehensive policy, based on relevant analyses, which sets targets and is supported with the necessary resources.

The statistical information provides a rough understanding of the scale of labour migration. The National Statistical Institute monitors the movement on the indicator of external migration, which in practice is the closest information for the assessment of labour migration. The NSI data is divided by gender, age and nationality. The analysis of this indicator has its limitations. On one hand, the NSI studies this process through the prism of demographic statistics. This means there is a focus on the number of emigrants and immigrants, but without a detailed analysis of their profile and motivation. This indicator by itself has a bearing on demographic research, but not the economic effect, motivation and possible policies to regulate labour migration. The second constraint is that according to the methodology, the NSI collects data on emigrants in two ways - if they themselves declare that they are emigrating, or when they want to terminate their health insurance. This methodology implies a real underestimation of the actual number of emigrants. The problem is that 90% of labour migrants heading for EU Member States have no formal obligation to inform the state authorities about them doing so.

Conclusions in brief

- 23% of the people surveyed are considering temporarily or permanently seeking work abroad;
- 54% of the people of working age (18-64 years) who do not have illnesses preventing them from working and who have experience of working abroad are considering seeking work again outside the borders of Bulgaria;
- The main factors that motivate people to consider looking for work abroad are: higher salaries (95%), a better social system (50%), and better health (40%);
- 32% of the people considering looking for work abroad plan to work abroad for 5 years or more;
- 65% of the people considering looking for a job abroad say that if they started work abroad, they would soon aim to get their families closer to themselves. It must not be overlooked that 74% of the people who intend to stay abroad for more than 10 years and 60% of those who intend to stay abroad forever also plan to take their families with them;
- 85% of those intending to look for work abroad would seek work in an EU country;
- 71% of those intending to look for work abroad declare that they would prefer permanent work abroad;
- 40% of those surveyed, who intend to seek work abroad indicate that they would return to Bulgaria to look after a relative;
- 74% of those intending to work abroad declare that a salary between BGN 1001 and BGN 3000 would motivate them to not seek work abroad;
- 90% of the people surveyed who intend to look for work abroad, state that raising the salary in Bulgaria would keep them in Bulgaria.

Analysis of the results of in-depth interviews

Six in-depth interviews were conducted using a questionnaire attached to this document. The survey covers three Bulgarian citizens of different ages and sex, living abroad and three foreigners living and working in Bulgaria.

The first case is of a man who lives and works in London in the field of construction. He is happy with his life there, but still has no plans to move his child to the UK. One of his ideas is to return to Bulgaria and pass on the knowledge and skills he has acquired abroad. According to him, migration is a positive process that creates competition, and only in this way a country can move forward.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this interview:

The lack of safe and fair working conditions and payment is one of the reasons for the emigration of young people from Bulgaria.

Education and healthcare in Bulgaria are at a high enough level that meets or even exceeds the standards of other European countries.

The lack of large cities in Bulgaria helps to make it easier for people to socialize. In our country it is much easier, faster and more convenient to create a social circle for entertainment purposes.

The emigration of young and capable people from Bulgaria is significant for the labour market in our country and all possible measures should be taken to derive the benefits from the migration of Bulgarian citizens, as well as to develop policies for their reintegration in our country. Among the biggest benefits of migration are the accumulation of experience, ideas and transferring these back to Bulgaria in order to create an environment of growth and prosperity.

Pessimism, lack of teamwork skills and work stress are also factors that negatively affect the labour market in Bulgaria and therefore - work should be done in these areas.

The second case is of an elderly woman who has lived and worked in Italy for more than 30 years but returns occasionally to Bulgaria. She has worked in several work spheres and plans to return to her homeland only when she reaches retirement age. Abroad, she is most satisfied with her income and the attitude towards her. She says she chose this lifestyle to ensure a better future for her children.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this interview:

For a large part of the Bulgarians who work seasonal work abroad, the leading motive for migration is money. They do not plan to reside permanently abroad and do not move with their families outside Bulgaria.

The conditions for social life in Bulgaria are very good, but the pursuit of higher incomes is a leading reason for leaving our country.

Thanks to the migration and seasonal work of thousands of Bulgarians, large cash inflows enter the country, which raise the living standard of Bulgarians in our country. The lack of a clear middle class is also a reason for many of our compatriots to emigrate, because they believe that this will lead to a better life.

The ambitions and diligence of Bulgarians is something that is deeply valued in the labour market abroad.

Outside Bulgaria, our compatriots often do not feel fully integrated despite equal access to health care, education and resources together with the locals.

The feeling of being valued at work and satisfied with your work is even more important than the salary itself and it is a factor that also stimulates the feeling of security and integration in the place where you live.

The third case is of a young man who chooses to continue his education and life abroad. Britain gives him more opportunities for career growth and a view of different cultures. However, he is determined to settle back in Bulgaria and develop professionally in our country using the experience, knowledge and contacts he has gathered along his life journey.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this interview:

Higher education in our country needs a change in the structure - the emphasis should be on more practice and technological renewal.

Multiculturalism attracts most young people and is a favourable environment for personal growth and exchange of experiences. According to young Bulgarians abroad, this is something that should be stimulated and encouraged in every way in order to improve different aspects of life.

Building micro-societies of different groups and interests is also a method of increasing the sense of integration and creates a sense of continuity.


Lack of decent income is one of the factors forcing young people to emigrate.

The rich complex of different skills that young people in our country develop at a young age is something extremely useful for their life outside the country.

The fourth case draws the attention of a middle-aged man with Macedonian citizenship who lives in a small town in Bulgaria. He moved here with his wife and currently plans to stay in Bulgaria. He works in the field of metal production and although he encounters some difficulties in his life here because he is a foreigner, he says that he is satisfied and happy with the place where he has chosen to build his future.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this interview:

Bulgaria needs educational and cultural programs in order to increase the sensitivity of the population on migration and integration, as it turns out that the lack of tolerance in society in our country makes Bulgaria an unfavourable environment for foreigners and to attract foreign investment.



The low standard of living in our country is something that makes an impression on foreigners who consider Bulgaria as a potential destination to stay and live here and this is undoubtedly something that repulses them.

The membership of our country in the European Union is a great advantage that attracts many people from the Balkan countries that are not members of the Union to live and work in our country.

Culinary customs, traditions and holidays of different cultures are topics that often unite and can serve for easier integration of foreigners in Bulgaria.

A number of companies in our country offer training to their employees and opportunities to improve their skills and potential. Investment in human resources is also something that attracts foreigners to the labour market in our country.

The state administration and various institutions working in the field of migration of third-country nationals need to optimize, increase competence and integration measures, so that more foreigners can easily use opportunities for development in Bulgaria.

The fifth case is of a young boy of Italian origin who chooses to continue his higher education in Bulgaria. His father runs a business in the country. The young man enrolled in "International Relations" at the New Bulgarian University, after previously trying at Sofia University, but giving up due to language barriers. He is currently working as a training specialist in an international company with a branch in Sofia and he is still not sure where he will continue his life.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this interview:

Sofia is a pleasant place to live according to foreigners, as on one hand it combines opportunities typical for large cities, and at the same time the distances are smaller and it is easier to find time for hobbies and socialization.


Immigrants in our country, who receive their salary in euros, can lead a relatively high standard of living. For them, our country is attractive in terms of low costs.

It is important to know the history and culture of the country you are migrating to. This would help you more easily understand the character and temperament of the locals. The society in our country is still not tolerant enough to foreigners who have chosen to study and work in Bulgaria.

Most of the state structures are not prepared to work with foreigners and this creates obstacles in the life of migrants in our country on a daily basis.

Most of the young people in our country speak foreign languages - something that is not typical of many Western nations. This makes us more adaptable in different situations and more valued in the labour market.

The negativism, stress and closed behaviour of some Bulgarians make a negative impression and repel migrants living in our country.



The sixth case is of a young girl from Montenegro who comes to live in Bulgaria with her boyfriend. However, she does not feel well here and thinks that she is not met with enough understanding, interest and support from the locals. She has no plans to stay in the country but admits that her stay here has made her more independent and confident.

The following conclusions can be drawn from this interview:

The cumbersome state administration, the levels of corruption and the low standard of living are among the main reasons why our country is unfavourable for foreigners to live here.

Low prices (probably due to currency differences) and beautiful nature are among the reasons why Bulgaria is a preferred destination for migration.

The lack of interest of locals in foreign languages, culture, traditions and customs, indicate a lack of tolerance and desire for understanding, which hinders the development of multiculturalism in our country.

The events organized by the embassies of different countries for their societies in our country are extremely important for increasing the sense of integration of migrants.

The prejudices of the locals in Bulgaria when it comes to hiring foreigners also negatively affect the multicultural development of the labour market in our country.

Conclusion and recommendations

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is the task of a wide range of stakeholders, not just the government. In this regard, the main recommendation is:

1. To make efforts to establish a network for cooperation and operational interaction between the widest possible range of stakeholders from state institutions, representatives of local governments and the non-governmental sector in the process of adaptation and social inclusion of all target groups related to migration policies in Bulgaria.

The small sample does not allow us to draw conclusions about the full range of topics covered in the first part of this report. We can make several recommendations related to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Bulgaria.


Regarding public opinion on migration and integration:

2. To increase the level of sensitivity of the Bulgarian society towards the migrants coming to Bulgaria and the Bulgarians going abroad. Educational programs (media and NGOs), festivals, exhibitions, events are needed to demonstrate the benefits of migration.
3. To develop more measures in the field of integration of foreign citizens in Bulgaria, not only of third-country nationals, but also of EU citizens. It is necessary to increase the efficiency of the measures already adopted in view of the statements of foreign citizens in our country in order to achieve greater cooperation between the institutions in all sectors where necessary.

Regarding Bulgarians abroad:

4. It is necessary to develop mechanisms for attracting Bulgarians who are currently working or studying abroad, as their knowledge and experience are extremely important for the labour market in our country.
5. It is necessary to develop programs to financially support young people from Bulgaria to gain knowledge, skills, experience and ideas abroad and then implement them at the local level.
6. To develop measures for reintegration of Bulgarians who have spent a long time abroad and need administrative, legal or other type of assistance regarding life in our country.

Regarding labour mobility:

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7. To create safe working conditions for mobile workers from Bulgaria, so that they do not fall victim to fraud, violation of labour rights or human trafficking.
 8. In addition to safety, to ensure the best possible legal assistance to each of them when traveling and working abroad.

Application 1:

Questionnaire of Bulgarians living abroad

Data: name, gender, age, citizenship, where you live abroad, field of work

Questions:

- How long have you been living abroad and how did you decide to move there?
- Has your family moved with you, and if not, do they plan to move? Why?
- What has changed in your life after moving abroad?
- What aspects of your life there do you like more and what are the main reasons for continuing to live in this place? What are the biggest advantages? And the disadvantages?
- Is there a Bulgarian community in the place where you are currently living and do you maintain close contacts with other Bulgarians?
- Would you return to live in your hometown? Why?
- What are the three most important things that would make you return to Bulgaria permanently?
- What, in your opinion, could improve the opportunities for realization on the labour market in our country?
- Do you feel integrated abroad? Why?
- Do you think you have equal access to health care, education and resources on an equal footing with locals?
- Do you participate in the public life in the country where you live abroad? In what way?
- What measures would you consider to be the best practices implemented in the country to improve integration?
- In your opinion, what are the measures that the local government in the country where you live now should implement in the coming years to improve the integration?
- What useful practices and good examples or your personal qualities as part of the Bulgarian society would you transfer from the place where you currently live to your homeland? And what did you transfer from your homeland to abroad?


Objective: Identification of the main reasons for migration, pros and cons of living abroad, degree of integration. Identification of the needs to improve integration and meet the needs of the labour market in our country.

Questionnaire of foreigners living in Bulgaria

Data: name, gender, age, citizenship, where do they currently live, field of work

Questions:

- How long have you lived in Bulgaria and what made you move here?
- Has your family moved with you, and if not, are they planning to move? Why?
- How did your life change after moving to Bulgaria, what made you choose this country?
- Which aspects of your life here do you like more and what are the main reasons to stay in Bulgaria? What are the biggest advantages? And the disadvantages?
- Is there a community of your origin in Bulgaria and do you maintain close contacts with your compatriots in Bulgaria?
- Would you return to live in your hometown? Why?
- How do you think the opportunities for realization on the labour market in our country can be improved?
- What is there in Bulgaria that is not in your homeland and that is a reason to live here? What would make you return to your homeland?
- Do you feel integrated in Bulgaria? Why?
- Do you think you have equal access to health care, education and resources on an equal footing with locals?
- Do you participate in the public life in Bulgaria? In what way? What cultural and mass events do you attend? In case you don't visit cultural and mass events, what is the reason for not doing it?
- What measures would you consider to be the best practices carried out in the city where you live in order to improve the integration of foreigners like you?
- In your opinion, what are the measures that the local government should implement in the coming years to improve integration?
- What useful practices and good examples or qualities that you have built here would you transfer from Bulgaria to your homeland? And what did you transfer from your homeland to Bulgaria?



Objective: Identification of the main reasons for migration, pros and cons of living outside the homeland, degree of integration. Identification the needs to improve integration and meet the needs of the labour market in our country.

Application 2:

Full text of the interviews

Name: Alexander Stoychev Bogdanov

Gender: Male

Age: 34

Citizenship: Bulgarian

Where do you live abroad?


London, United Kingdom

Field of work:

civil engineer

Alexander left for the United Kingdom in May 2016. He decided to leave Bulgaria because he believed that he had reached his peak of development in his homeland and wanted to develop abroad. According to him, if a person does not develop constantly, he degrades. He says the need for something new sends him to London. In Bulgaria, he is working on some of the largest infrastructure projects in the country. He believes that he has seen the good and the bad in this field of activity. He has worked on the construction of the Sofia metro in the Mladost district and claims to have received a decent salary, transport card and bonuses. He has had a work phone and a computer, but one day he got tired and applied to leave. Alexander is divorced and has an 8-year-old son who lives in Bulgaria with his mother. According to the man, London is not the best environment for a child to be raised and he would not take his son there. In his words, his son can move in with him, but at a later stage, because knowing the education in the UK, Alexander believes that his child will receive a far better education in our country. "I have fellow engineers who graduated in the UK who don't even know the multiplication table ", he added.

The main difference he notices in his new life abroad is that people complain far less than in Bulgaria. According to him, people in our country are dissatisfied regardless of their social status or the position they occupy. He says he behaved like that himself, but now he is trying to change that and be more positive. He believes that people's thinking abroad is very different. For example, in his field of work, the worker and his security are considered first and then the project itself, while in Bulgaria the main focus is on the owner's profit.




Alexander is deeply convinced that living abroad has no advantages over Bulgaria, but for him the biggest advantage of living there is the opportunity to work on larger projects and the satisfaction of doing something great. He shares that his current project is for a complex of 4 residential blocks, one of which has 56 floors. "We are two Bulgarians who lead the project, and you can't see such a thing in Bulgaria." Alexander's working conditions in Britain are the most impressive. He says that the most important thing there is to ensure safe working conditions, while in Bulgaria, working on a construction site, you risk your life every day. He goes everywhere with appropriate equipment, otherwise he will be sanctioned. He also shares that before starting a new activity, he always does a test with 400 safety questions and this form of inspection is refreshed every 5 years. He also takes a course for each more specific job and shares that such a thing has never happened to him in Bulgaria.

One of the disadvantages of living in London is the distance and the lack of social contacts. Alexander communicates with both locals and migrants from Afghanistan, India, Cyprus, Greece, etc. However, he says that he is trying to limit his contacts with other Bulgarians, because some time ago he was deceived by his compatriots. However, he shares that there are a number of groups of Bulgarians in London on Facebook and they often help each other. He himself helped recently with the anti-government protests in London. Alexander has also established interesting contacts with his compatriots abroad.

Alexander plans to return to Bulgaria in some time, regardless of the circumstances in the country. At this stage, he wants to develop abroad to see how far he can go in his job. Then he wants to go home and share his experience with the people here. According to him, a country moves forward when there is competition. "If I can learn things abroad that I can apply in my country and create competition, make others think and invest, then things will change," he said. Alexander believes that the salary is also a serious factor which demotivates a lot of people in Bulgaria, as he currently earns 6 times the salary he received in Bulgaria. He also says that the attitude of employers towards workers in Bulgaria must change significantly.

The opportunities for realization on the labour market in our country can be improved, but we need people who have been abroad, because every penny is valuable there, says Alexander. There we pay for a quality service, not just a waste of money, he added. "Only Bulgarians who have been abroad will create a competitive environment. Business owners and managers do not want to do anything because



their profits are raising, they cannot change anything because they do not know what and how. They stand on one level. In my company abroad, courses for all kinds of things are organized every year and you may choose to enrol in different courses. They are very tolerant of such things and appreciate people who want to develop."

The degree of integration in our country is also a significant factor in attracting foreign investment. Alexander says he has never felt different because he is a foreigner in Britain. According to him, there is even better access to education than the local ones have, as there are currently a number of programs under which the state pays foreigners to study. He participates in various cultural and sporting events and admires the variety of events that are provided on a daily basis. According to him, the special attitude of the locals toward foreigners is strictly personal. "When you are open to them and do not show slavish thinking, people respect you. We need to have self-confidence and say who we are and what we want. We underestimate ourselves and we are afraid to communicate with foreigners, because we think that they are something more," Alexander added.

Although there is equal access to health care, he has a health insurance in Bulgaria and he thinks that our country has better specialists. He says that the examples of Bulgarians who have not received any health care in the UK are not few. He himself would prefer to receive a diagnosis in our country and be treated in the UK, as the equipment is much more modern and the medicines are free.

Alexander believes that Bulgaria needs time to change generations in order to improve integration in our country. The country offers a great education, knowledge and skills that he brought to London, along with work habits and ethics. He is now the man who hires people at the company in which he works in the UK and says he has been given a lot of trust. When he returns, he wants to transfer the calmness and patience to the work he learned abroad. He says one of the most valuable lessons he has learned is the ability to work in a team. "In Bulgaria, everyone has to do 10 things, while abroad it is not like that, 10 things are done by 10 people and they have to work as one person. This is something that has not been learned in Bulgaria so far," he added.

Alexander says that it is enough for people in our country to complain less and just buy a plane ticket to expand their worldview.

Name: Elena Georgieva Savova

Gender: Female

Age: 57

Citizenship: Bulgarian

Where do you live abroad?

Naples, Italy


Field of work:

care for old people

Elena has lived in Naples, Italy for more than 30 years. She has worked in pizzerias, restaurants, hotels, and in the recent years has started looking after elderly people. She is the type of seasonal worker who returns to Bulgaria for a few months each year and then leaves again. She decided to move so long ago because the working conditions and the income there were much more acceptable for her. Her family lives in Bulgaria and they never planned to move to Italy. Elena herself tries to go home as often as possible and to support her children financially to this day.

Elena shares that life abroad is far from easy and her daily life there is very different from that in Bulgaria. In Italy, her life is almost entirely busy with work. She has no time for hobbies or other activities. She says that during all these years she has missed home, family and friends a lot, but she still continues to follow the path she has chosen because of the higher salary. "Thanks to it, I manage to live decently and send money to my family in Bulgaria, without depriving them or myself of anything. I'm not sure this would have been possible had I stayed to work in our country for the last 30 years," says Elena.

There is a large Bulgarian community in Naples and most Bulgarians keep in touch with each other. Elena communicates mainly with women on her age, with similar positions. They exchange experiences, give advice and help each other. It is definitely easier for her to communicate and get closer to her compatriots than to the locals, although she also has a few Italian friends. Elena dreams of one day returning to Bulgaria permanently because this is her home, but she says she would only do so when she retires in Italy. "With the Bulgarian pension I will die of hunger and misery, while with the Italian I believe that I will live a decent old age in our country," the woman said. She says that she wants to return in Bulgaria because it is where her home, family and friends are and she is not particularly interested in any external circumstances, as she does not believe that anything can change over the next years




in terms of working conditions in our country. According to her, change is a very long process that she will hardly live to see that.

However, the lack of a middle class she outlines as a serious problem on the labour market in our country. According to Elena, our country is on two poles - people who are over satisfied and people who live in misery. One of her proposals is to invest more in the care and agriculture sectors, because Bulgaria's young and active workforce goes abroad to work in these industries while they disappear in Bulgaria. Abroad, she like most of our compatriots, feels integrated, but not fully. "People accept and respect me for my work, but there is always the attitude that no matter how integrated, I am still a foreigner. I can't say that anyone has treated me badly or contemptuously, but I definitely feel uncomfortable sometimes," she added.

However, Elena is very pleased with the access to healthcare in Italy. Not only is she not feeling like something less than the locals, but on the contrary - she is very impressed that almost all examinations and medicines are free, unlike those in Bulgaria. Her observations are that Italian education is also at a high level. "At the same time, I myself realise that working here, I managed to provide an opportunity for my child to study in Bulgaria and pay BGN 1,000 per semester, because otherwise I would not be able to afford it," she added.

However, she lacks socialization, as in Italy she does not have much time to participate in various events. According to her, however, the country's experience in integration is evident and is probably due to the many foreigners there. Elena believes that there is something to be desired in terms of providing services and courses for foreigners, as many Bulgarians, for example, go there without a clear idea of what to expect and often their labour rights are violated and do not know where they can seek justice. Assistance in learning the local language is the most serious step for the integration of foreigners in every country in the world, according to Elena. She also adds that her impressions are that Bulgaria is not a very friendly country for its own citizens, and even less for foreigners. Bulgaria will become attractive to foreigners when the local income increases as well, and we look like a developed modern European country, says Elena. She is pessimistic that whatever the government does to improve integration in our country, it will not have any effect soon.

However, she believes in the ambition of the people and believes that this is one of the most valuable qualities that our country has learned and transferred abroad. "The ambition to look for a better life, development, security for my family. I think that the



difficult conditions in which we live here in Bulgaria make us more hardworking and ambitious when we go out, because we have learned to manage on our own without relying on anyone and to fight for every penny. " She added that Italy has also taught her a lot, especially how to value her work and to know what she deserves. Elena wants to pass this lesson to the younger people in our country as well - to demand what they deserve, such as fair payment and treatment, so that they can live with dignity.

Name: Lyubomir Emilov Ivanov

Gender: Male

Age: 24

Citizenship: Bulgarian

Where do you live abroad?

Glasgow, UK


Field of work:

Technological

Lyubomir has been living in Glasgow, UK for 5 years. He left in September 2015 after graduating from high school in Bulgaria. On the island he started his bachelor's degree in Computer Science. He decided to leave the country because he did not like many aspects of the educational system in Bulgaria. Lyubomir's parents and brother continue to live in Bulgaria and have no plans to relocate abroad. He himself is grateful and happy with what he has received in the last 5 years in Glasgow, but does not intend to continue living abroad for much longer.

Life abroad changes him a lot. For the first time in his life he has to live separately from his family for a significant period of time, which brings new duties and responsibilities. As soon as he moved, he began his higher education, and a few months later he started his first job abroad. Since the age of 14, Lyubomir has been helping his parents with their family business and has been involved with other work activities, but for the first time he had to balance studies, work and other extracurricular activities in parallel. In recent years he has worked in various fields and more often than not he has had to balance 2 or even 3 jobs at once.


One of the things that grabs him in Britain is education. And not because of the quality of teaching, the rank of the university or the famous lecturers, but because of the structure of the curriculum and the way the knowledge and information are shared with the students. According to him, it is a way that motivates you to develop, to never stop learning and to constantly improve yourself and your skills. "This motivation, along with the huge range of opportunities for personal and professional development, are the aspects I like the most there," he added. The multiculturalism in the city in which he finds himself is also very much in line with the communicativeness of the young person. Among the disadvantages of the place where he currently lives, Lyubomir points out the rainy climate and the different life structure to which the British are accustomed. According to him, cultural differences also play a serious role in adapting to the new environment.



There are 3 large universities in Glasgow, with a Bulgarian community in each of them. Lyubomir maintains contacts with members of each of the Bulgarian communities, as well as with other Bulgarians outside the university environment. He participates in initiatives and events organized by the Bulgarian communities in the city. During the first academic year he was part of a group for Bulgarian folk dances at his university. He plans to return to Bulgaria sooner rather than later, because he misses his family, our beautiful nature and the feeling of peace and comfort that only home can bring you.

One of the ways to make the labour market in our country more attractive, according to him, is to raise the salaries to a level that allows a normal and peaceful life for all Bulgarian citizens. According to him, changes in the educational system are needed in order to focus more on the practical side of any profession. One of Britain's strengths, attracting a number of foreigners, according to Lyubomir, is the free higher education for EU citizens. This significantly improves the quality of the country in terms of integration. "The diverse labour market, encompassing people of all backgrounds, nationalities, cultures and religions, is another example of a measure that promotes integration. ", he added. In Britain, Lyubomir feels fully integrated because of the multicultural nature of the city where he lives. He added that the huge range of personalities and cultures is not something that locals hate or try to eliminate, but encourage in every way, trying to turn the country into a place where newcomers feel good and calm.

The young man does not complain about access to health care and according to him he receives all the dividends as any person who contributes to the local economy and pays local taxes. He definitely doesn't like the public life there, but he never felt restricted or reluctant to take part in any events. "The huge range of various international events definitely makes the public life of the country more attractive to me, but Bulgarian culture and our traditions are definitely things that I often miss," he added. According to him, this whole set of measures is an example of good practice and should continue to be practiced, but after Britain leaves the EU, it is very possible that certain aspects might change. "Many Scottish citizens believe that their country should secede from Britain and become independent. Personally, I believe that such a change would also have a positive effect on the integration of foreigners in the country. "



Lyubomir has learned a lot during his stay abroad and today he is confident that he wants to transfer some of the good practices he has learned to his homeland. One of them is the fact that if you are persistent, hardworking and productive enough, you are really valued, no matter who you are, where you come from or what you do. Of course, his success and satisfaction today are due to a number of qualities he has built and developed in his homeland. Among those who have helped him the most for life abroad is the never-ending fighting spirit. "I would say that the Scots lead a fairly straightforward lifestyle. The state has provided them in such a way that they are not used to worry about anything, they are not used to learning and developing outside of their field of knowledge in any way. The locals lack the inventive, creative, resourceful spirit that is so inherent in us Bulgarians. The locals are used to have specific people for each job", he says. According to him, the desire for personal development is something he has built in Bulgaria and which has helped him many times. "The irreconcilable Bulgarian spirit is something that every Bulgarian carries in his heart, wherever he goes!", he is categorical.

Name: Deyan Manevski

Gender: male

Age: 35

Citizenship: Macedonian

Where do you live now?

Montana, Bulgaria

Field of work:

metal production

Deyan Manevski has been living in Bulgaria for 4 years. His wife is Bulgarian and after failing to obtain suitable documents for her stay in Macedonia, the family decided to move to the woman's hometown - Montana, Bulgaria. Deyan's family - his parents and brother - remain living in Macedonia. They often come to visit him together with his friends from there, but none of them plans to move to our country. Deyan says he has not encountered major differences in life in his homeland and in Bulgaria, as the two countries are very similar. It was a challenge for him to find new friends here.

He shares that at the beginning of his stay here he did not feel integrated at all and although now he has many Bulgarian friends, it is still difficult for him to communicate with the older people in our country. Deyan says that they always take up the topic of Bulgarian and Macedonian history and he tries his best not to pay attention to this kind of provocation. He is happy with his life in Bulgaria because he lives with the person he loves. A big advantage for him is the country's membership in the EU. "Currently, I have only temporary documents, but when I also obtain Bulgarian citizenship, I will be able to travel freely throughout the European Union," he added. Deyan does not fail to mention the disadvantages of the life in Bulgaria, namely the fact that most people work on weekends to be able to survive. At the same time, in the city where he lives markets, shops and especially pharmacies do not work during this time.


The man believes that the labour market in Bulgaria is developing well and there are jobs for everyone who wants to work. According to him, however, people here often have big claims and prefer to complain to their employers and say that money is not enough. Deyan also says that there are many shops and products in Bulgaria that cannot be found in Macedonia. However, his impression is that most of them are not of high quality and, compared to his homeland, there is a poorer range, but on the

other hand the quality is higher. He also shares that he would be happy to see more products from his homeland on the Bulgarian market, as the tastes of the two nationalities are relatively similar.

Although there is a large Macedonian community in Bulgaria, there are not many of Deyan's compatriots in the town where he lives. Nevertheless, it is very easy for him to communicate with Bulgarians, as the language is almost the same. Customs, traditions and holidays are also the same, with the exception of some dates. He adds that his brother in Macedonia also works daily with Bulgarian companies and the communication between the two countries is very easy. For now, Deyan plans to stay, live and develop in Bulgaria. He is satisfied with the healthcare in the country and believes that he receives equal access to services like every Bulgarian does. He also claims that he cannot complain about his education, and recently, thanks to the company he works for, he took a course in digital program management and received an official certificate. "I think the training I received was at a very high level." However, Deyan says he would return to Macedonia if something happens to his parents or when the country become a member of the European Union. "I think that wherever you are in the world, parents are the biggest incentive to go home," he added.

In Bulgaria he already feels socialized and goes out with colleagues and friends every week. The city in which he lives does not offer a variety of cultural events, but Deyan and his wife as a family visit their friend and relatives, prepare dinner together. Deyan says he often cooks traditional Macedonian dishes and feels very comfortable in the company of his relatives here. He says that Bulgaria and Macedonia are very similar and that he has brought with him to our country the temperament and desire to achieve everything at any cost – something that every Macedonian carries. He says that in his work the desire to prove himself is highly valued and he constantly gets the opportunity to enrol in different courses. "I feel that I am gradually improving and I believe that most employers in Macedonia can also invest more in their staff. If I come back one day, this is something I would certainly pass on as a good practice," he said.

According to him, however, the institutions in Bulgaria are definitely not as good as they have to be in terms of services for foreigners. Deyan says that the conditions for people staying temporarily stay must be improved. "I do not complain - I have a permanent stay, I pay taxes, bills, I have a good job. For me, Bulgaria is a place



where you can live completely normally. However, services for foreigners need to be improved from an administrative point of view and the whole process of obtaining documents should be facilitated," he added.

Name: Gianmarco Artibani

Gender: male

Age: 21

Citizenship: Italian


Where do you live now?

Sofia, Bulgaria

Field of work: training specialist, conducts trainings in connection with money transfer.

Gianmarco has been living in Bulgaria for 3 and a half years. He moved to Bulgaria because his father worked as a business consultant and often travelled from Rome to Sofia. The young man had the opportunity to travel with him and got to know our capital. After graduating from high school, he decided to move to Bulgaria to study and work. He likes Sofia and the way of life in the city. He studies international relations in English at the New Bulgarian University. Gianmarco's family is currently in Italy. His father's travels in Bulgaria were only for business, and his mother has a shop in their homeland and has never accompanied his father during his business trips. Recently, the father has also stopped his business trips to Bulgaria and comes to Bulgaria only to see his son. Gianmarco himself still does not know whether he will stay in Bulgaria permanently. "I live for the day and I fully enjoy it, and when I finish university, I will make the final decision whether to move or stay here," he added.

When he moved to Bulgaria, his life changed completely. He came to our country only at the age of 18 in a new city, in a new home. His English level was not high, he did not know Bulgarian either. He now works and studies in English and believes that he has grown a lot on a personal level. He has a whole new vision of the world. According to him, the Balkan people are very different from those in the Mediterranean countries, mainly in temperament and character. Gianmarco says the climate has a serious impact. It is of great importance to the way a person feels. For him, one of the disadvantages of Bulgaria is that it is often dark, rainy and cold here. However, he likes the short distances. There are serious transport problems in Rome - it takes about 40 minutes to get from one place to another. In Sofia, although it is the capital, it is much faster and easier to get to the centre on foot. Of course, this is a far smaller city compared to Rome. According to Gianmarco, life in the capital has a number of advantages from an economic point of view. He receives a salary in




euros, which turns out to be quite profitable given the local currency. In Sofia, Gianmarco lives alone without having to ask his parents for money, while in Rome this would not be possible. However, he does not deny that he sometimes feels nostalgia for his homeland because he misses the culture and language.

In our country he hardly communicates with Italians. He says he is always open to new connections and friendships and does not necessarily seek the company of his compatriots. He wants to meet new people, languages and cultures. He has many Italian friends in Sofia, but he does not communicate solely with them. "Most of my friends are Bulgarians. My ex-girlfriend was from Spain, two of my closest friends are Bulgarian and German, so I definitely communicate with locals, as well as with other foreigners and other Italians," added the young man.

At the moment, Gianmarco is facing the question of whether to return to Italy and enrol in a master's degree in Rome. Coming to Bulgaria was a challenge for him, because at the age of 18 he had to start a completely independent life and everything was a great source of adrenaline for him. Now he feels that he has cultivated himself and it is as if he is currently in his comfort zone in Bulgaria. "I know this is not good, so I intend, when I start to feel too calm, to embark on a search for new challenges," he added.

He also says he would return home when he achieves his goals here. He has several investment ideas and wants to start his own project in Sofia, related to the provision of services for small and medium-sized companies. After its realisation he will probably return to Italy. According to Gianmarco, communism in Bulgaria is not over and serious corruption and oligarchs have taken over the country after this period. "Bulgaria needs to get rid of corruption, invest more in young people and motivate foreigners to invest in the country. Of course, this is not an easy process. However, my impressions are that Bulgarians are very strong people and are motivated for a big change. I read the news of anti-government protests every day and I am deeply impressed by the spirit and enthusiasm. In my country, people constantly complain about politicians, but they never embark on the streets to protest against them," Gianmarco said. The Italian is sure that these processes in our country have a serious impact not only on the labour market, but also on how attractive our country is for foreigners.


The Italian feels well integrated in our country. He says that in the beginning it was difficult to establish connections with people, but the main reason was the language.



It is very easy for him to talk to people his age, because almost everyone speaks English, but he encounters difficulties when paying his bills, for example. He says he gets used to everything and at least 80% of people give their best to understand him and help him. He tries not to pay attention to the others, who claim that if he is in Bulgaria, he must speak Bulgarian. He says that they are much less, and there are such people everywhere. Gianmarco also likes the university where he currently is a student, but notes that at the beginning of his stay here he wanted to study in Sofia University. This turned out to be a problem, because he had to study Bulgarian for 1 year. The company he currently works for is American and pays his health insurance. That is why he says there is no problem with healthcare, although the language is sometimes a barrier because not all doctors speak English and his Bulgarian is still not as good. He has never been treated badly in any medical institution.

Gianmarco regularly goes to concerts and cinemas in Bulgaria. He visits various clubs every Friday and Saturday, plays basketball with his friends from here and abroad. He is satisfied with his social life here, but shares that there are many more things that can be done for foreigners in our country. For example, to have an office to help foreigners navigate different routes depending on where they want to go. "People also need to learn to create more groups where different points of view can be exchanged about different cultures," he added. Part of the integration process is working on identity documents, Gianmarco said. During this period, institutions can organize various events or courses to learn about the culture and history of the country in which they reside, he said. According to him, it is very important to have Bulgarian language courses with free access.

The young man shares the idea that one of the most valuable qualities of migration is the integration of ideas, views, values. He says that when he came from Italy, he brought with him the creativity of the Italians, the sense of design and the commitment and dedication to the work. "In Bulgaria too, people work a lot, but many of them, especially in the public sphere seem nervous when it comes to helping clients." In Bulgaria, Gianmarco has found curiosity and a desire to learn many new languages. This stands out as a value that he would like to transfer to his homeland. "If you go to Italy, you will see that most people do not speak English at all. In Sofia, almost every young person is great at this or other foreign language. In my opinion, one of the reasons for this difference is that Italy has a strong economic past and we have not had to learn languages. Now we are starting to change because the economy is not so good anymore. The Italians are not as adaptable as the Bulgarians and it is difficult



to follow the new wave, "said the boy. Gianmarco concludes that most Italians cling to old values, which is not bad, but makes them less open to new perspectives. According to him, this is not the case in Bulgaria because of the difficult history - the Ottoman Empire, the socialist period, the influence of the Balkan War. Gianmarco thinks that all these factors have made Bulgarians more adaptable, but also a little colder, for example to foreigners - "You respect us, but it's hard for you to trust us and it takes a lot more time," he said.

Name: Sanja Bajagic

Gender: Female

Age: 26 years

Citizenship: Montenegro

Where do you live now?

In Sofia, Bulgaria


Field of work:

I worked as an English teacher for children in Bulgaria, but I am a lawyer by education

Sanja has been living in Bulgaria for a year and a half. She moved to Sofia to be with her boyfriend, who is a Bulgarian. She says her life has changed dramatically - she is learning a new language and getting to know a whole new culture, she lives in a big city and she has definitely become more independent. Despite all these positives, Sanja is not sure that she will stay in Bulgaria. She is attracted to the beautiful nature, the developed infrastructure and the fact that life in our country is much cheaper compared to other countries that the young girl has visited. On the other hand, Sanja encounters a number of disadvantages, such as the state administration, which according to her, does not do its job quickly and efficiently at all. Corruption, which is noticed at every step and in many areas of life is another aspect she is not quite happy with. Sanja also believes that people in our country are not very open to foreigners and try their best to show patriotism, stick to their traditions, language and customs, without showing much interest in foreigners (where do they come from, what traditions they have, what language do they speak). She is also impressed by the low living standard of most people in small towns.

For the period she has been in Bulgaria, Sanja has already met Montenegrins here and participated in events organized by the Montenegrin Embassy in Sofia. She says that she has the contacts of her compatriots, but she cannot say that they are close. She herself believes that one day she will return to her homeland because she loves it and believes that it is a pleasant place to live. She shares that the economic and political situation there, the lack of job opportunities and corruption are negative factors, but she still feels in her place there, not as a foreigner.

According to Sanja, the opportunities for realization on the labour market in our country can be improved when employers go out of the habit of hiring only Bulgarian citizens, but rather more qualified candidates, regardless of their origin. She believes



that this is the reason why most foreigners in Bulgaria work in positions related to their native language, for example in call centres. This is the reason why Sanja thinks that Bulgaria does not offer more job opportunities than Montenegro, at least specifically for her.

She also shares that she does not feel integrated in our country and thinks that most people here are not ready to accept foreigners even from close neighbouring countries as part of their society. "No matter how much time you spend here, you will always be labelled a stranger, and I take that as a bad thing. In the coming years, Bulgaria may have the potential to become a truly international environment, open to all differences, such as Western Europe, but at the moment I think this is not the case," she added. Nevertheless, since she received legal residence documents in our country Sanja receives equal access to health care, education and other resources and has never faced discrimination in this regard. She also attends various cultural events. According to her, however, special measures and steps towards the real integration of foreigners are needed, but the people in our country are not yet ready for that. "It all comes from education and awareness raising. In my opinion, this will happen when the local people are ready to accept all foreigners, without prejudices and condemnations.", says Sanja.

One of her ideas on how integration in Bulgaria could be improved is the broadcasting of documentaries, educational programs for other countries, cultures, languages, through television and social media. She thinks that organising international, cultural events in different cities would also be useful for the Bulgarian society to get acquainted with the food, customs, culture and folklore of other nations.

However, for Sanja migration is something useful. She says that life in Sofia has taught her to live without being influenced by other people's opinions. In Bulgaria she also learned how to help more in nature conservation through recycling. She has participated in various green actions and this is something she definitely wants to bring to her homeland as a good practice. On the other hand, she thinks that she has brought many human qualities from Montenegro, such as directness, openness and kindness. She says these qualities are deeply appreciated by the people she communicates with in Bulgaria.



Bulgarian Platform for
International Development

Bulgarian Platform for International Development
Sofia 1000
ul. Tsar Simeon 37, floor 1
E-mail: bpid@bpid.eu
Internet site: bpid.eu



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