



Republic of Bulgaria  
ECONOMIC  
AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

## **ANALYSIS**

**OF**

**ATTITUDES TO MIGRATION AMONG YOUNG SECONDARY-SCHOOL  
GRADUATES IN BULGARIA**

**(own-initiative analysis)**

**Sofia, 2015**

The Economic and Social Council (ESC) included in its Action Plan for 2015 the elaboration of an analysis on "**Attitudes to Migration among Young High-School Graduates in Bulgaria**" based on its own survey conducted in 2015 among graduating secondary-school students.

The elaboration of the analysis was assigned to the Labour, Incomes, Living Standard and Industrial Relation Commission /leading commission/ and the Social Policy Commission.

Plamen Dimitrov, member of the ESC Group 2 - Trade Unions and chairperson of the Labour, Incomes, Living Standard and Industrial Relation Commission, was appointed rapporteur on the analysis.

At its meeting, held on 25 September 2015, the Plenary Session of the ESC adopted the present analysis.

## I. MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1.1. The problems of young people in Bulgaria are among the main priorities of the Economic and Social Council /ESC/ ever since its establishment. This topic has been reflected in various acts of the ESC, which set out both the key challenges and the possible policies and guidelines for solutions<sup>1</sup>.

1.2. ESC has repeatedly expressed its concern and tackled the question about the serious negative consequences of the migration of population in our country, and it especially that of young people. In its acts ESC has also proposed concrete solutions and measures to deal with this<sup>2</sup>. According to ESC, the development of migration processes in the country over the past three decades is a basic precondition for deepening demographic problems in Bulgaria and their expected serious negative impact on basic social systems - healthcare, pension, education, etc.

1.3. ESC recognizes the social and socio-economic importance to the problems of migration abroad of the Bulgarian population, which unfortunately Bulgaria has become a typical donor of quality human and demographic capital to developed countries within and outside the European Union (EU). ESC once again stresses that the consequences of this process can already be felt ever more tangibly in terms of the emerging serious shortage of skilled labour force, and in connection with the deepening negative development of the demographic processes and the level of human capital in our country.

1.3.1. ESC identifies another very serious problem with pervasive negative consequences in internal migration or the displacement of population, mostly young people from small towns to regional centres, especially to the capital - Sofia and to several major cities in the country. The development of this process in Bulgaria has begun before 1989, but its intensity in the last quarter of a century has led to serious population decline in small towns and increasing depopulation of entire areas in our country.

1.3.2. The combination of these two strong negative effects of external and internal migration poses a serious challenge in the medium term demographic future of Bulgaria and, according to ESC, is perhaps the most serious risk to the development of our country.

1.4. With particular concern ESC has repeatedly found that the most common carriers of these migration attitudes are young people who have much greater demands and expectations regarding the possibilities of finding a job, getting higher incomes and generally achieve a higher standard of living. Unfortunately, with the exception of Sofia

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<sup>1</sup> Opinion on "Family, Good Parenting and Equal Gender Opportunities"; Opinion on "Vocational Education and Training Issues in Bulgaria"; Opinion on "The Education System in Bulgaria - Problems and Necessary Reforms"; Opinion on "Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria for the Period 2014-2020"; Opinion on "The Labor Market in the Context of the Financial and Economic Crisis - Challenges and Possible Solutions"; Opinion on "The Bulgarian Economy within the Global Financial and Economic Crisis - Problems, Challenges and Opportunities"; Opinion on "Current Issues and Policies on the Labor Market"; Resolution on "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Towards Recovery and Job Creation"; Opinion on "Opportunities for Reconciling Work and Family Life"; Resolution on "Actions to Support Young Persons and tackling Youth Unemployment in Bulgaria".

<sup>2</sup> Opinion on "Demographic Trends and Challenges Facing the Demographic Policy of Bulgaria"; Resolution on "Demographic Challenges Facing Bulgaria within the Europe 2020 Strategy"; Opinion on "The Draft National Reform Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria" (2006-2009); Opinion on "The National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria on Migration and Integration 2008-2015; Analysis on "Early School Leaving".

and several larger cities in the country, in other settlements the conditions for living, working and habitation are far below the requirements and expectations of the majority of young people, which is a serious precondition for their intention to leave the place of residence and move to a bigger city or abroad.

1.5. According to ESC, these migration attitudes begin to form even in the period of schooling and are apparent after the completion of secondary education. For this purpose ESC conduct its own study of migration attitudes of secondary school graduates in the academic year 2014-2015, and in this analysis presents the main results and estimates. The survey was conducted among students throughout the country with the active assistance of the Trade Union of Bulgarian Teachers<sup>3</sup>.

1.6. With particular concern ESC found that on average two out of three graduating secondary-school students have the potential desire to leave the settlement in which they live now, this is much more pronounced in small towns and villages, as well as smaller regional centres. The survey results show that the proportion of graduates intending to leave the residence of students in these settlements is approximately two times higher than in most large cities with population over 300 thousand people.

1.6.1. ESC considered these data as an indication for a particular risk for sensitive deepening demographic problems in smaller settlements, and future depopulation of part of the territory.

1.7. ESC is particularly concerned by the fact that the intention to leave the place of living increases with the performance of students, i.e. there are higher migration attitudes among the best students graduating from secondary education.

1.8. According to ESC, one of the important factors for migration attitudes of the students is their family environment. In its study, ESC confirms that students' higher attitudes towards leaving place of residence correlate with the higher education of their parents.

1.9. Irrespective of the relatively low rate of students intending to leave the residence from cities with over 300,000 inhabitants, ESC draws particular attention to the overwhelming desire of these students for living abroad, which is proportionally more than two times greater than in other places in the country. According to ESC, this shows very clearly that in the largest cities of the country the strongest desires to leave the country and settle abroad are formed among students finishing their secondary education.

1:10. ESC highlights the clearly expressed intent of graduating students from smaller towns and villages to migrate to another city in the country, the proportion of these students is more than three times higher compared to those in cities with over 300,000 people. In this regard, attention should be given to the fact that with respect to inner

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<sup>3</sup> The surveyed group consists of 51,635 students in Bulgaria who have finished 12th grade in 2014/2015 academic year. The survey was conducted during the months of April and May 2015 and the sample included 2131 students. The sample model includes the separation of settlements in the country into three groups depending on the population and the nature of the settlements. In the formed three main groups (cities with population of over 300,000 people; other regional centres and other towns and villages) simple random selection was used in order to form the samples.

migration Sofia is the preferred place, especially for graduates of the smaller regional centres and other towns and villages of the country.

1.11. Generally, among students completing their secondary education with the intention to leave their place of residence, boys express a slightly greater willingness to move abroad, while girls are more willing to settle in Sofia or in another city.

1.12. ESC is concerned to report that the main problem referred to by secondary school graduates in 2015 is the difficulty to find employment in the place of residence. And although this problem is more typical for students with lower grades and those with parents with lower education, approximately two out of three secondary school graduates have indicated that the difficulty to find employment is the major problem they encounter in their place of residence. This major problem happens to be identified irrespective of the size of the settlement of residence, the academic achievement of the student, or the education of his/her parents.

1.13. ESC emphasizes another of its findings - about 50 percent of students completing their secondary education indicate as the other major problem the difficulty of finding a good suitable job. It is noteworthy that this problem is identified more often by students with higher grades or with parents with higher education who live in larger cities. This probably is one of the leading causes for the decision to leave the place of residence.

1.14. Inability to obtain higher income is the other main problem faced by young people in their place of residence. ESC notes that virtually one in two secondary-school graduates in 2015 identifies this problem as one of the most serious in their place of residence.

1.14.1. ESC pays special attention to the fact that failure to obtain a well-paid job in their place of residence is indicated to be among the most serious problems by students with higher grades or those whose parents have the highest education. ESC believes this is an important signal showing that the inability to obtain a well-paid job after completing one's secondary education may be one of the key factors for the migration of part of the graduates, in particular those achieving highest academic results.

1.15. ESC is particularly concerned by the fact that the next most important problem identified by secondary school graduates with respect to their place of residence is namely the poor education they receive. Actually, one in every four students has indicated the inability to obtain good education as a problem more serious than even those of bad roads and transport, poor healthcare or corruption in the place of residence.

1.16. Poor infrastructure, high levels of corruption and lack of opportunities for entertainment and sports in their place of residence are three other issues indicated by approximately 20% of graduates.

1.16.1. Almost one in every ten secondary school graduate indicates problems such as poor healthcare, high level of crime and the fact that his/her friends are also leaving the place of residence.

1.17. Although students indicate problems related to finding employment and securing a well-paid job as the most important, their main desire is to continue their education after

completing secondary school. ESC results show that about three-quarters of students have the potential desire to continue their education and maybe this accounts for their critical attitudes to the quality of education in their places of residence.

1.17.1. The desire for continuing education is closely linked to the academic performance of students and the education of his/her parents and particularly that of the mother, there is an identifiable proportional relationship. At the same time, there is also the reverse relationship between the worse academic results of students, the lower level of hi/her mother's education and the student's expressed intend to start work after graduating.

1.18. ESC is exceptionally concerned about the determination of students to move abroad. About a third of them declared their willingness in principle to emigrate at some point in the future, and another third indicated they are hesitating. Most of them intend to seek work abroad; the wish for further education ranks second, while prospective establishment in another country - third.

1.18.1. Based on the overall analysis it is possible to formulate the hypothesis that the expected migration potential among secondary school graduates is about 20%. One in every five graduates said he/she will attempt to go abroad for 2-3 years, which outlines the scope of potential emigrants.

1.18.2. The survey of ESC shows that the most powerful and already present intention to go abroad is characteristic for one in every ten students. Such students intend to do so immediately after the completion of secondary education.

1.18.3. The desire to leave the country among secondary school graduates is much more pronounced in regional cities as compared to other towns and villages.

1.19. According to ESC, the main reason for the formation of such intentions to leave the country is very clear - the possibility to secure higher income and standard of living. In practice, this is the reason that motivates one of every two students desiring to leave the country after completion of his/her secondary education.

1.20. At the same time, ESC found the presence of specific reasons for the formation of these attitudes depending on the character and size of the place of residence. Analyses show that in smaller towns and villages the more essential reason for the desire to emigrate is the opportunity to find good jobs abroad. Conversely, in the largest cities a significant factor in attitudes to leave the country is the possibility of obtaining good higher education abroad, which is emphasized by almost one in every five secondary-school graduates.

1.21. The factor of achieving a higher income and higher living standards, as well as receiving good higher education, is more typical for girls than for boys. Boys value more the possibility of finding a good job abroad.

1.22. ESC found certain differences in motivation for leaving the country of secondary school graduates depending on their academic results. The higher students' results, their

desire to move abroad in order to receive a good education increases. The lower their results, the more they prefer to leave the country in order to find a better job.

1.23. ESC notes that the possibility of financial support of the family has about twice as strong impact on the intention to leave the country of students with lower grades than other students with such attitudes.

1.24. ESC draws attention to the differences found in the preferred way of implementing students' intentions for leaving the country depending on the size and nature of their place of origin.

1.24.1. According to ESC's survey, one in every four students with the intention of leaving the country, who live in a big city, intends to do this alone. Data show that respondents, who have declared their desire to leave the country in this way and reside in regional centres, are about 30% more than those who reside in other towns and villages.

1.24.2. Respondents from smaller towns and villages typically express a desire to leave the country with their family, or part of it, while the share of respondents who intend to leave the country in this way decreases by about 30% in cities with over 300,000 inhabitants.

1.24.3. ESC finds that emerging differences in graduates' preferences for leaving the country between major cities and other settlements can be taken as a sign of greater confidence of students from big cities to deal with prospective problems abroad. In such cities there is the largest share of young people who intend to continue their education abroad, and this is associated with prospective living abroad alone. Young people from small towns primarily intend to look for work, which corresponds to a much stronger trend in small towns and villages for whole families, not just secondary school graduates, to work abroad (and ultimately emigrate).

1.25. ESC draws serious attention to the fact that about 70% of the students with intention to leave the country have relatives or friends abroad on whose assistance they may count. This is a signal that the already formed emigration from the country is a serious prerequisite for further waves of migration due to the possibility that young people may find accommodation with their relatives abroad.

1.25.1. ESC emphasizes that the presence of relatives abroad, who can provide assistance to students for leaving the country, is more typical of small towns and villages than big cities. This may be proof for a much stronger intensity of migration from smaller settlements over the past few decades, which as a consequence will probably lead to the depopulation of some of them.

1.26. At the same time, ESC very loudly and clearly points out that only 3.4 percent of students who intend to leave the country wish to do so because they do not want to live in Bulgaria.

1.26.1. ESC pays serious attention to the fact that 97 out of every 100 secondary school graduates with intention to leave the country actually want to live in Bulgaria, but are

motivated by other significant problems that young people normally face and which cannot be solved in the short term.

1.26.2. In this regard ESC's survey found that about two-thirds of the students with the intention to leave the country would remain in Bulgaria if they find a better-paid job.

1.26.3. About a third of students with attitudes to leave the country have indicated that finding employment in their area of training is a potential reason to change their mind. Moreover, about one-fifth of students with migration intentions may change their mind if they succeed in starting their own business in Bulgaria.

1.26.4. Obviously, the reasons behind the intention to move abroad are purely economic and have to do with the opportunities for higher incomes and finding a suitable job or starting your own business, as income and general living standards have priority. In this respect attention should also be given to other factors: poor education; poor quality of health care; high crime; corruption that is ubiquitous and dominates the society and economy; following the example of close friends; presence of relatives abroad, etc.

## **II. INTENTION TO LEAVE THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND PREFERRED DESTINATIONS OF MIGRATION**

2.1. ESC found that about two-thirds of secondary school graduates in 2015 potentially have the intention to leave their place of residence. In general the intention of leaving is less pronounced in cities with population over 300 thousand people and is much stronger in small towns and especially in smaller regional centres.

2.1.1. The study found that in 2015 71% of secondary school graduates in small towns and villages and 84% of such students in regional towns with populations of less than 300,000 people intend to leave their place of residence, while in the largest regional centres this intention is typical for about 40% of secondary school graduates.

2.1.2. There is a greater desire to leave the place of residence among female graduates as compared to male ones.

2.2. Taking into account the academic results of students from their previous year discovered a pattern in relation to the intention of leaving the place of residence and moving to another settlement or abroad. The better the academic results, the greater the desire to leave the place of residence.

2.2.1. In this connection, it was found that about half of the students with academic results for the previous year below 4.5/6 have expressed potential desire to leave their place of residence, while among students with excellent grades this is typical for three out of every four students.

2.3. ESC found that an important factor influencing the intention to migrate is the family environment, including the education of the parents. There is a direct link between higher education of parents and greater desire of students to leave the place of residence.

2.4. ESC found that with the increasing size of the settlement increases significantly the proportion of parents with university and college education. In cities with population above 300,000 this proportion is 2.5 times higher than the corresponding share in smaller towns and villages in the country.

2.4.1. Conversely, it is also clearly defined that in smaller settlements the share of parents with primary or lower education increases significantly. In small towns and villages the percentage of parents with primary or lower education is about 7-8 times higher than that in cities with population over 300,000.

2.5. The education of parents is definitely important for the academic performance of the students, there is a clear connection between higher student achievement and higher education of parents, and vice versa.

2.5.1. The share of parents with higher education among students with excellent grades is several times higher than that of students with results under 4.50.

2.5.2. ESC also found that the share of parents with primary or lower education among students with results under 4.50 is about 6 times higher than the corresponding indicator among students with excellent grades.

2.6. There are certain differences in the preferred place for settlement depending on the size of the place of residence of secondary school graduates.

2.6.1. The most pronounced intention to settle abroad is observed in cities with over 300,000 inhabitants where half of the surveyed graduates have expressed such intentions. In smaller regional centres and other towns and villages this share twice smaller.

2.7. Sofia is the preferred place to settle among graduates coming from smaller regional centres or from other towns and villages of the country. In such settlements this preference is more pronounced compared to similar intentions in regional cities with a population above 300,000.

2.8. The desire for moving abroad following the completion of secondary education is slightly more pronounced in male graduates as compared to male ones. Conversely, female graduates show a slightly greater desire to move to Sofia or to another city.

2.9. There is a definite connection between students' academic results from the previous year and their preferred destination for migration. This connection is more pronounced with respect to potential internal migration.

2.9.1. There is a stronger correlation between better academic results and the intention to settle in Sofia, while the desire to settle in another city correlates with lower grades.

2.10. The education of parents, particularly that of the mother, influences the formation of migration attitudes among students. Parents with the highest education form in their children the strongest desire to settle in the capital.

2.10.1. ESC estimates show that the share of graduates, who intend to settle in Sofia and have parents with higher education, is 2.5 times higher than that of graduates who have mothers with primary or lower education, while the trends concerning migration to another city are the opposite.

### **III. THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND THEIR INTENTIONS AFTER GRADUATION FROM SCHOOL**

3.1. ESC found that according to approximately two-thirds of the surveyed students the main problem is the difficulty of finding work in the place of residence. With particular concern ESC emphasizes that the lack of work for young people is a major problem both in small towns and villages and in major regional centres of the country.

3.1.1. This problem is very common among students who have lower grades or their parents have secondary, primary or lower education. At the same time, on average six of every ten students with excellent grades or whose parents have higher education indicate as their main problem the difficulty to find employment in their place of residence.

3.1.2. The difficulty to find any sort of employment is indicated by students as a bigger problem in smaller regional centres and other towns and villages in the country as compared to most major regional centres.

3.1.3. On the whole, female secondary school graduates have described the difficulty to find employment as a slightly more serious problem than male graduates.

3.2. Finding "a good suitable job" is another serious problem that is identified by about half of the secondary school students.

3.2.1. The difficulty of finding "a good suitable job" seems a bigger problem for students with average grades over 4.50, and especially for those with excellent grades compared to those students whose grades are below 4.50.

3.2.2. The difficulty of finding "a good suitable job" is a major problem for 40.1 percent of graduating secondary school students whose parents have primary or lower education, while the problem is identified by 47 percent of students with parents with higher education.

3.2.3. The difficulty of finding "a good suitable job" is defined as a more serious problem by graduates in the largest regional centres compared to smaller regional centres and other towns and villages in the country.

3.3. ESC found that the difficulty to find employment and "the difficulty to find a suitable job" are problems that are manifested differently depending on: the educational level of the family, especially that of the mother; the grades and gender of the student; the size and nature of the settlement.

3.3.1 The difficulty to find employment is defined as a greater problem for students with lower grades or parents with lower education compared to students with higher grades or parents with higher education.

3.3.2 The difficulty of finding "a good suitable job" is defined as a greater problem by students with higher grades or living in families of parents with higher education.

3.3.3 The difficulty to finding any sort of employment is indicated more often as a problem in smaller towns, while in the big cities students indicate more often the problem of finding "a good suitable job" as compared with their peers coming from smaller settlements.

3.3.4. Finding any sort of employment, and finding "a good suitable job," turns out to be a big problem for female graduates as compared to male graduates.

3.4. ESC found that the other major problem faced by students, is associated with obtaining a well-paid job. Every second student pointed out the impossibility to obtain a well-paid job as one of the most serious problems in their village. In smaller settlements this problem is considered more serious.

3.4.1. In large cities with populations over 300,000 people the problem with the impossibility of obtaining a well-paid job is indicated by 44.1% of the surveyed students.

3.4.2. In smaller towns and villages in the country this problem was identified by 53.5% of the students surveyed.

3.5. The study shows that the inability to obtain a well-paid job is considered a much more serious problem by students with excellent grades as compared to those with lower grades from the previous year. It is identified by 53.5% of excellent students and 44.3 percent of students with grades below 4.50.

3.5.1. This problem is identified as a main one by 50.8% and 50.3% of graduates whose parents have respectively higher and secondary education while, it was indicated by 44.7% of students with elementary or lower education.

3.6. ESC puts particular emphasis on the finding that one in four graduates indicates the lack of "good education" as another major problem of his or her place of residence. For the surveyed students this problem appears to be much more serious than the problems associated with transport and roads, as well as corruption in the place of residence.

3.6.1. It is noteworthy that the discontent of students from the poor level of education is much more pronounced in regional centres than in other smaller towns and villages in the country. While poor education is indicated by 26.1% and 31.3% of graduates respectively in the largest and in smaller regional centres, this problem is identified by 19.9% of these students in other towns and villages in our country.

3.6.2. Negative assessments of the level of education definitely increases with the average grades from the previous year of students. And if poor education in the place of residence is defined as a problem by 18.9% of students with grades below 4.50, this problem is identified by 32.1% of graduates with excellent results from the previous year.

3.6.3. Undoubtedly female graduates are more critical of the quality of education than male ones. In this regard, ESC notes that if 21.2% of male graduates identify poor education as a problem faced by the place of residence, this problem is indicated by 30.6% of female graduates.

3.7. The state of infrastructure, in particular, roads and transport, the high level of corruption and lack of opportunities for entertainment and sports are three other problems of the place of residence indicated on average by one in every five students.

3.7.1. The high level of corruption is a much more serious problem for students in the biggest regional centres than those in small towns or villages in the country. At the same time, the lack of opportunities for sports and entertainment is defined as a problem by 25.4% of graduates in small towns, while in the largest regional centres with population above 300,000 people this problem is identified only by 9.5% of students.

3.8. Poor health care is put forward as a problem of the place of residence by about 12,2% of the surveyed students. About 10% of them identify high crime rate as another problem of their settlement. Also, about 10% of students consider as a problem the fact that their friends are leaving their place of residence, and this problem is more serious in smaller settlements.

3.9. Although the possibility for graduates to find work, especially suitable work, as well as obtaining a well-paid job, are the two main problems they identify, most of them do not intend to start working immediately after completing their secondary education. In this regard ESC notes the extremely high desire for further education and training. Based on the survey it is found that three in four secondary graduates wish to continue their education.

3.9.1. At the same time, ESC found very large differences in the intention of continuing education among students from regional cities as a whole and other towns and villages in the country. Students from regional cities are absolutely dominated by the intention of continuing education - it is indicated by 85% of secondary school graduates - which is about 50% higher than what was indicated by students from other towns and villages.

3.9.2. There are also relatively large differences between the intentions of male and female graduates regarding their intention to continue their education. 83.4 of female secondary school graduates express an interest in continuing education, while this is typical for 69.2% of male secondary school graduates.

3.9.3. Students' grades from the previous year appears to be an extremely strong factor in forming the intention for continue their education. In support of this ESC notes that a little above 90% of graduates with excellent grades from the previous year are willing to continue their education, while this is typical for twice less students with grades averaging to below 4.50.

3.9.4. Quite expectedly the education of parents, especially the mother also has a strong influence on the decision of graduates to continue their education. And if 37.6% of students with parents with primary or lower education have expressed a desire for

further education, this intention is characteristic of 89.2% of students whose parents have higher education.

3.10. While in regional cities the desire for further education is much more pronounced compared to that of students in small towns and villages, regarding the intention to search for and start work after the completion secondary education shows opposite trends. In this regard ESC finds that while in small towns and villages in our country over 30% of graduates intend to seek employment in a private or state-owned company or start working in the family business, in regional centres such an intention is declared by less than 10% of graduates.

3.10.1. There is a clear trend that students with lower grades will more often indicate the intention to start working after completing secondary education. 40% of graduates with grades from the previous year averaging below 4,50 desire to start working, while this is characteristic of less than 4% of the graduates with excellent grades.

3.10.2. The education of parents is another very important factor for the formation of the intention to start working after completing school, and here there is an inverse relationship. Over 45% of graduates whose parents have primary or lower education, intend to start working, while this intention is indicated by less than 7% of graduates whose parents have higher education.

3.10.3. It is also noteworthy that while just over 20% of male secondary school graduates boys are keen to start working, this desire among female graduates is indicated by only 10% of the respondents.

#### **IV. ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS FOR LEAVING THE COUNTRY**

4.1. ESC found that the intention to go abroad is typical for about one third of the students graduating from secondary school in 2015. About a third more are hesitating whether they should move abroad. A firm denial to do this was expressed by only the remaining one third of secondary school graduates.

4.1.1. There are some differences in the intentions to go abroad in terms of the size of the place of residence. Most commonly such intentions are expressed in smaller regional centres as well as in cities with over 300,000 inhabitants. In this regard, ESC notes that the share of students who have declared intention to move abroad is between 22% and 37% higher in cities with over 300,000 inhabitants and in other regional cities than in other settlements in the country. This indicates that attitudes to leave the country are much clearer manifestation in larger cities, especially in regional centres.

4.2. ESC research shows indisputably that the dominant purpose to move abroad is to achieve a higher standard of living.

4.3. Opportunities for further education and for finding a job are two other main reasons that characterize the desire of secondary school graduates to move abroad. The desire to find a job is a stronger motivator for moving abroad than that for continuing education.

4.3.1. At the same time, continuing education and finding employment as reasons for moving abroad are of varying importance in forming students' intentions in different

places of the country. There is a trend of increasing importance of finding employment as a factor in making the decision to move abroad the smaller the size of the place of residence of the respondents. For example, in small towns and villages in the country two times more people have indicated finding employment as the major factor for their intention to move abroad than those that have indicated continuing education as such factor.

4.4. The desire to move abroad is definitely expressed by more female secondary school graduates than by male ones. In terms of the importance of finding employment, no difference is observed between the intentions of male and female graduates.

4.5. ESC finds some trends in the relationship between graduates' intention to leave the country and their average grades from the previous year. The intention to leave the country after completion of secondary education is definitely the highest among students with excellent grades - 37% of the respondents in this group express such a desire. At the same time, between 30% and 32% of secondary school graduates with lower grades express an intention to leave the country.

4.5.1. No significant differences are observed among graduates hesitating about whether to move abroad in terms of their average grades from the previous year.

4.5.2. It is interesting to emphasize that students with excellent grades from the previous year, expressed the strongest intentions to go abroad both to continue their education and to look for employment.

4.6. Conversely, ESC finds much stronger relationship between the grades of students and whether they intend to move abroad in order to continue their education or in order to find employment.

4.6.1. Regarding the intention of finding employment abroad the differences between students with different average grades exist, but they are not very pronounced. The difference in share of all students intending to work abroad between students with excellent grades and the rest is approximately 20-30%.

4.6.2. At the same time, the relative share of secondary school graduates with excellent grades from the previous year who are very likely to continue their education abroad is respectively 2.5 times and 1.9 times higher than the corresponding indicator for students with average grades below 4.50 and those with grades between 5.50 and 4.50.

4.7. The education of their parents has definite impact on the development of graduates' intentions to leave the country for various reasons. It is interesting to note that students whose parents have the highest and the lowest education have expressed stronger desire to leave the country than those whose parents have secondary education.

4.7.1. No clear difference is observed in the intention to move abroad to seek work among students with parents with different levels of education.

4.7.2. The education of students' parents has strong influence on students' decision to continue their education abroad. The share of students with parents with the highest

level of education that have high attitudes for continuing their education abroad, is more than two times greater compared with students whose parents have secondary, primary or lower education.

4.8. About one-third of the surveyed students intending to leave the country, are willing to do so immediately after completion of secondary education. About one fifth of graduates intending to leave the country plan to do so within the next 2-3 years. Generally, over 50% of secondary school graduates with the intention of leaving the country plan to do this within three years of their graduation.

4.9. No significant differences are observed with respect to how secondary school graduates' envision their leaving the country in temporal terms depending on the size of their place of residence. There is a slightly stronger desire to leave the country immediately after completion of secondary education in small towns and villages, but the differences between these places and larger towns are not so great.

4.9.1. The size of the place of residence is not a considerable factor for the formation of larger differences in the intentions to leave the country within the following 2-3 years. Here too, although with a very small difference, there are more responses expressing intention to move from small towns and villages, as well as in the largest cities with population above 300 thousand people, in general however the differences are not significant.

4.10. ESC found some differences in the envisioned way of leaving the country observed in settlements of various sizes. Overall, one in every four graduates with the intention of leaving the country declares that he or she will do so alone and unaccompanied. It is noteworthy, however, that certain differences can be identified between the relative share of graduates that have decided to leave the country alone in bigger cities as opposed to that in small towns and villages. Namely, the share of graduates intending to move abroad alone is about 50% higher in regional cities than in smaller towns and villages.

4.10.1. In small towns and villages students typically express the desire to leave the country with their family, or part of it, while in bigger places the percentage of those who intend to move abroad in this way decreases - it decreases by about 30% in cities with over 300,000 inhabitants.

4.11. The differences between big cities and small towns and villages in Bulgaria regarding the desire of students to leave the country alone or with their families show certain attitudes among students which may be formed in their family environment. These differences most probably are evidence for the much greater sense of self-confidence of students in big cities to deal with problems abroad than that of students in small towns and villages. Another reason for these differences may be sought in the formation of much stronger intentions in small towns and villages for moving the whole family abroad - not just the child that graduates from secondary school. Generally these interesting differentiations depending on the place of residence deserve further attention and analysis and should be subject to very careful and targeted policies on the part of the local and central government.

4.11.1. It is noteworthy also that over 50% of the surveyed students with the intention to leave the country are thinking to do this alone or with friends, but at least initially without their families. This can be regarded as a very serious signal for determination of migration intentions, which is hardly favourable circumstance for the country amid its demographic problems.

4.12. ESC draws attention to the fact that about 70% of graduates with the intention of leaving the country have relatives or friends abroad and they can go to them. This indicates that the already formed emigration creates very serious prerequisites for subsequent waves in mind the safety of young people the possibility to be accommodated with their relatives abroad.

4.12.1. According to ESC, however, serious consideration should be given to the facts related to small towns, villages and small regional centres, on the one hand, and cities with over 300,000 inhabitants, on the other. It observed that the share of graduates who have decided to leave the country and have relatives abroad in smaller regional centres, other towns and villages in Bulgaria is about 22% higher than the corresponding indicator for cities with over 300,000 inhabitants. According to ESC, this can be understood as an indicator for very intense migration so far, mainly from smaller places, and the next comparable wave would jeopardise the very existence of some of these places in the medium term.

4.13. Male graduates show a slightly more pronounced desire to leave the country immediately after completion of secondary education than female ones. Overall, however, the attitudes for leaving the country within the next 2-3 years are very similar for both male and female graduates.

4.13.1. More male graduates prefer to leave the country alone or with friends, as compared with female ones. Conversely, more female graduates express a very clear desire to leave the country with their whole family or a portion thereof, as compared with male ones. This indicates that male graduates are characterized by a greater degree of certainty or confidence to deal with problems abroad as compared to female graduates who share the intention of leaving the country.

4.14. Grades from the previous year, also have a certain importance for the formation of opinions about how to leave the country after completion of secondary education. The share of excellent students with the intention to leave the country and decided to do this alone is over 30% which is about 60% higher than the corresponding indicator for other students with lower grades and with the same intentions to leave the country.

4.14.1. At the same time, students with the lowest grades prefer to move abroad with their family or friends, which indicates some uncertainty in their opportunities for development. The data show that the share of students with average grades under 4.50 for the previous year who intend to leave the country with their family is about 66% higher than the corresponding indicator for students with excellent grades who express similar intentions to migrate. Moreover, the share of students with average grades from the previous year below 4.50 who express the intention to leave the country with friends is about 45% higher than the corresponding indicator for excellent students.

4.14.2. 74 to 77% of secondary school graduates with average grades from the previous year up to 5.49 and with the intention of leaving the country have relatives or friends abroad, who can host them, while for students with excellent grades this percentage is 64. According to ESC, this can be viewed as a signal for more intensive previous emigration of relatives of students with lower grades compared to the situation of students with excellent grades.

4.15. The role of education in shaping ways of leaving the country for students seems especially clear when we consider the characteristics of secondary school graduates intending to leave the country in terms of the education of their parents. It is undisputed that the higher the level of his or her parents' education, the higher the confidence of the student and the greater his or her desire to leave the country alone and without family. The share of students who wish to leave Bulgaria on their own and have parents with the highest education is 2.6 times higher than the typical indicator for students with similar intentions and parents with primary or lower education. At the same time, students wishing to leave the country with their family who have parents with primary or lower education are twice as many as students with parents with university or college education.

4.16. The lower is the education of the parents, the greater the share of graduates who want to leave Bulgaria immediately or within 2-3 years. For example, if 70% of secondary school graduates with desire to leave Bulgaria and parents that have primary or lower education intend to do so immediately or in the next 2-3 years, this process is typical for about 56% of those wishing to leave the country but have parents with higher education. Students with parents with the lowest education have the most friends and relatives abroad who can host them when they decide to leave. About 65% of the students with the intention to leave the country and with parents with higher education have relatives abroad, for students with parents with primary or lower education this percentage is about 88.

## **V.MAIN REASONS FOR MOVING ABROAD**

5.1. ESC found that the possibility of achieving higher income and standard of living is the reason why over 50% secondary school graduates have the intention to leave Bulgaria. Obviously, the dominant reason is too complex and in the minds of young people it is related to the way of life and the higher standard of living as a whole. Generally, the weight of this reason on the intention to leave the country is equal in smaller regional cities and other towns and villages in the country. A slightly smaller percentage of students in cities with over 300,000 inhabitants highlight as their main reason for intending to move abroad the possibility of achieving higher income and living standards.

5.2. The smaller the size of the settlement, the higher the percentage of graduates who want to leave because they want to find good jobs abroad. Moreover, while in cities with over 300,000 inhabitants about 15% of the students with the intention to emigrate want to do so in order to find a good job, in small towns and villages this group reaches 23%.

5.2.1. At the same time, the bigger the settlement, the greater the influence of the factor "obtaining good higher education". If in small towns and villages in the country about 9% of those who have decided to leave the country wish to do so in order to obtain a good higher education abroad, in cities with over 300,000 inhabitants, this group reaches 19%.

5.2.2. On the whole, specific reasons emerge for moving abroad in settlements of different sizes, with the exception, of course, of the dominant reason connected with achieving higher incomes and living standards. Obviously, in smaller towns and villages of the country a characteristic reason for emigration attitudes in young people is the lack of opportunity for finding work, which is not so common in bigger cities. At the same time, in bigger cities an essential factor for the prospective emigration of students is definitely the inability to obtain good university education, which is declared by one in every five secondary school graduates in such cities who have expressed their intention to leave the country.

5.3. However, it should be clearly noted that only 3.4% of secondary school graduates wishing to leave Bulgaria will do so because of their unwillingness to live in our country. In other words, almost 97 of the 100 secondary school graduates intending to leave the country are willing to live in Bulgaria, but unfortunately there are other significant problems they cannot solve in the near future in the country.

5.4. The desire to obtain higher incomes and living standard as a reason for leaving the country is more typical for female than for male secondary school graduates. Obtaining good higher education as a reason for leaving Bulgaria is also a factor of greater importance to female as compared to male secondary school graduates.

5.5. Finding a good job abroad as a reason for planning to leave the country is much more commonly indicated by male secondary school graduates as compared to female ones. We will once again emphasize that female graduates attach greater importance to the possibility of achieving higher income and standard of living, and obtaining good higher education. At the same time, no difference in the reluctance to live in Bulgaria as a factor for moving abroad is observed between male and female graduates and the expression of this reluctance shows a very low level of about 3%.

5.6. The higher the average grades of students, the higher weight of the possibility for receiving good higher education abroad as a factor for emigration. For example, if about 4% of students with grades under 4.50, who complete secondary education and intend to leave the country, have indicated the possibility of a good higher education as a reason for their decision, the share of students with excellent grades who have indicated this reason is 21%.

5.6.1. Conversely, the lower the grades of students from the previous year, the higher the importance of the possibility of finding a good job as a reason for moving abroad. In this case, the share of students with the lowest grades who intend to move abroad to find a good job, is 2.5 times higher than the corresponding indicator for secondary school graduates with excellent grades from the previous year who have expressed intention of leaving the country.

5.7. It is noteworthy that the ability of the family to provide financial support affects twice as strongly the intention for leaving Bulgaria of students with lower grades, as compared to other students who also have expressed the intention to move abroad.

5.8. The education of parents undoubtedly had some influence on the formation of students' intentions to move abroad. ESC finds a clear link between the degree of the education of parents and the exceptionally strong influence of the possibility of receiving good higher education abroad as a factor in forming the intention to leave the country among students.

5.8.1. Furthermore, the lower the education of parents, the higher the influence of the possibility of finding a good job as a reason for leaving the country.

5.8.2. However, it should be noted that the ability of the family to provide financial support is a factor with much stronger influence on the formation of the intention to leave the country among students with parents with primary or lower education - as compared to those with secondary and especially to those with higher education. In this connection, we will point out that the achievement of higher income and standard of living is a much less common reason for leaving the country with students whose parents have elementary or lower education - as compared to students with parents with higher education.

5.9. The survey conducted by ESC found that the preferred the main destinations for future emigration of secondary school graduates point mainly to three countries - Britain, Germany and the US - the intensity of migration intentions to these countries being different. Britain and Germany were indicated by 24% of secondary school graduates intending to leave the country graduate - in total they are preferred by almost half of the future immigrants. USA is the country indicated by around 13% of secondary school graduates. Other preferred destinations for country of residence are Spain, Netherlands, Italy, France and Austria, for which the percentage of preference ranged from 5.6% (Spain) to 3.6 (Austria).

5.9.1. Great Britain is the country preferred by students in regional cities - as compared to students from other towns and villages. Germany is an almost equally preferred country depending on the different place of residence of students. The Netherlands and France are definitely preferred countries in cities with over 300,000 inhabitants compared to other places, while the situation with Spain is exactly the opposite.

5.9.2. The average grades of students from the previous year is an important factor in determining their preferred emigration destination. Students with excellent grades and with the intention of leaving the country express definitely much stronger preference for settlement in the UK and the US as compared to other students with lower grades. While students average grades below 4.50 have a much stronger preference for Spain and Germany as compared to those with very good and excellent grades.

5.9.3. Germany, USA and the Netherlands are slightly more commonly preferred countries for settlement of male secondary school graduates with the intention of leaving

the country as compared to female ones. In turn, the female graduates have a stronger preference than male ones to countries like Spain, Italy and France.

5.9.4. The education of parents has a certain influence on the formation of preferences for destination among students. Secondary school graduates with parents with the highest education show a very clear tendency to favour Britain, which is also a typical choice for students with parents with secondary education. This group of students also show preference to the US and the Netherlands, but the percentage of students from this group who prefer the UK is, of course, much higher than those who prefer these two countries.

5.9.5. In turn, France and Belgium are the two destinations preferred by students with parents with primary or lower education as compared to other students. To some extent, this fact can be explained by the highly developed and in some sense "generous" social systems in France and Belgium, which are probably better known in Bulgaria to parents with primary or lower education.

(signed)

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