The globalisation and the intensive economic and social integration processes incredibly activate people’s mobility. Bulgaria has been facing migration problems with the political, economical and social transformation since 1990, which completely changed the labour mobility environment. As a result, migration flows increase significantly. This fact raises new problems as well as a need for new policies.

The present statements and comments will present: (a) the main facts regarding immigration and emigration flows after 1990 in Bulgaria; (b) the newly occurring problems ensuing from migration flows and (c) the policies that are in force or are indented to be introduced. The paper will comment the transferability of the Czech Republic experience named “The assistance system for Employment of Ukrainians in the Czech Republic” to the Bulgarian policy context.

1. Assessment of the policy context, economic circumstances and institutional/legal background in Bulgaria regarding migration

1.1 The policy context and the economic circumstance

The democratisation process in Bulgaria has led to waves of large-scale migration as emigration largely prevails. Hence Bulgaria is still in the dawn of discovering the event “immigration” but it has already been facing the consequences of mass emigration outflows.

The economic circumstances during the period 1990-2007 could be divided in three periods with regard to migration flows. The first period (1990-2000) includes the start of the transition and the economic downturn as a result of a number of very radical economic and social reforms e.g. liberalisation of prices and trade conditions; privatisation and mass layoffs; liquidation of existing cooperatives in agricultural sector that caused high rural unemployment, etc. Within that period the lack of jobs and population impoverishment stimulated emigration. According to some information sources the migrants for the period 1989-2000 numbered 691 thousand people. Census data point out that between the two last censuses –1992 and 2001 the total population decrease was by 514 thousand people or over 6% of the annual average population during the pointed period. The emigration had contributed to that decrease by 196 thousand people. The rest is due to negative natural population growth. The immigration for the pointed period numbered 19 thousand people.

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The second period covers 2000 – 2007 and is characterised by: significantly improved economic and social environment; increase of job opportunities and income level. These facts contributed to decreasing emigration flows and increasing immigration. As a matter of fact after 2002 the emigration outflow was stabilised at a level of about 7% of the population as the potential long-term migrants. However, the country remained relatively poor - the GDP per capita was 33.9% of Western Europe level in 2000-2002. The lower living standard compared with the EU-25 made the country less attractive for immigrants due to which Bulgaria was mostly a “transitional” country for them on their way to Western Europe.

The third period in the economic development starts in 2007, when Bulgaria became a member of the EU. The new status of the country as a member of the Union, on the one hand, changed the content of the “Bulgarian emigration” to Western Europe and on the other, increased the attractiveness of the country for immigrants.

1.2 The institutional and legal framework

The institutional and legal background of migration policy develops along with the building up of the new institutional and legal framework of the state and the economy.

The institutional framework includes ministries - Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; agencies - Employment Agency, State Agency for the Refugees, committees - Committee for Bulgarians, leaving abroad, as well as other institutions. Starting in May 2007 an Inter-institutional Working Group is operating, which deals with migration problems. It is chaired by one of the Deputy Prime Minister of the country. The social partners are included through the National Tripartite Council and the working groups within it. The non-governmental organisations are also involved in the whole net of institutions by participation in projects and programmes and in the public discussions on the topic.

The legal framework includes a number of documents - Bulgarian Citizenship Act, Civil Registration Act, Employment Promotion Act, Regulation on the procedure for providing mediator services to foreign employers, Mutual Employment Agreements with other countries, etc.

1.3 Migration flows – quantitative and qualitative dimensions

Migration flows consist of emigrants, immigrants and refugees. As already pointed Bulgaria is a net exporter of people, since the number of emigrants prevails, while that of emigrants and refugees is still negligible.

Bulgaria is a country with decreasing number of population. In 1989 it was 8.987 thousand people while in 2005 – 7 718 thousand. Compared with 1989, the number of the population decreased by 1 269 thousand people. The country population reduction is a result of both the negative balance of births and deaths and the negative balance of emigration from and immigration to the country.

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34 According to UNICEF Trans Monce Database and National Statistical Office.
35 The Czech Republic, France, Germany, Spain, Luxemburg, Portugal and Switzerland.
**Emigration has become a serious problem** for Bulgaria due to its negative impact on population growth and the present shortage of labour as a result of the economic revival. After 2002 the emigration wave included about 90 thousand people per year. According to some projections further decrease and stabilisation at about 6-8 thousand people after 2010 is expected. The decrease reflects the “emigration exhaustion” in the country.

**Fig.1 Emigration flows - Bulgaria**

![Graph showing emigration flows in Bulgaria from 1989 to 2006.](image)


According to 2001 census the main characteristics of the potential long-term emigrants were well-educated young people, incl. women in fertile age; while low-qualified people declared intentions for short-term, seasonal labour emigration. The migration potential over the years changed insignificantly from 19.4% in 2001 to 20.2% in 2007. There was a shift in the time horizon of the emigration model – the intention for short-term mobility in the respective year has increased from 26% in 2001 to 42.4% in 2007.

As far as destination is concerned the potential emigrants prefer Spain, Italy, USA, Turkey, Germany, etc.

Immigration flows, as pointed above, are insignificant if compared with emigration flows. The total number of immigrants, according to last census data, was 18 688 (2001). The statistics on permanent resident foreigners outline an increase to 50 756 in 2004, to 53 197 in 2005 and to 55653 in 2006. Figure 2 illustrates the dynamic of immigration in Bulgaria. There is an upward trend, which is however determined by people coming from less developed countries. There are certain groups of immigrants among them who regard immigration in Bulgaria as a stop in their emigration “journey”. This fact multiplies the problems of the policies since the effects of applied measures and programmes for economic and social integration of immigrants meet no relevant returns.

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36 Demographic development of the Republic of Bulgaria, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund, S, 2005, p.89

37 Family patterns and migration, National Representative Survey, 2007, p.87.
The structure of immigrants in view of the region, they come from points out that in 2006 77% of the immigrants came from Europe, 19% - from Asia, 2% - from America, 1% - from Africa and 1% were stateless. The structure of the immigrants who come from Europe included mainly people from Turkey, Russian Federation; Ukraine; Republic of Macedonia, Moldova (85.2% of all European immigrants). People from China and Armenia predominate in the flow from Asia.

**Fig.2 Permanent resident foreigners in Bulgaria**

[Graph showing permanent resident foreigners in Bulgaria from 2001 to 2006]

Source: Population and demographic processes, NSI, 2004-2006

It is important to underline that immigrants are not a homogeneous group. Within immigrants there are permanent residence (45% according to a case), people with long-term stay (16%), people granted humanitarian status or refugee status (11%), people with double citizenship and stateless (6%), and short-term residents (4%). Significant number of the people – 13% did not answer the question about their status, which might mean that they lived illegally in the country.

Relatively young people define the profile of immigrants in Bulgaria: 30% are in age group 18-30; 26% - in the age group 31-40. Immigrants are relatively well-educated – 21% are with higher education; 56% of the employed immigrants have their own trade business or are employees in joint venture firms or international firms, acting in Bulgaria. 38% of the immigrants are engaged in low-qualified occupations. An interesting point is the extent to which immigrants are involved in illegal activities and “grey economy”. The cited survey does not confirm the widespread opinion that immigrant are strongly involved in this sector.

The main problems concerning immigration policy can be viewed as problems, related to imperfect legal base, problems of information and coordination of activities between the institutions.

There are also asylum seekers numbering 639 people in 2006 (822 in 2005). Humanitarian status was granted to 83% of them and refugees status – to 12%. These people are also a matter of special policy for economic and social integration.

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**1.4 Migration policy**

The Bulgarian migration policy is based on the international commitments and agreements in the field. The policy follows the generally acknowledged principles regarding migrants and is much more focused on emigration. Presently the government undertakes more systematic steps for developing a consistent policy in the field of migration, incl. development of strategic documents and action plans related to emigration and immigration. These steps have been provoked by widespread debates concerning demographic trends and labour shortages. The aim of the elaborated policy is to reduce and stabilise the emigration flows and to stimulate immigration as a possible decision for bettering demographic balance and increasing labour supply.

**Emigration policy**

The core of the emigration policy is to prevent young people from future emigration. The particular measures and tasks for decreasing the number of emigrating young people includes: promoting employment and reducing unemployment among young people; improving working conditions, remuneration and quality of employment; ensuring equal access to quality education; relief in crediting for the purchase of housing, furnishing and improving dwelling conditions; creating conditions for overcoming poverty and social isolation among disadvantages youngsters; stimulating family formation, child rising and upbringing; easing the transition from school to employment; increasing the knowledge of youths about their labour/insurance rights and obligations; elaborating relevant policy for encouraging the return of young people, who have graduated from universities abroad as well as employers to hire such people to work.

**Immigration policy**

By expecting that present upward immigration trends in the country will continue the National Emigration and Immigration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (May 2008) underlines the need for: (a) intensive public debates about the socio-economic role of the immigration; (b) developing immigration policy that stimulates Bulgarians living abroad to settle in the country; (c) improving the existing legislation so as to unify the legal norms concerning immigration problems; (d) further developing the information system for immigrants and creating an administrative register of immigrants in the country; (e) spreading knowledge among the population about manners, customs, traditions and culture of immigrants by conducting information campaigns; (f) regulating the procedures for granting legal recognition of the education and professional qualification of the immigrants, etc.

The core in the immigration policy is the focus on ethnic Bulgarians living abroad. There are four main directions of actions, namely: (a) facilitating the procedures for obtaining Bulgarian citizenship; (b) providing scholarships for children of ethnic Bulgarian origin from other countries, wishing to stay in Bulgaria; (c) activating and expanding the spheres of cooperation with Bulgarian emigrants abroad; and (d) elaborating a policy for attracting ethnic Bulgarians to settle in the country and to encourage their entrepreneurship in Bulgaria.
2. **Assessment of the potential transferability of the policy/measure to Bulgaria**

The presented policy “Assistance System of Employment of Ukrainians in the Czech Republic” could be useful for the Bulgarian policy-makers in the process of building up the national immigration policy. It contains instruments for attracting foreigners to settle in the Czech Republic. The Bulgarian policy is more focused on attracting ethnic Bulgarians living abroad to settle in Bulgaria. Although the number of participants in the presented policy is quite small – about one thousand people, the outcomes are edifying since ways to bring people in legal employment and to ease their economic and social integration are identified.

3. **Important issues relevant to the policy areas that are currently being raised and debated in Bulgaria and future developments**

By present, the Bulgarian government intends to use the so-called “green card” as an instrument for attracting immigrants by providing better conditions for economic and social integration. Therefore, it would be useful for us to know what was the effect of the “green card” instrument applied in the Czech Republic and whether did it meet the expectations of the government and the immigrants.

In general, the discussed policy is quite relevant to what is currently debated in Bulgaria since the legalisation of illegal forms of employment and of immigrants (still quite few in number) is an issue of the labour market policy.

Due to increasing labour shortage of both qualified and unqualified labour the government is undertaking activities to import workers from abroad (Vietnam, China, neighbouring countries, etc.). In this respect Bulgaria largely relies on bilateral agreements. The presented paper outlines that this import of foreign workers as a measure to balance labour supply and demand did not work well. It would be good to know more details about the reasons for such a conclusion. It would be useful also to know more about specific economic, social or regional problems provoked by the immigrants in the Czech Republic, if any, and the measures to relieve or avoid such problems.

**References:**


2. Territorial mobility of the population, NSI, Census data, 2002.
