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# **Migration of Bulgarian Population – Characteristics and Relations to the Regional Socio-economic Disparities**

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## MIGRATION OF BULGARIAN POPULATION – CHARACTERISTICS AND RELATIONS TO THE REGIONAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

### **Abstract:**

*The paper suggests a short overview of migration processes in Bulgaria since the start of its democratization and transition to market economy. The socio-demographic structure of both potential and return migrants is evaluated empirically using a large sample data for 2013 representative for Bulgarian population aged 18-65. On the basis of a ranking of Bulgarian regions and districts by an integral score of their socio-economic development (involving a set of development indicators) a range of regional disparities are revealed in respect of migration potential, return migration, and remittances allocation and utilization. The rich empirical evidence suggests that Bulgarian migration policies should emphasize substantially on the issues of regional disbalances in order to offset the evaluated distortions.*

**JEL:** F22, R11

### **Introduction**

Migration as a specific social phenomenon has been a subject of profound research for a long time now. Many theories and interpretations have arisen based on various migration data sets<sup>5</sup>. There are several types of theories – those which dwell on the question of *why the process of migration has started* while others tackle the question of *why the process of migration once started persists* (Massey et al, 1993). In an attempt to find an integral theory on migration, H. de Haas discusses the differences and the similarities between the so called “functionalist” theories (sticking to orthodox concepts) and the “structural” theories (tending towards heterodox views on migration transition). In fact, H. de Haas

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<sup>5</sup> This is a fact since Ravenstein formulated his Laws on Migration published in 1885 and 1889. (Ravenstein, 1885 and 1889); and for Bulgaria after the publication of the book “Researches on Demography in Bulgaria” by G. Danailov (Danailov, 1930).

considers that there is no reason to distinguish the economic migration from refugees' exodus (De Haas, 2014).

Research on migration in sending countries is often underestimated and remains outside of the current debates on the matter. Nevertheless in the last 25 years, a new research method is established, focusing on the so called *potential migration* – “a research method born out of fear“as Professor Endre Sik<sup>6</sup> describes it. The justification for the fear of mass migration from the new EU member states is questionable. In any case, the notorious “Polish plumber” has become a kind of a mythic figure while Bulgarian housemaids appear in Spanish comics.

That kind of research allows for two main subsets to be observed:

- Potential migrants (long-term migrants, planning to move to another country and stay there more than 12 months and short-term migrants who would like to stay abroad less than 12 months);
- Mobile population (individuals with migration experience within the home country or living abroad).

This categorization is presented in details in table 1.

Table 1

Categorisation of migrants from the perspective of the sending country

Potential migrants		Mobile population					
Long term	Short term	In the country of origin		Abroad			
		Return migrants	Circular	Migrants	Migrants (Citizens of the world)	Return migrants	Circular
Intending to go abroad and stay there more than 12 months	Intending to go abroad and stay there less than 12 months	Intending to stay in the country of origin	Intending to go back abroad	Staying in the receiving country	Moving to a third country	Returning to the country of origin	Going back and forth the home and the host country

Source: Minchev, Boshnakov, Richter and Ruspini, (2017), p. 43.

In this paper, we consecutively discuss (1) the evolution of emigration from Bulgaria in the last 25 years; (2) the assessments of the intentions and the profile of potential and return

<sup>7</sup> Migration potential survey: a research method born out of fear. An interview with Professor Endre Sik, professor at the ELTE University and a senior researcher at TARKI Social Research Institute. (<http://www.migrationonline.cz/en/migration-potential-survey-a-research-method-born-out-of-fear-an-interview-with-professor-endre-sik-professor-at-the-elte>).

migrants, based on a sample survey; (3) and the interdependence between the regional disparities (level NUTS 2 and NUTS 3) and migration attitudes and remittances.

Part one – *Emigration from Bulgaria after 1989* is about the gross and net migration (migration balance) of the country after 1989.

Part two – *Potential and return migrants – typology, attitudes, and characteristics*, is where we discuss the main attitudes and profiles of the potential and return migrants.

Part three – *Regional disparities, out-migration intentions, return migrants and remittances*, is where we consider the interrelation between regional disparities (on NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 levels), and the intentions to migrate and regional particularity of the return migrants and their remittance behaviour.

## 1. Emigration from Bulgaria after 1989

At the time when the political system in Bulgaria started to change, the process of mass migration out of the country began. According to some assessments (Gachter, 1988) gross migration<sup>7</sup> is between 218 thousand and 45 thousand people per year for the period from 1989 to 1999 (Table 2).

According to the same assessments, a little more than 46% of the outgoing migrants from 1989 to 1999 went to Turkey and another 17% went to Germany. The rate of the asylum seekers is also high.

Table 2

Emigration from Bulgaria, 1989-1999

	Gross migration (thousands)	Net migration (migration balance)	
		Number (thousands)	% of the population per year
1989	-218.0	-136.9	-1.5
1990	-85.0	-118.2	-1.3
1991	-45.0	-75.1	-0.9
1992	-65.0	-61.1	-0.7
1993	-54.0	-27.9	-0.3
1994	-64.0	-3.7	0.0
1995	-54.0	-1.2	0.0
1996	-66.0	0.4	0.0
1997	-44.0	0.8	0.0
1998	-52.0	4.2	0.1
1999		-0.3	0.0

Source: Gachter, A. (2002). The Ambiguities of Emigration: Bulgaria since 1988. – International Migration Papers, 39, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Gross migration – the number of out migrants.

In the first decade of the transition period, there have been two waves of migration (Table 3):

- I. 1989-93 – 467000 people left Bulgaria, the majority of them (74%) went to Turkey. Here the rate of the asylum seekers is relatively high.
- II. 1994-98 – another 280000 people left the country. They preferred destinations such as Germany and Greece. The rate of the asylum seekers, during that “second” wave of migration goes down by 2.5 points. According to A. Gachter, the rate of those under the caption of “Other” may differ because of a certain amount of unaccounted migrants who went to Turkey or other unidentified countries.

Table 3

Gross emigration from Bulgaria by destinations

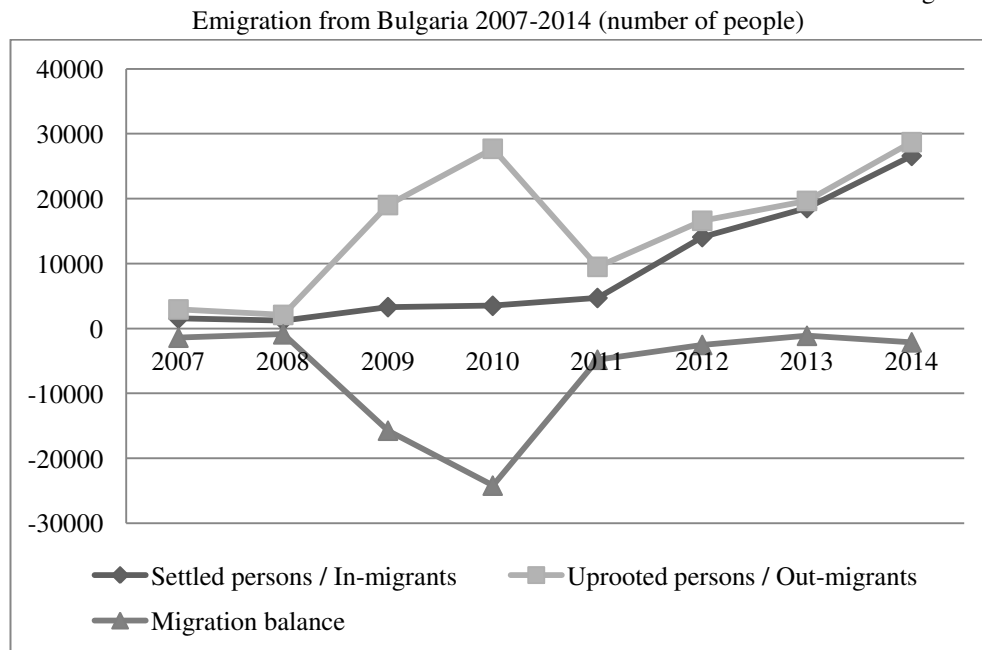
	BG	Austria	Switzerland	Germany	Greece	Turkey	USA	Asylum	Other
1989-98	-747000	1872	2253	124383	32383	344849	6307	41579	192779
1989-93	-467000		1009	87486	12489	344849		29329	-8162
1994-98	-280000	1872	1244	36897	20489		6307	12250	200941

Source: Gachter, A. (2002). The Ambiguities of Emigration: Bulgaria since 1988. - International Migration Papers, 39, p. 6.

The estimation of the gross migration from 1989 to 1999 goes up to 747 thousand people who left the country while the net migration (migration balance) is estimated at about 420 thousand people (Table 2). The gross immigration is supposed to be about 327 thousand people. We may assume that the data on the in-migration flow is mainly based on the number of the so called return and circular migrants.

According to the NSI estimates, the gross migration from Bulgaria in the period between the 1992 and 2001 censuses is about 196 thousand people. In the meantime about 19 thousand people return or come to live in the country. Thus the outward migration balance is estimated at 177 thousand people. During the same period about 22 thousand people leave the country per year (Kaltchev, 2002, p. 51.) From 2001 to 2011, the migration balance is estimated at 175 thousand people. (2011 census – main results, www.nsi.bg). After 1989, net migration from Bulgaria (i.e. migration balance – In-migrants minus Out-migrants for the period between 1989 and 2011) is negative and is between 650 and 700 thousand people.

Figure 1



Source: www.nsi.bg (last checked on 14.03.2016).

After 2007, gross emigration from the country went up to 28 thousand people in 2010 and 29 thousand people in 2014. During the period the migration balance is negative and significantly deteriorated in the years 2009 and 2010, going over -15 и -24 thousand people (Figure 1).

Figure 2

Gross migration according to gender (number of people)

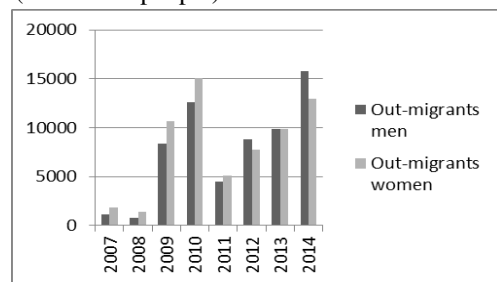
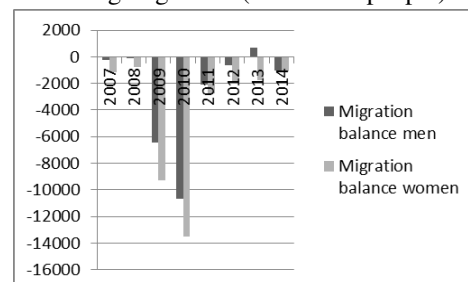


Figure 3

Net migration (migration balance) according to gender (number of people)



Source: www.nsi.bg (14.03.2016 г.)

While until 2011, female gross emigration surpassed male gross emigration, in 2012 and onwards, the tendency changed. Despite the changes occurred, female migration balance is still worse than male migration balance (Figure 2 and 3).

Figure 4  
Gross migration according to age groups 2007-2014 (number of people)

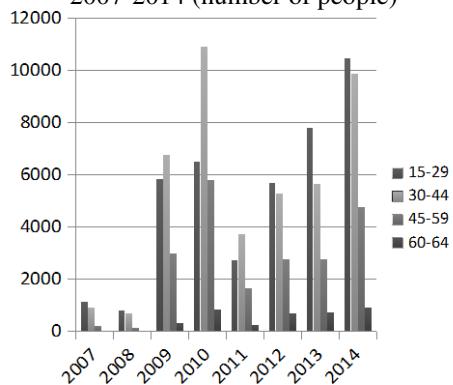
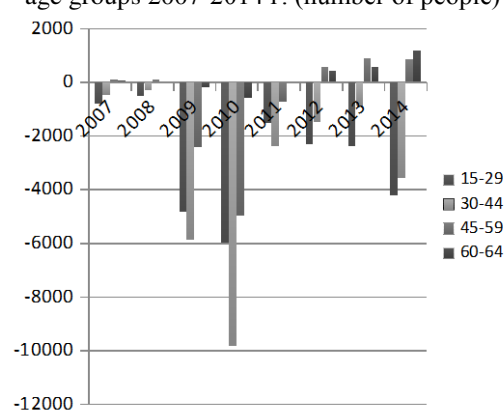


Figure 5  
Net migration (migration balance) according to age groups 2007-2014 г. (number of people)

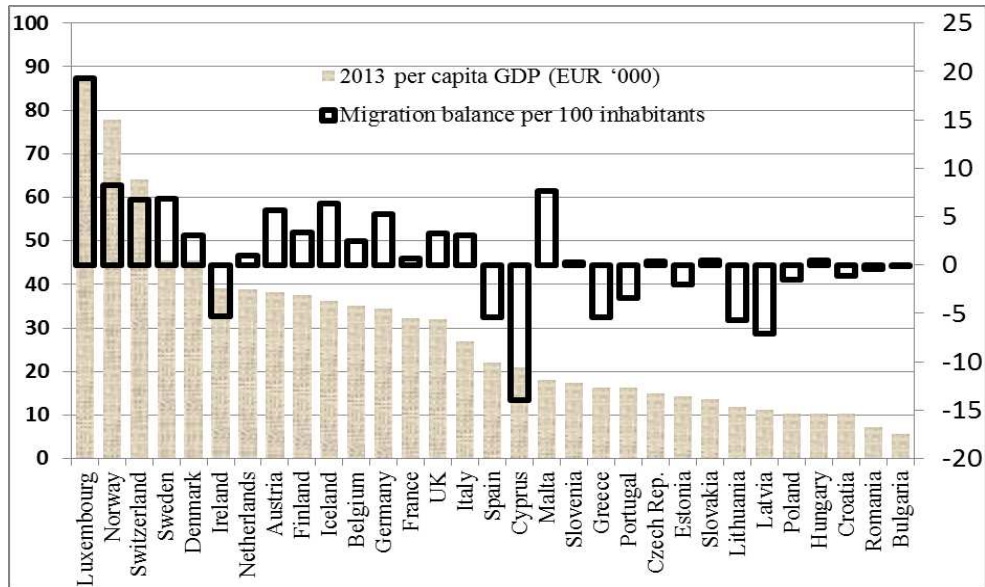


Source: www.nsi.bg (14.03.2016 г.).

Between 2009 and 2011 most of the emigrants were those in the age range from 30 to 44, then in 2012 and onwards most of the emigrants were those aged 15 to 29, i.e. the youngest ones. The negative migration balance within these age cohorts is at relatively high level in 2014 as well – over 4500 people aged 15 to 29 and more than 3500 aged 30 to 44 (Figure 4 and 5).

A comparison made of the migration balances (per 100 inhabitants) in EU countries, in 2013, shows that the situation in Bulgaria is similar to the situation in most of the East European and South European member states (Figure 6). Moreover, the data collected in such countries as Bulgaria and Romania point to a phenomenon called “migratory exhaustion”. While countries like Latvia and Cyprus lose about 5 to 15 people (per 100 inhabitants) in 2013. In absolute numbers, the negative migration balance rate is the highest in countries like Spain (-251 thousand people), Greece (-59 thousand people) and Poland (-56 thousand people) – the first two remaining preferable destinations for potential Bulgarian emigrants.

Figure 6  
GDP per capita and EU (28), Norway, Iceland and Switzerland migration balance (2013)



Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat> (14.03.2016 r.).

While studying migrant communities, qualitative research tools such as in-depth interviews are often used to describe the respondent's and his/ her family's migratory experience – i.e. the reasons for leaving the home country, settlement and integration in the receiving country, educational and work status before and after leaving, contacts maintained with the country of origin, satisfaction etc. Sample surveys on these matters are more rarely done.

In the last 25 years, countries like Spain and Germany are the most coveted destination countries for Bulgarian migrants. In those countries, different types of immigration policies are carried out, like periodical regularizations of the so called “undocumented” migration in Spain; and selective policy, based on the labour market needs in Germany. On the other hand, traditionally, the interstate agreements on intake of workforce and German speaking population are important in this country (we clearly remember the interstate agreements between Germany and Turkey as well as with former Yugoslavia in the sixties; or the programs for intake of German speaking population from Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union that were proclaimed in the beginning of the nineties).

In Spain and Germany, there are large Bulgarian communities - about 3% of the foreign population in Spain<sup>8</sup> and 2.4% in Germany<sup>9</sup>. In the last several years Bulgarian migrant

<sup>8</sup> According to the NGO CeiMigra, based in Valencia, in 2008, 16.6% of the over 900 thousand (in their estimation) Bulgarian migrants live in Spain (Ciudadanos del mundo, ciudadanos de Bulgaria, Coleccion: Miradas sobre la inmigracion, ([http://www.ceimigra.net/observatorio/images/stories/mirada\\_25.bulgaria.pdf](http://www.ceimigra.net/observatorio/images/stories/mirada_25.bulgaria.pdf)) (14.03.2016 r.)



community in Spain is getting smaller – from 176 thousand people in 2012 to 151 thousand in 2014.<sup>10</sup> Until January 1, 2014, 52% of the migrants were men and 48% were women. The reverse process is happening in Germany, where the Bulgarian community is growing bigger – from 93 thousand people in 2010 up to 183 thousand in 2014, predominantly male, (55%) arrived recently (less than 5 years average length of stay) and young (average age up to 32 years).<sup>11</sup>

### *Summary*

Migration processes in Bulgaria are not much different from those happening in other Eastern European and South European EU member states. The migration balance<sup>12</sup> is steadily negative and is about 650-700 thousand people throughout the period between the years 1989 to 2011. There is no doubt that such state of affairs affects the socio-economic situation in the country in an unfavourable way, considering the aging population and the negative natural increase rate.

In the last several years Bulgarian migrant community in Spain is getting smaller – from 176 thousand people in 2012 to 151 thousand in 2014 (and 142 thousand in 2015). On the other hand the number of Bulgarian migrants in Germany has doubled, from 2010 to 2014 growing up to 183 thousand people. Despite their relatively good educational status, in general, Bulgarian migrants in those two countries usually take lower skilled jobs.

## **2. Potential and return migrants – typology, attitudes, characteristics**

In the so called emigration countries (i.e. “sending” migrants), the socio-demographic analysis of the migration population can be focused on two main groups: potential migrants and return migrants. In the following sections the specificity of potential and return migrants (See Table 1) will be discussed.

When surveying potential out-migration, the choice of particular criteria for building and implementing a technique for identifying potential migrants is very important (see Kaltchev, 2002.). When determining the survey tools used in this paper the chosen criteria are aiming at the definition of the purpose for migration (i.e. to settle, work or study abroad), the length of intended period of stay abroad of potential migrants (intending to stay abroad more than 1 year; and intending to stay there less than 1 year), and the horizon of the planned move out from the home country (in the next 6 months; in the next 12 months; in the next 2-3 years; some time further). The results that were obtained from the data collected through the sociological survey carried out in 2013 – as part of the project

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<sup>9</sup>[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/StatistischesJahrbuch/StatistischesJahrbuch2015.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/StatistischesJahrbuch/StatistischesJahrbuch2015.pdf?__blob=publicationFile) (14.03.2016 г.)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ine.es/jaxi/Datos.htm?path=/t20/e245/p08/10/&file=01005.px> (14.03.2016 г.)

<sup>11</sup>[https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/StatistischesJahrbuch/StatistischesJahrbuch2015.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/StatistischesJahrbuch/StatistischesJahrbuch2015.pdf?__blob=publicationFile) (14.03.2016 г.)

<sup>12</sup> Number of incoming migrants minus the outgoing migrants.

„Migration and Transnationalism between Switzerland and Bulgaria: assessing social inequalities and regional disparities in the context of changing policies“ / IZEBZO-142979 (Richter et al, 2017) – showed the presence of the following groups of potential migrants and non-migrants and their frequency distribution (table 4).

Table 4

Potential migrants and non-migrants according to general groups and gender (in %)

Gender	Groups of potential migrants								Non-migrants		Total	
	Permanent emigrants (settlers)		Labour emigrants		Educational emigrants		Short-term emigrants					
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Male	204	10.4	200	10.2	14	0.7	137	7.0	1415	71.8	1970	100.0
Female	152	7.8	117	6.0	30	1.5	118	6.1	1521	78.5	1938	100.0
Total	356	9.1	317	8.1	44	1.1	255	6.5	2936	75.1	3908	100.0

Source: Representative sociological survey, carried out in 2013, among the 15 to 65 age group by the research team, working on the Bulgarian-Swiss project „Migration and Transnationalism between Switzerland and Bulgaria: assessing social inequalities and regional disparities in the context of changing policies“ / IZEBZO-142979.

### 2.1. Typology of potential migrants

#### **Potential permanent emigrants (settlers)**

In the first group are those who are “very probably” and “probably” moving to another country for a considerably long period of time and they mostly intend to settle permanently there. According to the survey data, they are about 9% of those aged 15 to 65. Of all the potential settlers 93% are still residing in Bulgaria, whereas the rest of them are already abroad. About a half of the potential settlers - 48% - have already lived abroad, 17% have stayed there for over 12 months, and i.e. they have been actual migrants. As of the rest of the group - 26% have stayed abroad for 3 to 12 months and 4% have stayed for less than 3 months.

As far as the time range that the potential settlers have chosen to actually migrate, 31% of them state for their intention to leave the country to be within the next 6 months, i.e. we may assume, that those respondents have made a final decision to migrate. Over the next 12 months, the share of those who would like to migrate is 27% and those who plan to migrate within the next 2 to 3 years are 21%. About 19% state that they are prone to migrate at some point in more distant future.

**Potential labour emigrants** are people who “very probably” and “probably” will go and work in another country for more than 12 months. The share of potential work emigrants is about 8.1%. About 98% of those potential migrants are presently living in Bulgaria. A total of 40% of the respondents have already been abroad for different periods of time. The share of those who have stayed abroad for more than 12 months is 11%, for 3 to 12 months - about 26%. Only 4% have stayed abroad for less than 3 months.

For 25% of the respondents, finding work in another country is about to happen in the next 6 months. Nearly as many (24%) – are those who plan that to happen within 12 months. Planning to work abroad within the next 2 to 3 years are 30%, and in a more distant future - 17%.

Planning to get a certain educational degree is the reason for a third group of potential long-term migrants from the country – those are the so called *educational (student) emigrants*. In that group are those who “very probably” and “probably” will continue their education abroad and stay there for more than 12 months.

The rate of potential student migration is lower – 1.1 % among population aged 15 to 65. Actually, according to numbers and share<sup>13</sup>, student migration is at a lower rate, but it is important because it is formed entirely by young people aged up to 30 years. It is typical for those respondents that they don't have previous migratory experience (less than 7% have already been abroad) and they make arrangements for going to another country for the first time. 98% of those respondents are presently living in Bulgaria.

Forming an intention to emigrate for educational purposes precedes the actual migration. A little over 2% intend to leave for another country within the next 6 months. Another 27% intend to do so within 12 months. The biggest share of respondents (46%) – state their intention to go and study abroad in the next 2 to 3 years and 23% intend to do that in a more distant future.

The biggest part of that group of migrants - about 80% - and of the other, who also intend to study abroad, are planning to earn a Bachelor's and a Master's degree.

***The classification of the potential migrants in the abovementioned three main groups is quite conditional.*** It is so because not only labour emigrants (88%) intend to find a job abroad but also as it is quite understandable – permanent emigrants (79%) intend to do so, as well as 16% of the student emigrants. About 8% of the settlers and 5% of the labour emigrants state that they would like to continue their education. Through this classification, we try to identify the drivers, which motivate the different categories of potential migrants to leave Bulgaria.

Part of the international migration cohorts are also people who “very probably” and “probably” will go for a specialization, for work, or for another reason to another country, but will stay there for a period less than 12 months. These are the "*short-term emigrants*" (short-term migration - where people stay abroad for less than a year). Those are 6.5% of the respondents. Almost all of them (99%) are presently living in Bulgaria. Of the supposed future short-term emigrants, 37% have been abroad before and the share of those who have stayed abroad for more than 12 months is too small - 4%. Less than 24% of the respondents have been abroad for a shorter period (3 to 12 months) and 10% - for less than 3 months.

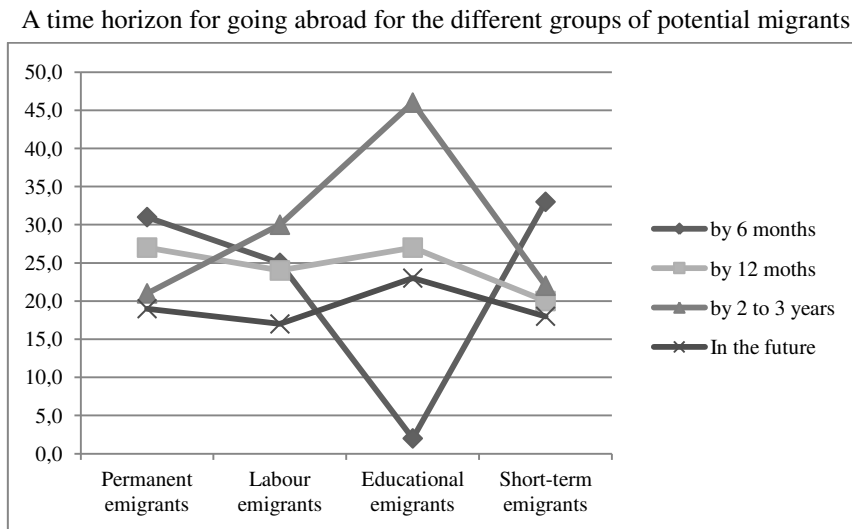
Among the group of the short-term emigrants, the bigger share is of those who point out that their intention to migrate will be realized as soon as the next 6 months - 33%. About 20% suppose that they will go and stay abroad within the next 12 months, and the share of

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<sup>13</sup> Due to the small number of cases observed in the sample, the data for this group discussed further in the analysis should be regarded as quite conditional.

those who intend for that to happen within the next 2 to 3 years is a little bigger - 22%. 18% of the respondents supposed to go abroad in a more distant future.

Figure 7



As it was found 18.2% of the total Bulgarian population, aged 15 to 65 years state that they intend to emigrate and stay out of the country for more than 12 months, and 6.5% will do so for a shorter period of time – less than 12 months. Among the rest of the population, according to our survey, there are not migration aspirations, i.e. this is potentially a “non-migrant population” and those people “less probably” or “not probably” will leave the country for the present or for the near future to find work, to improve their education, to go for specialization, etc. for more than one month. The share of non-migrants is about 75% of those aged 15 to 65. We have to say that only 7% of that population category has been abroad in the last 5 years for a various period of time and only 1.7% has been abroad for more than 12 months. Practically everybody who is considered to be part of the non-migrant population, at present lives in the country.

## 2.2. Demographic and social profile of potential migrants

When emigration processes are being studied, it is important to analyse the demographic and social characteristics of the individuals involved. It is necessary to do so, as migration processes directly affect the demographic structure of the whole population of the country and its reproduction dynamics.

In addition, when the demographic and social characteristics of the migrants have been analysed, two main types of structural dimensions have been used: to determine the **intensity** and **structure** of the potential migration. Through intensity indicators, the empirical frequency of potential migration developments has been determined, i.e. how

often the respondents have stated an intention to depart / emigrate for (in) another country<sup>14</sup> (for more than 12 months for potential long term emigrants and from 1 to 12 months for short term emigrants) and through structure indicators (in %) – the distribution of the groups of potential migrants according to demographic and social characteristics that have been of academic interest.

#### Gender and age characteristics of potential migrants

When defining the demographic profile of potential migrants, the gender and age characteristics of migrant groups are of basic importance. Generally, the range, respectively, the intensity rate of potential migration is higher among men. The share of men, intending to leave the country and settle, work or study abroad is 21.3%. This share among women is 15.3%. Attitudes for labour migration or permanent resettlement is more often found among men - over 10% than among women - from 6.0 to 7.8%. The intensity rate of potential migration is higher among women, when education purposes in a foreign country are considered – 1.5 vs. 0.7%. (See Table 4)

As a result of the higher intensity rate of potential migration among men, their proportion within different groups of migrants is also higher. Among the potential settlers, the share of men is over 57%, while the share of women is about 43%. Among labour emigrants, the difference in the proportions of men to women is even bigger. The ratio is 63 % of men to 37% of women. As regards the situation with student migration, the share of women potential educational emigrants (68%) is two times bigger than the share of men - 32%.

The intensity of short term migration (specialisation, education, temporary job etc.) is about 7 % for men and 6% for women. Within this potential migration group the share of men is bigger than the share of women as well – 54% vs. 46%.

Potential migration rate and the formation of the main migrants groups depend on the age structure of the country's population. The potential migration intensity rate is the highest among those aged 15 to 29 within all three main groups. About 17% of those within that age range intend to settle in another country, 11% intend to work abroad for more than 12 months and more than 3% intend to continue their education abroad. The short term potential migration rate is 10.5%.

In the next age ranges the intensity rate of potential migration systematically decreases. Among those aged 30 to 44, the intensity rate of potential migration is 10% for both permanent and labour emigrants and 3.3% for potential student emigrants. A little more than 7% among those in that age interval suppose that they can stay for a short time in another country.

The intensity rate of potential migration among those aged 45 to 59 is almost the same for the group of permanent (5.5%) and labour emigrants (5.8%). Among those aged 45 to 59, there are no intentions of becoming educational emigrants (only some individual cases have been registered), but about 4% state that they can go for work, specialization or to study for a short period of time in another country.

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<sup>14</sup>These indicators show the number of potential migrants in the relevant aggregation from which they are recruited, expressed as a percentage.

In the oldest age group (60+) the intensity rate of potential migration for all groups of migrants is very low – up to 1.7% and practically there are no registered cases of potential educational emigrants.

The age structure of the studied groups of migrants is different. The difference is largely determined by the goals the potential migrants set for themselves. From the group of those who would like to settle in another country for a long period of time or for ever, 44% are aged 15 to 29. Smaller, but nevertheless large enough, is the share of potential settlers aged 30 to 44 - 36%. Within this group of potential migrants, the share of those aged 45 to 59 is about 19%, and of those over 60 is only 2 %.

Among potential labour emigrants, the biggest share (40%) is of those aged 30 to 44, followed by those aged 15 to 29 - nearly 37%. Those, who would like to work in another country, aged 45 to 59 are 22%, and the share of the oldest potential labour emigrants is 1.6%.

The biggest share of potential student emigrants holds the youngest part of the population, those aged 15 to 29. They are about 76% of all potential migrants within this group. The share of student emigrants aged 30 to 44 is about 16%. Only separate cases have been registered within this group of emigrants (a small share), who are aged over 45. We can conclude that student migration is typical for young people, mainly aged up to 29.

Among potential short term emigrants, 42% are aged up to 29. The share goes down for the age group 30 to 44 - 37% and 19% for those aged 45 to 59.

#### Educational level of potential migrants

The educational degree and the aspiration to get a higher one have a certain impact on migration attitudes. Potential long-term migration intensity rate is higher for those with elementary or basic education degree. A total of 23% of that category of people intend to live out of the country for more than 12 months. They are considering to settle (9.5%) or to work (again 9.5%) abroad with the intention to continue their education there (3.7%).

The intensity rate of potential long-term migration among those with secondary education degree is slightly lower – 8.5% for settlers and labour emigrants. The intensity rate of potential students is significantly lower – under 1%.

Higher education graduates also show high “potential migration coefficient”. Over 10% of the respondents prefer to live abroad, if they get the opportunity to do so and 6% prefer to work abroad, i.e. to become labour emigrants.

The intensity rate of potential short term migration for people with any of the three types of educational degrees is between 5 to 7%.

There are significant differences in the educational structure in the particular migrant groups. The biggest share of potential settlers is among those with secondary education degree – 56.5%. Higher education graduates are 28%, and 15.2% are with elementary or basic education degree.

People with secondary education degree are the biggest share of labour emigrants as well – over 64%, those with lower education degree and higher education graduates are both 17%. The share of academic degree-holders among labour emigrants is very low – 1.3%.

The group of potential student emigrants, who would like to continue their education abroad, is constituted mostly of people with basic education degree - about 48% of the respondents. Those are people, who haven't completed secondary education at the time when the survey has been carried out. Among potential student emigrants, 34% are with secondary education degree, 16% are higher education graduates, predominantly Bachelor degree holders. Academic degree-holders are 2.3%.

Of short-term emigrants, 67% have secondary education, nearly 22% have higher education and the rest - about 12 percent - have elementary or basic education.

#### Socio-economic status of potential migrants

Respondents' distribution according to their social status and the type of migration they aspire for, points to the significance of the social structure as far as the formation of migration aspirations is concerned.

The intensity rate of potential resettlement is the highest among students - 15%. The intensity rate is lower among the unemployed - 14% and freelancers – 10%. Quite close is the intensity rate of potential resettlement among the private employees and agricultural producers – about 9%. This index is the lowest among those employed in state/municipal company or organization – 5% and also among the pensioners - 2%.

The data obtained regarding labour emigrants is quite the same. The intensity rate of potential work migration is the highest among the unemployed - 14% and the students - 13%. Next are the freelancers - 9% followed by private employees - 8%. This index is significantly low among those employed in state/municipal company or organization - 4% and agricultural producers - 3%.

The group of student emigrants is practically constituted only of school and university students. The intensity rate of potential migration among them is 8%.

Short term migration is preferred by agricultural producers – 12.5% and students - 11%. Nearly 10% of the unemployed intend to stay abroad for a short period of time. Among the other social groups the intensity of intention to work abroad for a short period is between 4% for public employees and 8% among those on a maternity leave.

The social structures of potential settlers and labour emigrant flows are proportionally close, although there are certain differences in the size of the shares within different social strata. The bulk of migrants are expected to get recruited from private companies - 33%. The second group is the unemployed - 30% followed by school and university students – 15%.

Labour emigrants flow is presumably composed of currently unemployed - 36% and private employees - 32%. The share of students within this group of migrants is about 15%.

Nearly 32% of the short-term emigrants' composition will be of people engaged in the private sector. The other main part of the flow (29%) will be formed of unemployed and students - 15%.

### *2.3. Main destination countries for potential migration*

After Bulgaria joined the European Union (EU), Germany has become one of the most preferred destination countries for Bulgarian emigrants. The data obtained point to the following: 28% of future emigrants intend to settle in Germany, 29% would like to work there, and 31% - to continue their education.

The second best and preferred destination for potential Bulgarian emigrants is the UK, where 17% of potential migrants would like to settle and another 21% would try to find a job there. The share of those who would like to continue their education in the UK is quite large - nearly 37%.

The next destination country, Bulgarians are attracted to is the United States, where 9% of the potential migrants would like to settle, 4% would like to work and 7% - to continue their education.

As far as the other European countries are concerned, 7% of migrants would like to settle in Spain, 6% - in Greece, 5% - in Italy etc. The share of migrants who would like to work in those countries is between 4 and 5.5%.

For short term emigrants the most preferred destination country is again Germany (25 %) and then the UK - 20%. Between 6 and 8% would like to stay for a short period in other EU countries and 3% - in Switzerland.

### *2.4. Return migrants profile*

Sample surveys, conducted in the sending countries, allow for an estimation to be made of return migrants' flows (*return migrants - those who stayed abroad for more than 1 month in the last 5 years*). Though indirectly, estimation could be made of the scope of the so called "current" migrants (*people, who were living abroad at the time when the sample survey was carried out*).

Thus, we found that in 15.5% of Bulgarian households, there are members who have lived abroad. In over 10% of the households, there are members who currently live abroad (Table 5).



Table 5

Share of households that have return or “current” migrant member (2013, in %)

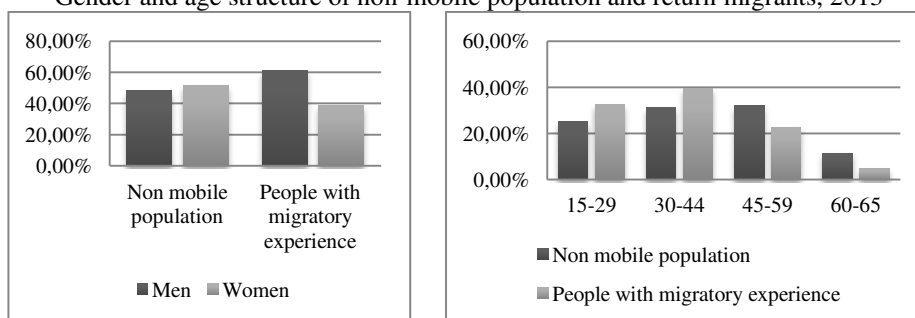
	Share of households that do not have “current” migrant member	Share of households that have “current” migrant member	Total
Share of households that do not have return migrant member	77.1	7.4	84.5
Share of households that have a return migrant member	12.4	3.1	15.5
Total	89.5	10.5	100.0

Therefore, here we can present the profile of the return migrants in reference to the profile of people with no migratory experience, identified as “non-mobile population”.

#### Gender and age structure of return migrants

Figure 8

Gender and age structure of non-mobile population and return migrants, 2013



Among people who stayed abroad for more than 1 month in the last 5 years and are currently in Bulgaria men predominate (61%) as well as the young adults (aged 30-44 - nearly 40%). Among the so-called non-mobile population (*i.e. people who have not been abroad for more than one month during the reference period*) the share of women is bigger than that of men (51.5% women; 48.5% men). And the share of young people - 15-29 years old and young adults - 30-44 years old in the group without migratory experience is 7-8% lower compared to mobile population.

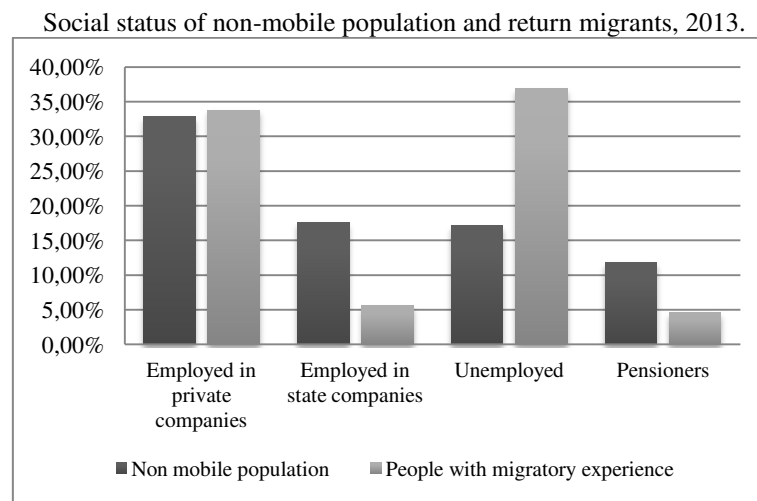
#### Educational structure and socio-economic status

The educational structure of the people who have lived abroad is similar to that of people without migratory experience. The most numerous are those with secondary vocational and

secondary general education (approximately 60% in both subsets); higher education graduates reach 1/4, and people with primary or lower education are 13% in mobile and less than 15% in non-mobile population.

On the other hand, there are significant differences in the socio-economic status of mobile and non-mobile population.

Figure 9



If the relative share of employees in private companies is similar – approximately 32-33%; the share of people employed in state/municipal companies amongst those without migratory experience reaches 18% and it is just approximately 6% amongst return migrants. Definitely employment in the public sector has a higher potential to “keep” the population in the country, compared with employment in private enterprises.

In addition, if unemployed amongst people without migratory experience according to the survey amount to approximately 17%, amongst return migrants this share exceeds 36%. And the question in fact is whether people with migratory experience prefer to settle permanently in the country or simply they are waiting until the next engagement abroad appears? As for the relative share of pensioners in the two subsets – as expected, it is higher amongst people without migratory experience.

### 2.5. Summary

The goal of this section is to derive a summary of the reasons and purposes for out-migration typical for various categories of potential migrants. Moreover, this way an approximate assessment can be made of the so-called “non-compensated” population losses for the country resulting from emigration and permanent settlement abroad. The first three

categories considered above constitute the major types of potential external migration from Bulgaria evaluated for the population aged 15-65 years at the end of year 2013<sup>15</sup>.

When comparing the 2013 results with those obtained from previous studies (2001, 2011), an increase in the intensity of potential migration is being observed in 2013 as compared to 2001 (18.3% to 15.3%); however, a slight decrease is noted in respect to 2011 when the same indicator was estimated at 19.7% (Minchev et al., 2012). Based on these results it can be concluded that over the last 10 years the potential out-migration for the target age interval is sustainably estimated in the range between 15% and 20%. A more realistic picture of the current status of potential migration is provided if these estimates are adjusted by taking into account the horizon of the possible realization of migration intentions. If the evaluated horizon of the out-migration move “up to 1 year” is applied, the intensity of potential migration for 2013 is reduced to 9.7%.

Migration amongst young and relatively better educated people deteriorates the population’s age structure, lowers the levels of fertility, get worse the professional and educational structure of workforce, and this in turn leads to other adverse demographic, social and economic consequences.

With regard to discussed statistical characteristics of intensity and structure of potential migrants a conclusion can be made that according to current migration intentions of the population aged 15-65, the expected external migration outflows will be formed mainly by men and by people aged below 44 years of age - 79% of settlers and 77% of labour emigrants. With migration for the purposes of education – the outflows will be formed mainly by people 15-29 years (75%).

56% of the potential settlers are expected to have secondary vocational and secondary general education, and 28% - higher education. In the structure of labour migration the share of those with secondary education will be 64%, and of those with higher education - 18%. Approximately 41% of the student emigrants will be persons expected to graduate from a secondary school, and people who have already obtained secondary education degree will be 34% of this migrant group.

The profile of the return migrants is similar to that of the potential migrants, but differs from the profile of non-mobile population. Men, people aged 30-44 and unemployed are the majority among those who have returned. Furthermore, more than 60 % of return migrants come from 5 European countries – Germany, Greece, Great Britain, Spain and Italy. The range of people who has returned from USA, France and Cyprus is between 4 and 6%, and about 3% are those who have returned from Turkey and Belgium. Obviously there is a direct connection between those destinations which are being preferred in the country and the migratory experience of the mobile Bulgarian population. This suggests a need for more active relations with countries with large Bulgarian communities -

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<sup>15</sup> In this case the criterion of the duration of the absence from the country of more than 1 year (potential migrants) has been applied. The analysis includes also the total of the people declaring that it is probable for them to be absent from the country for a period ranging from one month to 1 year (short-term emigrants).

concerning a various issues of migration policy – access to the labour market, insurance schemes, visas regimes, alleviating possibilities to send remittances, etc.

### **3. Regional disparities, out-migration intentions, return migrants and remittances**

It is widely known that ever since the formulation of Ravenstein's laws (1885, 1889) on migration, the links between the differing levels of regional development and the migration processes become one of the main components of migration theories. Neoclassics interpret migration as an efficient mechanism of allocation of resources, while for the historical structuralists migration processes increase the regional disparities. On the other hand, the so-called migration transition views migration merely as an inevitable characteristic of development (De Haas, 2010).

The present section examines the relationship between regional disparities and the formation of migration intentions. The „return” and the desire to „leave again” of people with migratory experience are observed. The diverse “transfer profile” model of the regions (NUTS 2) and the districts (NUTS 3), which are ranked according to their level of development, is subject to debate. Data has been used from a sociological survey conducted in 2013 within the framework of project „Migration and Transnationalism between Switzerland and Bulgaria: assessing social inequalities and regional disparities in the context of changing policies“/ IZEBZO-142979 [Richter, M., P. Ruspini, Mihailov, D., Mintchev, V. and M. Nollert, 2017].

#### *3.1. Assessment of territorial socio-economic disparities*

For the purposes of the study<sup>16</sup> the socio-economic disparities between the 6 regions from Level 2 (the so-called NUTS 2) are analysed and assessed. 15 indicators are used for that purpose; they are grouped as follows:

Demographic conditions:

1. *Natural growth rate* - ratio of the difference between the number of live birth and deaths during the year and the average population number during the same year, calculated per 1 000 persons. The indicator characterizes the condition of the demographic system.
2. *Migration coefficient* [mechanical growth (difference between the number of persons settling and the number of persons emigrating<sup>17</sup>) per 1 000 persons from the average population]. This demographic indicator is highly sensitive to the condition of the

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<sup>16</sup> The disparities between the regions from Level 2 and between the districts are assessed using a model, based on a taxonomic method (See Yankova et al., 2003, p.9, pp.166-168; Yankova et al., 2010).

<sup>17</sup> As of 2007 the mechanical movement of the population includes not only internal migration, but also movement of people to and from the country.

socio-economic and political environment, to the possibilities for career realization and the opportunities to ensure decent incomes and living standards.

3. *Age dependency ratio* (ratio of the number of people aged 65+ and the number of people aged 15-64, in %). The indicator characterizes the demographic “load” on the population within working age (independent adults) by the aging population (dependent adults).
4. *Share of the persons with higher education in the total population* – the indicator reflects the educational attainment of the local population.

State of the labour market:

5. *Coefficient (rate) of employment* (ratio of the number of employed individuals to the share of the population aged 15+, in %). The indicator reflects the degree, to which individuals within working age manage to find work, and, in more general terms, the existence of a balance between the local economy (the demand for labour) and the economically active individuals (the supply of labour).
6. *Coefficient (level) of unemployment* (ratio of the number of unemployed persons to the labour force, in %). This indicator, similarly to the preceding one, incorporates economic and social characteristics. It reflects the state of the economic system as well as the social problems it creates.

State of the local economy:

7. *GDP per capita*. This is the indicator with the most integral characteristics and significance. It reflects the cumulative result of the functioning of the economic system, respectively of the quantity of produced goods and services per capita of the population within the respective territorial unit. The higher the value of the indicator, the stronger and more developed the economy of the respective territorial unit and the higher the living standard of the local population.
8. *Labour productivity* (measured via the ratio between Gross Value Added and the number of employed individuals, calculated per 1 employee). The indicator reflects the efficiency of the local economy.

State of the transport infrastructure:

9. *Availability of transport infrastructure*. The indicator reflects the density of transport infrastructure, measured as the length of the railway and road network per 1000 km<sup>2</sup>. Under the conditions of intensified mobility, all sectoral and territorial systems strongly depend upon the availability and quality of the roads.

Poverty and household incomes:

10. *Income per household member*. This indicator is as much an economic one as it is a social one. On the one hand, it reflects the results of the labour/economic activity, while, on the other hand, it has an impact on the standard of living.

11. *Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion*. This is a combined indicator, which includes 3 indicators: risk of poverty, intensity of economic activity and material deprivation.

Education and healthcare:

12. *Share of pupils (grades 1-12) in total population* – this indicator reflects their relative share in the total number of inhabitants of the respective territorial unit.
13. *Share of university students in total population*. The availability of higher learning institutions and the access to them are major factors for increasing the educational level of the population.
14. *Doctors per 100 thousand inhabitants*. The availability of medical doctors is one of the main qualitative indicators, which characterizes the state of healthcare and the standard of living of the population.
15. *Number of hospital beds per 100 thousand inhabitants*. The degree of availability of hospitals is one of the main qualitative indicators, which characterizes the state of healthcare in the respective territorial unit.
16. In this way, the socio-economic disparities between the NUTS 2 regions are analysed and evaluated on the basis of a matrix of 90 indicators. The study is for 2011 and uses data from the National Statistical Institute (NSI).

The integral scores for the level of socio-economic development of the 6 NUTS 2 regions are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Ranking of the regions according to their level of socio-economic development (2011)

Region	Ranking	Integral score
Southwestern region	1	0.4622
South central region	2	0.7303
North-eastern region	3	0.7496
South-eastern region	4	0.7625
North central region	5	0.8559
North-western region	6	0.8894
<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>0.5627</i>

The analysis of the presented results allows for the formulation of the following *conclusions and assessments*:

- The Southwestern region (SWR) strongly stands out as the region in the best socio-economic condition: its integral score is lowest (i.e. – it is close to the “benchmark” territorial unit) and furthermore it exceeds the average for the country. The leading

position of SWR is confirmed by a multitude of other studies as well as by the data from Eurostat<sup>18</sup>.

- The North-western region (NWR) and North central region (NCR) are at the other extreme – their integral scores are far from the “benchmark” region and are considerably lower than the average for the country.
- The three remaining regions are in the middle of the ranking – the South central region (SCR), the North-eastern region (NER) and the South-eastern region (SER). Their scores are comparable, but, on the other hand, they are significantly different from the ones of the other three regions.
- On that basis, several “clusters” can be conditionally designated:
  - Of the SWR, which assumes the leading position from a socio-economic point of view;
  - Of the regions in the “golden middle” – SER, NER and NCR, whose scores are lower than the average for the country, but are considerably better than the ones of the underdeveloped regions.
  - Of the regions, which lag behind – NCR and NWR.

### *3.2. Territorial socio-economic disparities and potential migration of the population by NUTS 2 regions*

It is logical to assume that the social and economic potential of the settlements and regions, within which they are located, influences the migration behaviour of the population. In that sense, when comparing the integral assessments of the socio-economic development (IASSED) of the regions and the groups of districts with their potential migration coefficients (PMC)<sup>19</sup> a parallel is sought between the territorial disparities and the development of the migration processes.

Out of the designated six NUTS 2 regions, NER has the highest intensity of potential migration. This region has a PMC of 25.2%. It falls in the middle (ranking 3) amongst the other regions with regard to its integral score of social and economic development. SER is comparable in terms of its level of development and level of potential migration (ranking 4) with a PMC of nearly 23%. The population of these two regions most frequently declares intentions for emigration from the country. These two regions include one of the most developed districts in the country which has a positive influence on their scores of their level of socio-economic development; however, underdeveloped districts with worsened labour market conditions and unfavourable economic development indicators are also

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<sup>18</sup> See Territorial Disparities in Bulgaria – Tendencies, Factors, Policies, Sofia, 2010, p.20; Eurostat regional yearbook-2012, pp.18-21.

<sup>19</sup> Potential migrants per 100 persons of the population aged 15-65 years (in %). The coefficient is calculated (in total) for all potential migrants, since the assessment of migrants by groups at the regional level is not feasible due to the small number of observed cases.

allocated there. The potential short-term migration coefficients for the two regions are in the range 5-6%.

NCR and SCR, which have significantly different scores for the level of their development (NCR – ranking 5; SCR – ranking 2) have analogous characteristics of the intensity of potential migration – 19.7%. The favourable position of SCR in the ranking of the level of economic development is entirely due to the indicators of the one of the most developed districts in the country with administrative centre Plovdiv. To a large extent, this district ensures employment of the population in the region. The social and economic indicators of the other districts, which fall within this region, are below the average (for the country). The value of the indicator for short-term potential migration is 6.5%.

NCR encompasses relatively poorly developed districts, which is why it lags behind the other regions in its development. This region is characterized by a significant decrease in the population number, while the level of potential short-term migration in the region is 5.7%.

NWR is the most economically underdeveloped region in the country (ranking 6). There are no highly developed economic centres in this region. The intensity of potential migration is very low in comparison to the other regions – 14.3%. The low value of the indicator can be explained by the significant decrease in the population number and the worsened age structure. The region is characterized by “migration exhaustion”, i.e. *decrease in the population from the age groups, which most commonly participate in migration processes*. This is important to take into consideration particularly when it comes to international migration, which is characterized by a higher level of selectivity – age, education (acquired or aspired to), professional qualification and skills, individual mobility and others. NWR has lowest short-term migration coefficient – 3.7%.

As already mentioned, SWR is the most highly developed region in the country. In it, the level of potential migration is lowest – 13.1%. The regional labour market ensures a high level of employment of the labour force, while the comparatively developed social infrastructure ensures favourable living conditions and opportunities to receive education for the majority of the local population. The capital city of Sofia is the reason for that. The region also encompasses districts with lower levels of development, but their population number is relatively low. For this region the intensity of short-term migration is highest – 8.6%. To a large extent, this is due to the relatively high educational and qualification level of the labour force as well as to the opportunities for temporary employment, which, despite the crisis, neighbouring Greece provides.

Considering the structure of potential migrants for all regions of the country the relative share of men is evaluated as larger in comparison to that of women. SCR has the largest share of men amongst potential migrants (62%) followed by SWR (60%). For the other regions these shares vary in between 52% (for SER) and 59% (for NER).

The largest shares of young people (i.e. below age of 29) intending to enter the migration outflows are estimated for the population of SER (48%) and of NWR (46%). This will worsen the demographic situation in the latter region even further. The relative share of



young migrants in NCR and SCR is around 43%, while in the remaining two regions – NER and SWR, it is 39%.

Persons aged 30-44 years will comprise around 40% of total potential migrants in NCR and SWR. In the other regions these relative shares will range between 33 and 36%, with the exception of NWR – 28%. From the following age group (45-49 years) the largest share of migrants will be registered in NWR and in NER – nearly 25%. In the other regions the relative share of the migrants from this age group will fall within the range 16-19%. For all regions, the share of potential migrants from the highest age group (60-65) will be below 2%.

There are disparities in the educational structure of potential migrants between the different regions. Out of the respondents, who declared intentions to emigrate from SER, currently 37% have higher education. For SWR the value of this indicator is comparatively lower – 28%; the same applies to SCR – 23%. Within the migration flow from NWR the persons with higher education can be anticipated to comprise 8%, while for NCR and NER they comprise 19 and 14%, respectively<sup>20</sup>.

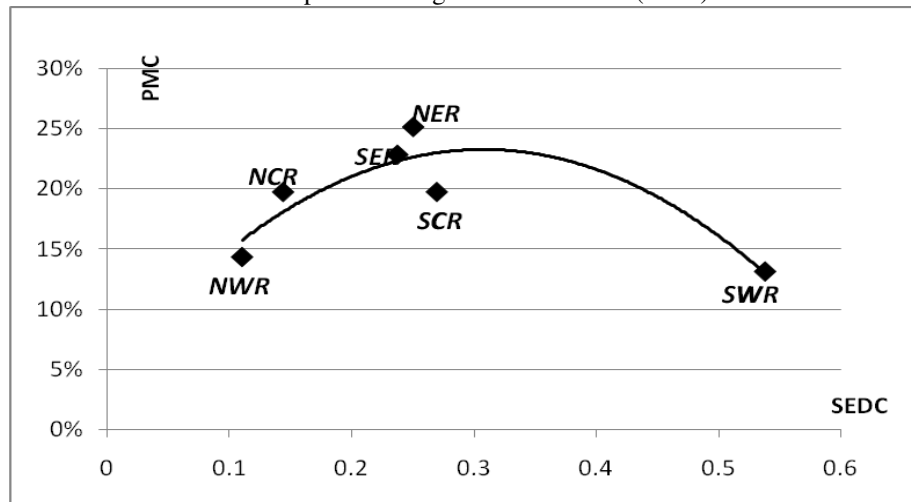
The majority of the country's population within the analysed age interval has secondary education. That is why the share of persons with secondary education is expectedly highest amongst potential migrants. The share of potential migrants with secondary education is highest in NWR, NER and SCR – around 62%. The proportion of persons with secondary education in the migration flow is lower in NCR – 55% and lowest in SER – 47%. The educational structure of potential migrants from respective regions includes also persons having elementary or lower education.

The examination of the values of the integral scores for socio-economic development of the regions and the level of potential migration therein (see Fig. 10) indicates that there is a correlation between the level of development of the region and the emigration intentions – namely, as the Socio-economic Development Coefficient (SEDC) increases the value of the PMC decreases (correlation coefficient: -0.37). This correlation does not apply to the North-western region, where the comparatively low level of socio-economic development is accompanied by a low coefficient of potential migration.

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<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of comparison, we would like to point out that, according to data from the Census of the Bulgarian population from 2011, the relative share of the population aged 15-64 is 24.5%, while of the population with secondary education – 54%.

Figure 10  
Correlation between the level of socio-economic development (SEDC – NUTS 2 regions)  
and the potential migration coefficient (PMC)



Of course, it should be taken into consideration that the migration behaviour of the population is not solely determined by economic factors. There are other circumstances and factors, which are of significance for its formation, such as - marital status, value orientation, inclination towards mobility, individual level of household and housing provision, friendly environment, awareness and adaptability to other living conditions, etc.; all these factors influence the decision to migrate.

### 3.3. Return migrants and remittances from abroad by NUTS 2 regions

The share of return migrants (*persons, who have lived abroad for more than 1 month during the last 5 years*) is highest in the two NUTS 2 regions with medium level of development (ranking 3 and 4) – NER and SER (17.9% and 15%, respectively). As mentioned above, these are the regions with the highest level of potential migration. The situation in SCR (ranking 2) and NCR (ranking 5) is once again analogous, despite the fact that the share of emigrants returning to SCR is nearly 2% higher in comparison to NCR. The lowest relative shares of return migrants (as well as levels of potential migration) are registered by the most underdeveloped and the most highly developed region – NWR and SWR – 11.0% and 9.4% (see Table 7).

Bulgarians returning from abroad can be grouped in accordance with their future intentions – to stay in the country or to emigrate again. Hence, amongst the people with migratory experience we can differentiate between those, who have permanently returned and those, who intend to emigrate again. The latter can be defined as “circular” migrants. In this way, we find that the share of the individuals intending to leave is once again highest in NER and SER, and lowest in NWR.

Table 7

## Return migrants (% of the population) by NUTS 2 regions (2013)

Region	Return migrants	Of them	
		Staying	Leaving again
SWR	9.4	36.7	63.3
SCR	14.0	26.4	73.6
NER	17.9	23.7	76.3
SER	15.0	17.9	82.1
NCR	12.3	30.4	69.6
NWR	11.0	53.2	46.8
Bulgaria	12.8	29.7	70.3

Source: Country representative sociological study, conducted in 2013 amongst the population aged 15-65 by the research team, engaged in the implementation of Bulgarian-Swiss project „Migration and Transnationalism between Switzerland and Bulgaria: assessing social inequalities and regional disparities in the context of changing policies“ /IZEBZO-142979/.

The data from the cited survey allow for assessments of the remittances from abroad, both by NUTS 2 regions and by groups of districts. Of course, these are sample estimations, whose conditionality should also be taken into consideration. The survey data indicates that an ¼ of the remittances are transferred to SCR (ranking 2), while 19% of them are transferred to NER (ranking 3) and SER (ranking 4), i.e. 63% of the remittances from abroad are transferred to these three regions (with medium level of development). NWR ranks next with 17% of the remittances. The most developed region SWR, where the capital city is located, is next, with 12% of the remittances. The lowest share of total remittances is registered in NCR – 8%.

In absolute figures this means that if on average around EUR 690 million enter the country per year, more than 170 million from them are transferred to SCR and a mere EUR 56 million – to NCR.

The assessment based on the data from the survey looks more conservative in comparison with the data from Bulgarian National Bank (BNB), since it is conducted solely on the basis of “Bulgarian citizens returning from abroad” without taking into consideration the possible remittances made by the so-called “current” migrants, i.e. members of the surveyed households, who were abroad at the time when the study was conducted.

The observed differences are primarily the result of the particular remittance behaviour of the residents of the individual regions. Hence, the assessments of the average annual remittances per person (who has lived abroad and is currently in Bulgaria) range from more than EUR 4 thousand in SCR, NWR and SWR to slightly more than EUR 2.5 thousand in NCR.

On the other hand, while on average for the country, the share of the income generated abroad, which is transferred to relatives in Bulgaria, is around 43%, in NWR this share is 54% and in NCR it is a mere 32%.

If not the most important, the utilization of the remittances is, at the very least, the most visible effect of emigration.

Figure 11

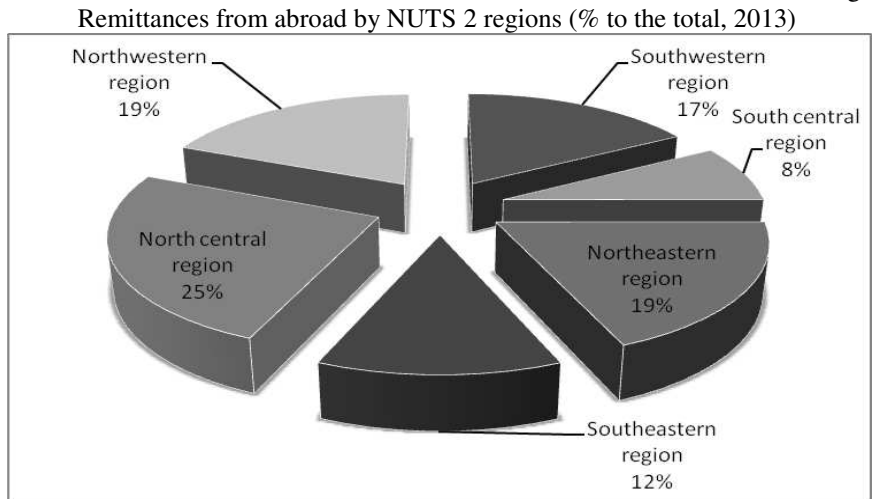
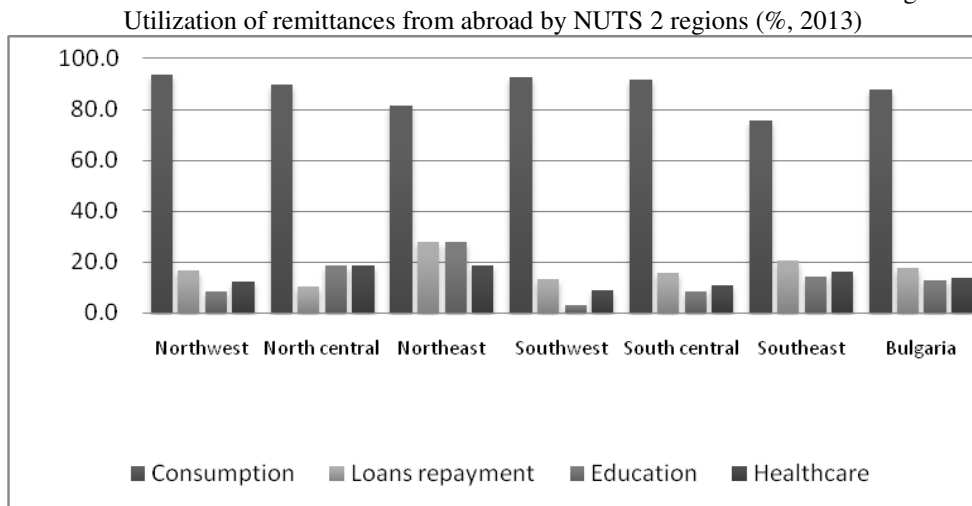


Figure 12



Without going into the popular debate (Rapoport and Docquier, 2005; Iskra Christova-Balkanska, 2010) about the so-called “altruistic” and/or “business” use of the remittances, we find that, in practice, they are not utilized for entrepreneurial initiatives (a mere 6 respondents, out of 361, who have declared receiving remittances, have responded affirmatively to this question).

In the NUTS 2 regions that participate more intensively in the migration processes – NER (ranking 3) and SER (ranking 4), which are characterized by the highest coefficients of potential migration and the largest shares of return migrants, the remittances are, to the smallest extent, utilized for the purposes of consumption (in comparison to the other NUTS

2 regions) – 81.5% and 75.5%, respectively. In the underdeveloped NWR the share of remittances used for consumption reaches 94%.

The remittances are most commonly used to pay loans in NER and SER – 27 and 21% respectively, while they are most seldom used for that purpose in NCR – around 10%, given a 18% country average. The transfers from abroad are frequently used for education and healthcare in NER, but also in NCR. On the other hand, in the most developed region (SWR) slightly less than 3% of them are used for education and 9% - for healthcare, while the average levels for the country are 13-14%.

#### 3.4. Disparities in the socio-economic development of the districts in Bulgaria

Another aspect of the correlation between the potential external migration and the socio-economic development at the regional level can be identified on the basis of the typology of the districts. The difference lies in the fact that the analysed regions and the groups of districts are formed on a different principle. The regions are geographical units formed on an administrative-territorial principle of linking of districts, which neighbour in territory, but have differing levels of development.

Table 8

Ranking and grouping of the districts according to their level of socio-economic development (2011)

Ranking	District	Region	Score
<i>Group I:</i>			
1	Sofia (Capital)	SWR	0.5332
2	Varna	NER	0.6279
3	Stara Zagora	SER	0.6438
4	Plovdiv	SCR	0.6785
<i>Group II:</i>			
5	Vratsa	NWR	0.7467
6	Gabrovo	NCR	0.7593
7	Ruse	NCR	0.7618
8	Sofia	SWR	0.7625
9	Burgas	SER	0.7775
10	Veliko Turnovo	NCR	0.7909
11	Pleven	NWR	0.8014
<i>Group III:</i>			
12	Blagoevgrad	SWR	0.8182
13	Dobrich	NER	0.8398
14	Shumen	NER	0.8419
15	Smolyan	SCR	0.8446
16	Kurdjali	SCR	0.8447
17	Pazardjik	SCR	0.8458
18	Sliven	SER	0.8464
19	Kustendil	SWR	0.8465
20	Yambol	SER	0.8499
21	Turgovishte	NER	0.8519

Ranking	District	Region	Score
22	Haskovo	SCR	0.8578
23	Lovech	NWR	0.8587
24	Pernik	SWR	0.8856
	<i>Group IV:</i>		
25	Razgrad	NCR	0.9026
26	Montana	NWR	0.9092
27	Silistra	NCR	0.9549
28	Vidin	NWR	0.9747
	Bulgaria		0.6543

The typology of the districts into four groups is based on the obtained integral scores of their socio-economic development. In this sense it can be said that the groups of regions (clusters) are more homogeneous, regardless of their location.

The integral scores for socio-economic development of the 28 districts (NUTS 3) and their grouping<sup>21</sup> are presented in Table 8 above.

According to their level of socio-economic development, four groups can be differentiated:

**The first group** includes four districts with scores, higher than the country average. These are the districts with the highest level of socio-economic development in 2011. One district from each of the following four regions falls in this group: SWR, NER, SER and SCR. Sofia (capital) assumes the first place as it concentrates a significant part of the economic potential of the country, including companies, population and labour resources; the score of this district is closest to the territorial unit benchmark and is significantly different from the scores of the other districts.

**The second group** includes seven districts with comparatively high levels of socio-economic development. One district from SWR, two from NWR, three from NCR and one from SER fall within this group.

Two districts from the most underdeveloped region in the country – NWR, fall within this second group. This peculiarity can be explained by the fact that (a) the regions are territorial units of differing sizes and hence with different values of the analysed indicator, which in turn form a different “benchmark”; (b) the more favourable values of the analysed indicators, registered by the leading districts in NWR – Vratsa and Pleven, are neutralized by the extremely unfavourable values of the same indicators of the other districts in this region, such as Vidin and Montana; (c) NPP “Kozloduy” is situated in Vratsa district, which currently neutralizes the poor state of a series of other municipalities in the district (for example, Borovan, Krivodol, Roman, Hayredin).

Burgas district also falls in this group; one of the most dynamically developing municipalities (Burgas) is situated therein as well as a number of Black Sea municipalities,

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<sup>21</sup> Grouping of districts is done using the software product *Arc Gis* by the method of Jenks based on their assessments of the level of socio-economic development. Jenks method makes it possible to form the uneven classes (natural groups) and to examine the proximity (uniformity) of units in groups.

which rely on tourism as a structure-determining sector; however, a few underdeveloped municipalities also fall therein, such as M. Turnovo, Ruen, Sredets.

**The third group** – the group of the districts, which lag behind in their development, is most numerous. 13 of the 28 districts in country fall into this group. The smallest number of districts in this group (only two) is from SWR, while the largest number of districts is from SCR.

**The fourth group** is comprised of districts, whose level of socio-economic development can conditionally be characterized as “critical”. The scores of the districts, which fall into this group, are not only significantly lower than the country average, but are also quite far removed from the scores of the districts from the preceding group. During the last 15-20 years Montana and Vidin (from NWR), Razgrad and Silistra (from NCR) are invariably amongst the territorial units, which are strongly affected by negative processes of depopulation and aging of the population; they are characterized by an inefficient structure of the local economy, few competitive enterprises, low levels of income, high levels of unemployment and poverty.

### *3.5. Potential migration of the population by types of districts*

The intensity of potential migration (measured via the PMC) of the population of the districts, which have high (group I) and comparatively high (group II) scores is approximately equal - around 17% (see Table 9 below). The PMC of these two groups of districts is lower in comparison to the average value of the indicator for the country. It should, however, be taken into consideration that the first group consists of the four most highly developed districts, which have the largest Bulgarian cities as administrative centres. Large district centres as well as large industrial or tourist facilities also falls within the districts from the second group. That is why, on the one hand, the developed production and social structure therein limits the migration intentions, while, on the other hand, and a larger share of the population living in those districts is young and educated and also more mobile. Those factors explain the identified level of potential migration amongst the population of these types of districts.

In the third group, which includes the largest number of districts, identified as lagging behind, the intensity of potential migration is highest. In these districts an average of 22% of the population has potential migration intentions. The population of these districts has a comparatively sound age and educational structure, but apparently the local labour market does not meet the requirements of the labour force.

The districts, which fall within the last group, face serious difficulties in their economic development; the demographic situation therein is very unfavourable. They are characterized by rapid aging of the population, resulting, amongst other factors, from previous internal and external migration processes. The critical economic condition can be expected to act as a push factor. The low value of the potential migration coefficient (14.5%) in these districts reflects their nowadays limited demographic potential.

Table 9

## Intensity of potential migration by groups of districts (2013)

Groups of districts	PMC -%
Group I	17.2
Group II	16.8
Group III	21.5
Group IV	14.5
Bulgaria	18.3

More significant intentions for short-term emigration are registered amongst the surveyed population from the first and third group of districts – above 7%. For the other two groups the value of this indicator is slightly below 5%.

Men predominated in the structure of potential migrants. In the second and third group of districts their relative share is 60%. In the first group the share of men is 56%. In contrast, in the fourth group the share of men is smaller in comparison to that of women – men comprise 49%, while women – 51%.

The persons with higher education comprise large share in the potential migration flow, which is to be recruited from the first group of districts. Their relative share is 29%. In the next two groups of districts the persons with such a level of education comprise around 22%. This proportion is very small amongst migrants from the last group – slightly less than 3%. In the first, third and fourth groups of districts, the potential migrants with secondary level of education range between 60 and 63%. This share is lower amongst the migrants from the second group – 53%. The rest of the potential migrants have elementary or lower education.

### 3.6. Return migrants and remittances by districts

The share of return migrants is highest in the underdeveloped (Group IV) districts and in the districts with a low level of development (Group III); there it amounts to nearly 17% and 15%, respectively, while the country average is 13%. The analysed share is lowest in the group of the districts with medium level of development (Group II, which encompasses districts such as Burgas /SER/, Ruse and Veliko Tarnovo /NCR/, Vratsa /NWR/, where NPP “Kozloduy” is located, etc.). From the standpoint of the categorization “staying” – “leaving again” two “extreme” points can be identified – that of the developed districts (Group I – namely, Sofia – capital /SWR/, Varna /NER/, Stara Zagora /SER/ and Plovdiv /SCR/) and of the underdeveloped districts (Group IV – Vidin and Montana /NWR/ and Silistra and Razgrad /NCR/).



Table 10

Return migrants (% of the population by groups of districts) – 2013.

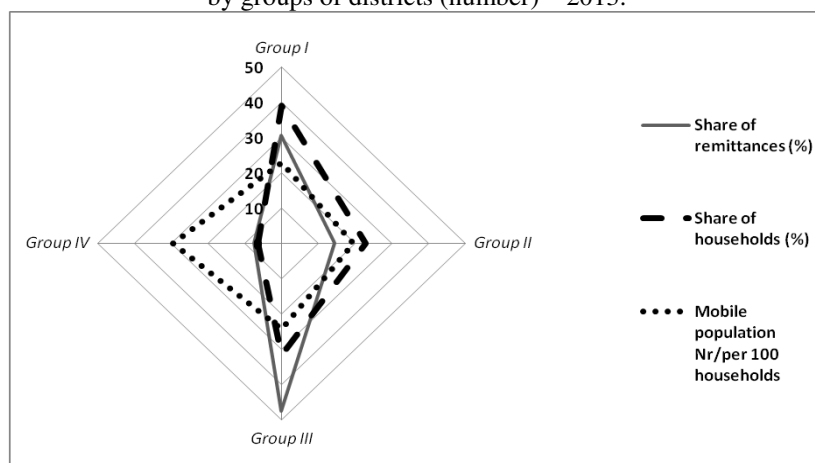
Groups of districts	Return migrants	From them	
		Staying	Leaving again
Group I	12.9	25.0	75.0
Group II	8.3	35.1	64.9
Group III	15.0	28.6	71.4
Group IV	16.9	46.5	53.5
Bulgaria	12.8	29.7	70.3

In the first group, only one in four persons, who have lived abroad, would stay permanently; this percentage is significantly higher in the districts from the fourth group, where nearly half of the respondents (46.5%) would not emigrate again.

The largest share of remittances from abroad are transferred to the districts with lower levels of development (Group III, wherein, as mentioned above, falls the greatest number of districts – 13, amongst which are Blagoevgrad /SWR/, Dobrich /NER/, Shumen /NER/, etc.). The assessments made on the basis of the cited study indicate that nearly 48% of the remittances are transferred to this group of districts (see Fig. 14). Furthermore, in terms of indicators, such as share of households and mobile population per 100 households, these districts fall behind the leading group of districts (in the first case) and behind underdeveloped districts from Group IV (in the second case) (see Fig. 13). It can be estimated that 330 million out of the EUR 690 million, which are being transferred to the country on average per annum, are received by the 13 districts with somewhat low levels of development. Apparently, these transfers compensate for the shortage of resources therein; on the other hand, however, it can be anticipated that the dependence of the population of these districts on incomes from abroad will increase.

Figure 13

Relative share of remittances, households (%) and mobile population per 100 households by groups of districts (number) – 2013.



The dependence on income from abroad seems to be lowest for the group of districts with medium level of development (Group II) – the share of households in these districts reaches 23% of all Bulgarian households, while the share of transfers received from abroad does not exceed 15%. The less mobile population (*persons, who have lived abroad for more than 1 month during the last 5 years*) is typical for this group – 19 mobile persons per 100 households. Regarding the value of this indicator, the situation in the group of underdeveloped districts (Group IV) is contrasting. There nearly 30 persons per 100 households have previous migratory experience.

Despite the conditionality of such assessments, it can be concluded that there are disparities between the individual groups of districts with the regard to the transfer behaviour of their residents. The persons from the underdeveloped districts (Group IV) have sent more than ½ of what they earned abroad to their families and relatives back home, while the residents of the districts with medium level of development (Group II) have send 38%. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the residents of the districts with low level of development (Group III) have sent more than EUR 4.5 thousand (on average, per annum and per person) to their families and relatives, which is considerably more in comparison to the residents of the other districts.

Figure 14

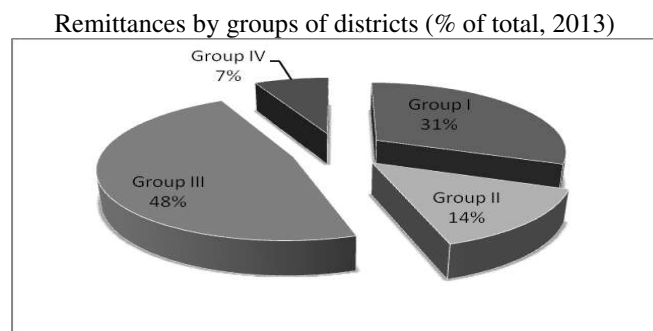
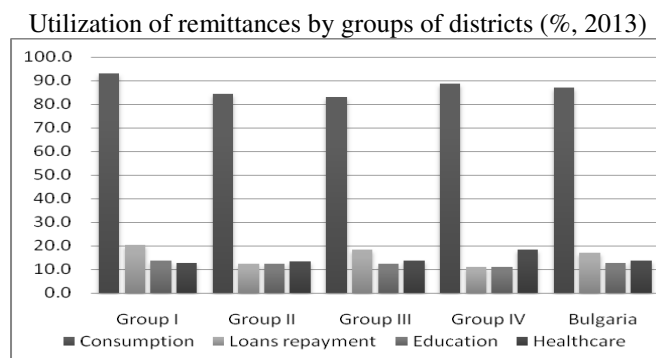


Figure 15



Results are quite diverse concerning the utilization of remittances by groups of districts. The remittances are most commonly used for the purposes of consumption in the developed (Group I) and the underdeveloped (Group IV) districts. Money are frequently used for payment of loans again in the developed districts (20% of the cases) but also in the ones with lower levels of development (Group III, 18%), given a country average of 17%. The share of remittances used for educational purposes is almost the same everywhere in the country districts. In contrast, the utilization of remittances for healthcare purposes occurs significantly more often in the underdeveloped districts (Group IV) than anywhere else (in more than 18% of the cases, given a country average of 13%).

### *Summary*

The analysis of the interdependence between the level of development of the regions (NUTS 2) and districts (NUTS 3), on one hand, and the intensity of potential and actual migration (assessed on the basis of the number of return migrants) – as well as the regional specificity of remittances transferred from abroad – on the other hand, confirms the expectations that the regions with medium and low level of development participate most actively in (and respectively depend to the largest extent on) the migration processes. However, the situation is quite ambiguous. The analysis of these relations at the level of NUTS 2 regions and the districts ranked according to their integral scores (accounting for a wide range of indicators) highlights diverse, sometimes even contradictory, aspects of the phenomenon.

The regions with medium level of development – NER and SER (ranking 3 and 4) are characterized by the highest intensity of potential and actual migration – 25% and 18%, respectively for the first region, and 15% for the second region. On the contrary, the underdeveloped NWR (ranking 6) and the highly developed SWR (ranking 1) register the lowest values of these indicators – 14% and 11% for NWR and 13% and 9.4% for SWR. At the district level the situation is much more diverse. The 13 districts with low level of development (Group III) jointly register the highest potential migration coefficient (21.5%) while the lowest one is estimated for the underdeveloped districts from Group IV (14.5%). The intensity of actual migration is once again highest in these two groups of districts, but the order is reversed as follows: 17% for the fourth group and 15% for the third group.

Furthermore, it can be anticipated that there will be a significant decrease in the young population of NUTS 2 regions SER and NWR (48% and 46% of the potential migrants from these regions are below the age of 29) as well as an outflow of persons with higher education, mainly from SER and from SWR (37% and 28% of those willing to emigrate from these regions have higher education). Similarly, at the district level the outflow (loss) of educated persons can be expected to be most significant in the group of the developed districts (Group I).

The largest share of remittances from abroad are transferred to SCR (ranking 2) followed by NER (ranking 3) and SER (ranking 4) – a total of 63% of the remittances from abroad are transferred to these regions. They are most commonly used for the purposes of consumption, particularly in the NWR (94%) which is characterized by a very low overall

level of development. The analysis of remittances regarding groups of districts indicates that the largest share of transfers enters the 13 districts with relatively low level of development (Group 3, with 48% of all remittances). In the four underdeveloped districts (Group 4) these resources are more frequently used for healthcare purposes than the usual for the country. All of these results suggest a need for a special focus of Bulgarian migration policies at the regional level taking into account the disparities evaluated in this respect.

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