EEJRS

Volume 9 / Issue 1 / June 2023

EASTERN EUROPEAN
Journal of Regional Studies

ISSN: 1857-436X, ISSN: 2537-6179

CSEI Center for Studies in European Integration

ASEM Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova

Eastern European Journal of Regional Studies

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023

With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Academia de Studii Economice a Moldovei

This thematic edition of the journal is elaborated within the framework of the Jean Monnet Chair in EU studies and Migration (EUMIGRA), with the financial support of the Erasmus + program of the European Union, no. ref. 620774-EPP-1-2020-1-MD-EPPJMO-CHAIR 1

Centre for European Integration Studies
Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova

Eastern European Journal of Regional Studies

Eastern European Journal of Regional Studies (EEJRS) is dedicated to foster an effective interaction between innovation, education and research in the Eastern European Neighbourhood countries in order to better understand its transformations induced by the European integration process.
***EEJRS** is **double-blind peer-reviewed scientific journal**, published twice a year (June and December)*

Publisher:

Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova (AESM), Center for Studies in European Integration
str. Banulescu - Bodoni 59, Building B, office 707, MD-2005 Chisinau, Moldova

Website: https://csei.ase.md/journal/

UDC Indexing and bibliographic editing: Silvia HABAŞESCU, Ala IAROVAIA, Svetlana STUDZINSCHI
Indexing of the journal in international databases: Ana GUDIMA, ASEM Scientific Library

ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies

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https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.01

HARNESSING ON THE POTENTIAL OF MIGRANTS IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract: *Migration is an important component of the development of the Republic of Moldova at the current stage. The economic and social instability that followed after obtaining political independence in 1991, the inefficiency of reforms in several socio-economic fields, the institutional uncertainty led the population to migrate, this being a strategy to adapt it to the created conjuncture situation. The increase in intensity migration was also influenced by the processes of liberalization of entry and exit procedures from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Currently, our country represents one of the countries in the world with the largest shares of the migrant working population, as well as the share of remittances in GDP, the effects of migration being felt in all areas of social-economic life in the country. Concern for the support of migrants over time has materialized through the creation of governmental structures with the aim of monitoring and launching various strategies, programs, projects addressed to citizens outside the country's borders. Ensuring the reintegration of returned migrants, after a migratory experience of work or life abroad, is of great importance both for citizens and for the state authorities that have the duty to support emigrant citizens regardless of their options to return or settle in the adoptive country. Through this scientific approach, the authors propose to analyze the effectiveness of the tools used by the institutional, banking and social systems in harnessing on the potential of migrants, as well as the extent to which they are known, meet the expectations of citizens in the process of return and reintegration, their accessibility, transparency and efficiency. A sustainable socio-economic development of the Republic of Moldova, in the context of clear aspirations for European integration, will create opportunities for citizens wishing to return, work and live in the country.*

Keywords: *return migration, development potential of migrants, integration of migrants, PARE 1+1, PARE 1+2, migrant entrepreneurs.*

UDC: *314.743:338(478)*

JEL Code*: J01, J61*

Introduction

Migration from the Republic of Moldova acquired a mass character after the declaration of state independence, being mainly caused by the deep socio-economic crisis,

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Received: 12.05.2023 Accepted: 17.06.2023

which led to the impoverishment of the population of a considerable part of the country's population, against the background of the Transnistrian conflict and the separation of 11,8% from the territory of the country, a self-proclaimed region that still does not have a determined status. The migration vector oscillated, until recently, in two distinct directions: east and west. In the last 7-10 years, Moldovan emigrants have mainly oriented towards the states of the European Union. The current situation caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the war in Ukraine, has determined essential transformations of the migration flow, both in terms of structure and geographical orientation. The pandemic crisis has restricted economic activities in several host states of our emigrants, and some of them have temporarily or permanently returned to the country. A considerable part of emigrants returned from the CIS area and reoriented to the EU states that offer more opportunities in obtaining a job and a safer and more prosperous life.

In the last 10 years, at various levels, it is being discussed, more and more frequently, about the intensification of the valorization of the potential of migrant citizens, which could be an important factor in the socio-economic relaunch of the Republic of Moldova.

Even though the official statistics attest to a number of 676 355 people (2021) migrated, of which 47% are men and 53% women, according to the state border crossing data, of which 48% are for a period of up to 1 year, and 52% from a year and more (PMERM, 2022, p. 22), the real number is much higher. The Public Services Agency certifies a number of 113 705 Moldovan citizens who permanently left the country's borders on 01.01.2023, and the number of those holding the citizenship of the EU states is 14 434, and the citizenship of the CIS states 15 972 (ASP, 2022). According to international statistics, the estimated number of emigrants from the Republic of Moldova is 1 159 400 (UN, 2020). The number of children born by Moldovan emigrants abroad is of interest for the prospective development of the country. Thus, in the last 10 years (2013-2022), 107 623 children of citizens of the Republic of Moldova were born abroad and were registered in the state registers (ASP, 2022). This could be an important potential in the development of the country in a future perspective.

Currently, there is a slight increase in return migration, caused by the loss of opportunities for our emigrants in certain European states, the return of retired migrants from EU states, re-emigration being adjusted and some more transparent programs and policies regarding those who wish to return (Hachi, Morozan & Popa, 2021). This may increase in intensity as the political and economic situation in the country and in the region stabilizes. The transformation of migrants' capital into a development factor can take on a larger scale in the conditions in which the authorities of the Republic of Moldova will create important premises for the return and social and economic reintegration of migrants.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the existing opportunities for exploiting the potential of migrants, in the context of the sustainable socio-economic development of the Republic of Moldova. As specific objectives, we proposed:

- to identify of existing opportunities for the development of migrants in the country of origin;

- to analyze of the instruments used by different state structures in order to harness on their potential and efficiency (programs, activities, actions, products);
- to analyze of the opinion of emigrant citizens, based on the sociological study, regarding the intention to return and work with state and non-governmental structures, their willingness to harness on their potential in the country;
- to assess the degree of access of migrants to information regarding the possibilities of return and development in the country of origin, regardless of the intention to return or stay in the adoptive country;
- to study of the good practices existing in the states of the world for maintaining the link with the country of origin and capitalizing on the potential of migrants.

Even if the Republic of Moldova is one of the emigration states that actively promoted the idea of developing policies and mechanisms for an integrated approach to migration, the knowledge and harnessing of them by migrants leaves much to be desired. At the same time, the increase in emigration from the Republic of Moldova occurred against the background of changes in the economic and political situation: the increase in the demand for labor in European countries, the simplification of the movement procedure in the international space, Moldovans having the opportunity to move freely, without visas, in 73 states of the world, and in 46 they can obtain a visa on entry, occupying, in this sense, the 36th place among the states of the world according to the Global Passport Power Rank 2023 (PI, 2023); the continuation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict that amplifies the state of political and economic uncertainty in the region. To these causes are added those of an internal order, such as: the high degree of misinformation and informational manipulation, identity uncertainty, the sharing of political preferences among the population, etc.

1. Data and methodology

In carrying out the given study, several research methods were used: comparative, deductive, analytical, investigation, quantitative and qualitative. The comparative method was used in order to deduce the tools used by different states of the world in terms of harnessing on the potential of migrants, either through their remittances, or other forms of benefits resulting from work, the experience of migrants, as well as the ways of involving them in socio-economic activity in their country of origin. The quantitative and qualitative method was implemented by harnessing on the sociological questionnaire that was applied, both face-to-face with migrants from two European capitals[3], later being launched on Facebook and Odnoclassniki[4] social networks, as well as by the „snowball" method person to person on Facebook Messenger, Viber as well as WhatsApp. The questionnaire was addressed to people who have migrated from the Republic of Moldova who have an

[3] During period 01-07 July 2022 the study of diaspora associations and migrants in Rome (Italy) and Paris (France) was carried out

[4] Popular social networking site in the Russian Federation and the former Soviet republic

experience of at least half a year abroad and includes 30 questions. The purpose of the „Migration-development-return" questionnaire was to collect relevant quantitative and qualitative data on migrants, data that cannot be extracted from official statistics and that can contribute to a better understanding of the following analytical elements:

- deduction of the degree of integration of migrants in the host society;
- analysis of the types of ties with the country of origin and the migrants' perception of the situation at home;
- analysis of the intention to return to the country and the reasons underlying the decision to return;
- identifying the intention to harnessing on experience and savings in entrepreneurial or other activities etc.

The sociological survey was carried out on a sample of 193 people participated, of which: 28% men, 72% women; 37,9% - respondents aged between 18-35 years, 58% - aged between 36 and 55 years; 47,7% of the total number having an experience of more than 11 stays abroad, 18,1% - 5-10 years and 28% - 1-5 years. About 1/3 of the respondents have the citizenship of the state in which they are located, the answers being received from 11 states. The questionnaire was approved by IData, a service company specialized in the collection and processing of data from research planning, the development of research tools.[5]

2. Results and discussion

The high intensity of the migration phenomenon, the maturing of migration, the recognition of the socio-economic impact of migration on the development of the country, led the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to adhere to the recommendations of international organizations and to ensure an active institutional and normative-legislative framework that would support migrants, regardless of their options in choosing the country to work or live. Currently, the Republic of Moldova is among the states that have a developed institutional framework, and the large number of programs launched are aimed at harnessing on the potential of migrants in the context of human sustainability. Most of them were developed in accordance with international standards and the Community acquis, keeping account of the context of the European integration aspirations of the state.

The country's banking system played an important role in supporting migrants. It has offered and exploited, over time, a series of instruments designed to attract the financial resources earned by migrant workers to the country of origin and, in this way, to motivate them to invest in the socio-economic development of the country. This link, through the work of migrants, is an important means of stimulating our citizens to return home or to maintain contact with the country and to develop different niches of domestic business.

[5] *IData, Date Inteligente SRL https://idata.md/*

The banking system in the Republic of Moldova has tried over time to attract the financial resources of migrants by offering a secure support as a depository for the money earned by migrants working abroad, by granting some facilities, by offering preferential loans for the development businesses, the procurement of real estate, the support being directed to migrant workers or their first-degree relatives, supporting several programs launched by government authorities.

An analysis of the banking system attests to the involvement of both the National Bank of the Republic of Moldova, the basic financial authority in the country, and commercial banks. Among the 11 functional banks of the banking system of the Republic of Moldova, only 5 have created products or supported actions, activities of migrants in one form or another.

Remittances represent an important source of development for the Republic of Moldova. They have the strongest and most visible impact on development, with several authors considering remittances as the main factor in economic development in the last 20 years (Hachi, Vaculovschi, Crudu, & Popa, 2022). Thus, the opportunities created by remittances for development are not only for migrants and their families, but have an impact on society as a whole and not only on the balance of payments, foreign trade, the investment climate, the labor market, but also on society as a whole starting from the multiple effects it carries. In fact, remittances and the elective potential of migrants are most actively exploited by the state authorities, as mentioned in their works by (Hachi & Morozan, 2022), (Guțoiu, 2014), (Thad, 1988), the other sides of the potential of migrants being poorly exploited.

Of the 11 commercial joint-stock banks existing on 01.01.2023, only 6 have over time launched products and services for migrants and/or supported certain activities (table 1).

Table 1. Development opportunities for migrants from the banking system of the Republic of Moldova

Commercial banks in the Republic of Moldova	Banking offers for migrants
1.B.C.„Moldova Agroindbank” S.A.	- mortgage loan for migrants; - savings deposit (with accumulation); - co-partner of the program for attracting remittances in the economy "PARE 1+1" - co-partner of Diaspora Day
2. B.C. „Moldindconbank” S.A.	- the FOLCLOR warehouse intended for migrants - senders and recipients of remittances - co-partners of the state programs "Prima casa" and "Livada Moldovei"
3. B.C. „VICTORIABANK” S.A.	- preferential bank card for students from the Republic of Moldova studying in Romania
4. OTP Bank S.A.	Mortgage loans for migrant/temporarily suspended citizens
5. B.C. „COMERȚBANK” SA	https://comertbank.md/services/migrants/
7. B.C. „ENERGBANK” S.A.	Credit Diaspora

Source: *adapted from official websites of commercial banks and telephone interviews (CB), https://comertbank.md/, (E), https://www.energbank.com/ro, (MAIB), https://www.maib.md/, (MICB), https://www.micb.md/, (VB24), https://www.victoriabank.md/ (OTPB), https://www.mobiasbanca.md/*

The other commercial banks currently do not have products and services, but they have shown interest in developing them in order to meet the needs of migrants[6]. Some commercial banks have suspended programs for migrants during the current war in Ukraine (OTPB).

Part of the savings made by migrants are kept at home, the degree of mistrust in the banking system being one of the causes, bank offers are unattractive, deposits in foreign currency, and records in lei, contributing to the "loss" of money depending on the fluctuations in exchange rates, difficulties in closing the account, difficulties in withdrawing savings from the account, low rates for depositing money, but also the information channels directed at migrants are insufficient[7].

The preconditions for the elaboration of the legal normative framework regarding migration were also adjusted by the accession/ratification by the Republic of Moldova of the international and regional legal instruments regarding migration, but also the clear aspirations of the Republic of Moldova to join the European Union, by external conditions: the liberalization of the visa regime from 20.08.2014, the signing of the Association Agreement, and more recently the granting of the status of a candidate country for European integration. Among the basic legal instruments designed to manage the migration process in the country, there are:

- The National Program to stimulate the return and (re)integration of citizens of the Republic of Moldova involved in the migration process for the years 2022-2026/Concept;
- The national strategy in the field of migration and asylum for the period 2011-2020, GD 655 of 08.09.2011;
- The national strategy „Diaspora-2025” and the Action Plan for the years 2016-2018 regarding its implementation, GD no. 200 from 26.02.2016;
- Conception of the migration policy of the Republic of Moldova, approved by Parliament Decision no. 1386-XV of 11.10.2002;
- Law on migration no. 1518-XV of 06.12.2002;
- Law on labor migration no. 180-XVI of 10.07.2008 (in force from 01.01.09);
- Law on employment and social protection of jobseekers no. 102-XV of 13.03.2003
- The National Action Plan for 2011-2015/2016-2018 regarding the implementation of the National Strategy in the field of migration and asylum, GD no. 1009 of 26.12.2011; Action plan (2017-2020) regarding the (re)integration of citizens of the Republic of Moldova returned from abroad, etc. (HG, 2017).

The institutional framework capable of effectively monitoring and managing the migration process was created, the managerial functions of migration were shared.

Thus, by the Government's provision no. 58-d of 07.06.2013 and with subsequent additions, the last one dating from 09.02.2022 HG no. 67 the Commission for the

[6] *The given conclusion was identified from the responses received to our request to the commercial banks*
[7] *The sociological survey "Migration-development-return"*

coordination of activities in the field of migration and asylum, the responsibilities and the action plan were approved.

Among the basic objectives of these migration monitoring and management tools are:

- ensuring the security of migrant workers;
- discouraging the brain drain and encouraging the return of migrants to the country by launching several programs and activities aimed at supporting those wishing to return to reintegrate into the society from which they left;
- strengthening the diaspora of the Republic of Moldova, by launching some programs, to expand the networks of associations and create thematic connection points;
- the active involvement of the diaspora in migration policies, the strengthening of ties with the diaspora, the transfer of „social remittances";
- improving the right to acquire and the portability of the right to pension;
- encouraging circular and return migration, etc.

In order to achieve these goals of the migration policy in the Republic of Moldova, practically all public institutions and decision-makers are involved, so that the policy is coherent, participatory and oriented towards the sustainable development of the country.

It is important to emphasize that productive investments must be directed to sectors and projects that bring lasting and sustainable benefits to the economy and society of the country of origin. A strategic approach and effective governance are essential to ensure the efficient and responsible use of accumulated savings and remittances in support of sustainable development (King, 1986), (Wahba, 2014).

If in the period of 1991-2010 characterized by the lack of a clear vision regarding migration management, starting from 2011 and until now we can speak of a complex and integrated approach to migration processes, an intensification of external activity through the ratification of several bilateral agreements or multilateral regarding migration, as well as the implementation of national and international legal instruments.

Thus, the main mission of the institutions with the right to monitor and effectively manage migration can be related to the implementation of the existing legal card and the launch of a series of programs, projects, actions, events, all with the general purpose of supporting migrants and offering opportunities to harness on potential accumulated over time, for their benefit, but also for the country as a whole.

Among the main programs, projects, events launched by state institutions are: Diaspora Engagement Hub, Diaspora*Origini*Reveniri/DOR, Diaspora Congress, Diaspora Home Succeeds (Dar 1+3) (Diaspora Relations Office); The „Pare 1+2" economic aid attraction program (Organization for the Development of Entrepreneurship); „Consolidation of Moldova's labor market management and migrant return capacities (National Employment Agency); „Startup for young people and migrants" (Chisinau municipality), etc.

A constant and active concern for migration and emigrants also exists on the part of several representatives of international organizations in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, among the most dynamic programs addressed to migrants are: „Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration" (IOM Moldova), „Migration and Local Development" Project, „Integration of

Migration into Local Development, Alliance of Native Associations (PNUD Moldova), „Consolidation of Capacities of migration management in the Republic of Moldova", etc.

Even if the state authorities are actively involved in the management of migration, the infrastructure for monitoring and integrated management of migration is developed, we proposed to analyze the extent to which these actions, programs, manifestations addressed to migrants are known by it, as well as testing the intention to return to country and/or involvement in the socio-economic development of the Republic of Moldova. In this sense, the tools of the sociological survey „Migration-development-return" were used to correlate the expectations of migrants with the programs, projects, actions and activities carried out by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova, but also to evaluate the impediments to return in a perspective future and the constraints/challenges that could appear in this process. There are several determining factors that contribute to the individual's decision to return to the country of origin after a period spent abroad, depending on the individual context and circumstances (Wahba, 2014).

Thus, to the questions of the questionnaire from which the degree of integration in the adoption societies could be deduced, we can deduce the following: 29% of the respondents indicated holding the citizenship of the state in which they live with the rights and obligations arising from this status; about 1/3 of the respondents are abroad with their family, the majority ruling out returning to the country. Also, the fact that a relatively large number of Moldovan emigrants have legalized and work in a specialty 37.8%, and about 10% own their own business, study here, is also an indication of the reduced hope of returning to the country of origin (figure 1).

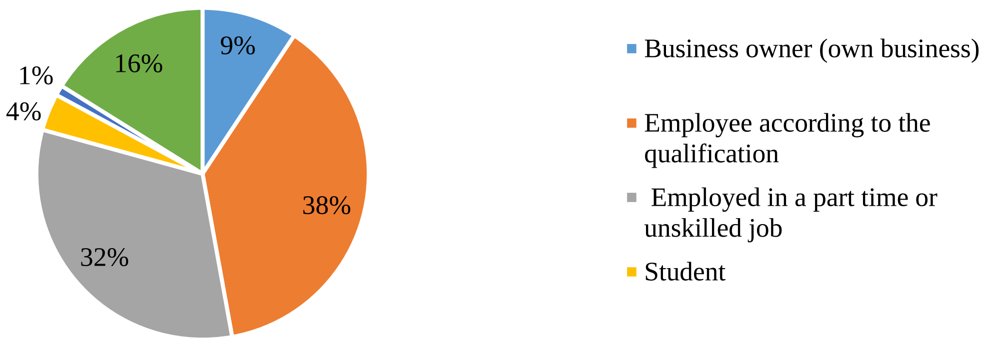

Figure 1. Which of the following best describes your current situation abroad?
Source: *based on data from the sociological survey „Migration-development-return"*

Other answers given by respondents attesting to the high degree of integration or connection with the society in which they are: 28% indicated the presence of a private home, and 13.5% own a rental home. This aspect also sends messages with reference to the intention to stay in the country of adoption. Several EU states have support programs for young families, including for immigrants, favorable credit conditions (a fact mentioned by many respondents), this finding is -could lead to the "hunting of talents" and/or young and promising human potential for the given societies, in the context of the demographic problems they have. 45% of the people surveyed indicated the connection with the banking

Received: 12.05.2023 Accepted: 17.06.2023

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.01

system in the countries of adoption and, accordingly, the achievement of personal and/or business goals, which can also be considered an indication of loyalty and naturalization of foreigners. 85% of our citizens consider themselves integrated or partially in the new society, a good indicator for adopting countries and their active policies of naturalization and integration of migrants (figure 2).

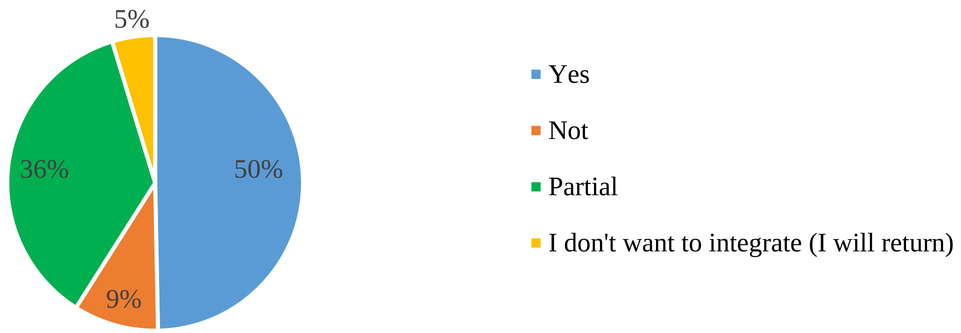

Figure 2. Do you consider yourself integrated in the society you are in?
Source: *based on data from the sociological survey „Migration-development-return"*

A second set of questions aimed to identify the return intention of our citizens in migration. The decision to return can be inferred from the answers given by the survey respondents. Thus, 72% of them have fond memories and thoughts about their native country, 64% would like or could return to the country in the future, but the number of those who have made plans to return in the short term is small, 43% do not exclude this possibility in the future, 1/3 giving a categorical answer "no"; about 80% of them intend to participate in the future elections that will be organized in the country, etc. (figure 3).

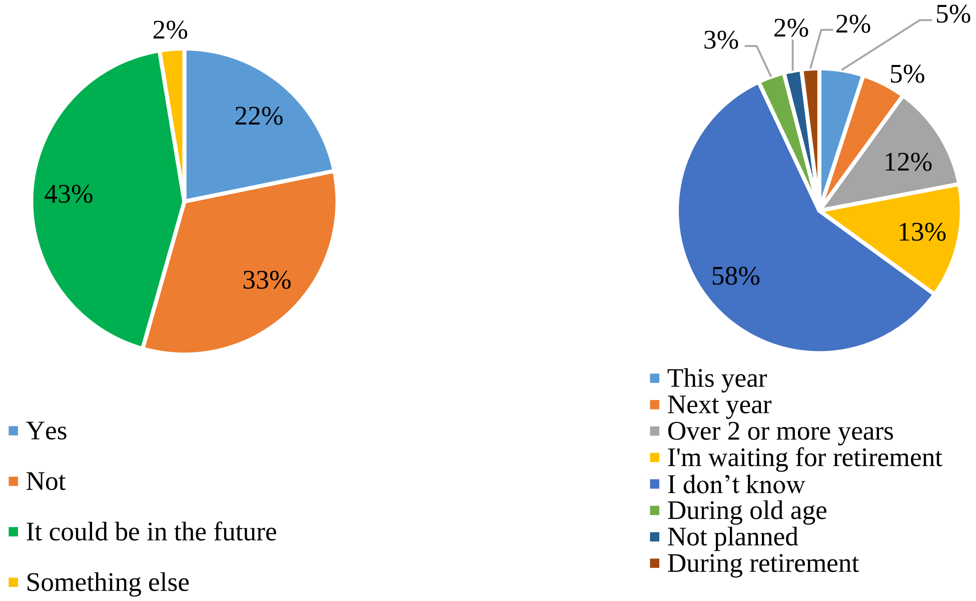

Figure 3. Do you want to return home and when?
Source: *based on data from the sociological survey "Migration-development-return"*

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Unfortunately, the connection between migrants and their country of origin is more informal, individual, they appreciate the dispersed nature of the association of migrants abroad and the low efficiency of their activity, as well as the insufficient knowledge of the programs launched for the Moldovan diaspora. This fact is confirmed by the answers to the questionnaire questions with reference to knowledge of the programs launched by the state authorities (fig. 4).

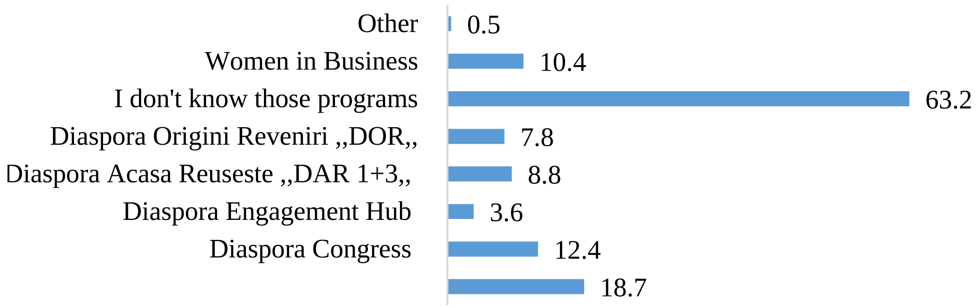

Figure 4. Which of the programs launched by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova are you familiar with?
Source*: sociological survey „Migration-development-return”*

Although the country's authorities are making great efforts to attract this human potential that has left the country, both through the normative-legislative framework and through a series of projects, programs, activities, actions aimed at attracting migrants into the country's socio-economic life, the mechanism for achieving a more effective beneficial contact must be rethought, both for migrants and for the country as a whole. These programs must be expanded, actively promoted, including by changing the general attitude towards this category of citizens, part of the country's human capital, the interest in them should not be limited only to remittances, but to active integration into the country's human capital. The applied strategies and documents aimed at migrants must be adjusted with concrete action plans, with the active involvement of the public at all levels of government. The duty of the authorities of the Republic of Moldova is to support the citizens of the country regardless of their current status or perspective and their intention to remain in the host countries or return to the country.

In several states of the world there are practices to support returned migrants, including financial, social, integration support, etc. These practices differ from one country to another, in accordance with the interests of the states and include various programs, policies, action plans, etc. and can serve as good practices for our country as well.

Thus, the Philippine state offers returned migrants financial and logistical support to find a job, develop their entrepreneurial skills, and rehabilitate and reintegrate into social life. According to official data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, the number of migrants returning to the Philippines has increased significantly in recent years. In 2018, more than 4% migrants were recorded as returning to the Philippines (ADALFS, 2018). In addition, according to a study by the World Bank, returning migrants to the

Philippines have a positive impact on the national economy through investment and increased consumption. The study found that, on average, return migrants to the Philippines invest about 15 percent of their income in various sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, industry and services. According to the study "Returning Home After Typhoon Haiyan: A Rapid Assessment of the Reintegration of Returning Migrants in the Philippines" conducted by the World Bank, the return of migrants to the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 had a positive impact on the national economy. Returned migrants brought with them new skills and knowledge acquired abroad, invested in local businesses and created new jobs (WBG, 2013). Returned migrants can contribute significantly to the economic development and reconstruction of the country if they benefit from reintegration programs and government policies that encourage investment and entrepreneurship.

A considered successful example of return migration in Africa is Morocco. The Moroccan government has launched several programs and policies to encourage Moroccans working abroad to return and invest in their country. The authorities support migrants who return to Morocco with the aim of resuming economic activity, by offering loans and financial services under privileged conditions, also granting social and psychological assistance, thus helping them to reintegrate in the country. According to the report of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Government of Morocco, entitled "Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration in Morocco", during the period 2005-2021, the number of return migration in Morocco increased from 295 to approximately 3798 people (IOM, 2021, p. 5).

According to the author (Dustmann, 1996), practices from European history can be learned to encourage the return of migrants to their country of origin, and temporary immigration schemes can be useful to stimulate East-West economic relations.

Effective programs for return migration also exist in European states. Thus, France has developed some programs and policies to facilitate return migration and to help migrants reintegrate into French society and economy. These policies include vocational training programs, easy access to housing, business assistance and financial support for small and medium-sized businesses. In France, figures on return migration are limited, but there are some studies that suggest the phenomenon has increased in recent years. In 2019, another study by the French Institute for International Affairs found that return migration represented about 7% of all immigrants in France and that they are usually of a higher skill level than incoming immigrants in France (IFAI, 2019).

Germany offers programs for migrants returning home, including support for business development and reintegration into the local labor market. The German government also provides assistance in obtaining funding and developing research projects.

In addition, Switzerland has a "Comeback Program", aimed at Swiss people living abroad who wish to return home. The program provides support for job search, training and reintegration into Swiss society. Bulgaria, helps migrants reintegrate into Bulgarian society and develop their own businesses or find a job in the country. Bulgaria has seen a significant increase in the number of migrants returning to the country in recent years.

According to the data of the National Institute of Statistics of Bulgaria, the number of migrants who returned to Bulgaria increased from about 3,500 in 2015 to more than 7,000 people in 2019 (INSB, 2016).

The Czech Republic also has a number of programs and policies to support migrants returning to the country. The results of the Czech Republic's programs and policies for return migration are positive. In recent years, the number of migrants returning to the Czech Republic has increased significantly (MIRC, 2019). This increase is considered a success of policies to support migrants returning home and to stimulate the socio-economic development of this country.

China represents another example of good practices in the relationship with the diaspora, by encouraging investments from them and which have been essential in the country's economic emergence in recent decades. Chinese investors from the diaspora brought with them not only capital, but also knowledge and advanced technology, which contributed to the country's economic growth. They have promoted innovation and technology transfer by investing in high-tech industries such as IT and the renewable energy sector. The number of Chinese migrants returning to the country has increased significantly (MPI, 2020). This growth has been fueled by policies and programs that support migrants to return home and find a job or start a business in China. One of China's main return migration policies is the "1000 Talents" program, which aims to attract scientists and engineers back home to contribute to the country's development. The program provides funding, research facilities and other benefits for those returning to China.

These examples of good practices can serve as a benchmark for the Republic of Moldova to support migrants who want to return to the country. By providing financial and logistical support, along with training and education services, returning migrants can have a better chance of finding jobs and developing their businesses, contributing to the economic and social development of their country of origin.

Conclusions

Undoubtedly, people from the Republic of Moldova, temporarily or permanently emigrated, represent an important human capital that should be actively harnessing both for the benefit of the migrants and for the benefit of the country. Migrants have a significant potential: financial, relational, demographic, worthy of consideration by the authorities of different ranks in the country, in order to stimulate and make it more efficient and which would give a new impetus to the socio-economic development of the country.

The current programs/projects to support migrants are welcome, but they only partially cover their expectations, from the desire to harness on the experience, savings, relationships, knowledge they have gained abroad and are little known. The banking system, for example, does not harness on this important potential even in the short, medium or long term. It is necessary to involve the banking system more actively in support of migrants and their intention to harness the money earned in the country's economy, ensuring them a high degree of transparency and security of the financial means attracted.

There is a need to ensure a safer information system for migrants, as well as to provide assistance in terms of applying to programs, projects, private initiatives. In this sense, the connection with migrants through diaspora associations through formal informational sources, as well as informal ones, is welcome.

There is a need to expand and create a new system/mechanism to stimulate returns and sustainable (re)integration. This mechanism must be discussed with the diaspora through a permanent and constructive dialogue. The transformation of migrants' capital into a development factor can gain momentum under the conditions in which the authorities of the Republic of Moldova will create important premises for the return and social and economic reintegration of migrants.

Harnessing on the potential of migrants can be a valuable resource for the socio-economic development of the Republic of Moldova. By creating an adequate legal framework, active government structures, by conducting a constructive dialogue with the diaspora, return migration would be encouraged. Good practices are an example of this.

Acknowledgement

This article was elaborated within the project Jean Monnet Chair in EU Studies and Migration, implemented with support of the ERASMUS+ programme of the European Union (ref. nr. 620774-EPP-1- 2020-1-MD-EPPJMO-CHAIR). The support granted by the European Commission for the elaboration of this publication is not a content approval, which only reflects the opinions of the authors, and the Commission can not be held accountable for any use of the information contained in this.

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Received: 12.05.2023 Accepted: 17.06.2023

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.02

WICKED PROBLEMS AND THE DESIGN THINKING METHOD AS A TOOL TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS. THE CASE ALIEN PROJECT

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Abstract: *Today's global challenges are characterized by increasing complexity. This makes it possible to call these challenges so-called wicked problems, which are difficult to define clearly, have no single solution and require the involvement of multiple stakeholders for its purpose. Such complication can include a group of contemporary migration and refugee problems, which include dilemma of adaptation and integration of immigrants, or social conflicts between locals and newcomers, etc. The Design Thinking (DT) method, which is recipient- and user-oriented solution, can be used to try to solve these issues. Importantly, the beneficiaries themselves can also be involved. The purpose of this study is to present the essence of wicked problems, as well as the DT method as a tool for solving contemporary problems, including migration and refugees. The study fills the research gap on presenting a proposal for a tool in the form of the Design Thinking method for solving contemporary wicked problems, including in the setting of migrants and refugees, using the results of the ALIEN project as an example. A synthetic review of the literature on wicked problems was also conducted. The study used a qualitative method in the form of logical inference, as well as a review of the literature on the subject, studies, and reports. By addressing this issue, the authors intended to expand the existing body of global analysis in this area. As demonstrated in this paper, the DT method has been successfully used to solve wicked problems among migrants and refugees in Norway as well as Ethiopia, Senegal, USA, Colombia, Australia, France, Germany, Greece, Jordan and Iraq. International research teams, including the ALIEN project team, are seeking effective solutions to wicked problems accompanying migration and refugee processes. This empirical study discusses the application of this method to solving wicked problems surrounding migrants and refugees, especially their solution proposals developed within the ERASMUS+ ALIEN Strategic Partnerships project. The authors believe that they could be successfully used today on a large scale.*

Keywords: *wicked problems, migration, refugee, Design Thinking, UNHCR*

UDC: *[314.74:341.43]:327.58*

JEL Code: *F22, J61, F53, I23, O31*

Introduction

A peculiarity of recent decades has been the emergence of new types of problems that are characterized by, among other things, a high degree of complication, difficulty in solving them, or limitations in the objective evaluation of the solutions adopted. In reference to these problems, H. W. J. Rittel and M. M. Webber used the term wicked

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Received: 01.05.2023 Accepted: 09.06.2023

problems (Rittel&Webber, 1973), understood as “vicious circle” problems, as opposed to tame problems, ie, ones that are easy and simply solvable. They can occur locally, nationally, but also globally and relate especially to climate, environmental, economic and social issues like public health, income inequality, local underdevelopment etc., as well as those related to adaptation and integration of immigrants and refugees.

The priority challenge regarding wicked problems is to formulate them. It is important to recognize especially their causes. However, even at this stage, the difference in positions and perspectives with which the international community defines the same dispute becomes apparent. The different positions and perspectives are a consequence of differences in culture-history, economics, lobbying and attitudes toward social innovation (Chrisidu-Budnik, 2017). The causality of these dilemma is clearly non-linear. There are a lot of reasons between which there is their unpredictable interaction and dynamics (Zybała, 2013). Therefore, a precise and unambiguous identification of a wicked problem is very difficult. This is because each has a unique nature.

Similarly, there is no single, specific way to solve a malicious issue . Sometimes their solution can even cause undesirable repercussions. This is because the solution to each wicked problem creates new conditions that determine situations and decisions later on. In addition, there is no way to verify the developed solution to the problem, and its implementation causes unpredictable and multiple economic, social, and political consequences. Each wicked problem can therefore be a symptom of another, even more serious complication . In view of the above-mentioned features, the expected outcome of efforts to solve these disputes is never certain but is also irreversible and causes consequences.

There is also difficulty in determining the point at which a wicked problem can be considered definitively solved. As a result, the solution to a wicked problem is usually one-sided, not reflecting all of its complexity. Sometimes there are also multiple solutions or even no solution to a given difficulty. This is because each such issue is embedded in a specific context, for the solution of which different tangible and intangible resources are needed, and its eventual solution is not unequivocally satisfactory to all actors. Their solution creates a discrepancy between the actual state and the desired state. The actors involved in the process of anticipating the desired state may take different perspectives. The discrepancy between the actual state and the desired state becomes particularly apparent when a particular wicked problem is global in nature. Then, the mechanisms for developing and agreeing on common positions, cooperation and international coordination between actors become decisive. Therefore, an effective means of solving contemporary wicked problems, including migration and refugee challenges with the involvement of various actors such as migrants, students, members of organizations, local governments, etc. seems to be the Design Thinking method (Buchanan, 1992).

1. Literature review on wicked problems

Ritchey (2013) notes that some complex economic, social, and organizational problems cannot be effectively explained and solved by traditional analytical, or linear, approaches. At the same time, in the conclusion of his argument, he stresses that wicked problems can carry consequences for those who undertake to solve them without exploring the true origin of these problems.

Jordan and Kleinsasser (2014) encourage the dissemination of this issue across the educational spectrum. The authors base their discussion on previous studies of wicked problems that have been conducted in literacy learning. They explain the significance of malingering issues and present the response to them by educators, teacher educators, parents and policy makers. They conclude with precisely defined recommendations for dealing with their effects. Among the solutions, they envision intensifying discussions with stakeholders and promoting continuous observation .

On the other hand, Guy Peters (2017)studies the terminology of the concept of wicked problems and concludes that only a few of them meet the definition of wicked. Based on this analysis, a research program has been implemented to answer the extent to which problems that are considered wicked problems represent real difficulties in solving them.

According to Alford and Head (2017), wicked problems tend to add up, creating difficult-to-solve multiple complexities that escape the framework of common definition and accepted solutions. They differ in the criterion of the sophistication of their “wickedness”, by such dimensions as the irreconcilability of the institutions involved and their individuals, as well as cognitive complexity. The authors propose a typology of wicked problems. They present a framework and proposals for different types of cooperation for their solution, generally geared to a specific type of problem. In the final phase of the article, they conclude that establishing a standard for solutions to these problems proves not only impossible, but perhaps unnecessary from their point of view.

Krause (2012) analyzes poor quality in higher education as a wicked problem.The author advocates a more concrete theorization of the issue of wicked problems in the local, institutional, and national space . On the other hand, Ricker-Gilberst (2013)review and analyze a critical assessment of subsidy programs for selected inputs in African countries. The authors are of the opinion that production subsidies should be considered a wicked problem because of the difficulty and indeterminacy involved in their evaluation. Another interesting example of a study that critiques existing models of decision-making and classifying decisions in the theory of strategic managers’ and organizations’ capabilities using the complexity of wicked problems as an example is presented by McMillan and Overall (2016).

As the main ideas of the article, Coyne (2005) presents how we can use creativity and emerging ideas of wicked problems to debate the meaning and terminology of understanding the contemporary paradigm.

The findings of researchers Lönngren and Van Poeck (2021) indicate that the concept of wicked problems is not always consistently applied as a theoretical concept. It is clearly attributed many different meanings, different epistemological assumptions, and a full and wide range of rhetorical functions.

The existing research gap on wicked problems in the literature is related to their categorization under challenges of migration and refugee processes. It is not the intention of the authors within the framework of this study to analyze in detail the wicked problems occurring in the environment of migrants and refugees. This is a separate research problem that could be considered within the framework of a separate article.

2. Design Thinking method: a concept of a tool to solve modern wicked problems

The DT method is a method of solving problems.. The essence of it is to creatively design in teams, various solutions to difficulties , especially malicious issues, responding as much as possible to the needs of the audience and users. It is an intuitive, but at the same time structured method of work, as well as affair solving thanks to which in teams, often interdisciplinary, innovations are created in a broad sense.

The method originated at Stanford University in California, where it was developed and popularized by Professor David M. Kelly. Its origins lie in designing products and services for Silicon Valley technology companies. Nowadays, non-governmental organizations (in the USA, e.g., the Rockefeller Foundation or the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), UN agencies (e.g., the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)), or public administration units (in Poland, e.g., the City Hall in Lodz, the City Hall in Wroclaw) are using the Design Thinking method more and more often.

Design Thinking assumes that the focal point of the design process is the recipient, the user, to whom the result of the design work is dedicated. It also involves connecting to this process the audience to whom the result of the work is directed (Brown, 2016). Including various social groups, including such as immigrants, students, youth or members of organizations and local governments in active participation in society, and equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to make a meaningful contribution to solving disputes , including "wicked problems," includes not only the educational process, but also practical experience (Eurydice, 2012).

An important element of this method, therefore, is to listen to the needs of the potential audience and actively involve them in the design, and the philosophy of the method can be summarized in four rules (Plattner, Mainel& Leifer, 2011):

- Human, according to which design is a social activity, and problem solving should strive first and foremost to satisfy human needs.
- Ambiguity, which means the ability to experiment and see certain things and problems differently.
- Redesign, which says that it is worthwhile to learn about existing solutions and methods of dealing with a given problem, as completely new and improved solutions can be built on their basis.

- The rule of tangibility, according to which visualization and prototyping foster better communication between project team members.

Design thinking thus refers primarily to the ability to think with so-called solutions, that is, to think and act creatively (Antoszkiewicz, 2015), focusing on human expectations and needs, hence the focus is on the living being. In order to get an answer to the question about the expectations of future recipients or users, it is necessary to use deep empathy so that needs that have not yet been articulated explicitly can be identified (Lockwood, 2010). This is because such an approach has a significant impact on the design process as a whole: from the original concept to the final solution to the problem.

The Design Thinking process itself consists of stages, based on which the progress of the work is monitored (Helmann&Rosienkiewicz,2016). As a ultidisciplinary approach, it has adapted techniques and tools from different fields of knowledge, such as art, engineering, anthropology, psychology, etc., to DT (Tschmmel, 2012). One of the more popular schemes of the Design Thinking concept is the so-called Stanford model, which is based on iterative cycles consisting of five stages (Brodnicki, 2015). The first stage is empathization, which involves deeply recognizing the true needs of users and understanding them in different situations. The second stage is to define the problem and identify the design challenge based on the information and data collected. The third step is to generate a large number of diverse ideas, representing potential solutions to the problem defined earlier. The richness and diversity of ideas submitted is most welcome according to the principle that bad ideas do not exist (Chyba, 2017). Above all, openness, and willingness to work together as a team play a key role. The final decomposition of ideas into those that are obligatory, realistic, and feasible, far-reaching, but also within the range of action, is made, and the best one for the team is selected. In the next, fourth stage, quick and inexpensive prototypes are created as a visual representation of the solutions, in order to hand them over to the public for testing. The final stage is testing, which involves the use of prototypes by audiences in a real environment and collecting comments from them. Gathering feedback from different test stakeholders makes it possible todevisea set of different solutions. Positive tests indicate that the solution is ready for final implementation.

The DT method therefore promotes and supports important 21st century skills such as critical thinking and action, underpinned by curiosity, attentiveness, critical thinking, perseverance, flexibility, and commitment, as well as creativity, communication, and teamwork skills. One can also add to these somewhat “harder” skills, such as analytical and synthetic thinking, the ability to do project work, move between different disciplines (transdisciplinarity) and cultures (interculturalism). The main premise of Design Thinking is the ability to look at a given wicked problem from the point of view of the people who are affected by the problem and for whom a solution is being sought.

The essence of design thinking is to determine what kinds of issues exist in a given environment, including among immigrants, refugees and their host communities, analyze these complications , select the onesworth addressing, and then seek innovative solutions to them. Design Thinking enables complex, ambiguous tasks to be undertaken, resulting in unique solutions. The effect is achieved using a creative and even abstract approach.

The method, therefore, is the continuous experimentation and search for innovative solutions with special attention to the social, cultural, and economic context of the wicked problem and on providing such an innovative solution that meets the criterion of usefulness from the point of view of its audience (human centered design). In doing so, the method is not assigned to a specific work algorithm but is based on stimulating creativity through continuous prototyping of potential solutions, requires both the use of a variety of tools to stimulate creativity and mobilize resources. It is thus a non-linear and flexible approach that balances research, analytical and creative thought processes (Serrat, 2017).

3. Using Design Thinking to solve migration and refugee problems

The phenomenon of migration and refugees is characteristic of virtually every state or regin, and has become a defining feature of the modern global economy (Vaculovschi, 2021). It is a fundamental, unavoidable and potentially beneficial economic and social element of the functioning of any country or region. However, the problem may be how to manage this phenomenon. As a rule, the management of this phenomenon should be directed at the positive impact of this phenomenon on the state of the economy of the host countries, or at increasing its positive and reducing its negative effects. At the same time, in order to meet the growing challenges of migration and refugee management, it is very important to involve numerous actors, as well as migrants and refugees themselves. The Design Thinking method can be applied to problem solving in many areas related to migration and refugee issues. These problems can relate, for example, to faster adaptation of migrants and refugees socially, culturally, economically and politically, and to building inclusive and tolerant relationships between migrant and host populations.

One of the forerunners of the application of Design Thinking in the area related to immigrant integration is Norway. It was used to examine gaps in the system of asylum and integration of immigrants in the Austrheim municipality. It was intended to allow participants in the project process to better understand the complexities of the local system and to identify key success factors for the integration program (Armond, Percy& Nielsen, 2014).

Another example of using the Design Thinking method to solve migration and refugee problems is Ideas Box dedicated to Somali refugee children and youth staying in refugee camps in the Dollo Ado region of Ethiopia close to the Somali border. It was initiated by UNHCR Sub-Office Melkadida and implemented in December 2015 in two refugee camps, Malkadida and Bokolmany, by Save the Children and Libraries without Borders, in coordination with the UNHCR Innovations Service in Geneva. Ideas Box is a multimedia library containing books and ICT devices such as tablets, laptops, and audio and cinema components. It aims to provide access to information, culture, and education to refugees and people in refugee-like situations, especially children and youth, to empower them and promote their rights (UNHCR, 2015) (UNHCR, n.d.) (Ideas Box, n.d.). However, the Ideas Box programmes are present in many other places and offered as pop-up libraries and media centres to users and beneficiaries other than refugees. In 2019, ongoing implementations around the world included Senegal, the US, Colombia, Australia, France, Germany, Greece, Jordan, and Iraq, and among the recipients were refugee populations, street children, inhabitants of underserved and local communities, and low-income city districts (Ideas Box, n.d.).

DT was the key axis of the migration-oriented project ALIEN (Advanced learning and inclusive environment for higher education through greater knowledge and understanding of migration) too, implemented in 2016–2019 and co-financed by the European Union within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme ('Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices: Strategic partnership for higher education'). The international consortium was managed by the Polish Japanese Academy of Information Technology (Poland) in cooperation with different European partners, including universities SGH Warsaw School of Economics (Poland), Aalto University (Finland), University of the West of Scotland (UK), Glyndwr University (UK) and one non-academic institution, Technopolis City of Athens S.A. (an NGO in Greece). The idea behind the project was to combine the knowledge and expertise of diverse stakeholders representing different scientific disciplines, such as economics, social work, education, social sciences, and art and design studies, to face important social problems and challenges related to the migration situation in Europe and its consequences. The project aimed to 'contribute to greater equity and social cohesion within Europe through a series of knowledge-exchange activities with diverse stakeholders (academics, national and local authorities, migrant community organisations), and through the understanding of the complexity of the flow of migration' (PJATK, n.d.). It was inspired by the recent migration and refugee crisis, which led to an increasing interest in migration issues in the EU Member States. This was done via forming interdisciplinary and participatory educational collaborations to enrich their expertise on multiple social science disciplines with stakeholders' engagement. So, these events not only served to test innovative teaching methods, but also facilitated knowledge exchange and network building between the project's key players: academics and project partners, students as well as diverse stakeholders, including NGOs, public institutions and migrants. The project advanced young people intercultural competences, knowledge and understanding of migration through transnational, multi- and interdisciplinary collaboration. At the same time the project developed lasting engagement of HEIs with local and international migrant organizations as well as regional authorities to build bridges and share knowledge, good practices and raise awareness of issues around migration. Thus, it contributed to greater equity and social cohesion within Europe through a series of knowledge exchange activities with diverse stakeholders (academics, national and local authorities, migrant community organisations).

It should be emphasized that the project produced the following outputs: Method's Report on inquiry-based and project-based learning with activities on migration, the Understanding Migration Processes manual for Educators of Social Science, the

Understanding People Through Art manual for Educators of Design containing the guidelines on implementing our experimental and innovative teaching methods as well as Modules on Migration including thematic course content from the perspective of particular social science discipline including Economics, Education, Politics/Sociology/Social Policy and Social Work and Workshop and Living Lab scenarios. Living Labs worked as interactive think tanks, where issues and opinions of public concern related to migration was discussed. Living labs served as an input for the projects' learning materials and thus they operated as the meeting point of the diverse stakeholders of the project and they involved interchanging of ideas, methodology forming and collection of data.

The Polish team of academics from SGH Warsaw School of Economics that was involved in the ALIEN project included Jan Misiuna and Marta Pachocka and was led by Magdalena Proczek. They were dealing with socio-economic and demographic aspects of migration and integration using the example of the EU and selected Member States. They were focused on the issues of international migration in an interdisciplinary approach, with an emphasis on the social sciences, including economics. There were two subtopics of the project: access to social services (i.a., social assistance, healthcare, education, housing) and access to the labour market (i.a., rights, obligations, procedures, labour market situation, institutions, consequences). Following the project guidelines and own teaching experience, the SGH team asked the students and PhD students during living labs to submit aresearch product – a design thinking product in which students were offered more freedom and space for their creativity. They were supposed to prepare and deliver this product as a result of their work on small team research projects. In general, the projects proposed by the young people teams concerned the following specific social or public policy problems:

- Pitchbook, informing and promoting the initiative of We need books: Providing multicultural spaces in Athens (cooperation with NGO We need books in Athens).
- An awareness campaign – What are we made of? – for the residentsof Athens, aimed at increasing the awareness of one's own origin and integrating the foreignpopulation into the local society (in cooperation with the City Hall of Athens).
- Performative art in Warsaw – Detention camp – Box metaphor – regarding the problem of asylum seekers in detention centres and alternatives to it (in cooperation with the NGO Association of Legal Intervention in Warsaw).
- Animation addressed to refugees in Poland informing them about the individual integration programme (in cooperation with the Warsaw Family Support Centre in Warsaw).
- IT mobile application (prototype) for victims of violence (in cooperation with NGO METAdrasi in Athens).

The mobile app, in particular, nowadays seems like an ideal product that could be introduced on a large scale to solve the problem of violence and avoid suffering of its victims. All projects proposed by the young people teams are applicable to Ukrainian refugees today.

Conclusions

Thanks to the promoted values and attitudes such as empathy, solidarity, creativity, curiosity, openness, or innovation, the Design Thinking method responds to the needs related to contemporary global challenges. Among the most important of these are the challenges and problems associated with migration and refugees in the broadest sense. These are wicked problems. The migration and refugee crisis of 2015 and 2022 has revealed many areas where action and solutions are needed. However, they should be systemic, considering a wide variety of actors, interests, global processes. The Design Thinking method can therefore provide an answer to solving the most complex challenges of the 21st century, including migration and refugee problems.

Design Thinking is characterized by working in multidisciplinary teams, and what is related to this diversity, creativity can be stimulated through this diversity (Starostka, 2015). Thanks to the fact that the team's competencies are diverse, it has a chance to develop out-of-the-box solutions (Bruce& Bessant, 2022). The process also leaves room for choices based on intuition, which, when dressed in context, allow for a deeper exploration of the problem. This allows innovative conclusions to be reached that prove to be meaningful and usable once they are subjected to systematization in the face of further data gathered through the Design Thinking process in an attempt to find a solution to the wicked problem.

However, it is worth emphasizing that the Design Thinking method is not and has never been just a scheme of action or a set of techniques. It represents a particular style of thinking and set of skills focused on solving wicked problems and challenges that are real needs of specific users or their entire groups. Migrants and refugees are exceptional. DT is a process in which stages of work progress are defined, but each phase of design thinking can differ from each other depending on the type of problem, and thus can bring many possible options for further action, the choice of which is at the discretion of the project team and the user. Therefore, it reduces the risk of potential failure, and thus allows modifications and upgrades to be made while still in the initial phase (Drucker, 2002) that is, it introduces the possibility of including the necessary corrective actions for the achievement of planned results and continuous improvement. Great freedom and flexibility in the application of the concept is definitely its a positive aspect. This makes it accessible and applicable to all interested parties (Studzińska, 2017). Above all, however, as a social process, it entails multidimensional cooperation with the external environment (Arabasz& Sińczuk, 2016).

Due to the occurrence of wicked problems in migration and refugee processes, it seems helpful to use the DT method to try to solve them. A public entity in Norway and an international entity, the UNHCR, have reached for this method. Also, within the framework of the ERASMUS+ ALIEN Strategic Partnerships project, a number of interesting solutions to wicked problems occurring around migrants and refugees have been developed through this method. Among the most interesting is an IT mobile application (prototype) for victims of violence. It seems that it would be worthwhile to apply it, especially in the contemporary circumstances of increased migration and refugees in various parts of the world, of which from Ukraine.

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Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.03

FROM MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS TO INTEGRATION: CONTRASTING PIONEER AND RECENT MOLDOVAN MIGRANTS IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: *Using an exploratory research, this paper aims to gain in depth information on Moldovan migrants in Romania across different generations. It focuses on changes in migrants' aspirations over time and how historical context influences coping strategies. The study compares behavior and experiences of earlier Post-Socialist migrants (pioneer migrants) with recent young migrants in Iasi and Bucharest. Results indicate evolving aspirations and reduced integration barriers, with recent migrants benefiting from technological progress and easier access to Romanian citizenship, facilitating faster integration.*

Key words: *international migration, aspirations, integration strategies, Moldova, Romania, post-soviet countries, comparative analysis.*

UDC: *314.745.4(478+498)*

JEL code: *J15, J61, K37, R32, H75*

Introduction

Scientific research looking into how the historical context shaped narratives and aspirations of migration in Eastern Europe has generally focused on the Socialist vs. Post-Socialist experiences (Burrell, 2008; Mayblin et al., 2016; Śliwa and Taylor, 2011), yet little attention has been given to the different generations of migrants in Post-Socialism

Romania is a net emigration country and it is widely recognized that over the past few decades the country has experienced significant outflows, with many Romanians leaving the country in search of better economic opportunities and improved living conditions (Dorobanțu-Dina, 2021). Immigration to Romania is less observed and studied.

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Received: 08.05.2023 Accepted: 07.06.2023

Being a former communist country for almost five decades, the country had closed borders and immigration was strictly controlled. In this context, Romania attracted about 21800 migrants from outside the EU in 2018, while the stock of non-EU residents was 54500 in the same year (Roman et al., 2020).

Republic of Moldova and Romania share a common historical background, a common language (Romanian), and a cultural heritage. After World War II, Eastern Moldova was incorporated into the Soviet Union as the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. During this time, Eastern Moldova experienced Soviet influence and was subjected to a distinct political trajectory compared to Romania. Moldovan migrants were restricted from coming to Romania during the communist regime, as they were citizens of the USSR, even if they had Romanian ethnicity. The migration from Moldova to Romania increased after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Moldovans being currently the most important and visible group of migrants in Romania. According to the National Institute of Statistics Romania (2022), the share of Moldovan immigrants in the total immigrants by country of provenience is 22.9% in 2018, increasing at 23.15% in 2019 and only 14.12 in 2020. The Moldovans were the second large group of immigrants in 2018, surclassed by Spanish, the first in 2019 and only the fourth in pandemic context in 2020. Romania is the main destination for Moldovan students.

Migration has got far-reaching social implications in the Republic of Moldova, as usually happens in countries in transition (Hachi et al., 2021). The migration patterns of Moldovans are divided between East (Russia) and West (EU/Romania). Economic situation and family network play a major role in choosing their destination. Young people choose to attend Romanian universities based on proximity and their relatives' location. Most of the cases, the small Moldovans' entrepreneurs in Romania search for partners or employees in their origin country (Stoleriu et al.2011).

This article is the outcome of the research project "*EMpowerment through liquid Integration of Migrant Youth in vulnerable conditions (MIMY)*" funded by the EU under grant agreement number 870700, which ran between February 2020 and January 2023. The objective of the paper is to depict the differences and dynamics in integration patterns between various generations of Moldovan migrants living in Romania. We are interested in particular in how the migrants' aspirations change in time, and if the historical context leads to different coping strategies. In line with the aspirations-capabilities framework developed by De Haas (2021), we analyze how migrants' ambitions and capabilities evolved across the three decades.

Using a qualitative approach, our research aims to cover this gap by comparing Moldovan behavior and experiences of earlier Post-Socialist migrants (early 1990s, immediately after the fall of the Iron Curtain) with those of recent migrants at the two aforementioned local sites, Iasi and Bucharest. We employ focus groups to gain in-depth understanding of the aspirations and behaviors of the two groups of Moldovan migrants in Romania, as well as to identify common themes in their responses.

1. Migrants' aspirations and integration across generations: a literature review

It is widely acknowledged that the coping interventions of individuals are influenced by the context under which they develop (Frydenberg, 2014; Mattlin et al., 1990; Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). For migrants, a situational determinant of coping strategies of utmost importance is the historical context in which migration occurs, with its complexity of social, political, economic, cultural circumstances etc. Understanding the historical context is crucial for providing effective support to migrants according to the specifics of the particular generations of migration.

In this study we rely on the aspirations-capabilities framework developed by De Haas (2021), in which migration is seen as a function of ambitions and capabilities. Migration decisions are strongly influenced by perceived geographical opportunity structures, which refer to the availability of resources and opportunities in specific locations (Czaika and De Haas, 2012, 2014; Flahaux and De Haas, 2016). These structures are a result of both individual agency (such as interests, aspirations or ideals of migrants) and structural factors (such as economic and political conditions of the sending or receiving countries) (Bernard et al., 2023; Gotehus, 2021; Schlimbach et al., 2019). Migration decisions within specific sets of perceived geographical opportunity structures are also made with specific aspirations of meeting personal goals (Parreáas, 2001). Investigations of the aspirations-capabilities framework can thus lead to a more meaningful understanding of agency and structure in migration processes.

Coping strategies have been demonstrated to have a mediating role on the aspirations of individuals (Oh and Yang, 2022). It is also understood that different generations have different aspirations, which are shaped by the historical context experienced by each generation in particular (Twenge et al., 2012).

While studying Lithuanian migration to the USA, Čiubrinskas (2020) identifies that transgenerational differences in coping strategies existed between the migration wave triggered by World War II and the one triggered by the fall of the Eastern Bloc. Using an environmental stance, Westheimer et al. (2019) draw parallels between major historical events like the Syrian War and the subsequent refugee crisis and social shocks that impact resilience and coping mechanisms. The research suggests that these shocks play a significant role in shaping individual and community responses to adversity, and can ultimately affect long-term outcomes for those impacted.

An important research finding to the transgenerational coping strategies of migrants is that first generation (or earlier generations) migrants lack social and cultural contacts that might help their integration (King et al., 2014; Kogan, 2011). Ten Kate et al. (2020) find out that first generation migrants engage less in social activities in the receiving country and, thus, their satisfaction with social relationships is lower, pushing them towards more loneliness. As a result of experiencing poorer social support (Bilecen and Vacca, 2021), first generation migrants adjust their aspirations downwards, tending to limit them. Instead, first generation migrants tend to focus on the retention of relationships and networks with their home country (Amit, 2010). The social capital of migrants within the host country tends to develop over time, validating the network hypothesis (Palloni et al., 2001), with later generations benefiting from networks established by earlier generations. Research by Fiske (1995) shows that early generations emphasize social survival as their primary motivation of belonging. In time, members of early generations will direct their attention to collectivism. Building collectivism helps early generation migrants to tend towards becoming a settled population. Early settlements of migrants allow the development of a collectivist culture, based on which future generations of migrants can set higher aspirations (Gong et al., 2021). Transmitting collectivism to future generations will aid the latter's cohesion and cooperation values by emphasizing group attributes such as harmony, duty or interdependence (Brewer and Chen, 2007). It has been suggested that moral duties towards a specific group, such as a generation of migrants, could inspire individuals to develop aspirations (Qu, 2022). The desire to improve not only the personal life, but also aspirations of making a positive impact on the lives of those in the group can drive individuals to pursue their goals with greater determination and purpose. This can create a sense of purpose beyond individual self-interest, benefiting both the individual and the group as a whole.

The transgenerational coping strategies and aspirations of migrants may therefore vary, with earlier generations often experiencing more difficulty in adapting to their new environment and, thereupon, having lower aspirations. This can be attributed to the higher challenges that early generations of migrants have in adjusting to a new culture, language, and social norms, as well as to more discrimination that early generations have to endure. Pottie et al. (2015) and Stevens et al. (2020) demonstrate that first-generation migrants are more likely to be exposed to bullying victimization and discrimination than later generations. Also, early generations of migrants may have held onto traditional values and may struggle to integrate into their new home, while more recent generations may fully embrace the opportunities and freedoms of their new country, especially when they receive guidance and education from the older generations about local values and norms. For example, Nygård (2017) identifies that children of migrant families are more optimistic, tend to pursue higher levels of education and to aspire for better skilled professions, thanks to the socio-cultural heritage developed in the receiving country by their families and then passed onto them. Thus, as generations progress, the coping strategies and aspirations of migrants can evolve in response to their changing circumstances, with later generation migrants disposing of more interpersonal and social resources (Kuo, 2014).

Rodan and Huijsmans (2021) also prove that later generations of migrants tend to have higher aspirations thanks to the collectivist values transmitted intergenerationally. Hence, as time passes, migrants are inclined to express their aspirations in a more visceral and heartfelt way. Later generation migrants are enabled to develop more sophisticated coping strategies thanks to the social and cultural capital that earlier generations of migrants have started to construct in the host country. Second generation migrants articulate their aspirations in a more embodied and emotional manner, aiming to become, as Rodan and Huijsmans put it, 'more than just a migrant'. This idiom hides the fact that the newer generations of migrants have greater chances to manage their transnationality in an adequate way and to become, in fact, or to perceive themselves as citizens of the host society. Thus, for second generation migrants, holds more value and can be easier materialized than for first generation migrants, which tend to focus on instinct, individualism and survival. Also, aspirations of early generations tend to be more simplistic, as opposed to those of later generations, with a higher degree of complexity.

Rodan and Huijsmans (2021) also show that the historical context in which migration takes place is constitutive of migrant subjectivities and their associated aspirations. The general discourse of each generation of migrants is shaped by the time and circumstances in which they migrate. The historical context is vital for how they perceive their migration, as each generation of migrants will have its own narrative shaped by historical factors that affect their demographic, socio-economic, cultural and political experiences. Another important finding of the authors is that the historical context of migration is not only generative of aspirations, but also driven by aspirations. Generations of migrants embark on the resettlement journey with some particular desire of being and becoming during their stay in the host country and, as such, create a generational discourse that is representative for their cohort and is also a pivotal component of how that generation perceives and makes sense of its migration.

Čiubrinskas (2020) highlights how migrants leverage their various social and cultural connections, developed from diverse political and historical factors, to navigate the hurdles of migration. Ultimately, creating an environment that supports the successful integration of migrants requires ongoing effort to identify and address changing conditions that can impact the relationship between migrants and the local community.

Bech et al. (2017) emphasize that socio-historical contexts lead to the emergence of normativity in migrational contexts. The authors point out that integrational patterns and aspirations are not merely ideological, but that they change in time. The authors have selected Sweden as an example to prove this idea, whereas the Scandinavian universal welfare state model has continuously developed since the 1960s, shaping the aspirations of various generations of migrants at different moments in time.

For Eastern European countries, Śliwa and Taylor (2011) differentiate between socialist and post-socialist experiences of migration and their associated aspirations. The authors claim that disjunctures between the two periods occur due to a changed socio-political context, as well as due to the changed attitudes towards migration. Post-socialism paved the way for new and higher aspirations motivated by the transition to a free market economy (Annist, 2022; Stenning, 2005).

In line with these research results, our paper fills the gap by considering the case of two generations of young Moldovan migrants in Romania, in two different historical contexts.

2. Methodology

The exploratory study employed qualitative research methods, specifically focus groups with Moldovan migrants residing in Romania. As many of them are located close to the eastern Romanian border, the city of Iasi has been selected for one of our case studies, alongside Bucharest, the capital city of the country.

The advantage of a focus group is that it allows researchers to gather data and in depth insights from a diverse group of participants in a relatively short amount of time. Additionally, focus groups can provide an opportunity for participants to interact with one another and generate new ideas and insights that may not have been possible through individual interviews. By bringing together small groups of people, we facilitated a discussion around the specific topics: migrational aspirations, barriers and facilitators at home and at destination, integration strategies for the new-comers.

Data collection took place between January 2020 and November 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the mobility restrictions, the research team had to conduct the focus groups online, via Zoom.

In the case of older Moldovan migrants, the potential participants were identified using a snowball strategy. As the elderly migrants are less organized in professional or ethnic associations, we started by identifying two independent participants for each location and they employed other participants. The first contact was made in most of the cases through WhatsApp, and further on the email contacts were exchanged. In the case of recent migrants, the participants were identified through two different methods: first, through students who were following a distance learning program, and second, through youth and students' organizations of Moldovans in Romania. These were identified in the two locations using social media accounts and the contacts established in the MIMY project. In the end, four focus groups were conducted, in Romanian language. The ethical approvals were obtained and the participants signed the informed consent regarding the MIMY project activities, the purpose of the research and the use of the data. No problems were encountered in the communication with the participants and the organization of the focus groups. The focus groups were dominated by a friendly atmosphere and good communication in the group. Table 1 presents the four FGs.

The two groups are comparable in the sense that all migrants arrived in Romania as young individuals, having less than 29 years at arrival and they migrated alone. However, the different historical conditions and environments in the 90's compared to 30 years later, are reflected in different integration processes. The interview guides were similar for both groups, covering topics related to: motivation, aspiration at arrival, barriers and difficulties in the host country, vulnerabilities. Finally, participants were suggested to provide short recommendations for newcomers, in order to ease their integration paths.

Given the fact that the report presents the results of four FGs on the same topic, we consider that classical content analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009) is an appropriate method for our case and it was employed in our analysis. We identified the codes manually, using the transcript of the FG in Romanian language. In the second stage, we compared the FGs and looked at the common codes.

Table 1. The Focus groups composition

Code of the Focus Group	Description
1. FG1_O	Early migrants from the Republic of Moldova; Bucharest; 3 participants; age range: 48-49 years; Migration route: education; Conducted online via Zoom.
2. FG2_O	Early migrants from the Republic of Moldova; Iasi; 3 participants; age range: 47 – 51 years; Migration route: education; Conducted online via Zoom.
3. FG1_R	Young recent migrants; Iași; 5 participants; age range 19 – 24 years; Migration route: education, work; Conducted online via Zoom.
4. FG2_R	Young recent migrants; Bucharest; 6 participants; age range 19 – 24 years; Migration route: education, work. Conducted online via Zoom.

3. Results

3.1. Aspirations at time of arrival

Most of the participants in FG1_O and FG2_O came to Romania during the first migration generation from Moldova, in the 90's, as scholarship holders of the Romanian state. Some came to high school, at an early age (15 years, FG2_O_Participant 3) or to university (FG1_O_Participant 1, FG2_O_Participant 3) or doctoral studies (FG2_O_Participant 1). They witnessed Romania's transformation across the last three decades, as they went through the difficulties of a country in transition along with the difficulties of adapting to a new destination.

Aspirations for migration were related to various reasons and had the stamp of youth desires for adventure, personal development and better life. One respondent aspired to know and experience Romanian culture, which was perceived as the national culture, but without knowing this clearly. Before the fall of the Iron Curtain, not much was known in Moldova about the realities of Romania, and citizens were cultivated a Moldovan identity, instead of the Romanian one: "*As a child, I was one-day astonished hearing on the radio the Romanian public channel, in a foreign language, that I was able to perfectly understand*" [FG2_O_Participant 1]. Her aspirations were followed across her migration period, as she immersed herself into Romanian culture.

In another case, the older migrant aspired to experience new challenges and had a genuine desire for adventure: "*I needed a challenge, as I wanted to study foreign languages and I was just rejected at the admission to a Moldovan university, that was only financing 16 places in 1991*" [FG1_O_Participant 1]. Looking for a new challenge as a path for personal development open the door to migration decision.

Another participant had the desire to study in a western European country *"I was asked if I wanted to study in Europe, and I accepted, knowing that Romania is towards the west"* [FG1_O_Participant 3]. [all of them laugh]. Aspiring for a better education, in a western environment is associated with the difficulties faced by Moldova in early 90's, when the country was facing severe economic problems. In such circumstances, "*many people aspired for having a better job and a better future*" [FG2_O_Participant 2].

Interestingly, the recent migrants' aspirations are more pragmatic, being also related also to their local destination. The recent migrants indicated that Bucharest, the capital city, is seen as a more sophisticated place, suitable for educated people and for young with high expectations. "*The Moldovans who come to Bucharest are from the upper layer of the society. [Bucharest] is not for all Moldovans. Whoever comes to Bucharest is of a higher level and is usually interested in getting involved [in activities pertaining to the community of Moldovans]*" [FG2_R_Participant 3].

Another participant wanted to live in a large economic city. "*I desire to live in a large city, so choose Bucharest, as it is a capital city. The economy is strong over here. We come here for the opportunities offered by Bucharest. In Bucharest you have the most opportunities (compared to other cities in Romania, e.d.). All decisions are made from Bucharest*" [FG2_R_ Participant 2].

3.2. Barriers in building their lives in the local area

Several common topics related to the barriers faced during the early migration stage were mentioned.

Lack of family support, at an early age, was mentioned as an important difficulty in the case of the older migrants, as family ties were sporadic. There was no possibility of telephonic contact, there were no public telephone posts in the Moldovan home village: "*In the first year I waited for one whole week with an appointment to talk on the phone with my parents."* [FG1_O_Participant 3]. All participants agreed that the situation is completely different for today's young people who have multiple means of communication with their families. They acknowledged the huge impact of technological progress in communications which changes the migration context for the new generations.

Adaptation was more difficult than expected also due to the lack of information at the point of origin: they did not know exactly where the Romanian cities in which they applied for and received scholarships were situated, so many migrants ended up in cities far away from the Moldovan borders. Additional difficulties were also created by the poor long distance road and rail infrastructure in the early 1990s Romania. Consequently, they reveal a new common theme, of multiple phases, as some of them pursued *several stages of emigration.* A participant was assigned to a city on the western Romanian border with Serbia, and later she moved to Iasi, another participant stayed in Cluj, then in Bucharest, while other arrived in Iasi, and then he moved to Bucharest. Participants agreed that they felt most vulnerable in the first years after arrival, mainly due to lack of family and of possibilities to stay constantly in contact with those at home.

Migrants also faced difficulties due to the prolonged and challenging recognition process for their studies. This hindered their prospects in accessing opportunities: *"The process of the equivalence of studies in the Republic of Moldova lasted for two years,* *during which time he could not find a job suitable for the training I followed"* [FG2_Participant 1]. Administrative barriers, related for instance to receiving a driving license [FG1_O_Participant 2] or difficulties during a divorce [FG1_O_Participant 3] were also emphasized, but mainly related to administrative procedures rather than ethnicity.

No barriers were mentioned by the older migrants related to access to the labor market, where the competences of Moldovan migrants were recognized and appreciated. Moreover, in one case, an advantage of being a migrant was reported: "*coming from Moldova and also being a Russian language speaker helped me find a good job at a Russian company in Bucharest"* [FG2_O_Participant 2].

Three decades later, the recent young migrants still face some similar integration difficulties as the older ones, related to education or administrative papers. One common challenge is related to high bureaucracy that was encountered by themselves or by their colleagues in various circumstances, when interacting with education administrative or with public authorities: *„A girl from Ukraine [who came to study in Iasi], nobody in the faculty knew how to deal with her. She had all her paperwork written in Ukrainian, this had to be translated, but nobody knew how (...). You'd expect some guidance and information from people who should know, who should be competent, specialized regarding the whole admission process (...) and they didn't know what to do with her, where to send her." [FG2_R_* Participant 3*]*. As young migrants have higher expectations, the high bureaucracy seem to create frustration. Another common barrier is related to the lack of information, specifically associated this time to the education system: *"I have the impression that information which should reach foreign students is somehow ignored or left aside and they do not reach the students in due time"* [FG1_R_ Participant 1].

The recent migrants have high aspirations from accessing the labor market. However, these are not supported by the concrete context, as their access to the jobs seems to be jeopardized due to the high bureaucracy: *"Our greatest challenge is to find employment. Without Romanian citizenship, it is difficult to get employed. There is much paperwork to be done, which puts off the employers."* [FG2_R_ Participant 2].

Housing has also been mentioned as a barrier to integration, which has both ethnic-biased and gendered-biased backgrounds: "*Romanian landlords are very skeptical towards girls from the Republic of Moldova. As a Bessarabian girl, it's hard to find rent. Many owners have the impression that Moldovans want to rent the apartment to do video chat*". Interviewees believe that such preconceptions are mostly a result of a lack of information that the local population has about Bessarabians, which ultimately determines a negative attitude towards them: "*The lack of information determines the negative attitude towards the Bessarabians. My [Romanian] colleagues had a distorted impression of us, they asked me if we had computers and internet in the Republic of Moldova*" [*FG2_R_* Participant 2].

3.3. Facilitators and coping strategies for a softer integration

Several facilitators that aided for a softer and more rapid integration could be identified. Social support was largely received from within the school environment or from the family of the spouse, while the acquisition of Romanian citizenship was seen by many as probably the most important factor of integration.

During the early stages, the school environment played a crucial role in providing support to the Moldovan community. Teachers and colleagues extended their substantial assistance and established important ties with Romanian colleagues, as the Moldovan community was only beginning to emerge: *"I was at the beginning more of a curiosity (for the locals), as my colleagues had not met any person from the Republic of Moldova before"* [FG2_O_Participant 1].

Migrants agree that the acquisition of Romanian citizenship was by far the most important factor for integration, as they have the same rights as the Romanian citizens.

A gendered approach to the facilitation of integration can be observed when discussing the role played by family creation. Moldovan women who married Romanian men and formed families in Romania, benefitted from an extended social network derived from the relatives of the spouse, which helped their rapid integration: "*My husband's family taught me a lot about Romanian history, about the differences between the Romanian regions"* [FG2_O_Participant 3]

In the case of the recent migrants, the facilitators are also related to education, but in a more pragmatic way. Some of them are students, while others aspire to become students. The opportunities and resources were related to receiving a scholarship: *"We are slightly more advantaged at ASE (n.r., Bucharest Univesity of Economic Studies), I am unsure about other universities, but we don't have to pay fees next year if we have any unpassed examens, and we are still eligible for a scholarship for all three years even if we don't qualify for the budget program."* [FG2_R_Participant 2]. In the same context, the access to tax-free studies was mentioned, as Romania has integration policies that support a number of Moldovan students specifically to follow any Romanian universities without paying any taxes. Also, diploma recognition was discussed and this aspect is more contextual, as all of them mention that they chose to study in Romania because their study diplomas from Moldova are recognized.

Unlike the pioneer migrants, the recent ones tries to benefit from the existing, well developed community of Moldovans in Romania: *"the associations of Moldovans provide some extra information, but not much of it"* [FG2_O_Participant 1].

Even within the receiving country, opportunities differ depending on regions. The capital city of Bucharest is perceived by Moldovan migrants as offering better opportunities than, for example, the north-east of the country, which includes two of the cities close to the border with the Republic of Moldova, that migrants often chose as destinations: Suceava and Iasi: "*It is clear that opportunities in Bucharest are way higher than in Suceava*" (young migrant male participant who resided in Suceava for three years, then moved to Bucharest). Even so, such higher opportunities are at risk of being lost if citizenship cannot be acquired: "*Without citizenship, we lose lots of opportunities that Bucharest has to offer*" (young migrant male participant from Bucharest). Therefore, they have the chance to choose their final destination, driven by the best opportunities this may offer.

ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.03

All the participants in the four focus groups were actively preoccupied about their integration and were willing to reflect on how they managed this process. In the case of the older migrants, the integration process is considered to be closed; some of them managed to move their parents and parts of the Moldovan family to Romania as well [FG1_O_Participant 1, FG2_O_Participant 2, FG2_Participant 3].

However, integration was not a smooth, linear process. As stated by one older participant, "*Integration was an act assumed, proposed and constantly pursued. It involved a lot of individual effort. (...) I made an effort to learn the Romanian literary language, using dictionaries and Romanian language courses"* [FG1_O_Participant 1]

In the case of the young generation, integration is perceived as an utmost need. Even if at the beginning, they preferred to have activities with other students from the country of origin, they are aware that a constant effort is needed for being accepted by the local community. This started just from their arrival to Romania, when "*I set out to integrate from the beginning, I didn't want to be perceived as different from the others*" [FG2_R_Participant 5]

4. Discussions

Our study shows that the historical context has an impact on migrant's aspirations and integration strategies for the respondents of the focus group. Using the input of young migrants from the same destination country (Moldova) living in the same origin country (Romania), who, however, arrived to Romania three decades later than the first migrants, we identify differences, as well as communalities in the aspirations of the two generational cohorts. In the early 1990s, just after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the young Moldovans' aspirations were more general and they were related to escaping the post-soviet country's turbulence and difficulties. Some of them were triggered by a genuine interest in learning more about Romanian culture, which was restricted before. In the case of recent migrants, the aspirations are more specific and pragmatic, being related to pursuing an education and/or finding a job. In some cases, they would use Romania as a trampoline for going to other European countries. Therefore, the recent young migrants seem to be much more flexible in their decision to live abroad and ready to change places for education or work (Dabasi-Halász, 2018).

It also seems that their aspirations are of different nature, and the recent migrants are more determined to succeed – in line with previous results (Kuo, 2014; Rodan and Huijsmans, 2021). Unlike the migration pioneers, the recent Moldovan migrants have access to more and better resources and to a large, already developed migrant network (King et al., 2014); these make easier the adaptation and integration. The results confirm the aspirations-capabilities framework (De Haas, 2021), as the newer generation has better capabilities and its aspirations are higher. In line with Dokadia and Palo (2022), our results highlight that each generation possesses distinct aspirations that are influenced by the specific historical context encountered by that particular generation. Moreover, aspirations

Received: 08.05.2023 Accepted: 07.06.2023

of the recent migrants seem to be driven by the location, as those who are living in an inspiring capital city are encouraged to aim for more.

As the aspirations adjusted in time, the barriers also changed during the three decades, and it seems that respondents that recent migrated has significantly less and lower difficulties compared to respondents from previous generations. Also, later generation migrants seem to adjust and to develop better strategies for crossing such barriers, capitalizing on the economic growth and technological progress in the destination context. The pioneer migrants were more affected by the lack of family contact, while nowadays the respondents may be instantly connected with family and peers who remained in the country of origin. Recent generation migrants benefit from the development of IT&C technologies; transnationalistic opportunities are enhanced by social media and better phone connections and internet facilities. Technological advances in IT&C and internet capabilities make the lack of family support more bearable and also facilitate the access to information in the host county. (King et al., 2014)

The barriers to education as an integration factor changed over time. All the participants mentioned the recognition of studies in the home country and administrative barriers. The respondents that migrated early in '90s mentioned that the access to the labor market was not restricted, while the youth mentioned restricted access to the labor market without having Romanian citizenship. This may be related to the higher expectations youth may have, and also to a more complex and competitive labor market and economy recently developed at destination.

One relevant integration factor mentioned by the two groups was related to acquiring Romanian citizenship. In the case of the older migrants, this process was significantly more difficult and the participants (both males and females) were supported by their Romanian families, after marrying Romanians. In other cases, they should have first found Romanian roots and then applied for citizenship.

In the case of the recent migrants, the access to citizenship is much easier, as reported by Cimpoeru et al. (2023). The Citizenship Law (1991/2010) outlines the specific requirements that international citizens have to meet in order to acquire citizenship. Moldovans are entitled to regain Romanian citizenship based on relatives (such as parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents) who were born in the Kingdom of Romania prior to June 28, 1940, the date of the Soviet occupation of the historical region of Bessarabia and Northern Bukowina. The management of process simplified in time. The acquisition of citizenship was a clear sign of being integrated in the Romanian culture and society for the older migrants, while for the recent one it was mainly the route to an EU passport and a gate for receiving equal rights to Romanians in terms of education.

The integration is differently defined by the older generations versus the new one. The first group considered integration finalized when they received Romanian citizenship and in some cases, they managed to move parts of their Moldovan family to Romania as well. For the younger respondents, integration is seen more as an individual, personal process. Speaking the Romanian language correctly is perceived as a facilitator of integration.

One idea that emerged from the analysis is that integration requires effort, ambition and willingness, and each person has to pay such effort individually (*"you, the migrant, are the one who went there, no one invited you"* [FG1_O_Participant 1]). However, as also shown in the paper, integration is not only a matter of individual agency, but also of structural functionalism through the barriers or opportunities existing at wider societal level (i.e., incentives such as scholarships offered by the Romanian state).

Conclusions

The objective of this paper was to depict the differences and dynamics in integration patterns of Moldovan respondents that migrated in different periods in Romania. We analyzed in particular how the respondents' aspirations change in time, and if the historical context leads to different coping strategies, by comparing the responses of Moldovan migrating earlier (early 1990s, immediately after the fall of the Iron Curtain) with recent migrants in two local sites, Iasi and Bucharest. The results show that aspirations evolved across the three decades, from more general ones, related to adventure, personal development and cultural experiences, to more specific, such as pursuing an education and finding a job. At the same time, integration barriers overcome by the pioneer migrants, related to the lack of family support, administrative papers, access to education, diminished significantly, but not disappeared. The new migrants benefit from the technological and economic progress at destination, are more informed and better connected and have better tools for developing new integration strategies. Moreover, smoother access to Romanian citizenship paved the way to a faster integration, being the most important facilitator of integration.

The study is not free of limitations as it employs qualitative methods, resulting in limited generalizability. Due to the small sample sizes often used in qualitative research, findings may not easily apply to larger populations or contexts. Therefore, it is important not to consider our results as having the potential to be generalized for other immigrants from Moldova, such as labor migrants or older migrants pursuing family reunification. Our results provide information regarding specific aspects and topics, with an emphasis on in-depth understanding rather than statistical representation.

Taking everything into account, the historical context and the dynamics in destination countries are related to changes and adjustments in young migrants' aspirations and in their integration journeys. The new migrants seem to be more flexible and more prone to a circular migration, or to searching new opportunities in other European countries. Therefore, our results can be useful for policy makers in the fields of education and labor or for migration practitioners, in developing strategies and managing migration flows between the two countries.

Acknowledgements

This study was supported by the research project "EMpowerment through liquid Integration of Migrant Youth in vulnerable conditions" (MIMY) funded by the European

Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 870700. The authors thank participants in the four focus groups for their valuable support and contributions.

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Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.04

THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract: *The refugee crisis in Ukraine generated by the intensity of military actions has highlighted the vulnerabilities faced by state institutions, affected by the large number of foreigners who have sought refuge on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Both the Member States of the European Union and the Republic of Moldova have seen the security gaps that persist and must be removed. Change is a difficult and time-consuming process, and in the event of a massive influx of foreigners, it requires prompt and effective interventions. Actions in the management of the crisis situation put the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to the test. Thus, taking into account the effects of the refugee crisis in Ukraine, this paper consists in assessing national efforts in the context of the most efficient management of refugee flows seeking protection in the Republic of Moldova. This article aims to highlight the problem of the refugee crisis in Ukraine, the crisis conditioned by the Russo-Ukrainian war. The article also highlights the main issues regarding the granting by the Republic of Moldova of humanitarian aid to refugees from Ukraine, as well as respect for the rights of refugees in the Republic of Moldova.*

Keywords: *national security, rights of refugees, crisis, influx of foreigners, conflict in Ukraine.*

UDC: *341.43(477+478)*

JEL Code: *J60, K37, K38*

Introduction

The war in Ukraine started by the Russian Federation is becoming a major military conflict since World War II. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is not just a regional war. It is the war that marks a rupture in the relations between Russia and the West, a war that will have profound repercussions both for Europe and for the whole world. The global consequences of this war are felt in all dimensions of society. The evolution on the front and the interests of the great powers in the region, for the first time bring to the fore the indirect confrontation of the military potential of NATO and Russia.

Ukraine proclaimed its independence in 1991, amid the disintegration of the Soviet Union. On July 16, 1990, the new parliament adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, which established the principles of self-determination of the Ukrainian nation, democracy, political and economic independence and the priority of Ukrainian law on Ukrainian territory over Soviet law. A country of 45.6 million inhabitants, with a multitude of social groups and ethnic minorities, Ukraine has the largest border separating a country of the former Soviet bloc from Russia (van Klaveren et al, 2010).

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Received: 26.04.2023 Accepted: 09.06.2023

As a result of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine, the EU reacted swiftly and urgently activated intervention mechanisms, thus showing solidarity in action, helping people in need of aid and protection. The intervention mechanisms focused in particular on humanitarian aid, emergency assistance in the field of civil protection, support in crossing the EU's external border, as well as providing various forms of protection to people fleeing from areas affected by armed clashes or under shelling. The European Union, for the first time since its creation, has activated the Temporary Protection Directive, which regulates the provisions of EU legislation to manage the increased influx of people as efficiently as possible. At the same time, the European Commission, in coordination with EU countries, has started collecting information on the situation at border crossing points to prevent the risk of a wave of illegal migration and trafficking in human beings. To help border guards in EU countries to effectively manage the flows of people arriving from the borders with Ukraine, on 2 March 2022, the Commission published guidelines on the management of external borders, aiming to reduce waiting times for processing refugees, while still ensuring an atmosphere of security for citizens. The guidelines include provisions such as:

- the deployment of minimum border controls at the EU borders with Ukraine;
- simplifying entry conditions for persons entering from Ukraine;
- the establishment of temporary border crossing points, in order to complete the official list of official border crossing points;
- facilitating the provision of humanitarian and other essential services at border crossings;
- relaxing the conditions of access for personal belongings and pets.

The guidelines strongly recommend EU countries to make use of the support of EU Agencies – with Frontex able to assist with the identification and registration of the people arriving, and Europol available to deploy officers supporting EU countries with secondary checks (European Commission, 2022).

1. Literature review and data methodology

The war in Ukraine has put the national authorities in the position of having to act urgently to ensure a rapid management of the state border on the entry-exit segment. At the same time, the state's efforts had to be directed towards ensuring respect for the fundamental rights of foreign refugees from Ukraine on the territory of our country, with the actions in their entirety to be in line with UN standards on state of emergency, their priorities and indicators.

In order to successfully carry out this study, an extensive analysis of international regulations and literature dedicated to the respect of human rights, in particular ensuring international protection and management of migration flows, was necessary.

Issues such as the procedures applied by the authorities when managing migrant flows at the border (Cebotari & Buzev, 2020), as well as the measures taken to respect the fundamental rights of refugees who have found shelter on the territory of the Republic of

Received: 26.04.2023 Accepted: 09.06.2023

Moldova (Ombudsman, 2022) were subjected to analysis. In this context, the general principles that are regulated in the national asylum legislation (Law No.270, 2008) have been widely applied in providing temporary protection to refugees from Ukraine.

Also „support and assistance to refugees in Ukraine” has been in the focus of attention of international organizations and non-governmental organizations in the country, which have provided significant support in the effective management of major refugee flows.

The study conducted in this article is mainly based on the methods of descriptive statistics and document analysis. Statistical data submitted by subdivisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as some data taken from various information sources made after 24 February 2022, the date of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, were analyzed and used.

2. Moldova's response to the protection and support of Ukrainian refugees

The refugee crisis in Ukraine raises the issue of the security of European states, materialized in the fraudulent crossing of borders, in the risks of members of terrorist groups entering Europe and planning new attacks, with strong economic, social and political implications. Although the refugee crisis in Ukraine must be carefully studied and addressed in a way that ensures that the rights of all those seeking protection and fleeing war are respected, we cannot ignore its other consequences.

A combined response from the Member States of the European Union and those aspiring to this status, as well as the Republic of Moldova, is absolutely necessary to respond with appropriate means to this challenge. In order to find a response to such a sensitive situation as the refugee crisis, it is necessary to take a wide range of measures, from adapting the legislative framework to ensure their protection, to identifying medium-and long-term solutions, which must be applied in order to reduce security risks as far as possible.

With the massive influx of people who have been forced to flee the war, the likelihood that there will be members of diversionary groups, secret agents or even terrorists, is not negligible. Regardless of the way in which the states will verify the asylum applications, the risk of occurring some events that threaten the security of the state remains a major one. Besides, the regional instability caused by the war in Ukraine, the precarious economic and social situation are of concern to the local population.

The war in Ukraine has forced millions to flee their homes. The conflict that began in February 2022 has created one of the largest humanitarian crises in recent European history. The ongoing war has led to an increasing number of victims, destruction and displacement of people inside and outside Ukraine. In consequence, millions of people are forced to move, either inside the country or in neighboring countries-mainly Poland, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary. According to data presented by UNHCR (UNHCR, 2022), from the beginning of the war, February 24, and until July 2022, about 8,792,763 people left Ukraine, and 3,296,112 returned to Ukraine. About 90% of them are women and children, who are also more at risk of violence and abuse, such as trafficking in human beings, smuggling and illegal adoptions.

In the first week after the invasion of Ukraine, record numbers of Ukrainian refugees were recorded at the eastern border of the Republic of Moldova. Therefore, between 24.02 and 02.03.2022, 112,299 citizens of Ukraine entered the territory of the Republic of Moldova, of which 108,955 people entered through the Moldovan-Ukrainian border segment. The highest pressure is on the eastern segment of the border, especially the Palanca border crossing point.

At the same time, during the mentioned period, the Border Police informs, in a press briefing, that the flow of people at the state border with Ukraine has increased 6.5 times (384,770 people compared to 65,023), and the one with Romania on the way out of the country 3 times (454,729 people compared to 139,951). On March 22, 2022, out of the total number of 351 thousand foreign citizens entering the territory of the Republic of Moldova from Ukraine, 247 thousand crossed the country to Romania, and about 104 thousand remained in the Republic of Moldova (Border Police, 2022).

In turn, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova provides information on the situation at the border crossing points and monitors the flow of refugees to facilitate the crossing of the border and support the escape corridors. Thus, between February 24 and May 13, 421,929 refugees left the territory of Ukraine. A very large number of refugees transit the Republic of Moldova to EU member states. There are still 84,735 refugees on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, of which 46,272 are minors. During the nominated period, 7,381 asylum applications were received by the specialized authorities (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2022).

On July 5, 2022, at the press briefing held by the leadership of the Office of Migration and Asylum of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, information was provided on the state of affairs in the field of migration and asylum since the breakout of the war in Ukraine (Migration and Asylum Office, 2022). So, in the period 01.01.2022-04.07.2022 a total of 8098 asylum applications were registered.

Thus, a total of 11882 asylum applications were registered in 2022, an increase of 2697% compared to previous years (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The increase in protection seekers is due to the influx of foreigners fleeing the war in Ukraine.

The international protection of foreigners in the Republic of Moldova is carried out within the limits of the provisions of the international standards in this field, as well as the national legislation derived from them. The institution of asylum serves as an indicator of the country's respect for basic human rights and freedoms and compliance with the requirements of humanitarian law. The share of commitments undertaken by the Republic of Moldova in this area can be compared with the share of former Soviet states such as Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The number of asylum applications received and decisions to grant international protection in relation to GDP per capita and correlated with the number of asylum applications per 100,000 population shows the increased burden of the Republic of Moldova in relation to the mentioned countries (Law Center of Advocates, 2022).

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.04

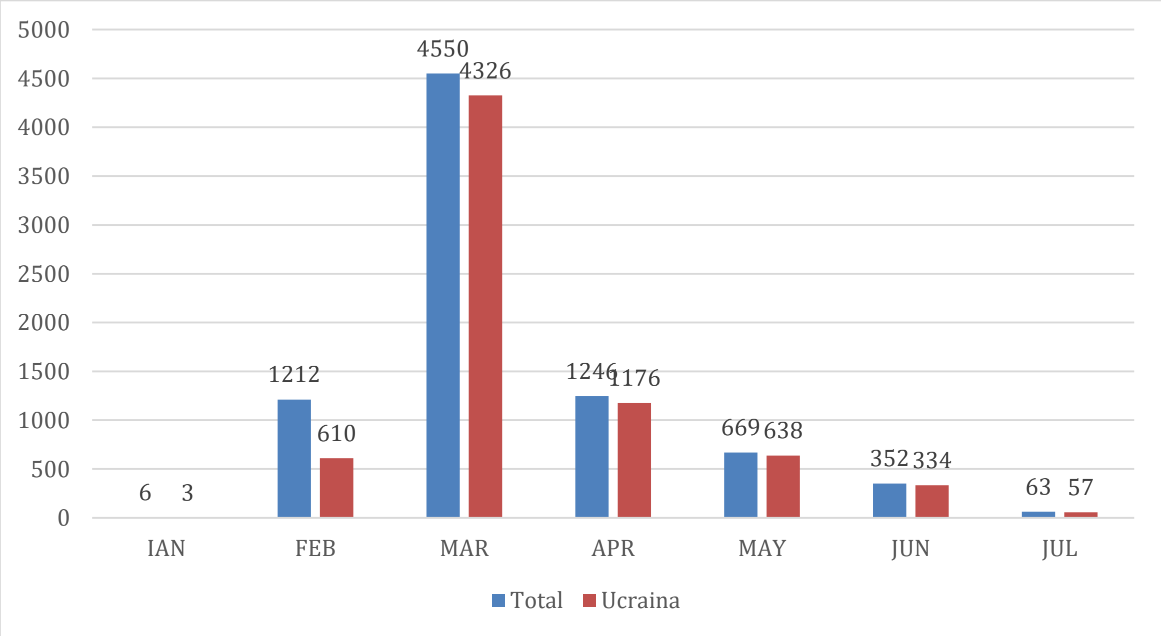

Figure 1. Number of asylum applications registered in the period 01.01.2022-04.07.2022
Source*: Migration and Asylum Office. Humanitarian crisis management - challenges and legal solutions (2022)*

At the national level the international protection of foreigners is regulated and ensured by the provisions of the Law No 270 of 18 December 2008 on asylum in the Republic of Moldova. The competent authorities ensure access to the asylum procedure to any foreigner, on the territory of the Republic of Moldova or at the state border, from the moment of manifestation of will, expressed in writing or orally, from which it results that he/she requests the protection of the State of the Republic of Moldova.

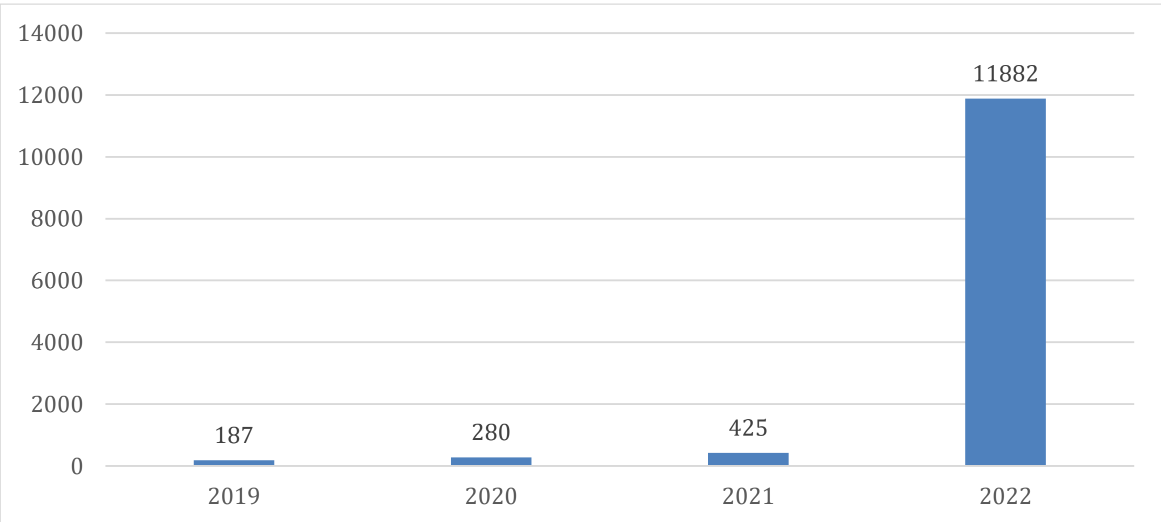

Figure 2. Asylum applications lodged in the Republic of Moldova
Source*: Activity Report Law Center of Advocates (2022)*

Received: 26.04.2023 Accepted: 09.06.2023 https://csei.ase.md/journal

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.04

The refugee crisis triggered by the war for the first time in the history of Europe conditioned the solidarity and total mobilization of the efforts of all European states, including the Republic of Moldova. Being a neighbor of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova from the first day of the war made effort to provide emergency aid to the massive flow of displaced people and those seeking safety, protection and assistance (EU response to Ukraine's refugee crisis, 2022).

The spontaneous appearance of a large number of foreigners, fleeing the war in Ukraine has made the Republic of Moldova a temporary host and/or transit territory for Ukrainian citizens and other foreigners fleeing the war. In this context, the temporary protection granted to foreign nationals is an activity, intended to ensure immediate protection, in the case of a large number of foreign persons who are seeking shelter and fleeing from the path of war, and at the moment they cannot return to their country. Social integration and respect for the rights of refugees is a process of their active participation in the economic, social and cultural life of the host society, and to achieve this, it is necessary to carry out integration programs and facilitate access to a number of economic rights and social: the right to a job, the right to education, the right to health care and social assistance and the right to housing. Granting temporary protection, upon request, to foreign persons from Ukraine and recognizing the status of beneficiary of a form of protection on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, they are entitled to use the humanitarian facilities offered by the host state (Ombudsman, 2022).

Facilitating the access of foreigners to the Republic of Moldova was made possible by the implementation of the National Mechanism for unitary and coherent management of the situation in the event of an increased influx of foreigners, approved by Government Decision No. 1146/2017. The main objective of the mechanism is the use of available human, technical and material resources in order to manage, in conditions of efficiency and effectiveness, the crisis generated by a large influx of foreigners on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. With the application of the mechanism, the Contingency Plan is implemented for the management of a crisis situation in the event of an increased influx of foreigners. In order to solve the situation generated by the increased influx of foreigners, the provisional Crisis Management Center in case of an increased influx of foreigners was established, under the direction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Cebotari & Buzev, 2020).

Thus, on February 24, 2022, the date on which the Russian Federation began the so-called “special operation” In Ukraine, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved the declaration of a state of emergency in the country for a period of 60 days. On the same day, Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilița submitted to the Parliament the proposal, in connection with the situation regarding security in the region and ensuring national security, noting that during the state of emergency it is proposed to establish a special regime of entry and exit from the country. of airspace, but also measures to ensure the management of migration flows and ensure the protection of refugees from Ukraine. At the same time, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has started the necessary preparations for managing the flow of migrants from Ukraine, registered at the border of the Republic of

Received: 26.04.2023 Accepted: 09.06.2023

Moldova. In the conditions of the war situation in Ukraine, all the institutions of the Republic of Moldova went on to operate on alert. Also, under the created conditions, the Crisis Monitoring and Management Center started its activity on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

In the context of the created situation, the Commission for Exceptional Situations of the Republic of Moldova (2022), approved on February 24, 2022, Disposition no. 1, which provided for several derogations from the national legislation. All the provisions of Provision No. 1 aimed at ensuring and efficient management of the situation and facilitating the access of refugees from Ukraine.

Crossing the state border. In the context of the war situation in the neighboring country, which began on February 24, 2022, the authorization to cross the state border into the Republic of Moldova from the territory of Ukraine was allowed and simplified upon presentation of one of the valid identity documents: minors with the presentation of the birth certificate, the document of national identity (identity bulletin/card), passport, and adults upon presentation of the national identity document (identity bulletin/card) or passport. A few days later, the condition of presenting valid identity documents when crossing the state border was cancelled, so minors could also enter the country based on the medical certificate certifying the child's birth. Later, the entry conditions were simplified to the maximum, granting the right to travel, based on other types of documents, including their copies, which allow the identification of the person (Ombudsman, 2022).

In order to facilitate the movement of refugees who entered the territory of the Republic of Moldova from Ukraine, green corridors were created through which carriers ensured the movement of refugees, and the Civil Aviation Authority ensured the organization of irregular flights to EU member countries.

According to the latest UN report, the Republic of Moldova is the first in the top five countries that have received refugees from Ukraine - with almost 1,400 people per 10,000 inhabitants. More than 500,000 refugees have already passed through the Republic of Moldova, leaving around 102,000 citizens in the country, of which about 49,000 children (Ciochină, 2022). So, the entry into the Republic of Moldova of foreigners from Ukraine, in a facilitated regime, was accepted for humanitarian purposes.

Temporary accommodation. In the context of the intensification of military actions and the increase in the number of refugees, the decision was made to create the necessary living conditions for refugees. Thus, the Commission for Exceptional Situations decided to create two temporary Centers for the management of influxes of foreigners on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, which were deployed near the town of Palanca, on the eastern border, and the town of Calaraşovca, in the north of the country, managed by the MAI. In order to standardize the procedures throughout the national territory, the Ministry of Internal Affairs decided to create and set up another provisional Center for refugees at the Giurgiulești border crossing point in the south of the republic. In total, on April 20, 2022, the total number of temporary centers under the management of the MAI is 6, with a total capacity of 2000 places. The efforts of the Republic of Moldova to manage the crisis of refugees from Ukraine, were focused including on ensuring the necessary living comforts within the established Centers. In order to ensure the established norms, the Regulation on the organization and operation of the Temporary Placement Center for Refugees and the personnel and expenses rules were developed and approved, granting the placement center the status of a specialized social structure (Ombudsman, 2022).

Of those more than 100,000 refugees, less than 10% are in placement centers. So 90% are accommodated in families or on their own. Usually, in other countries in such crises, tent parks are set up. The authorities of the Republic of Moldova have avoided this, including because Moldova and Ukraine are culturally close states, good neighbors, and our society has absorbed the flow of refugees very quickly. Most placement centers are dormitories or former study blocks (Ciochină, 2022). 107 centers with a capacity of over 9000 seats, but only 46% of them are currently used.

The Ukrainian refugees, who remained in the Republic of Moldova, continue to be in those 95 temporary placement centers and in host families. The accommodation rate in placement centers is currently 46.4%. In total, over 716 thousand meals a day were distributed in placement centers by the Government, non-governmental organizations and the World Food Program (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2022).

Also, 54,029 refugees received monthly financial assistance from the UN Refugee Agency, of which 27,449 people benefited from the second tranche of financial assistance.

In parallel with the support provided to refugees, about 10,500 host families from Moldova received the single allowance from the World Food Program. Ukrainian refugees who entered the Republic of Moldova after the start of the war in the neighboring country receive monthly financial support. Thus, for each person in the family, 2200 lei are offered, transferred on a card, which can be used only on the territory of Moldova. Refugee payments are managed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and coordinated with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Messager reports (Dolgheri, 2022).

Healthcare. Special attention was focused on healthcare services and health emergencies. By means of the provisions of the Commission for Exceptional Situations, the exemptions necessary to the normative framework in force were regulated. The Ministry of Health has ensured the creation of mobile medical teams, for rapid intervention at border crossing points, including medical teams that are permanently active in temporary Centers for the management of influxes of foreigners. The services provided are primarily focused on triage, first medical aid, medical-surgical emergencies and primary psychological assistance (Ministry of Health, 2022). The provision of necessary medicines and equipment is carried out from state reserves and from humanitarian aid that has been collected from external partners and managed by the Ministry of Health.

In order to provide the necessary assistance at the border of the Republic of Moldova, preliminary sorting centers have been created, created by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. For example, if some refugees want to continue their journey to other countries, then buses are organized, which transport them directly from Palanca to Iasi. The Causeni-Iasi train also operated for a while, running several times a day and was free of charge. For those

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who want to stay on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, the transport from the border to the placement centers is organized, and there are created minimum conditions-sleeping places, hygienic putties, food, basic medical services and even vaccination points. Also, during the same period, there were about 14,000 requests for primary, emergency and hospital care, of which: 86 COVID cases, 101 births, 518 dialysis sessions and 241 chemotherapy and radiotherapy sessions (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2022).

Access to employment. The CSE Disposition no. 4/2022 facilitated the right to work for Ukrainian citizens. In consequence, refugees, regardless of legal status, for the period of emergency can be employed on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

In the situation created, the managers of the production and service units were obliged to inform the National Employment Agency about the employment of foreign persons benefiting from a form of protection on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, all territorial subdivisions for employment were informed about the availability of work in this field, including favored visits to placement centers for refugees, in order to disseminate information on the possibility of employment (Ombudsman, 2022).

Therefore, the labor market was opened to refugees, who had the opportunity to work directly, without a work permit, and to work in this way for two months (Ciochină, 2022). Representatives of the Employment Agency have already received applications. According to the authorities, more than 9,900 jobs are available in various fields - textile, HoReCa or/and transport. Of the more than 9,400 vacancies, 3,800 are in Chisinau. For Ukrainian refugees, the employment procedure has been simplified so that they can work without a work permit (tvrmoldova.md, 2022).

It should be noted that 482 refugees found a job, and 1,135 employers showed openness to the citizens of Ukraine, offering 2,163 vacancies. At the same time, 283 Ukrainian citizens are registered in the territorial subdivisions of ANOFM in order to benefit from employment support (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2022). The Republic of Moldova has the opportunity to provide Ukrainian refugees with jobs in IT, Free Economic Zones, the construction sector, the textile industry and HoReCa (esp.md, 2022), there are two areas where Ukrainian refugees can be integrated into work. If there are highly qualified specialists in the field in Ukraine, they could be absorbed by this sector. If IT companies around the world want to help Ukrainian refugees, it is enough to place orders with Moldovan companies in the field. The higher the volume of services provided by the Republic of Moldova, the higher our capacity to absorb refugees, said the economist.

The second area, according to the economic analyst, are the Free Economic Zones, 43 in number throughout the Republic of Moldova, which in 2021 registered 600 million dollars in exports, and this year will be able to easily exceed 700 million dollars. The response of the Republic of Moldova for those with high skilled work must be the IT sector; for those who do not have the necessary qualification must be the Free Economic Zones. "In the last ten years, investments of 340 million dollars have been made in these Free Economic Zones. In ten years, the number of employees has increased by 13,000. The

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crisis of 2020 has slightly reduced the number of employees, in 2021 the level that was in 2019 has been exceeded ", said the economic analyst.

The first area is the IT sector, which since 2016 has seen a significant increase in exports of services and products. The volume of exports of this sector in 2021 has exceeded 340 million dollars, and in 2022 it could exceed 400 million dollars. If in 2013 5 thousand people were employed in this sector, now there are over 11 thousand, and a higher demand can no longer be met at the expense of the local labor force. The Chisinau government must encourage both IT parks and Free Economic Zones to promote the Republic of Moldova as a country where investments can be attracted in these sectors, which will allow the country's development and help Ukrainian refugees.

„In the field of construction, there is a need for labor. The same goes for the textile industry and the Horeca sector. These sectors are facing a shortage of jobs and we could involve Ukrainians by helping them” (esp.md, 2022).

Although the war and its disastrous consequences have forced millions of people to flee their homes and take refuge in other countries, such as Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and the Republic of Moldova (jurnal.md, 2022), Ukrainian citizens are trying to adapt to the new reality that has gripped them. life. Some of the people who arrived in the Republic of Moldova have already integrated into the labor force. Chisinau, 16 - in Ungheni and Balti, 12 - in Cahul and less than 10 in other regions of the country.

Child protection. In March 2022, the placement of refugee children from Ukraine in studies was regulated by the provision of the Commission for Exceptional Situations. In such circumstances, the Ministry of Education and Research has developed the study placement mechanism. At the same time, all children from refugee families in Ukraine were given the opportunity to attend the educational institution as an audience, which means the possibility to attend classes without the obligation to attend school, with the child's record in a provisional register. In order to ensure the protection of foreign children in Ukraine, at the national level, the Regulation on the establishment of the intersectoral cooperation mechanism for the identification, assistance and monitoring of children at risk, who came from the territory of Ukraine during the war in Ukraine, was approved (Ombudsman, 2022).

Another important decision, adopted by the ESC at its meeting of 04 May 2022, provides for the adjustment of measures for the protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents, who cross the state border from Ukraine. Thus, the persons responsible for taking over the minors will carry out an assessment of each case, individually, based on a document approved by order of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (Migration and Asylum Office, 2022).

Conclusions

The military aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine has a major impact on the civilian population, which is thus forced to flee the attacks. In this context, the European Union's objectives of supporting neighborhood resilience, reaffirmed by the Joint

Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit, become relevant. In the context of the war in Ukraine, European solidarity was manifested by the support of Member States through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (Mocanu et al, 2022).

Analyzing the involvement of the Republic of Moldova in the crisis situation, generated by the massive influx of refugees from Ukraine, it is worth mentioning that the speed and ability with which the state authorities reacted showed a professionalism and a consolidation of government, specialized structures and the whole civil society, in order to manage the influx of refugees as efficiently as possible, especially in the first days after the beginning of the conflict.

Thus, starting from the presence of threats to regional security, the Republic of Moldova will, without delay, review and develop a new national security strategy within the security policy. Also, taking into account the situation in the region, as well as the behavior of actors at regional and international level, highlighting internal and external security concerns becomes an imperative for the New Strategy aligned with European principles and values.

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Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.05

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS AND RESULTS OF CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS IN THE STUDY OF THE OPINION OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND BY LABOR MIGRATION

Elena VACULOVSCHI*[1]

Abstract *Focus group interviewing is a technique frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. In this article, I propose to present the experience of conducting focus group interviews with children, carried out within the project Children left behind by labor migration: supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families in the European Union. In order to obtain better qualitative results, the research sought the free expression of the opinion of all respondents participating in the research. This aimed to highlight the various possible negative aspects related to the phenomenon of transnational families and children left without care whose parents are away working abroad. The guide for moderation of focus groups with children was structured in five modules. It included topics related to perception of migration and its impact on transnational families and children left without parental care, caring for the child after the parents leave, the changes that occur after the parents' migration, existing social services in the community and future perspectives of children. Each module, the experience of conducting focus group interviews and the results of the opinion study of children left behind by labor force migration were presented and analyzed in depth in the article.*

Key words: *focus groups, sociological researches, children, transnational families, labor migration.*

UDC: *303.621.35-053.2:[316.356.2:331.556.46]*

JEL Code: *J 61*

Introduction

Focus group interviewing is a technique frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. This method uses the generation of ideas within groups and is applied in the social sciences since the 1930's. It belongs to the category of qualitative data collection techniques for analyzing perceptions, people's motivations, feelings, needs and opinions. (Lindsay & Hubley, 2006)

The "focus group" technique involves a focused discussion that aims to provide a complex of qualitative information regarding people's perceptions, feelings, motivations, needs and opinions. This technique is a planned group discussion, organized to obtain perceptions related to a strictly defined area of interest, carried out in a permissive environment. The discussion is relaxed and often pleasant for the participants who share their ideas and perceptions; group members influence each other, responding to ideas and comments. (Kreuger, apud. Marlow, 1993: 55-56)

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Received: 13.05.2023 Accepted: 15.06.2023

One of the important characteristics of this technique is its complexity, both by the way it is carried out, but also by the method of achieving the proposed objectives, naturally bringing the participants together in a united group. The focus group technique is focused on the participants' development of pleasure for the discussion, which takes place in a positive climate and develops natural strategies to avoid or reduce communication misunderstandings regarding the discussed topic. Another interesting feature, specific to the "focus group" technique, is the possibility to modify or even completely change the opinions of the participants until the end of the discussions. (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, Mukherjee, 2018)

Among the basic objectives that can be achieved in a sociological research by using the "focus group" technique can be mentioned:

- generating reactions, impressions, opinions regarding some services, programs, institutions or other objects of interest;
- establishing the ways in which those in the target group think and talk about the object of interest;
- diagnosis of the problems that a new program or service may raise;
- the interpretation of previous results obtained by other means (Cojocaru, 2003).

A central role in the successful conduct of the discussion within the "focus group" technique as well as in achieving the research objectives belongs to the moderator, who can often be the researcher himself. The moderator is the one who provokes the expression of opinions and directs the discussion. The moderator's difficult task is to provide everything necessary for the interview and to prepare himself.

The duties of the moderator in the smooth running of the discussion are multiple, among which can be mentioned those of encouraging all group members to participate in the discussions, stimulating the expression of various opinions, supporting the dynamics of the discussion, encouraging the clarification of points of view and explaining statements and affirmations ambiguously formulated. At the same time, a good moderator must be a skilled communicator, avoid presenting his own judgments and evaluations on the topic discussed or on the discussion itself, not presenting himself as an expert and not asking biased questions (Cojocaru, 2003).

In the researches that studies the opinion of children, the focus group technique is welcome, because it provides quite relevant results, due to the fact that children talk to each other and are more open. When the child's discussion with an adult takes place, a subjective barrier appears. Children may be embarrassed by some questions, they may try to say what they were taught by their parents, at school, etc. The focus group technique allows the generation of honest responses in a relatively free discussion among peers. Thus, the moderator (researcher) has the task of creating the necessary atmosphere and guiding the discussion in the necessary direction. In this context, I believe that in the research that adults do with children, those introductory discussions are welcome, which would relax the children and create a correct attitude towards their role in the research.

1. Literature review

For developing this article, was analyzed literature concerning the subjects of focus group method in research, studies about the situation of migrant people, transnational families and the well-being of children left behind by labor migration. Also was studied some articles concerned with the use of focus group discussion methodology.

2. Data and Methodology

In this article, I propose to present some aspects of conducting "focus group" interviews with children, carried out within the project Children left behind by labor migration: supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families in the EU (CASTLE) ICMPD/2021/ MPF- 357-004.

The aim of the project is to carry out an in-depth study on the situation of children left without parental care following migration and to determine the impact of labor migration policies and legislation on the protection of children in the Republic of Moldova. The project also aimed to better inform transnational families and representatives of public authorities regarding the realities and practical aspects related to labor migration.

The field research included: 36 in-depth interviews with adults (parents who have gone to work abroad, stay-at-home parents whose spouses have gone to work abroad, carers), 4 in-depth interviews with children whose parents have been away to work abroad, 11 in-depth interviews with representatives of public authorities, 4 focus groups (2 with adults and 2 with parents). The research project was carried out by Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova in partnership with the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, and the Oleksandr Yaremenko Ukrainian Institute of Social Research, who also initiated research into the given phenomenon in their countries (CASTLE Opening Report, 2022).

The research tools (interview guides) were coordinated with colleagues from Babeș-Bolyai University and adapted to the realities of the Republic of Moldova. Also, in the framework of the research, the relative observance of a territorial representativeness, as well as from the point of view of the social structure of the respondents, was followed. For a closer approach to the real situation, the interview guides were consulted with the adult and with child co-researchers.

In order to obtain better qualitative results, the research sought the free expression of the opinion of all respondents participating in the research. This aimed to highlight the various possible negative aspects related to the phenomenon of transnational families and children left without care whose parents are away working abroad. Also, within the research, solutions or intervention methods from the public authorities were sought to overcome the problems faced by transnational families.

Presentation of the participants and the discussion rules, with the presentation of the discussion topic, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, the rules of the group discussion and the retrieval of socio-demographic data.

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.05

The guide for moderation of focus groups with children was structured in 5 modules and included the following topics:

- ***Module I.*** *The perception of migration and its impact on transnational families and children left without parental care*. This module included topics related to how is the life of children with parents working abroad; how does the life of children whose parents go to work abroad differ from that of children whose parents are at home; what are the difficulties faced by children with parents working abroad; what are the joys of children with parents working abroad? During the discussions, was expected stories will be told with examples from the lives of children, friends, acquaintances and colleagues (at home, at school and in the community).
- ***Module II.*** *Caring for the child after the parents leave*, covered subjects related to questions with whom do the children stay whose parents went to work abroad; are children asked who they want to stay with; what new responsibilities do children have in the household after their parents leave? Next topics were intended to determine the opinion of children about the people who take care of the children whose parents are away working abroad, how do they behave with children whose parents are gone? As well, what is their opinion about the school life of children whose parents are away working abroad, what changes are occurring (frequency, success, relationships with friends, relationships with teachers); how do children with parents working abroad spend their free time? Are there differences in the way these children spend their free time compared to those whose parents are at home; are there any offline or online groups of children with absent parents (What kind of groups? How they were formed? What is discussed in them?)
- ***Module III.*** *The changes that occur after the parents' migration* included topics regarding the changes in children's lives after their parents leave abroad (in communication with departed parents, communication with remaining grandparents, health issues, etc.). How are children's perceptions of child migration changing; are there differences in how parents' migration was seen at the beginning and 1-2 years after the parents' departure; what did children with parents working abroad earn and what have they lost? Who do children tell their secrets to? What about joys, fears, pains?
- ***Module IV.*** *Existing social services in the community* covered subjects related to questions like who provides emotional, moral and psychological support to children with parents working abroad and how? What should be done in the Republic of Moldova for children whose parents are away working abroad, who should do it, where and how? What can be done for these children in the school and locality?
- ***Module V.*** *Future perspectives* was dedicated to advices that children would like to give to other children whose parents are abroad.

As mentioned above, 2 online focus group interviews were conducted. At the discussions were present two adults, a moderator and an assistant. The moderator is

Received: 13.05.2023 Accepted: 15.06.2023

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.05

important to the discussion not only to manage existing relationships, but also to create a relaxed and comfortable environment for unfamiliar participants. Similarly, the assistant's role includes observing non-verbal interactions and the impact of group dynamics and documenting the general content of the discussion, thus completing the data (Kitzinger, 1995). The first interview was conducted with 6 children, all from the countryside aged between 14 and 16. The second interview was conducted with 4 children, all from rural areas aged between 15 and 17. For all children, one or both parents were abroad for work.

3. The organization and conducting of focus group interviews with children

At the beginning of the interview, the moderator announced the topic of the discussion and in order to avoid tensions and prevent possible frustration of the children, he started with the presentation of images with double interpretation, such as those shown in fig. 1:

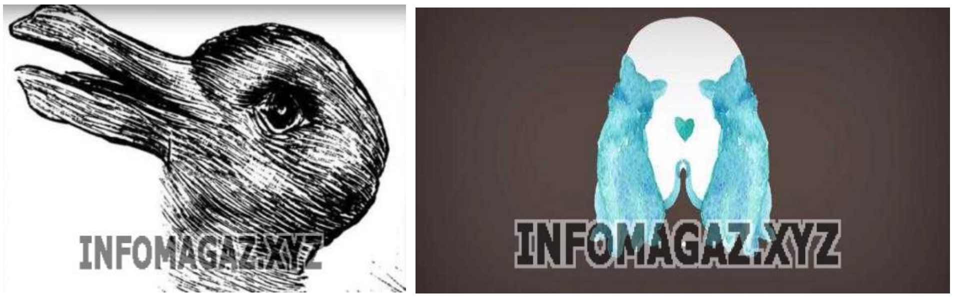

Fig. 1 Double images

The children were asked to say what they see in these pictures. Of course, the interpretations were different, which allowed the moderator to conclude that there cannot be right or wrong answers, both answers have the right to life. In this context, the answers to the following questions will not be interpreted as right or wrong. The moderator and assistant explained the purpose of the research to the young respondents and assured them that their answers would be coded, thus preserving anonymity.

This introduction was welcome, because initially the children felt like they were in lessons, in front of the teacher, a phenomenon that could be observed from the non-verbal expressions. After the presentation of the images and the introduction by the moderator, the state of tension that prevailed both in the first focus group and in the second, decreased significantly.

Children in the first focus group connected their webcams to introduce themselves, but during the discussion, they preferred to disconnect them. They probably felt freer that way. The children in the focus group were quite active, open and quite honest. They told their stories and sometimes it looked like they could not wait to tell them. In some cases, they complemented the each other sayings.

In the second group, the children did not really want to open up. At first, there was an attitude of mistrust. It was the impression that they considered, they will not be understood, but if they are, nothing will change for them. To support the dynamics of the discussion, the moderator and the assistant told some stories from their childhood, thus challenging the children to express their attitude towards the changes taking place in modern society. Such an intervention aimed to move the children from the role of simple respondent to the role of expert. This intervention was successful because the children felt important, saw that their opinion matters and adults perceive it.

4. The analysis of the focus groups' discussion results

The first part of the discussion, the perception of migration and its impact on transnational families and children left without parental care was quite dynamic in both focus groups. In general, children find life with their parents to be easier. In their opinion, children left at home, without parents receive less love and warmth. These children develop and mature faster. In addition, the fact that children with absent parents become more serious, more responsible is even seen as an advantage. Some children see the parents' departure as an obstacle to a good school success. They mentioned that this charge is placed on the children's shoulders, because some grandparents are already old and cannot handle household chores well. The children do not consider themselves special, about half of their peers are either with their parents gone or divorced.

Quotations:

"I don't find much difference and I don't think that we are different from someone else, different from the community, or something like that, so I think we don't have to be separated or anything." (A. FG_C_02)

"I don't feel much difference that my mother is not there …. no, and we are not very different from anyone else, I don't feel the difference." (P. FG_C_02)

"Well, no, at school everything is ok, we don't differentiate between children whose parents are at home and those who are away." (M. FG_C_02)

The lack of parents is felt more by those who are not with grandparents or close relatives, but all children would like to see their parents more often.

Children do not consider themselves to have any more special problems than others. Rather, they believe that parents have greater emotional, moral and material pressure.

The material part is positively appreciated by the children, but this does not compensate for the lack of parents. When asked if they had any joy after their parents left to work abroad, the children answered negatively.

Quotations:

"... actually it's very difficult because it doesn't always consist of money in any case, but anyway the parental warmth will always be missing, it doesn't matter how much money they send and stuff like that, it doesn't always boil down to money". (I. FG_C_01)

The set of questions regarding the care of the child after the departure of the parents was discussed quite dynamically within both focus groups. Several children said they were morally prepared by their parents before they left. But not one of them was asked who they would like to stay with. Because most of them stayed with their grandparents, who are older than their parents, they have to help them. They mentioned, however, that their colleagues with parents being at home also have certain responsibilities related to household chores. The older children in the family, who were still quite young at the time, had to participate in the upbringing and education of the little ones. According to the focus group participants, children with absent parents may not manage their time properly, take too much time off and fail to do their homework.

Quotations:

"When my parents leave, they always prepare me morally that I have to listen to my grandmother, that she can't always do much and we have to help her." (P. FG_C_01)

"I often have to cook, this happens very often…".(I. FG_C_01)

"...I know a little girl who stayed with her aunt and she was in the 5th grade, her aunt couldn't make it, she also had two children, they were small and the little girl had to stay as a nanny, she went to school, helped them with their lessons , she was sweeping the yard, lighting the fire, clean, things that are good in life and she said that this thing was good for her, she doesn't judge her aunt because she didn't teach her bad things, she didn't hate her, she told her that you have to do this, that, that and then you go to do your lessons, you go to play, go for a walk, it was a kind of experience". (L. FG_C_01)

"I was lucky, my mother left, …, but I was very lucky with my grandparents, because they helped me, fed me, -they gave me everything I need, my grandmother is a teacher". (L. FG_A_02)

There are also children who have stayed with a stranger. Of course, those who are with their grandparents feel well and the lack of parents is felt not so badly. They all communicate with their parents regularly; their parents take an interest in their lives. In school life, children consider that there are no special changes, they have the same behaviors, the same aspirations as other children. However, children do not consider that they have more responsibilities than those whose parents are not abroad.

"No, it's not a relative, after my parents broke up, my mother's relatives don't talk to me, …, and it also happens from my father's relatives too they don't talk to me because look, mom is so bad, and mom's relatives all say it's so bad and no, they don't talk to me, but neither do I to them." (M. FG_C_02)

It was said that some teachers are prejudiced and believe that if the parents are away, then the child does not want to do anything, to learn. Some teachers offended the children.

Quotations:

"I think that the attitude of the teachers differs at school, … Sometimes they can say "Hey, you're home alone, it means you don't want to do anything,"... (V. FG_C_01)

"Ok, maybe we were more different from other children, the fact that we were dressed better, … because I had a phone and I was little, or something. I dressed like all the kids, but I was bullied by the teachers more...". (M. FG_C_01)

The third block of topics about the changes that occur after parents' migration, was unpleasant for the children and the discussions were not very intense. Being small children they were angry with their parents because they left them. But when children grew up, they understood that parents left for them too. They rather share their secrets with those in whose care they stayed at home. It was mentioned that it is much harder when both parents are away.

All children that participated in the discussion, directly or indirectly, also feel responsability for the situation related to their parents' departure. This fact was perceived throughout the discussions and on each topic discussed, children through intonation or directly mentioned that their parents left to give them a better future.

Quotations:

“In my case, as a child I grew up with my grandmothers and I was already used to it. The difference is that I grew up, I matured. When I was little, I was always angry with my parents because I didn't understand why they left me. I knew it was because of the money, but of course I wasn't mentally developed enough to really figure it out. But now I'm starting to understand them more and more because I realize it's all for my own good.” (I. FG_C_01)

“... changed was, that I now understand.” (P. FG_C_01)

“... I was younger, I didn't understand why my mother was leaving, she left me, I mean, not that she left me, I mean she left for a long period of time, already with age I understand that here she is gone to work, and to create a better future for her and me”. (P. FG_C_02)

“Money stole my childhood, sometimes I regret it, sometimes I'm glad.” (L. FG_C_02)

The children want their parents to be more integrated in life in Moldova, to visit some beautiful places. They want to encourage the parents, that not everything is so bad in our country. I feel sorry for the parents.

“I'm talking about me personally, I don't see a difference because I see, that my mother goes to work and she doesn't come... I always tell her to go with... and there to see something else from Moldova. This is how it was done in Orheiland, let her see there too, but she doesn't want to. (L. FG_C_02)

The topics where Community Social Services were discussed did not generate to much talks. The majority of children do not expect special actions from the community. They would like more cultural and sports activities to be organized for all children.

They receive emotional, moral and psychological support rather from grandmothers, older sisters and brothers, friends, psychologists, teachers and from God.

Quotations:

“I think that emotional support can be in the case of girls and a friend because sometimes you can really talk about anything, that is, over the years you have gained trust in her and you can tell anything and she always supports you and is even by your side”. (V. FG_C_01)

“… we are part of an association made by father N, there we keep talking about problems in society, about different topics.... Yes ..., with us, the father does this very well, because he can help us with good advice...”. (M. FG_C_02)

The children are waiting that the local public administration will create more jobs so that their parents can work in Moldova.

"...it would be better if there were more jobs and possibly the parents would stay here longer, in Moldova they would work and receive the same, because it is not enough." (V. FG_C_01)

On the last topic regarding Future prospects and recommendations for other children who are in similar situations, each child was asked to respond. Most believe that it would be best for the parents to take the children with them when they leave, or not to leave at all. They advises other children not to be angry with their parents and to understand that they too are having a hard time.

Quotations:

"In the future I still want to go, I will go, I will go and I will take my mother with me and I will insist that we go somewhere and travel and see new places." (L. FG_C_02)

"I would take my whole family with me because it is a big mistake to leave children in the hands of someone else, regardless of the circumstances". (I. FG_C_01)

"If I were a parent, I would take the children if I could find a very good job, they would pay me, that would be normal, but if the job was not settled, I would not take the children". (D. FG_C_01)

"My advice would be for the children left at home to try to understand and not be angry with their parents for making this decision". (P. FG_C_01)

"I don't let my child go through what I know I went through. I wouldn't have the courage that my parents had". (L. FG_C_01)

Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be mentioned that in focus group research with children it is very important to create an atmosphere of understanding. Especially since this technique allows the generation of honest responses in a relatively free discussion among peers. Children are more honest, and the behavioral stereotypes imposed by society are not yet so strong when uses focus groups interviews. The age difference between the moderator (researcher) is a factor that demotivates children to be open in communication. The mature person is perceived by them as a mentor, not as an equal interlocutor. In this context, the moderator has the task not only to manage the existing relationships, but also to create a comfortable environment for the participants in the discussions. I consider that in the researches that adults do with children, an introductory discussion are welcome, because it would relax the children and will create a correct attitude towards their role in the research. Furthermore, in the discussions held with children in the framework of various sociological researches, the vector of the respondents' attitude towards the researcher cannot be neglected.

The analysis of results of focus group interviews with children, carried out within the project Children left behind by labor migration: supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian transnational families in the EU (CASTLE, 2022) showed, that children left at home, without parents receive less love and warmth. These children develop and mature faster, they become more serious, more responsible. Directly or indirectly, the children feel responsibility for the situation related to their parents' departure. The majority of children do not expect special actions from the community, they rather want to receive emotional, moral and psychological support from the people around. And, of course most of children believe that it would be best for the parents to take the children with them when they leave, or not to leave at all.

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Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.06

BUILDING SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE AND ANTIFRAGILITY: STRATEGIES AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR MITIGATING DISRUPTIONS

Iulia IVAȘCENCO*[1]

Abstract: *This paper examines the role of redundancy and robust supplier relationships in enhancing supply chain resilience, specifically focusing on the cosmetics industry. It explores strategic redundancy measures such as maintaining safety stock levels, diversifying transportation modes, strategic distribution center locations, and collaborating with backup suppliers. The study further discusses the importance of robust supplier relationships and details strategies to strengthen these relationships, including effective communication, collaborative planning, aligning goals, and fair and ethical treatment. To illustrate these concepts, the paper leverages case studies from global corporations, including Unilever, Estée Lauder, Toyota, Nike, Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Apple, and Walmart. Conclusively, it provides future outlooks and actionable recommendations for enhancing resilience in the cosmetics industry's supply chain.*

Keywords: *supply chain management, antifragility, resilience, risk management, technology.*

UDC: *687.5:005.552*

JEL Code: *O14, Q55, L25, D22.*

Introduction

In the cosmetics industry's vibrant and rapidly evolving domain, the strategic management of increasingly complex supply chains is paramount (Pereira de Carvalho & Barbieri, 2012). This industry's global reach has amplified the supply chains' complexity and simultaneously elevated their vulnerability to a diverse range of disruptions. As a result, each facet of the supply chain, encompassing raw materials sourcing, manufacturing, packaging, and distribution, is laden with unique challenges and potential points of failure (Frederico, 2021).

Recent global incidents, encompassing natural disasters, geopolitical conflicts, and the COVID-19 pandemic, have underlined the pressing need for supply chains that are resilient and antifragile—capable of surviving and thriving amid disruptions (Taleb, 2012). This pressing concern forms the crux of the research problem this study aims to address: How can cosmetics companies fortify their supply chains to ensure their resilience and antifragility in the face of potential disruptions?

Flowing from this research problem, the study poses the following questions: What strategies can be employed to reinforce the resilience and antifragility of supply chains within the cosmetics industry? How can redundancy be effectively built into these supply

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Received: 15.03.2023 Accepted: 07.06.2023

chains? What role do robust supplier relationships play in this context, and how can they be cultivated and sustained? The investigation of these questions, illuminated by real-world examples, forms the core of this study.

1. Methodology

As this study is conceptual in nature, the methodology employed is fundamentally based on extensive literature reviews and the analysis of theoretical frameworks rather than relying on empirical qualitative research or specific case studies. This study's primary aim is to elucidate the concepts of redundancy and robust supplier relationships within the cosmetics industry's supply chain.

In order to achieve this aim, an integrative literature review approach was adopted. This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of extant literature spanning diverse but related fields, thereby ensuring the holistic capture of all pertinent conceptual perspectives and theoretical constructs (Torraco, 2005). The literature review extended across academic databases such as JSTOR, PubMed, and Google Scholar, incorporating both peer-reviewed academic articles and industry reports. Search criteria included combinations of keywords such as "cosmetics industry," "supply chain," "resilience," "antifragility," "redundancy," and "supplier relationships."

In addition, this study employs a conceptual analysis method, which involves identifying, examining, and interpreting the available information related to the constructs of redundancy and robust supplier relationships (Rodgers & Knalf, 2000). This methodology allows us to dissect these concepts thoroughly, explore their various dimensions and interconnections, and assess their potential application within the cosmetics industry's supply chains.

The findings derived from the literature review and conceptual analysis are then synthesized into a coherent narrative, illuminating the application of redundancy and strong supplier relationships in reinforcing supply chain resilience and antifragility in the cosmetics industry.

2. Challenges in the Cosmetics Supply Chain

The cosmetics industry encapsulates a highly sophisticated and multi-tiered supply chain, ranging from raw material acquisition to manufacturing, packaging, and, ultimately, distribution to end consumers (Fernie & Sparks, 2014). This supply chain's complexity is further augmented by its global reach, which necessitates the coordination of numerous suppliers, manufacturers, and distributors across different geographic locations, each with its own set of regulatory environments and market dynamics (Christopher, 2016).

Such complexity brings inherent vulnerabilities, as disruptions at any stage of the supply chain can reverberate through the entire system, leading to significant business interruptions and financial losses. Recent history bears testament to this vulnerability, as several disruptive events have critically impacted the cosmetics industry's supply chain.

Natural disasters, for instance, have had profound effects. For example, the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan caused severe disruptions in the global supply chain of cosmetics due to the country's significant role in producing and supplying specialty chemicals for the industry (Craighead et al., 2017). Similarly, geopolitical tensions, such as trade wars and economic sanctions, have led to import/export restrictions and tariffs that have disrupted supply chains and increased costs for cosmetics companies (Bode et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the susceptibility of the cosmetics supply chain to disruptions. Government-imposed lockdowns and social distancing measures have led to factory shutdowns, labor shortages, and disruptions in transportation and distribution networks (Ivanov, 2020). Additionally, consumer behavior has drastically changed, shifting towards online shopping, thus putting additional pressure on logistics and delivery systems (Gupta et al., 2020).

These examples highlight the urgent need for cosmetics companies to develop strategies to enhance the resilience and antifragility of their supply chains, enabling them to absorb shocks better, adapt to changes, and even thrive amidst disruptions.

3. Building Redundancy in the Cosmetics Supply Chain

Redundancy, as a concept within supply chain management, refers to the strategic replication of critical supply chain elements to establish contingency measures in the event of disruptions (Pavlov et al., 2019). Redundancy serves to cushion supply chains against unexpected occurrences such as natural calamities, labor strikes, or geopolitical unrest by providing alternative sources for supply and delivery, thereby enhancing the supply chain's overall flexibility and responsiveness (Azadegan et al., 2021).

Implementing redundancy within the cosmetics industry involves various strategies. One such strategy is the maintenance of safety stock levels of critical materials and products (Park, 2011). This ensures a buffer inventory that can meet demand surges or compensate for supply disruptions, thereby preventing production delays and ensuring timely delivery to customers.

Another strategy involves the diversification of transportation modes. Utilizing a variety of transport options such as air, sea, and land enables companies to pivot quickly should one mode face disruption, thereby maintaining the timely delivery of products (Mackay et al., 2020).

Strategic location of distribution centers across different regions also adds a layer of redundancy. It ensures that there are alternative options should one distribution center face disruption, thereby maintaining the smooth flow of products to customers (Shekarian & Mellat Parast, 2021).

Additionally, collaborating with backup suppliers for key materials and products safeguards against single-source dependencies (Kamalahmadi et al., 2022). This contingency planning can prevent production delays and ensure that products are delivered to customers on time.

Leading cosmetics companies, such as Unilever and Estée Lauder, have successfully integrated redundancy into their supply chains. Unilever, for example, has implemented measures such as maintaining safety stock levels, diversifying transportation modes, strategically locating distribution centers, and working with backup suppliers to ensure smooth operations even during disruptions (Bilovodska et al., 2018; Unilever, 2023). Similarly, Estée Lauder has fortified its supply chain by maintaining safety stock levels, utilizing diverse transportation modes, and establishing strong relationships with backup suppliers (Brun & Karaosman, 2020).

4. Nurturing Robust Supplier Relationships

Sustaining robust relationships with suppliers is a cornerstone for constructing a resilient supply chain, particularly in the context of an intricate and volatile industry such as cosmetics (Faruquee, Zhang, & Thürer, 2021). These relationships, fortified by trust and collaborative efforts, can significantly contribute to the mitigation of risks, enhancement of operational efficiency, and promotion of innovation within the supply chain (Chen, Wang, Nevo, Jin, Wang, & Chow, 2019).

Effective communication is a fundamental element in nurturing robust supplier relationships (Chen et al., 2019). Regularly updating suppliers about the company's requirements, and keeping abreast of supply chain developments, can build trust and transparency, fostering a timely resolution of potential issues. A notable exemplar of this principle is Toyota, whose comprehensive supplier communication system divulges information on production plans, inventory levels, and delivery schedules (Marksberry, 2012), thereby enabling suppliers to align their production schedules, reduce delay risks, and boost overall efficiency in the supply chain.

Collaborative planning constitutes another vital strategy for strengthening supplier relationships (Duong & Chong, 2020). By working in concert with suppliers to formulate planning processes and identify potential risks and opportunities, companies can enhance efficiency, curtail costs, and elevate the quality of products and services. Nike, for instance, has instituted a Lean Manufacturing program that promotes collaboration with suppliers to refine production processes and minimize waste (Porteous & Rammohan, 2013). This program has yielded substantial cost savings for both Nike and its suppliers, and has also improved product quality.

Aligning goals with suppliers and striving collectively towards shared objectives is yet another strategy that can build trust and ensure suppliers' commitment to meeting a company's needs and expectations. Coca-Cola's supplier sustainability program, which is designed to reduce environmental impact and endorse sustainable business practices throughout its supply chain, serves as an example of this approach (Walsh & Dowding, 2012).

Lastly, treating suppliers ethically and fairly, including punctual payments and adhering to contractual terms, helps foster long-term commitment from suppliers. Procter & Gamble's supplier diversity program aims to promote diversity and inclusion in its supply chain by working with small and diverse businesses, providing access to training and development opportunities, and ensuring fair payment for goods and services (Gould, Karunaratne, & Sanders, 2020).

Companies such as Apple and Walmart have also demonstrated the benefits of solid supplier relationships. Apple has established a supplier code of conduct outlining expectations for ethical and sustainable business practices and collaborates closely with suppliers to identify opportunities for cost savings and efficiency improvements (Kashmanian, 2018). Similarly, Walmart's supplier sustainability program encourages suppliers to adopt more sustainable practices, resulting in significant cost savings and waste reduction in the supply chain (Neebe, 2020).

In conclusion, developing robust supplier relationships is instrumental in crafting a resilient and antifragile supply chain. Regular communication, collaborative planning, goal alignment, and fair and ethical treatment of suppliers are key strategies that, when implemented effectively, can significantly enhance the resilience of the supply chain in the cosmetics industry.

Conclusions

The cosmetics industry navigates a complex and multifaceted supply chain, accentuated by globalization and rapid growth. It is increasingly evident that disruptions, such as natural disasters, geopolitical tensions, and pandemics, pose significant threats to the continuity of supply chains, thereby underlining the need for resilience and antifragility. This study explored two key strategies to fortify cosmetics supply chains, namely building redundancy and nurturing robust supplier relationships.

Redundancy serves as a failsafe mechanism within the supply chain, acting as a buffer to unforeseen disruptions. It involves the deliberate duplication of supply chain components, such as suppliers, transportation modes, and distribution centers. Notably, Unilever and Estée Lauder have successfully integrated redundancy into their operations, offering a blueprint for other firms in the industry.

Strong supplier relationships, on the other hand, function as a strategic partnership that facilitates risk management, efficiency, and innovation. Establishing effective communication, collaborating on planning processes, aligning goals, and treating suppliers ethically form the cornerstone of such relationships. Cases of Toyota, Nike, Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Apple, and Walmart exemplify these principles, yielding benefits such as improved efficiency, reduced costs, and a more sustainable supply chain.

Looking ahead, it is paramount for the cosmetics industry to view these strategies not as optional, but as integral components of their supply chain management. As the external environment continues to evolve and present new challenges, firms must constantly revisit and refine their strategies, ensuring that they are adequately prepared for potential disruptions. Future research should delve into quantifying the benefits of these strategies and identifying the best practices for their implementation.

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Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.07

KEY FACTORS IN SELECTING ECONOMIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA CASE STUDY

Ecaterina ȘIȘCAN*[1]

Abstract: *Economic higher education institutions in the country operate in an extremely complex and dynamic environment, characterized by demographic decline of the population, mass emigration of the younger population, high level of competition on the national and international markets, quantitative reduction in the demand for higher education services and the change of its structure, etc. The challenges from the external environment bring to the attention of university management the need to develop effective marketing strategies for the attraction and retention of students. The success of this approach largely depends on the awareness of potential students' motivations for applying to a training program and the criteria for choosing the university. Understanding the expectations and preferences of potential customers allows the design and development of more relevant educational programs and services, the development of effective communication strategies, that help recruit and retain a sufficient number of students to achieve the educational and financial goals. In this vein, the present study aims to analyze the existing behavioral models to identify the determinants that influence the university selection process by potential students. At the same time, the paper presents the results of the survey carried out in order to identify the key factors used by Moldovan students in the process of choosing the training program and the economic education provider. This study is part of a complex descriptive research on the behavior of consumers of economic higher education services.*

Keywords: *higher education, economic education, educational marketing, students' behavior, students' choice*

UDC: *378.4(478)*

JEL Code: *M31, M37, I23*

Introduction

One of the most important challenges faced by higher education in the Republic of Moldova today, including the economic one, is the constant reduction in the number of students. In the last 15 years, the number of students enrolled in higher education has dropped by more than twice. The same downward trend is recorded in higher economic education attesting a fall in demand by almost 65% during this period. At the same time, the analysis of quantitative and structural developments on the market of higher education services allows us to note that the training programs in the field of economic sciences remain at the top of consumer preferences, covering about 1/5 of the global demand volume. In part, this can be explained by the potential consumers' perceptions of the benefits they expect to gain as a result of consumption. Economic studies are often

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Received: 26.04.2023 Accepted: 07.06,2023

associated with employment prospects, career advancement or starting their own business, social status, etc.

Another challenge for economic higher education institutions in the effort to attract and retain students is the fierce competition on the educational market. The level of competition on the domestic market remains quite high, even if the number of educational institutions registers a downward trend. Currently, the offer on the educational market is represented by 21 higher education institutions (NBS, 2022), and more than a half of them offer training programs in the field of economic sciences. At the same time, the intensification of competition is also felt on the international higher education market. According to the experts' estimates (Ioniță, 2022), about 40% of all young Moldovans applied for higher studies in universities abroad.

In this context, it is increasing the importance and relevance for decision-makers within universities of reference studies for the identification of incentives, selection of criteria and the main factors that influence the decision-making process of acquiring future students. Understanding these behavioral determinants allows university management to adapt their recruitment strategies and other marketing activities to increase the educational institution's chances of being selected.

Starting from these reasons, within the limits of this paper we propose (1) to present the conceptual framework for exploring the factors that influence the decision to choose the university, (2) to identify the key factors considered by the Moldovan students in the process of choosing the training program and the economic education provider as well as (3) to analyze of the evolution of these factors over time.

1. Literature review

The existing competition on the national and international markets of economic higher education services highlights the importance of applying educational marketing strategies to attract and retain students. The development of appropriate strategies requires the need to study the behavior of the consumer of educational services. Understanding the expectations and preferences of potential customers contributes to designing and elaborating of much more relevant educational programs and services; developing effective communication strategies to attract and retain customers; improving the customer experience and, as a result, a stronger connection with the educational institution; development of loyalty strategies for the customers of educational services, etc.

A special place in behavioral studies belongs to understanding of how the prospective student makes the purchase decision and what are the determinants of the choice of the training program and of the university. Studying the factors that influence the decision to choose an educational institution is important for several reasons. Thus, M.Shah (2010) claims that the knowledge of behavioral determinants offers the educational institution a series of benefits, such as:

Received: 26.04.2023 Accepted: 07.06,2023

- understanding the reasons why prospective students prefer one university to the others;
- the information could and should be used by universities in developing marketing plans;
- it allows to get to know the students' expectations and to adopt strategies that could be implemented to improve their experience in the process of creation and consumption of educational services (cited by Manoku, 2015, p. 256).

The review of publications devoted to the investigation of the behavior of the consumer of educational services shows that there are a number of models, that analyze the process of choosing a university. The main differences between these models are determined by the description of the variables and how they affect the marketing decisions aimed at encouraging prospective students to pursue the institution's offer. What unites these models is the deeper understanding and systematization of the factors that influence the choice. Thus, the authors highlight a diversity of factors, both objective and subjective, that influence the future student's decision. These factors are correlated with the criteria, the students use when evaluating possible alternatives. Although the studies attest to the existence of some common elements, the importance given to these factors in the process of evaluating the alternatives varies from case to case.

The synthesis of the research results carried out by several authors allows us to identify three groups of factors that influence the decision to choose the educational intitution by potential students (figure 1).

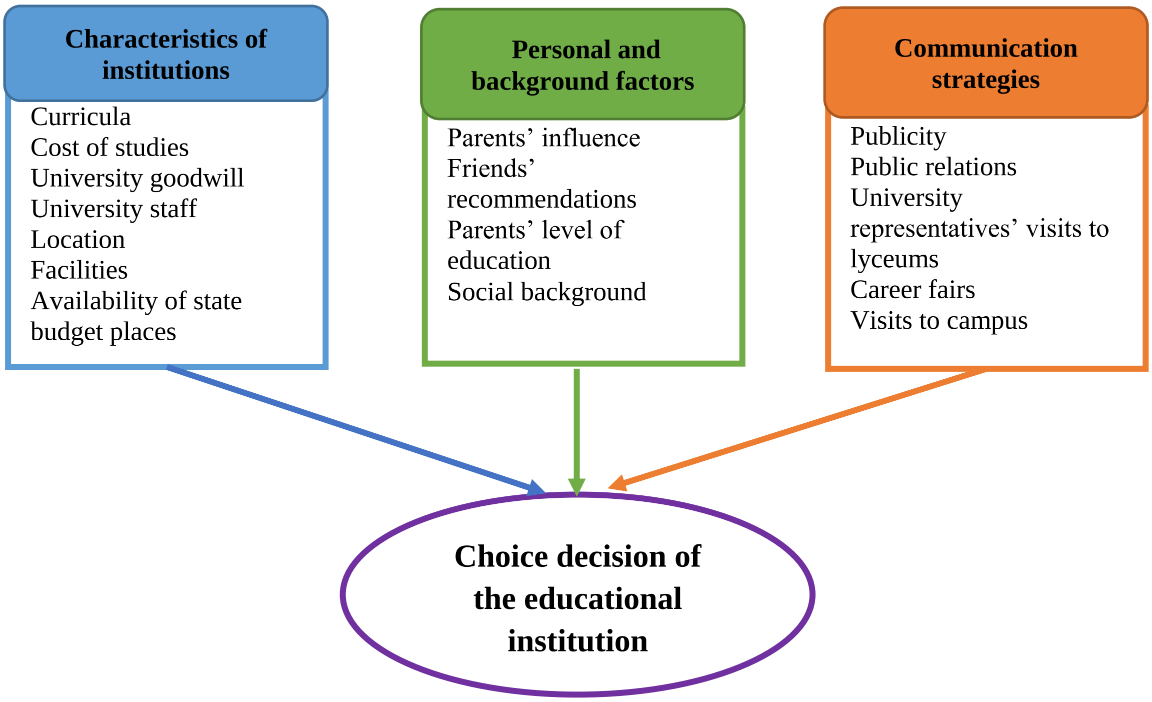

Figure 1. Factors that influence the decision to choose an educational institution

Source: *developed by the author based on Maceachern & Yun, 2017; Maniu & Maniu, 2014; Ming, 2010; Shammot, 2011, Connie, G. et al., 2022*

According to the model presented in the figure above, two groups of factors are of interest for the development of marketing strategies: institutional characteristics and communication strategies. It is on these variables that the educational institution can intervene to influence the behavior of potential consumers (Ming, 2010, p. 55).

Next, we aim to identify which of the variables presented in the model exert a stronger impact on the decision of young Moldovans to opt for higher economic studies.

2. Data and Methodology

This study is part of a complex descriptive research on the behavior of consumers of economic higher education services. This research aims to identify the key factors considered by Moldovan students in the process of choosing the training program in the economic field and the educational institution. The analysis of the results of the studies published in the specialized literature allowed the identification and systematization of the factors subject to the research. The survey was used to collect primary data, and the data collection tool – the questionnaire. The survey was attended by 640 students and master's students attending economic training courses. Sampling was performed using stratified random sampling. Thus, the sample is representative according to two variables: the field of training and the training level of the respondents. In terms of statistical accuracy, a sample of this size has a sampling error of ± 3.87% at the 95% confidence level. The questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms. The period in which the present study was carried out is November-December 2022.

3. The Model and Findings

Studying the motivation of consumers of educational services is important both for identifying the direction in which demand will evolve on the educational market, and for defining educational policies at the national level. For the higher education institution, this information is useful to define its marketing policies and strategies.

In this context, the survey participants were asked to indicate the reasons why they opted for a study program in the field of economics. The percentage of answers to this question is presented in figure 2.

According to the results obtained, the majority of respondents (70.8%) indicated "career prospects" as the reason for choosing the study program, followed by "the prospect of obtaining higher earnings" and "the desire to develop their own business", mentioned by 47.8% and 41.5% of the respondents, respectively.

Starting from these results, we can state that the decision of the potential student is, most often, conscious, rational and future-oriented, a fact that confirms the existing theories in the specialized literature according to which the individual is predisposed to invest in education, if he believes that they will get higher earnings in the future.

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.07

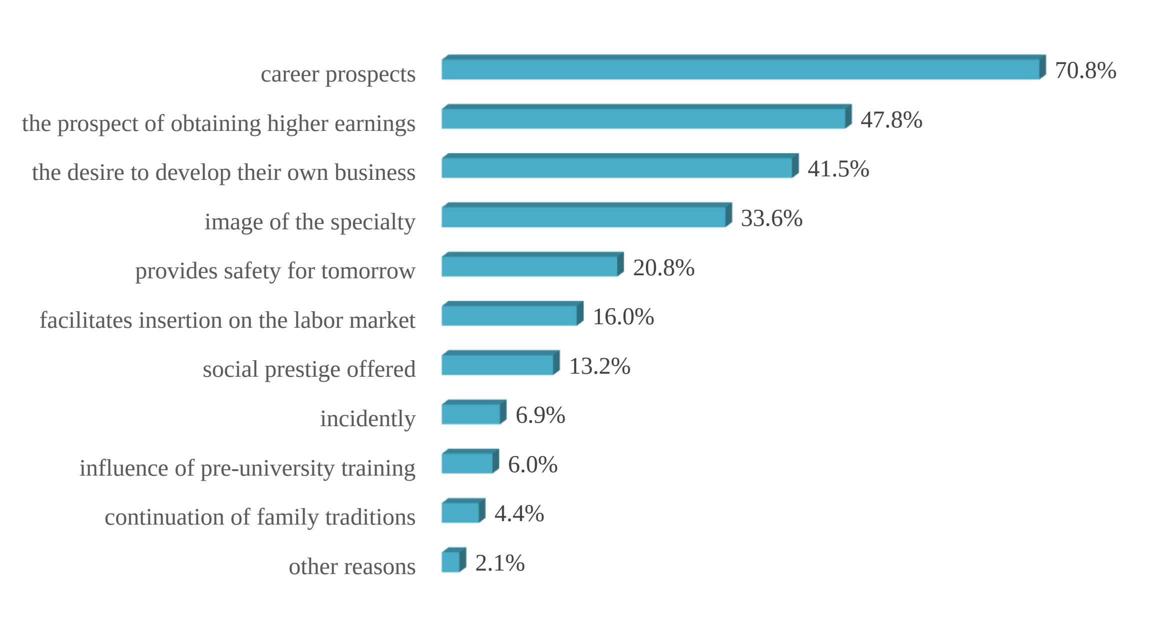

Figure 2. Reasons for choosing the study program in the economic field (%)
***Source**: developed by the author based on survey results*

According to some studies, there is a significant difference in wages between young people with higher and secondary education. For example, in Sweden this difference is about 18%, in Korea about 30%, and in Hungary about 40% (Prodan, 2017, p. 165).

At the same time, with relatively high frequencies in the responses of the survey participants, such determinants as "image of the specialty" (33.6%), "provides safety for tomorrow" (20.8%) and "facilitates insertion on the labor market" are found (16.0%). These results confirm the hypothesis that the unemployment risks perceived by the applicants of training programs in the economic field are lower compared to other fields. As a result, even with the oversaturation of the economist market, training programs in economics remain at the top of consumer preferences.

The variants "social prestige offered" (13.2%), "influence of pre-university training" (6.0%) and "continuation of family traditions" (4.4%) appear with a lower frequency in the students' answers.

If the choice of the field of study is determined by perceptions of career opportunities and financial satisfaction, prospective students' university choice decisions are influenced by a number of institutional factors. Among the main factors identified in the previous research are: the educational programs offered, the cost of the program, the image of the institution, the proficiency of the staff, the facilities offered, the availability of budget places, etc.

In order to identify the degree of influence of these factors on the decision to choose the educational institution that offers training programs in the economic field, the respondents were asked to appreciate the importance of these factors on a one-to-five-point scale. Based on the answers, the average level of importance of the factors was calculated.

Thus, in the result of the analysis we find that the "quality of training" was indicated as the most important factor in choosing the educational institution, accumulating an

Eastern European Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.07

average score of 4.61 p. On the next three positions, according to the opinion of the respondents, were placed the “quality of the teaching staff" (4.54 p.), "the educational programs offered" (4.44 p.) and "the image of the educational institution" (4.26 p.).

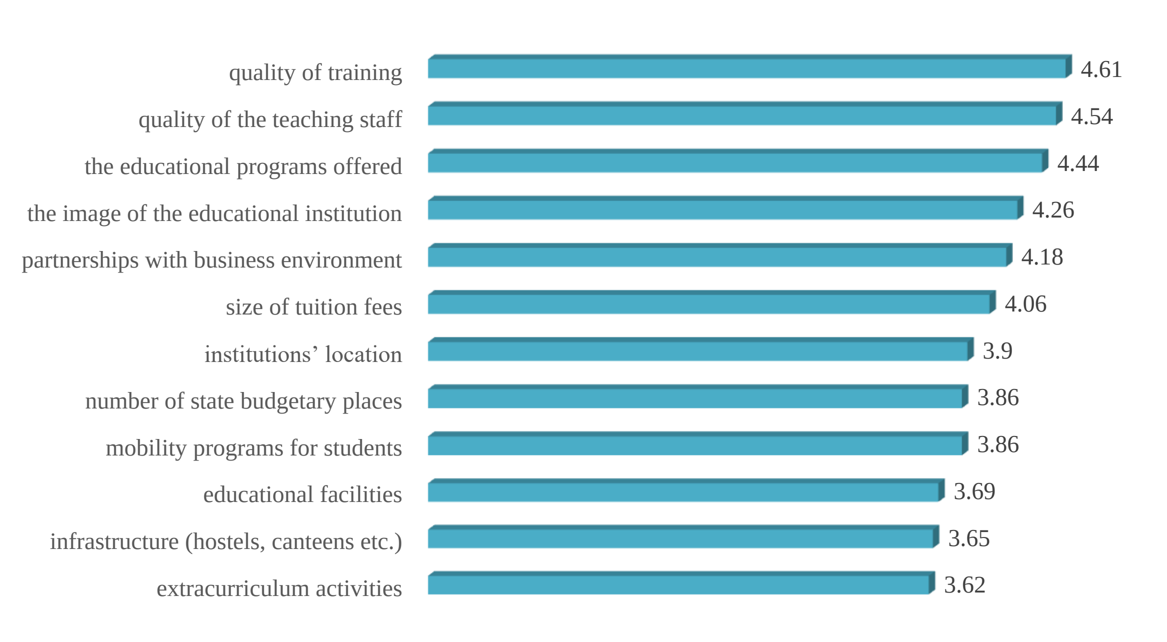

Figure 3. Appreciation of the degree of importance of the factors considered in the choice of the educational institution
***Source**: developed by the author based on survey results*

In comparison, according to the results of a similar study carried out in 2019, the most important factor considered by students was the "training program" which reached the highest score (4.28 p.), followed by the "quality of the teaching staff" (4.02 p) and "the image of the educational institution" (3.46 p.) (Sișcan & Zgherea, 2019, p. 113). It can be noticed that within a short period of time there was a change of accents. Currently the future students are opting for quality studies that would allow them to obtain a solid base of knowledge and skills to become competitive in the labor market and develop a successful career.

Taking into account the importance of price as an impact factor on the behavior of the consumer of products and services, and especially the price-quality ratio, the hypothesis was formulated that the quality of services and their price are the most important criteria in choosing an educational institution. In this sense, we note that the hypothesis was only partially confirmed, as the price accumulated an importance score of 4.06 p., placing itself in the middle position of this top.

Comparing the results obtained within the limits of this study with those reflected in the publications of researchers in the field, we find that although the behavioral determinants of Moldovan students are largely the same, the importance given to them in the university choice process varies. Thus, researchers E.Manoku (2015), M.M.Shammot (2011) identify "the cost of the study program" as the most important factor affecting the

Received: 26.04.2023 Accepted: 07.06,2023 https://csei.ase.md/journal

decision to choose a university. M.J.MacEachern and D.Yun (2017), in turn, studying the factors that influence the choice of Chinese students, conclude that "educational facilities" is the most important factor of students' motivation. The results obtained by the Russian researcher Хлабыстова Н.В. (2014) showed that among the top three influencing factors are: "quality of training", "image of the institution" and "parents' influence". A study by Connie, G. et al. (2022) showed that the majority of Malaysian students are influenced by the "programs offered by the universities".

Another group of factors with an impact on the decision to choose a higher education institution is the communication strategy. For the foundation of an effective promotional communication strategy, it is important for the university to know the sources of information used by potential students in the process of information on the educational offer. Understanding how prospective students search for information and make their decisions about which universities to consider can help a university focus its marketing efforts on the right channels and messages.

In this vein, the following question sought to identify the sources of information most often accessed by respondents in the process of documenting the educational offer and evaluating the alternatives (figure 4).

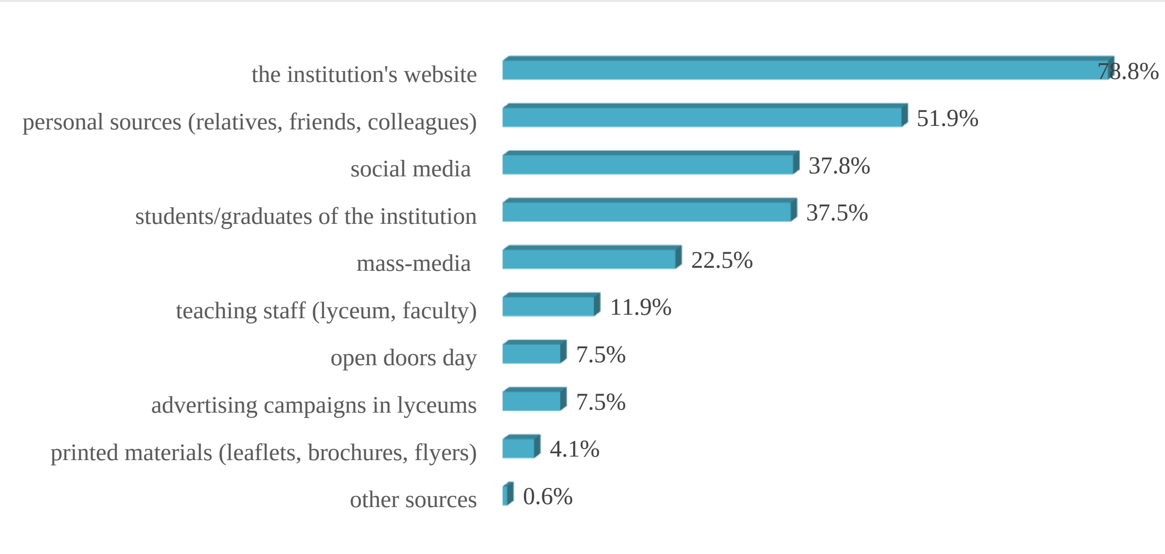

Figure 4. Sources of information on the educational offer (%)

Source*: developed by the author based on survey results*

The results presented in the figure above show that the most popular source of information is the institution's website, indicated by 78.8% of the respondents. These results support the idea that websites are usually the starting point in the information process on educational offers. Furthermore, according to the results of Afzal Basha's study (Rajkumar et al., 2021), 43% of enrollment decisions were made as a result of visiting the university's official website. Prospective students are looking for information about study programs, tuition fees, facilities and the experiences of other students. A well-structured and easy-to-navigate website can go a long way in attracting students.

In the next three positions are personal sources (relatives, friends, colleagues), which were mentioned by 48.8% of the survey participants, social media (37.8%) and students/graduates of the educational institution (37.5%). Thanks to its credibility, many potential students are guided by the recommendations of friends or other people they know to choose their university. Therefore, universities should encourage students and alumni to share their positive experiences and provide them with a platform to do so.

At the same time, it is worth noting that only 56.3% of the respondents affirmed with certainty that the information provided by the universities was useful in their approach to information on the educational offer.

The data obtained highlight the need to provide the most complex, up-to-date and relevant information through the official university websites, social networks, as well as to grow the positive image so as to generate personal recommendations.

Conclusions

In the current context of economic, social and technological development, the efforts of economic higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova, more than ever, are oriented towards the development of marketing strategies focused on attracting and retaining students. This approach imposes the need to know the factors considered by the students when choosing their university.

Based on the study, we can conclude that the behavioral determinants of Moldovan students in the process of choosing an economic higher education institution do not have significant differences compared to students from other countries, except only in terms of the importance given to the factors. The comparative analysis of the results of the surveys carried out at three-year interval shows that, currently, potential students attach much more importance to quality criteria when choosing the economic education provider. Thus, among the most important factors that determined the choice of the university, the survey participants mentioned "the quality of training", "the quality of the teaching staff", "the study programs offered" and "the image of the educational institution". We can find that in the case of Moldovan students, the institutional characteristics have a considerably greater impact on the decision to choose the educational institution compared to the other two groups of factors. By working on the improvement of these factors universities would obtain important sources of competitive advantages.

Regarding the main motivators for choosing the study program, students indicated "career prospects", "the prospect of obtaining high earnings" and "the desire to develop their own business". Knowing these factors can help higher education institutions develop their curricula and adapt them to the needs of students.

At the same time, information on behavioral determinants can be successfully used by universities as support for defining communication strategies, as well as adjusting the content of promotional communication in order to attract and recruit potential students.

Received: 26.04.2023 Accepted: 07.06,2023

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Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.08

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION REGARDING RETURNED MIGRANTS. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Dorin VACULOVSCHI*[1]
Raisa DOGARU*[2]

Abstract. *The given article describes the trends of return migration, but also the situation of labor migrants returned to the Republic of Moldova, the factors that initially led to labor migration, and then to their return. The very process of migrants' return presents them with the same difficulties and challenges as in the case of their going to work abroad. Citizens returning home face a lack of jobs, impediments in the recognition of diplomas and qualifications obtained abroad, difficulties in the process of opening a business, etc. However, the state makes great efforts to stimulate the return of labor migrants, but also their (re)integration into society. However, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948), the right of citizens to return to their countries of origin is a right recognized and reaffirmed in other international normative acts, such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (United Nations Convention, 1990).*

Keywords: *labor migration, return migrants, challenges of return migrants*

UDC: *314.745.4:331.526(478)*

JEL Code: *J6*

Introduction

In addition to economic and social benefits, labor migration can also generate certain major social risks related, first of all, to the loss of human capital, demographic imbalances, population aging, as well as increasing pressure on the social security system, etc. which any state of origin is interested in avoiding through its migration policies. In this context, for the countries of origin, the migration policy must be based, first of all, on the temporary nature of labor migration, and migrants should always have the opportunity and motivation to return home.

For countries of origin, such as the Republic of Moldova, the actuality of the problem of the return of migrants is determined by the following reasons:

- labor migrants represent a valuable demographic potential for the country;
- migrants are able to take risks, express themselves and realize themselves in a foreign, initially unfavorable environment;

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Received: 09.05.2023 Accepted: 09.06.2023

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.08

- labor migrants are people who have earned money and are able to invest it in the development of the economy and the community (Mosneaga V., 2012, 153 p.).

Return migration is considered to contribute to local development even more than remittances. It is obvious that a simple invitation to migrants to return home is not successful, if it is not complemented by offering a solid package of incentives that can make this option acceptable to the people concerned. The returned migrant must be reintegrated not only in the labor market, but also in society. Such problems as the access of the migrant's family members to health services, to social security benefits, to the educational system must also be taken into consideration. Maintaining the link between labor migrants and their country of origin will encourage their contacts and the participation of migrants in the life of their country of origin and thus facilitate their reintegration process.

The very process of return puts the migrants in front of the same difficulties and challenges as in the case of going to work abroad. Citizens returning home encounter impediments in finding a job, in recognizing diplomas and qualifications obtained in other countries, in the process of opening a business, in enrolling children in educational institutions, etc. In this context, the state that is interested in the return of migrants must make credible efforts to facilitate the process of (re)integration of returned migrants in the labor market, in general, in social networks, so that they become active citizens for the Republic of Moldova. However, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right of citizens to return to their countries of origin is a right recognized and reaffirmed in other international normative acts, such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families.

The Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda provide for an equitable approach for various categories of citizens, including migrant workers. It is accompanied by a series of key tools and mechanisms for achieving people-centered economic development, being anchored in several of the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration (Global Compact on Migration, 2019), in particular: objective 3 with reference to providing information at all stages of migration; objective 12, regarding ensuring the certainty and predictability of procedures related to migration; objective 18 regarding the development and recognition of qualifications; and in a particular part of the objective no. 21 on facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration.

However, there is some negative self-selection in the process of returning migrants, as many returnees are less competitive compared to migrants who remain abroad. However, the capabilities and productivity of many returning migrants appear to be more advanced than they were when they left.

The return of migrants, especially the individually planned one, requires appropriate information and concrete measures that both public authorities and non-governmental organizations specialized in the field can provide.

At the moment, the issue of the return of labor migrants has become extremely topical due to the deplorable situation on the labor market. The Republic of Moldova has one of the lowest employment rates in Central and Eastern Europe (42-43% in 2021). The low unemployment rate (3.2%) masks the extremely low level of activity and employment. The employment structure reveals that, for the most part, workers are concentrated in agricultural activities (21.5% of the total number of jobs), as well as in public administration, education and social assistance (22.9%) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Another challenge for the labor market in the Republic of Moldova is the low level of labor productivity: the gross added value generated by an employed person oscillates around 30-40% of the average of the same indicator in Central and Eastern European countries (author's estimate). This fact shows how low the technological performance of Moldovan firms is and their limited capabilities to generate added value. A major problem affecting labor productivity is also the high level of the informal economy, which accounts aproximativelly a fourth of the entire economy (NBS). The share of young people which are not in employment or vocational training (NEET)[3] is 26.4%, which is twice the European average. In this context, a valuable group put back into the economic circuit would be that of returned migrants, who have gained experience of work in the countries where they worked and studied. For this reason, active policies are needed to stimulate the return and social reintegration of returned migrants.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the situation of returned migrants from the Republic of Moldova, the challenges they face, as well as the solutions proposed by the public authorities, so that the return of labor migrants avoids any social risks, and the value added by migrants to really contribute to a sustainable development of the Republic of Moldova. The article comes with a series of recommendations that would lead to the change of the socio-human life of returned migrants, as well as to diminishing the motives of migrants to go back abroad.

This article uses as factual material the results of the IOM Study "Migration for the purpose of work: The profile and current challenges of Moldovan migrant workers in the main destination countries, the provisions of legislative acts regarding integration opportunities" (ILO, 2020). Also, the article is based on some provisions of the National Employment Program for the years 2022-2026 (Government Decision no. 785, 2022), of the National Strategy "Diaspora -2025" (Governement Decision no. 200, oh 26.02.2016), of the National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030" (Law no. 315 of 17.11.2022).

1. Literature review

For a more in-depth analysis of the given subject, factual data presented by the National Bureau of Statistics, by NEA, as well as some studies carried out by representatives of civil society, through the competition of international organizations, were used. In this context, the IOM study "Migration for work purposes: The profile and current challenges of Moldovan

[3] NEET young people: young people who are not part of the employed population, do not study/learn within the formal education system and do not participate in any kind of courses or other training outside the formal education system. It is estimated for the age groups 15-24 years, 15-29 years and 15-34 years.

migrant workers in the main destination countries, the provisions of legislative acts regarding integration opportunities" (IOM, 2020) can be mentioned.

2. Data and Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in the elaboration of the article, such as: sociological observation method, document analysis, and statistical data. Statistical data of the National Bureau of Statistics, of NEA, as well as some data taken from various studies carried out in recent years were used.

3. Analysis of the situation regarding returned migrants

In the contemporary stage, the world economy is in full transformation. Modern industry is increasingly transitioning to a production model based entirely on automation and robots. This trend risks rendering the advantages of low- to medium-skilled labor irrelevant. Countries with technologically backward industrial sectors and a rather low degree of qualification of the labor force are particularly vulnerable in relation to the robotization process in developed countries, and the rate of liquidation of jobs in such countries is twice as high than in countries with a skilled workforce.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated trends in changing the content of work. People place greater emphasis on ethical, safe working conditions that allow for a better balance between personal and professional life. Remote work and virtual meetings are becoming a reality. Digital technologies have penetrated sectors that were traditionally seen as technologically backward, including agriculture. In the same context, the labor market follows an increasingly clear trend of accelerated growth of jobs that require a high level of qualification and remuneration, in parallel with the sharp increase in the gap between the wages of skilled and unskilled workers. Under these conditions, the economies of developed countries face a growing labor shortage, which leads to an increase in the demand for foreign specialists, a fact that stimulates the international labor migration of qualified specialists.

Against the background of these international trends, the Republic of Moldova faces a deplorable situation on the labor market, determined, in particular, by the unfavorable economic situation, the reduced capacity to create new productive and attractive jobs, the low level of wages compared to neighboring countries. For this reason, the labor market in the Republic of Moldova registers one of the lowest employment rates in Central and Eastern Europe (40.5% in 2022) (NBS, 2022). The low unemployment rate (3.2%) masks the extremely low level of activity and employment. The employment structure reveals that workers are mostly concentrated in agriculture (21.5% of all jobs) (NBS, 2022), as well as in public administration, education and social assistance (22.9%) (NBS, 2022). Another negative factor is the low level of productivity: the gross added value generated by an employed person oscillates around 30-40% of the average of the same indicator in Central and Eastern European countries (author's estimate), being determined by the low technological complexity of Moldovan companies and the capacities their limited ability to generate added value. A major problem affecting labor productivity, competitiveness, public revenues and the redistribution of value generated in the economy is the high prevalence of the informal economy, which accounts a quarter of the economy. One way to prevent the growth of vulnerabilities and precariousness, including in areas related to the future of work, to prevent the growth of income inequality, to regulate industrial relations, as well as to ensure inclusive and effective governance of the labor market is to strengthen institutions of social dialogue. The reduced internal mobility of human capital is also a major constraint in the development of the private sector. The share of young people not in employment or vocational training (NEET) is 26.2% - among young people aged 15-29 (2022) (NBS, 2022), which is twice the European average. The three biggest obstacles to ensuring the performance of private sector companies are: (i) insufficient level of technical occupational skills, (ii) poor motivation and (iii) unsatisfactory work ethic.

In the background of these challenges on the labor market in the Republic of Moldova, which is facing an acute shortage of qualified labor force, which compromises the prospects of a sustainable development, the issue of the return of labor migrants becomes imperative.

In general, the Republic of Moldova has demonstrated an increased interest in the issue of return migration, Diaspora and migration policies since 2012, elaborating a series of strategic documents, such as the Mechanism for the integrated approach to the field of Diaspora, Migration and Development (DMD) and implementing a series of policy instruments and programs specific to the field. Moldova was one of the leading countries in the development of policies and mechanisms for an integrated approach to the field. This is due to the large number of labor migrants, but also to increasing migration trends. At that time, in the return and reintegration policies of returned migrants, the focus was rather on the objective of informing the diaspora about the economic opportunities existing in the country. Because they were centrally focused, migrant return policies looked at return migration at the individual level, providing services and reintegration tools for citizens rather than communities. As a result, even if there were coherent initiatives and policies, the level of awareness of them by return migrants was low and their impact was much less than needed. Thus, the number of beneficiaries of continuous training programs oriented towards the needs of citizens of the Republic of Moldova returned from abroad in 2020 was 1605 people (registered with unemployed status). At the same time, in 2020, 38 continuous training programs were authorized for operation (NEA, 2022). In 2020, a number of 47 people validated their skills in the non-formal skills validation and certification centers established within the Center of Excellence in Construction and the Center of Excellence in Services and Food Processing. In 2021, the number of this category of people reached 300.

In general, the success of return and (re)integration policies depends on the degree of sustainability of return and (re)integration. There are several important indicators that can measure the sustainability of reintegration policies: the number of returned citizens; the number of returned citizens willing to leave again; the number of returned citizens who found a job; the number of returned citizens who opened a business; the number of returned and reintegrated mixed families; the number of open businesses and the ratio between the number of returned citizens, satisfied with the quality of life and the number of dissatisfied ones.

The Republic of Moldova must expand and create a new sustainable reintegration system. For this reason, one of the most relevant activities provided for in the 2017-2020 Action Plan regarding the (re)integration of citizens of the Republic of Moldova returned from abroad[4] was the establishment in 25 districts of the Interinstitutional Referral Mechanism for citizens returned from abroad (IRM), which represents a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the implementation of the IRM, signed by public authorities that provide various services, such as: the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection; Ministry of Education and Research; The Ministry of Economy; National Social Insurance House; National Medical Insurance Company; The National Employment Agency, the Public Services Agency, the District Councils, the local specialized bodies in the field of education, the health department, the economy/and investment attraction department, the social assistance and family protection department, the Territorial Employment Service of Work, Territorial Agency of the National Medical Insurance Company.

IRM aims to ensure the provision of quality social and professional (re-)integration services for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova returned from abroad, in a coordinated and multidisciplinary manner. For its implementation, the capacities of all trained actors were strengthened, and the Diaspora Relations Office ensures the coordination of this process, including organizing information sessions for the institutions involved (Government Decision no. 724/2017).

In the same context, through the "PARE 1+1" Program during 2020, consultations were provided for 3694 people, 201 people benefited from training and 187 investment projects were approved for financing. Out of the total number of businesses accepted for financing, 73 businesses (39.0%) were created by returned migrant workers, and 114 (61.0%) businesses were established by first-degree relatives of migrants[5]. The main indicators of the support programs show that in 2020, 3717 jobs were created and maintained, of which 551 within the "Start for young people" Program, 620 within the "PARE 1+1 Program", 593 "Women" in business", 1953 through the Digitization of SMEs tool (ODIMM, 2019).

Having said this, it can be concluded that the authorities are interested in the return of labor migrants and are making major efforts to make this happen. However, various studies show that the situation of returned migrants is not the best, and a good part of the

[4]The 2017-2020 action plan regarding the (re)integration of citizens of the Republic of Moldova returned from abroad intr09_128.pdf (gov.md)

[5] www.odimm.md

young population of the Republic of Moldova plans to migrate. Thus, according to the Generations and Gender Study Report (Report of the "Generations and Gender", 2021), 15.5% of respondents pointed out that they intend to move in the next three years to another country, the share of the city population with such an intention is higher than that of the village population , being 21% and 12.3%, respectively. Also, men have the intention to emigrate in the next three years to a greater extent than women, the proportion being 18.8% and 12.4%, respectively, and people with higher education and those who are single stood out with the highest shares in regarding the intention to emigrate in the next three years. Based on these, the Republic of Moldova needs a qualitatively new approach in managing the field of return and (re)integration.

At the same time, through readmission agreements concluded between Moldova and other states, the Migration and Asylum Office ensured the transfer of 758 people in 2020 (593 people from Germany and 137 from France). All persons were presented to be included in (re)integration programs at the local level. It is important that readmitted persons are (re)integrated successfully because usually these persons tend to emigrate repeatedly. It should be noted that the number of mixed families is increasing and hence the need for reintegration measures addressed to the families of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, affected by migration.

At the same time, the problems of those who have returned are accentuated. The migration situation in the Republic of Moldova continues to be critical. Thus, two thirds of the households of RM citizens, affected by migration, have one migrant abroad, 30.8% two or more, and the preferred destination countries remain the EU (72.7%) and the CIS (14.7%) (ILO, 2020). The migration profile of Moldovan citizens in these countries indicates either a circular migration (Russian Federation) or a close retirement age of migrants (Italy and Portugal). Migrants from the Russian Federation planned to return in proportion of 71%, Italy – 28%, Poland – 30%, Portugal – 21% (ILO, 2020).

Currently due to difficult travel conditions, the probability that a large part of these citizens will return home is very high, even if 50% of them declared that they had no intention of returning to the Republic of Moldova. Migrants from the Russian Federation planned to return in proportion of 71%, Italy – 28%, Poland – 30%, Portugal – 21%. A study conducted in 2020 by the International Organization for Migration, shows that 30% of respondents intend to return, of which 67% want to return as soon as possible, and 17% in 1-2 months, and another 18% do not they have decided on this for now. Men are more likely to return than female migrants (38% men vs. 25% women). The study shows that migrants who are in the country of destination based on their biometric passport are the most determined to return, constituting 44% of all respondents, followed by those with an EU passport (Romanian/Bulgarian) - 25% of respondents. It is found that the most likely to return are irregular migrants - 59% of the respondents of this group indicated that they intend to return. They are followed by respondents employed on fixed/short-term contracts, of which 43% intend to return. Those with service contracts expressed their desire to return two times less - 21% and only 15% of those with contracts for an indefinite period plan to return (IOM, 2020).

When asked what their personal plans are after returning home, 32% of those who want to return home indicated that they plan to stay in the country for a longer period to get a job or open a business, while 28% of these respondents plans to return back.

Another study shows that 66% of respondents would like to return to Moldova, if decent job opportunities appeared, with a minimum salary of 1,200-2,000 EUR. The conditions for returning home would be strong governance and the rule of law, including the creation of jobs and investment opportunities (IOM, 2020).

According to the National Employment Program for the years 2022-2026, active labor market policies must improve the functioning of the labor market, a precondition being their targeting to the groups most at risk of exclusion and ensuring adequate funding. The review of targeting approaches and the volume of funding, the modernization of employment services and the expansion of active labor market programs will be accompanied by the strengthening of the administrative capacity of the National Employment Agency to manage service delivery to a larger group diversified by clients (short and long-term unemployed, unemployed young people, returned migrants, people with disabilities, women returning to the labor market after child care leave, refugees, etc.)

According to the IOM study "Migration for work purposes: the profile and current challenges of Moldovan workers in the main destination countries" (IOM, 2020), the main reason for returning to the country was emotional. Homesickness was mentioned by over 20% of returned migrants, in approximately the same proportions of men and women.

A second reason was mentioned the expiration of the contract/work permit, - 21% of the respondents. Family insistence also played an important role - 19% of respondents, especially women. At the same time, over 65% of Moldovan citizens living and working abroad said that they would generally like to invest in Moldova mostly in tourism and education (39% of respondents). The majority (88% of respondents) believe that the main impediment to the diaspora's contribution to the development of the Republic of Moldova is the high level of corruption and lack of trust in institutions. Among the three most important impediments to the development of Moldova and ensuring the well-being of the population, the respondents mentioned: the high level of corruption and the lack of justice (76%), the lack of well-paid jobs/business development opportunities (44%) and the large inequalities/ poverty among population groups (40%).

Moldovans abroad also believe that the Government must invest more in justice, in the rule of law (38%) and in opportunities for economic empowerment on the labor market (32%). The system of integrated approach to the return and (re)integration of returned migrants needs a systemic qualitative restructuring, based on responsibility at the individual, central and local level. Returnees require extensive services focused on economic, social, and psychosocial needs.

The study showed that returnees may face a wide variety of challenges, including: the need for unemployment assistance and job search; lack of savings; lack of medical insurance; consultancy in the establishment and development of the business; the correspondence of jobs with the profile of the qualification obtained, the need to obtain the recognition of certain qualifications/skills or study documents obtained abroad; lack or expiration of identity documents; psychosocial problems or difficulties of (re)integration in the communities of origin; school (re-)integration of children, etc. The adoption of skills and habits, sometimes poorly aware, acquired abroad (e.g. speaking in Romanian with a foreign accent), the fear of competition shown by the locals who stayed in the country compared to those who returned home, in some cases generate attitudes of isolation and rejection within the community. These situations explained by individual and group psychology must be alleviated by the state and local authorities through a sustained effort.

Integrated and targeted programs could help these people return to the community, while capitalizing on their contribution to the development of the locality, taking into account the challenges and capitalizing on the existing opportunities at the community level, on which the success and sustainability of reintegration will depend. The system of integrated approach to return and (re)integration needs to move to a new qualitative level. The individualized approach to return and (re)integration sporadically contributes to the success of reintegration. The data shows that of the total number of returnees, more than 70% intend to leave again in the next 6 months, and 33.8% of the interviewees intend to settle down with their family abroad. In the opinion of the majority of respondents (33.7%-34.5%), the policies currently applied in the Republic of Moldova would not influence their decision to emigrate.

The Republic of Moldova does not have a mechanism to identify potential migrants, as this group is not regulated even in the current legislation. Thus, the number of people, potentially migrants, who benefited from the information services provided by the National Employment Agency cannot be estimated. NAE grants, through the National Reference System, information services, annually, to all those who apply. NEA informs about the advantages, disadvantages of migration and the risks of illegal migration during the 259 information seminars attended by 2937 people looking for a job. At the same time, during 2020, the Call Center recorded 1,985 calls that addressed the subject of emigration abroad. Informing potential migrants about the advantages, disadvantages of migration and the risks of illegal migration also takes place with the support of external donors and through international organizations (NEA, 2022).

The study showed that about 1/3 of the respondents (37% women and 28% men) called for information/services from private agencies in Moldova, about 30% both women and men - from private individuals abroad, about 20% each – to private persons from Moldova. Respondents from the urban environment and those with higher education prefer to turn for information to private individuals from the country or abroad, while those from the rural environment and the less educated - to private agencies in Moldova. At the same time, only 13% of the respondents called on NAE and/or the territorial subdivisions, among which the proportion of men is almost 20%[6].

Training for potential migrants is organized by Territorial Subdivisions for Employment of the Labor Force or by private employment agencies. Given that the declared intention of citizens to leave is high, it is important that the national mechanism for facilitating return and reintegration contains an information and counseling route for potential migrants, at their place of residence. At the current stage, the connection and communication between LPA and NAE is rather precarious. The focal points responsible for migration issues within NAE do not have a clear communication mechanism with those responsible for migration in the locals public autorities (LPA). One of the challenges of migrants is the loss of qualifications obtained in the Republic of Moldova. Only 17% of the respondents of the study managed to obtain the recognition of the studies they did in the Republic of Moldova, another 19% believe that only partially, and 1/3 gave a negative answer. The loss of qualifications is related not only to the lack of agreements between states, but also to the fact that few of the migrants are informed about the procedures of the destination countries and the need to prepare documents for the recognition of studies and qualifications before departure.

Among the problems and challenges of migrants during the migration period can be mentioned the loss of job (12%), the negative impact on well-being. Many of those who have lost their jobs are forced to work undeclared and have difficult working conditions, without employment contracts or sick leaves. This fact can lead to situations of abuse and discrimination of migrants in the countries of destination, placing these people in the category of vulnerable people, who will need financial and social help on their return. Women are often subjected to even more difficult working conditions (reduced opportunities to go out, poor hygiene conditions, lack of days off, etc.). Thus, more than 94% of those who are in Israel are isolated from their families, relatives or friends.

Migrants who do not have an official status in the country of destination, and lose their jobs, are the most affected. They usually remain unemployed without unemployment benefits, without sources of income.

The greatest challenges of returned migrants are the lack of information, financial support and consultancy in employment and/or starting a business. The reintegration and support programs so far have not taken into account a large number of citizens of the Republic of Moldova, affected by migration, who could return. The study shows that 30% of respondents intend to return to the Republic of Moldova, of which 67% want to return as soon as possible, and 17% in 1-2 months. Male migrants are more likely to return (38% male vs. 25% female respondents). The most determined are those in a vulnerable situation, especially migrants from the Russian Federation: 71% of respondents from this country indicated that they want to return, of which 91% indicated that they want to return home as soon as possible. Further expanding communication and creating a clear and easy-

[6] www.anofm.md

to-use system for all citizens affected by migration, regardless of educational level, remains another challenge.

The study showed that only 10% know about the existence of reintegration measures. A very small percentage declares that they feel protected in the Republic of Moldova, therefore the rest intend to emigrate again. Among those settled abroad, businessmen and highly qualified specialists do not express the intention to return to the Republic of Moldova. As a result, the Republic of Moldova faces a double exodus of citizens: those who emigrate for the first time and those who emigrate repeatedly. The study showed that the community's attitude towards migrants was negative - 53%, which will have a strong negative impact on the development of communities and the development of joint economic initiatives.

According to the study, the psycho-emotional state of migrants, especially women, is extremely vulnerable. The movements of relatives abroad have led to situations of mental stress for those abroad. Migrants' families break up, and family conflicts generate the need to return. Studies show that the most important reason for returning is the family situation. Although there are mental health centers in Moldova, migrants do not know or do not have access to psycho-social rehabilitation services. Practically, the most important conditions for the return of migrants coincide with the needs of the citizens who remained at home: corruption, high taxes, distrust in state institutions, but also the lack of own financial resources.

On the other hand, the main measures that would facilitate return and reintegration relate to: attracting foreign investments, effective implementation of new economic development projects that take into account the specific needs of returned migrants, creating jobs for those returned, supporting small businesses entrepreneurs through counseling and access to finance, promoting employment opportunities in agriculture at the local level, protecting the local market for agri-food products, creating opportunities for professional reintegration at home, reducing the underground economy, developing local social infrastructure, modernizing or creating networks of water and sewerage, the conclusion of bilateral agreements with destination states for the portability of pensions and other social benefits, etc.

The most important economic fields with potential for returnees are: agriculture, food industry, tourism and hotel industry. The citizens of the Republic of Moldova, affected by migration, specify that the economic recovery and the facilitation of return are correlated with the reforms in medicine and public health, education, culture and research. The returned migrants mention that they can contribute to the development of the Republic of Moldova by transferring knowledge and experience, by investing in the Moldovan economy by opening small businesses, by capitalizing on financial remittances, as well as by resetting the way of thinking and capitalizing on their own skills.

Quantitative studies, as well as qualitative ones, demonstrate a weak interaction between local authorities and returned migrants. This results in a lack of information regarding reintegration programs, available jobs, economic opportunities and business opening. Also, in order to facilitate the return, it is important that in the pre-departure period, but also during the stay abroad, the connection with the local authorities is efficient and constructive.

Conclusions and recommendations

A sustainable process of return of migrant workers presupposes, first of all, a coherent and synergistic system (comprehensive and efficient) to stimulate the return and facilitate the (re)integration of migrant citizens, promoted by the public authorities, by ensuring the entire cycle of policies, services and products in the field, developed sustainable assistance and support tools. It is expected that according to the Government Activity Program for the years 2021-2025 "Moldova of the good times" and the "Diaspora 2025" Strategy (p. 3.2), "the Republic of Moldova will become by 2025 a country with a favorable environment for civic, social, economic and political manifestation for all its citizens, regardless of place of residence, and an attractive return destination for members of the diaspora. It will increase the sense of pride towards the country and the level of credibility on the international level thanks to the promotion of measures to protect, develop and realize the human and material potential of the diaspora".

Migration should be addressed as an inherent part of (sustainable) development. For this reason, among the basic solutions related to return migration are:

1. Consolidation of the institutional and policy framework and the efficiency of coordination and cooperation mechanisms at the national level in the field of return and (re)integration.
2. Guaranteeing respect for social rights and promoting community integration of returnees and their families by ensuring access to education, health and other public services.
3. Facilitating the reintegration and increasing the economic opportunities of people returned from abroad, by attracting investments, developing the entrepreneurial spirit and new skills, employment in the labor field, creating new support programs. Including businesses opened by returning women, women employed in the labor field.
4. Ensuring the access of returned migrants and their families to effective mechanisms of information, communication and effective participation in public life at the national/local level by organizing information campaigns on various current topics.

Acknowledgement

This article was elaborated within the project Jean Monnet Chair in EU Studies and Migration, implemented with support of the ERASMUS+ programme of the European Union (ref. nr. 620774-EPP-1- 2020-1-MD-EPPJMO-CHAIR). The support granted by the European Commission for the elaboration of this publication is not a content approval, which only reflects the opinions of the authors, and the Commission can not be held accountable for any use of the information contained in this.

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ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
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Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.09

THE PROCESS OF CAPITAL MIGRATION OF GROUPS OF COMPANIES ON A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL – ACCOUNTIND AND FISCAL ASPECTS

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Abstract: *Developments in accounting systems at national and international level are largely influenced by the interconnection of economies and the globalization of financial markets. There is a complex relationship between globalization processes and development indicators. All factors of globalization - financial cooperation, trade, investment, scientific and technological progress and migration - have socio-economic and environmental implications and influence policy design and implementation at national, regional and global levels. Important among these impacts are the limitation of state autonomy in policy-making and, consequently, the need for national policy-making to be more responsive to international obligations, commitments and imperatives. Achieving development goals requires strengthening global partnership. The purpose of the proposed investigation is based on the analysis of the historical migration of financial, material and human resources of groups of companies, which has led to the creation and strengthening of new market relationships, markets where groups of enterprises dominate, which by diversifying their activities are now able to generate impressive financial results. The research was based on methods and techniques for aggregating migrated capital by specifying the links between economic agents within the group, describing the essence of international capital migration, the causes of international capital migration of enterprise groups, etc. The authors, studying the processes of migration of capitals of entities, personnel of groups of companies at national and international level, established the forms of migration of capitals internationally, focusing on consolidated accounts and tax aspects in terms of problematic moments and put forward proposals for solutions in the context of globalization and migration of capitals and activities of groups of companies, demonstrating the influence of migration of capitals of entities within groups on the development of the world economy.*

Keywords: *migration of capital, investments, consolidation techniques, group of companies, equity capital, goodwill, minority interest, income, financial results.*

UDC: *657.411:657.375.6*

JEL Code**:** *M16, M41*

Introduction

The important vector of globalization is the international movements of capital and direct and indirect investments abroad, made by multinational companies, which currently require study, including in terms of how to prepare the consolidated financial statements of groups of entities.

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Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 07.06.2023

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.09

The consolidated financial statements must ensure a homogeneous presentation of the group of companies included in the consolidation perimeter. For this reason, before carrying out consolidation operations, a series of operations are required to standardize the indicators of the entities at group level, which eliminates the differences between the accounting rules used to prepare the individual financial statements and those applicable to the consolidated accounts.

Also it was necessary to study what is the essence of international capital migration, what are the reasons of international capital migration, what are the forms of international capital migration, procedures of accounting of capital migration and establishment of correct exceptions of inter-group operations at consolidation of capital of groups of enterprises, revealing of problems and offers of solutions on taxation of financial results of groups of enterprises, arising as a result of application of the tax legislation, inclusive.

The applied methods of research: study of the content of economic processes on the topic, scientific observation, explanation of such economic phenomenon as international migration of capital affects the world economy, formulation and verification of scientific hypotheses and conclusions on the topic.

The results of the study are aimed at ways of determining the accounting and control procedures related to the definition of the essence of international migration of capital, how capital migration occurs in the countries that are able to organize foreign production through investment and gain an increase in economic efficiency from foreign trade, services, etc.

The results of the study are also based on the analysis of the migration procedures of specific activities of enterprises and working personnel within groups of companies and the consequences of these migrations at the national and international level, the impact of international migration of capital on the global economy, the increased activity of transactions in the world stock and currency exchanges in recent years, the consequence of international capital market development.

1. Literature review

The processes of migration of capital, activities and employable personnel within groups of companies are studied by various authors, with a focus on the process of globalisation.

The contemporary configuration of economies covers a wide variety of processes. First, it corresponds to the opening up of economies to international transactions and the development of trade in goods and services (international dimension).

Secondly, the international mobility of factors of production, especially capital, is what we mean by globalisation. The most important vector of the latter development is the international movement of capital and, in particular, direct investment abroad by multinational companies (multinational dimension). Lastly, developments seem to mean a process of increasing interpretation of national economies, resulting in a relative progressive erasure of borders, a reduction in national regulations and a deterritorialisation

Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 07.06.2023

of economic activities. More than an internationalisation of the economy, it is a supranational perspective on production processes and markets, with integrated markets and enterprises becoming global players for whom decisions and behaviour seem to detach themselves from any national considerations and dictate their law to national policy makers (Feleaga, 2007, p. 12).

In this area of finance, the globalisation of capital markets is increasingly becoming a challenge and a reality with seamless mobility of financial flows on a global scale.

According to Article 4 of the National Accounting Standard (NAS) "Equity and Debt", Equity is the amount remaining in the entity's assets after deducting liabilities. The equity of an investee is the total value of the shares of the owners of the investee, who have purchased the shares usually through financial markets.

Developments in accounting systems at European and international level are largely influenced by the interconnection of economies and the globalisation of financial markets.

Faced with any company deciding to expand, there is the following alternative: either it buys directly the long-term and current assets necessary for its growth and hires staff to run it, or it takes over a company which already owns the necessary assets.

The first route is called internal growth and leads to the growth of the company's intangible and tangible assets. It is often driven by spontaneous growth in the company's markets and its operating and non-operating revenues, and is the result of a proactive policy by the company to better position itself in the market by diversifying production or creating new products.

The second path is called external growth. In this case, the firm does not directly acquire the production goods needed for its development but establishes links with the firm that already owns these goods, looking for the possibility of using them. This results in an increase in financial fixed assets. External growth is preferable to internal growth because it has a number of advantages: the cost of external growth is lower than that of internal growth and it allows the firm to speculate on all purchasing opportunities. This is the form underlying the formation of groups (Bogdan, 2011, p. 15).

According to Article 3 of the Law on Accounting and Financial Reporting No. 287 of 15.12.2017, the group of companies means the parent entity and all entities - subsidiaries, entities wholly or partially controlled by the parent entity.

According to the author Bogdan, the Group is a set of companies linked together by a relationship of economic dependence (this relationship may be institutionalised or provided for by a contract or statute, or determined by simple economic relations) and having a single decision-making centre, called the parent company. A group of companies is a dominant economic entity comprising several independent legal entities, one of which directs (controls) the others. This common (or single) decision necessarily implies relations of dependence between the other companies and the decision-making company (Bogdan, 2011, p. 19).

The practice of commercial and production activity, which has become established, shows that entities operate in the active market of goods and services by implementing not only their own operations, but also transactions that have acquired the name of "corporate actions" and as a result create or suspend the activity of the legal entity.

Corporate actions are based on the sale (purchase) of net assets of subsidiaries and lead to changes in the capital or ownership structure. However, their realisation is possible only if the entity has internal or external sources for their development. Internal sources are formed within the framework of operational and financial activities, while external sources depend on the structure of the entity and its branch membership. (Golocialova & Turcanu, 2019, p.7)

In contemporary economies, including the one in our country, groups of companies play a dominant role. This explains the interest shown by various economic and social partners of groups of companies in the information presented in their consolidated accounts (financial statements) (Sacarin, 2012, p. 5).

The parent company - a separate legal entity within a group of companies - prepares its own financial statements. However, its individual financial statements do not provide users with the information needed to assess the financial position and performance of the whole group. Thus, in order to improve external financial reporting and to facilitate management decisions, the parent company prepares and publishes the consolidated accounts of the group it represents as if it were a single entity (Teterleva, 2016, p. 52).

Currently, large groups of companies listed on major stock exchanges use either US standards (USGAAP – US Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) or International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS – International Financial Reporting Standards) developed by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB – International Accounting Standards Board).

The organisation of the procedures for aggregating information at the level of groups of undertakings, which draw up consolidated financial statements, is due to and based on the fact of the migration of capital at national and international level that are on the books of the groups of undertakings.

Capital export is the process by which part of the capital is withdrawn from circulation in the country where it was originally created and subsequently moved to another country in the form of goods or money to generate additional income. Because of the fact that capital is not only exported abroad from a country, but is also transferred there from other countries, we can talk about the existence of cross-investments, and the process of such movement is called international migration of capital (Alisenov, 2023, p. 206).

Financial investments, which underlie the migration of capital, are assets in the form of securities, equity interests in other entities and other investments held by the entity for the purpose of exercising control, obtaining income or other economic benefits (Grigoroi et al., 2021, p. 193).

International capital migration is the process of moving investment from one country or region to another. This process can be driven by various factors, such as the level of return on investment, political stability, availability of infrastructure, and access to markets (Agreeva, 2019, p. 106).

2. Data and Methodology

The research method is based on the analysis of theoretical and practical material concerning the problematic aspects of the procedures for the migration of capital of groups of companies, which are the basis for the application of consolidation techniques and also the problems of migration of the working population at national and international level, the accounting aspects of the elimination of capital subject to consolidation of subsidiaries and the tax aspects of the taxation of the financial results of groups of companies, procedures which are unavoidable in the case of groups of companies, whose capital has migrated to different countries, where it is also tax resident.

The theoretical foundations of the study are based on analysis, synthesis, deduction and the inductive method, which is used to provide a clear and representative interpretation. The importance of the present article's research lies in achieving the nominated aim and objectives, including on definition of the essence of international capital migration, forms of international capital migration, identifying the causes of international capital migration, the impact of international capital migration on the global economy, by examining the provisions of national and international accounting regulations, as well as the works, researches and opinions of local and non-resident authors, scholars and researchers, in order to solve the concerned issue.

In addition, we used a qualitative method to synthesize the most relevant studies in order to highlight the valence of the concept of capital migration, which lies as the basis for the creation of enterprise groups.

3. The Model and Findings

The confrontation between groups of companies of different countries on the world market generates the penetration of large companies of one country into the national territory of competitors from other countries, in order to create there their entities, branches, subdivisions, as a result of migration of capital, migration of the core activities of groups of entities in order to protect and broaden the interests of generating large economic advantages of the groups internationally, including with the aim of minimizing the costs of acquiring raw materials and expanding markets.

Since the 1970s, transnational companies (TNCs) have emerged, which have generally stopped exporting their production across national borders, expanding their positions in the world economy only from production manufactured in other countries. The first such company was the food industry giant - the Swiss company "Nestle". The emergence of foreign entities in an already segmented market has led to a sharpening of the competitive confrontation.

Thus, inter-branch competition at national level evolves into international competition, which in turn leads to even stronger international competition. Competition gives rise to financial industrial groups (FIGs) and TNCs, and these lead to global competition - the general rule leading to the emergence of FIGs and their increasing role in the internationalisation of the economy.

International migration of capital is the movement of capital between states in the form of exports, imports, as well as its work abroad.

Capital migration is an objectively existing economic process in which funds move between states, providing their owners the opportunity to obtain additional income in the country of destination.

Studying the impact of capital migration today is especially relevant, as the volume of international trade, interbank lending, intergovernmental loans are demonstrating rapid growth, the activity of transactions in the world stock and currency exchanges in recent years is also increasing, followed by the development of the international capital market.

The impact of international capital migration on the global economy is truly enormous. Firstly, it is expressed in the positive effect of international capital transfers, which contributes to the growth of the world economy. This happens because a country rich in capital-intensive goods or capital is able, through investment, to organize foreign production and obtain an increase in economic efficiency from foreign trade. This phenomenon can be connected with low cost of labor and raw materials in a recipient country, as well as with a milder investment climate, which implies a free economic zone regime, lower standards in environmental legislation, etc.

For the global economy today the increase of the scale of capital migration between countries is becoming a trend. The international capital market is becoming increasingly important as a liquidity provider of financial resources for the economy. Migration of certain factors of production between states evens out their prices. The movement of factors from countries with a surplus of them at a low price to regions with a deficit and correspondingly higher prices leads to the benefit of both exchanging parties.

The privileged place of international migration of capital in economic relations at the global level, the importance of its impact on the world economy is due to the fact that this process:

1. Positive effect on the growth rate of the world economy;
2. Contributes to the further deepening of the division of labor between countries and, accordingly, strengthens cooperation;
3. Strengthens the exchange of goods between countries, branches of corporations, including intermediate goods, which also leads to the development of world trade (Ageeva, 2019, p. 121).

The main subjects of the world capital market are states, international financial organizations (World Bank, International Monetary Fund), private business.

In today's complex and complexly organized world economy, regardless of the level of development of the country, none of them can boast the presence of all types of factors of production on its territory, nor the production of all types of goods. It is through international interaction that the effective exchange of goods and factors of production between national economies can be ensured, which is in the interests of all participants in the process and helps them to achieve their goals.

Centuries ago, trade was the first form of international cooperation. In the following centuries, in the process of strengthening and complicating economic ties between states, in addition to markets for goods and services, a capital market was formed. At the initial stage, the direction of capital migration was one-way, from the developed countries of Europe to their colonies. However, in the process of intensification and expansion of the geography of capital migration almost all countries acted as exporters and importers of capital, and as a rule in both capacities simultaneously. Since the second half of the 20th century, the volume of international migration of capital has been growing steadily. And the rate of growth in the export of capital was significantly higher than that of commodity exports or GDP of developed economies. Today, the level of development of the capital market is at an unprecedented height, from acting as the main driver of economic globalization.

The global capital market, which is part of the global financial market, is divided into two markets: the money market and the capital market.

The money market trades financial assets (currencies, credits, loans, securities) with a maturity of up to one year. The task of the money market is to meet the current (short-term) need for loans and credits. Market participants use them primarily to pay for services and to buy goods. Also, a large part of money market operations is speculative in nature, the main instrument in this case being currency.

For projects with a long-time horizon, there is a long-term oriented capital market.

Participants in this market are central and commercial banks, non-banking financial institutions, public authorities, as well as private legal entities and individuals.

There is a certain interrelation between global trade and migration of factors of production, there is a possibility of complementing and replacing each other. So, if a country has a shortage of labor, it can be overcome in two ways: both by importing labor-intensive goods and by facilitating migration of labor from countries with a surplus of labor.

Large entities form the core of the economy in many developed countries. As a rule, they go a long way in development, including processes of horizontal and vertical integration of production combined with diversification. Large entities successfully solve the problems of inter-branch, territorial and macroeconomic management.

In the practice of corporate governance in recent years, there has been an increasing combination of three governance models: American, Japanese and Western. This is reflected in the process of internationalisation not only of their own production but also of management - a review of the management structures of large companies along the lines of replacing rigid centralised management with a small degree of decentralisation, which can be explained by the tendency to make use of accumulated knowledge, skills and creative potential in the work process. These development directions correspond to a large extent to the ideology of creating and developing industrial-financial groups.

Labour migration is currently evolving beyond the traditional procedure of seasonal workers, who are the active and employable population migrating into or travelling to a destination country along a designated migration corridor.

In recent years, the complexity and diversity of the migration process has evolved at a high speed and in different directions, due to a multitude of economic, environmental and political challenges facing many countries on the continents concerned.

The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated this migration phenomenon. The combination of growing skills shortages in destination countries increases the relevance and importance of global competition to exploit the benefits of labour migration.

Despite its complexity, the benefits of labour migration can be shared by sending and receiving countries, as well as between national and migrant workers, ensuring access to decent and productive jobs.

Employers have a strong, moderate interest in the type and extent of labour migration, as the expansion of international labour migration within clusters brings much needed diversity and skills, particularly in sectors where employers have difficulty finding suitable staff for cluster jobs and/or in sectors where employers have difficulty retaining or accessing local skills.

In this context, employers can benefit from specialists, professionals, with acquired skills in the field of recruitment of executives, who provide access to qualified staff, who follow established procedures required by employers, ensure compliance in supplying recruited staff, including from other countries, a model usually practised by groups of companies in developed countries, including economically, which have a shortage of qualified staff and despite the fact that the activities carried out are expanding in terms of geographical areas.

In this context, it is important that employers' and entrepreneurs' organisations and their members engage in dialogue with their respective governments (ministries and other government bodies responsible for migration) so that migration policies benefit all parties involved (Sacarin, 2021, p. 274).

Migration is possible in the form of loan capital or entrepreneurial capital.

Loan capital is money that is directly or indirectly invested in real production in order to obtain income in the form of interest from its use in the recipient country. The main form of migration in this case becomes international credit (public and private).

Entrepreneurial capital is amounts also invested in production, but in this case the goal is to make a profit. The migration of this form of capital takes place through international investment. The sources of funds in this case can be individuals, states and enterprises owned by them.

Depending on the source of origin, capital is usually divided into private and official capital.

Official (state) capital includes budgetary money migrating in the form of loans, loans, aid. The decision to migrate in this case is made by governments and intergovernmental organizations.

Private (non-state) capital is the aggregate of funds that belong to private companies, banks, and other non-state organizations. The decision to organize their movement is made by governing bodies and their associations. It is important that the resource for private capital is the funds of companies not related to the budgets of countries and regions, for example, investments in the development of production abroad, export credits to banks. Although private companies are relatively autonomous in their decisions to migrate their own capital out of the country, the governments of the states, whose residents they are, have the right and possibility to regulate and control such operations (Teterleva, 2016, p. 139).

Depending on the purpose of international investment of capital can be distinguished direct and portfolio investment:

- Foreign direct investment has as its goal to generate income in the recipient country of capital, where it is invested, on a long-term basis. In this case, the investor gets the opportunity to manage the object of investment. An example of such investments is the organization of a branch of a domestic firm in the recipient country, the acquisition of a controlling stake in a foreign company. At carrying out direct foreign investments private business capital which is taken out of the country is almost always involved. At the same time, real investments are directed to the fixed assets, such as enterprises, land.
- Portfolio foreign investment is a purely financial operation, in which capital is invested in securities issued by other states, with the possibility of direct control over the investor does not get. At the expense of portfolio investment is a diversification of assets and risk reduction. This type of investment involves mainly private business capital, but the state also participates in the purchase and sale of foreign securities, issues its own bonds.

J. Dunning has developed the concept of the "electric paradigm" according to which the movement of capital abroad within TNCs is primarily conditioned by the ownership advantages of TNCs - advanced technologies (know-how) economies of scale and economies of scope, secondly - the effect of internationalisation (internalisation advantages), which is explained by the reduction in the transaction costs of exporting and the risk of technology transfer and, thirdly, by the fact that it benefits from cheaper inputs in the country where the TNC operates (Sacarin, 2012, p. 187).

In contemporary economic literature, the role of TNCs in the internationalisation of economic relations is examined primarily in terms of technology transmission.

At the same time, countries that receive TNCs on their territory need to know in advance their potential, which lies in the combination of fundamental knowledge - generally accessible - with the highly specific, non-encrypted technologies that represent the know-how of the given transnational company and that are formed over several years of its evolution.

Parent entities, which hold equity interests in subsidiaries, are sometimes also referred to as holding companies. These entities whose sole function is to hold equity

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.09

securities and which do not have an operational activity are referred to as pure holding companies. The contents of the balance sheet (individual accounts) of the pure holding company are, on the assets side, equity securities and loans granted to subsidiaries and, on the liabilities side, equity and long-term and short-term liabilities. The profit and loss statement includes dividend and interest income, interest expense and, possibly, reserves for impairment of investment securities.

Capital ties between entities are the basis for the existence of groups of companies. But corporate groups can also exist in the absence of capital ties. In this situation, cohesion between companies belonging to the same group is due to the fact that:

- The main shareholder of each entity is the same natural person or the main shareholders are several natural persons belonging to the same family;
- The group entities are placed under common management, even if there is a multiplicity of owners or shareholders;
- Entities have very close contractual relationships, which generate the behaviour of integral enterprises;
- Entities are linked by profit-sharing agreements.

Groups of companies can also be characterized according to the activity carried out. Thus, some groups carry out a single activity, while others, on the contrary, carry out several sectors of activity between which there is no link. Groups in the latter category are called conglomerate groups.

Some groups may be geographically concentrated and limit their activities to one country or one region within a country. On the contrary, some groups are present in several countries, even worldwide, such as, for example, The Coca-Cola Company, Starbucks Coffee Company, etc. Despite their multinational character, these groups have a home country where they are based and where decisions are made for all the entities of the group under analysis.

The work carried out by groups by geographical area can be structured as:

1. ***Subsidiaries which, within a country, are dependent on a sub-holding*** (figure 1). Depending on the group management needs, this way of structuring the group allows to obtain information on the activity of the sub-holding. Often, to avoid certain risks, this information is not published. These risks, which are higher in the beneficiary geographical areas, are of various kinds: demand for wage increases, customer demand for price reductions, tax administration findings on transfer pricing, etc.
2. ***Subsidiaries located in the same geographical area but dependent on the parent entity*** (figure 2).

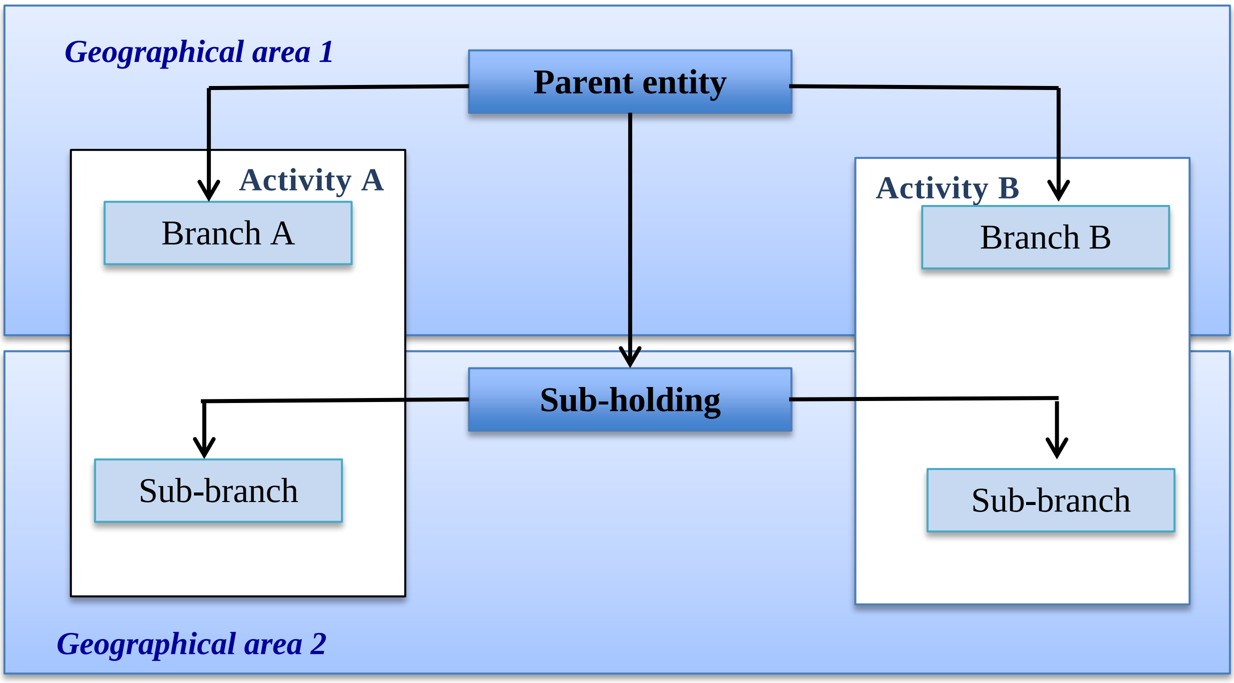

Figure 1. Subsidiaries dependent on a sub-holding
Source: *Elaborated by the author*

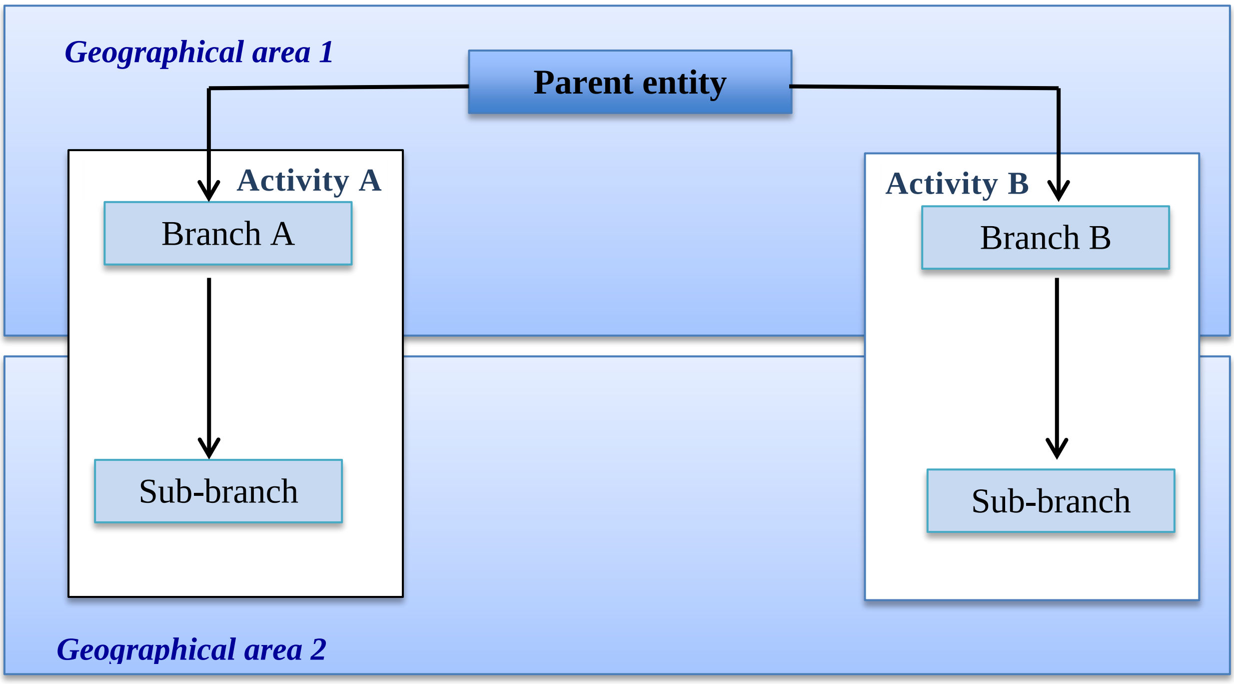

Figure 2. Subsidiaries dependent on the parent entity
Source: *Elaborated by the author*

The characteristic elements of the group based on the examined procedures are:

- A group of entities is first characterized by the existence of legally independent entities. The principle of legal independence is one of the factors which makes group structures flexible and facilitates various strategies aimed at concentrating, diversifying or reorganizing activities.
- The second element is the existence of a central unit - the 'parent entity' - to which other group entities are subject. The existence of a decision-making power is also a source of conflict or tension between the entity exercising power and subordinate entities. This power must be organised in two ways: defining the scope of competence between the parent entity and other entities and organizing control by the parent entity over other undertakings.
- By defining the areas of competence between the parent entity and other undertakings, it is possible to achieve a concentration of decision-making power by the parent entity or a greater decentralization of power and responsibilities to other undertakings.
- Whatever the definition of the area of competence, the parent entity must exercise control not only to assess the performance of subsidiaries, but above all to ensure that decisions taken by subsidiaries are in line with the overall strategy defined by it for the group as a whole, even if there is decentralization of decisions.
- The final element is that the main objective of the decision-making unit must be to achieve a common development strategy for all group entities. The group's performance depends to a large extent on the subsidiaries' adherence to the common strategic objectives and their integration into the information and decision-making process.
- Therefore, group entities should not only be subject to a decision-making unit, but they should also participate in a common group policy.

Consolidation of accounts may be carried out by listed or unlisted economic agents, as well as autonomous enterprises, public institutions, carrying out industrial or commercial activities, if they control one or more entities or exercise significant influence over them, and the group exceeds during two successive accounting periods a certain size of financial result, balance sheet value, or number of employees, etc.

According to Article 4 of the International Financial Reporting Standard "Consolidated Financial Statements" an entity that is a parent company must present consolidated financial statements.

According to Article 5 of the National Accounting Standard "Presentation of Consolidated Financial Statements", the parent entity is required to prepare consolidated financial statements if it has control over subsidiaries that are characterised by:

- a majority of the voting rights of the shareholders or associates in another entity;
- the right to appoint or remove a majority of the members of the board, executive body or supervisory body, as the case may be, of the other entity and is simultaneously a shareholder or member of the other entity;

- the right to exercise significant influence over an entity of which it is a shareholder or member by virtue of a contract entered into with that entity or a provision in the instrument of incorporation or statutes of that entity;
- being a shareholder or member of an entity and alone controlling a majority of the voting rights of the shareholders or members of that entity as a result of an agreement with other shareholders or members of that entity.

The consolidation process can be achieved by different methods, depending on the existence of control over the activities of the subsidiaries and the value of the investment. According to the purchase method of consolidation (full consolidation method) the aggregation procedure involves substituting the item "Long-term financial investments in related parties" in the financial statements of the parent company with the amount of net assets of the subsidiary at the date of consolidation and reflecting the value of Goodwill at the date of acquisition, also, if the parent company owns only a major share of the subsidiary's equity, it is necessary to reflect the share of the other shareholders who are in the minority by recording the non-controlling interest in the net assets of the subsidiaries at the date of consolidation.

The basic ways of combining the capital of entities within a group of undertakings to produce the Consolidated Accounts are as follows:

1) Elimination of the parent entity's investment against the equity items of the subsidiaries subject to the consolidation process depending on the share held by the parent entity, which must be between 50% and 100% for the Comprehensive Integration Method and the existence of sole control:

Debit account Share capital of subsidiaries

Debit account Retained earnings of subsidiaries

Debit account Other equity of entities - subsidiaries

Credit account Financial investments of parent entity

2) Recording of Goodwill at the value established at the date of acquisition of the subsidiary entities, as the difference between the value of the investment of the parent entity and the value of the net assets of the subsidiary entities at the date of acquisition or investment of capital:

Debit account Goodwill recorded at the level of the parent entity

Credit account Financial investments of parent entity

3) Recording of non-controlling interests at the date of consolidation, if the parent entity does not own 100% of the equity of the subsidiaries participating in the consolidation:

Debit account Share capital of the subsidiary entities

Debit account Retained earnings of subsidiaries

Debit account Other equity of subsidiaries

Credit account Non-controlling interest (minority interest)

The procedures for consolidating information at the level of the group of enterprises are very complex and are well defined, used in practice and regulated by

National and International Financial Reporting Standards, including the elimination of inter-group economic transactions, dividends calculated for payment by the subsidiary companies to the parent company and other transactions specific to the activities of the companies belonging to an industrial-financial group of enterprises.

Once the consolidated accounts have been prepared under the responsibility of the heads of the undertakings subject to consolidation, they are audited by the auditors and then brought to the attention of the shareholders or members, so that they can make informed decisions at the general meeting on decisions falling within its competence and can express their opinion on the management and activities of the parent entity. It should be noted that they are not subject to the approval of the general meeting because these consolidated accounts do not (unlike the annual financial statements) determine the rights of shareholders or associates in the distribution of the financial result in the form of profit.

In the Republic of Moldova, under the "Law on financial-industrial groups" no. 1418-XIV, 14.12.2000, in force since 06.03.2001, the existence of groups of companies is regulated and therefore recognised in commercial law.

These legal regulations have become increasingly necessary as a result of the accelerated development of several state-owned companies and autonomous regions with group functional characteristics and strong territorial influence.

From the point of view of tax law, the concept of the group is not ignored at international level, as it is required by a careful monitoring of how dividends are distributed between group companies and how profits are offset against losses at group level (Bucur, 2016, p. 10).

In developed countries, tax law takes care not to disadvantage entities operating within the group. In the Republic of Moldova, where consolidation of accounts is feasible, tax law is not prepared to meet these requirements.

Taxation takes into account the existence of group entities, and various measures have been successively adopted to establish group taxation in the countries of the European Union, either to correct various methodologies that are normally applied or to combat tax evasion that could be carried out through the system of multinational groups. These measures can be summarised as intended:

- Ensuring the neutralisation of taxes set on groups;
- Favouring foreign investment;
- Encouraging the regrouping of enterprises;
- Combating tax avoidance between companies belonging to the same group;
- To combat international tax evasion.

The special regime for parent companies and subsidiaries consists of:

1. Income of subsidiaries distributed to parent entities shall not be subject to any withholding tax;
2. Income of subsidiaries is exempt from tax on the parent entity; a flat-rate expense apportionment is applied to the parent entity;

Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 07.06.2023

3. In practice, the 50% imputation of tax assets allows the parent entity to redistribute income to subsidiaries (subsidiaries being defined as entities in which the parent entity owns 100% or less of the shares) without having to pay an advance payment.

The group company tax integration regime is defined as the legal regime encountered by the group's head entities subject to taxation, whatever the nature of their activity. However, there is a limitation to groups formed by the parent entity and one or more entities in which it holds 100% or less of the capital, directly or indirectly, if the intermediate enterprises are themselves members of the group. The parent entity is solely liable to tax on the result of the group of undertakings. However, each member of the group is jointly and severally liable for this tax.

The dividend distribution tax regime aims to avoid the cascading of corporate tax for companies that have adopted the strategy of expanding or diversifying their business through external growth in relation to various other entities.

Under tax law, all enterprises liable to corporate tax (in the case of the Republic of Moldova, corporate income tax) must include dividends received from other enterprises in their taxable income.

The parent undertaking and subsidiary undertakings are considered legal persons. According to Article 18 of the Tax Code "Dividends obtained from a non-resident economic agent shall be taxed, i.e. added to the taxable income at the end of the reporting period under review, i.e. at the end of the calendar year".

Therefore, if the subsidiary companies are legal entities and operate in the territory of other states, when transferring dividends to the parent company, they are not subject to taxation, since the dividend is calculated and paid out of the net profit.

We believe that it would be more reasonable that in the case of groups of companies, dividends received by parent companies established (considered) as income in financial accounting should not be subject to taxation, in order not to hinder the development of their activity on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

Consequently, income received by the parent company from its subsidiaries will be subject to double taxation. In order to avoid double taxation, the net income, related to shares or shares-quotas received during the reporting period under review by the parent company should be deducted from its total profit.

The tax deduction system is justified by the fact that the parent company normally has to incur expenses for the management of the participants whose income is exempt. The corresponding expenses are not deductible. Since they are deducted at the level of the parent company, the income must be returned to the subsidiaries. At the same time, the amount of these shares may not exceed the amount of expenses actually incurred by the parent company.

Concerning the offsetting of profits and losses within the group, this tax regime is imposed when taxing the profits of a group, resulting in two deviations from the rule, namely:

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https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.09

- From the principle of territoriality: corporate income tax is calculated on all the financial results of operating and non-operating activities, whether they are realised at home or abroad;
- From the principle of legal personality, in which case the personality of subsidiaries is disregarded.

In the case of the worldwide profit regime, enterprises may add to the domestic financial result the financial results from the operational activity of branches, offices, permanent facilities, without their own legal personality.

In the case of the consolidated profit regime, both the direct results of establishments (branches, offices, etc.) abroad and the financial results from the activity of domestic or foreign subsidiaries are added to the domestic financial result.

For example, suppose the parent entity controls three subsidiaries, the parent entity's investment in their equity is major, which at the end of the reporting year had the following financial results:

- The entity - parent - recorded profits before tax - 8,260,000.00 monetary units;
- Entity - daughter 1 (parent entity's investment in the equity of the entity - daughter being 95%) - recorded profits before tax - 984,000.00 monetary units;
- Entity - daughter 2 (parent entity's investment in the equity of the entity - daughter being 82%) - recorded losses as financial result - 1,675,000.00 monetary units;
- Entity - daughter 3 (the parent entity's investment in the equity of the entity - daughter being 100%) - recorded profits before tax - 2,620,000.00 monetary units.

According to Art. 15, letter b) of the Tax Code 1163-XIII of 24.04.1997, the total amount of income tax is determined for legal entities in the amount of 12% of the taxable income for the Republic of Moldova. Thus, if it were legally allowed for groups of companies having their tax residence in the territory of the Republic of Moldova, together with the parent entity, to be taxed the overall financial result of the group, the income tax would be calculated as follows:

1. Tax base determined at group level = 8,260,000.00 + 984,000.00 - 1,675,000.00 + 2,620,000.00 = 10,189,000.00 (monetary units);
2. Overall income tax on group = 10,189,000.00 * 12% / 100% = 1,222,680.00 (monetary units);
3. Recording the income tax liability to the budget at the level of the parent entity, with cash contributions also made by the entities - subsidiaries:

Debit account Income tax expenses - *1,222,680.00*

Credit account Payable to the budget, sub-account Payable on income tax on entrepreneurial and professional activity - *1,222,680.00*

The application of the group taxation of the financial result does not reduce the tax burden, but the State would also favour the activity of the group of companies from a tax point of view in the country of residence of the group of companies, which usually contributes to the import of capital.

In general, the two regimes have made it possible to establish tax integration which is applied without prior control, on an optional basis, to enterprises or economic agents which pay income tax and which operate on a continuous basis, i.e. the principle of permanence of methods (i.e. the accounting policies accepted by the enterprises analysed are applied by them consistently from one accounting period to the next (The National Accounting Standard "Accounting Policies") throughout the year, directly or indirectly) is observed.

In the end, we can emphasize that the already enormous impact of international capital migration on the global economy continues to increase as its scale grows. International capital migration makes finite resources more efficiently distributed in the global economy, pushing up its development.

Among the main effects of capital migration are:

- the acceleration of global economic growth by selecting the most promising areas of capital investment when migrating;
- deepening of the division of labor and growth of cooperation between countries;
- increase in the volume of commodity exchange between regions and acceleration of global trade development due to the growth of activity of international corporations;
- strengthening of global cooperation at the expense of mutual migration of capital between regions.

Conclusions

Based on the study carried out, the authors found that the reason for the migration of capital from the country is primarily its relative surplus. As a result, there is a discrepancy between supply and demand on the capital market in terms of industries and states, and as a consequence, money is transferred abroad, where it is possible to receive higher profits or interest from their investment.

Among the reasons for the migration of capital from the country are the following:

1. The visible possibility of establishing a monopoly in the market of the recipient country;
2. Access to cheaper resources (labor and raw materials) in countries receiving the capital;
3. Existence of political stability in recipient country;
4. Relatively low environmental standards;
5. The favorable "investment climate" in the receiving country.

By the "investment climate" is meant a set of the following parameters:

Eastern European Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.09

1. economic conditions: the situation in the economy in general (rise, recession or stagnation), the state of the currency, financial and credit national systems, conditions for the use of labor, the level of domestic taxes, the customs regime.

2. the state policy in the field of foreign investments: respect for international legislation and implementation of international agreements, quality and stability of state institutions, continuity of power.

A characteristic phenomenon of the current stage in international capital migration is that a growing number of countries are involved in cross-border movement of direct and portfolio investments and loan capital. While previously some countries acted only as importers or exporters of international capital, today they act in both capacities, i.e. they both import and export capital.

Plus, the global experience of economic development speaks to the fact that:

1. In the present conditions of development, the most successful form of business promotion is the financial-industrial group, as the organisational basis for the development of contemporary productive forces, the creation of which has been influenced by the international migration of capital;
2. The main advantage of the financial-industrial group is the transnationalisation of industrial development, the attraction of foreign investment and technical expertise, and the expansion of the market;
3. The formation of core companies within the financial-industrial group means the creation of a system-generating link that enables the maintenance and appropriation of new market segments, the expansion of infrastructure through the organisation of new entities and, above all, the stimulation of the development of small and medium-sized businesses;
4. The group company tax integration regime is defined as the legal regime encountered by group-holding entities subject to taxation, whatever the nature of their activity;
5. The participation of the financial-industrial group in the competitive struggle to create advanced technologies requires them to initiate large investment projects, which largely determines technical and scientific progress.

At the same time, the world practice of creating a financial-industrial group applicable to the conditions of reforming the economy of weakly developing European countries should not be limited to the experience of a particular country, such as the USA, Japan, South Korea or any other country that is mechanically transferred to their territory. The question is to use this experience not in an abstract way, but by conceiving the main trends in the progress of world economic relations and finding our own forms of implementing these trends, which correspond to the concrete needs of the specific stage of economic and social development.

Thus, for European countries with developing economies such as the Republic of Moldova, it has been shown that the role of TNCs in attracting foreign direct investment is of particular importance.

ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.09

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Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 07.06.2023

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.10

CHALLENGES AND FUNDING STRATEGIES FOR DIGITAL EDUCATION IN EUROPEAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: *This paper focuses on digital education in European primary schools, examining trends, challenges, and financing strategies. The study uses a combination of research methods, including the comparative method, analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction, statistical data collection, and the monographic method. The paper identifies the current state of digital education in primary schools across Europe and highlights the challenges faced by educators and policymakers in implementing digital education initiatives. It analyzes the different financing strategies adopted by European countries and their effectiveness in promoting digital education in primary schools. The study finds that while many European countries have made significant progress in digital education, there are still challenges to be addressed, including infrastructure and connectivity issues, digital skills gaps, and funding constraints. The paper concludes with recommendations for policymakers and educators to promote digital education in primary schools and ensure that all students have access to quality digital learning opportunities.*

Keywords: *digital education, primary schools, financing strategies.*

UDC: *373.3.014.544:004.7(4)*

JEL Code: *O33, I22*

Introduction

In recent years, digital education has become an increasingly important topic in the field of primary education in Europe (Marín & Castaneda, 2023; Ottestad & Gudmundsdottir, 2018). With the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT), schools need to adapt to the digital age and provide students with the necessary skills to succeed in a constantly evolving technological landscape (Collins & Halverson, 2018; Wheeler, 2015).

This paper examines the trends and challenges of digital education in European primary schools and explores financing strategies that schools can employ to overcome financial barriers to adopting digital technology.

While there has been significant research on digital education in primary schools, much remains to be learned about the most effective ways to integrate technology into the classroom and how to finance these efforts. This paper will explore the current state of digital education in primary schools across Europe, including the distribution of students, the types of institutions involved, and the technology currently available in these schools.

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Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 12.06.2023

The main problem this research addresses is the need for more financial resources available to many primary schools for investing in digital education, which limits their ability to provide students with the necessary digital skills. This research aims to identify financing strategies that primary schools can use to overcome these barriers and provide students with a high-quality digital education.

Overall, this paper aims to provide insights into the current state of digital education in European primary schools and offer practical recommendations for schools looking to invest in this area. By understanding the challenges and opportunities of digital education, schools can better prepare their students for success in the digital age.

This study stands out from other research on the topic due to its focus on primary schools specifically and its emphasis on the financing strategies used to fund digital initiatives. The paper also provides a comparative analysis of the various funding options available to primary schools in Europe, including grants, public-private partnerships, leasing and financing options, community fundraising, and crowdfunding. This analysis offers valuable insights for schools seeking to implement digital initiatives and identifies best practices for financing these initiatives sustainably and effectively.

The paper comprises ten key chapters in addition to the Introduction and Conclusions. These chapters delve into the present status of digital education in primary schools, the obstacles encountered by schools in adopting digital technologies, the financing strategies utilized to support digital initiatives, and case studies of successful digital initiatives in European primary schools.

1. Materials and Methods of Research

The research methods used in this study were carefully selected to achieve the research objectives: to examine the trends, challenges, and financing strategies of digital education in European primary schools. The comparative method compares the situation in different countries and identifies similarities and differences in their approaches to digital education. Analysis and synthesis are used to process and organize the information gathered from different sources, while induction and deduction are used to draw conclusions based on the data collected. Statistical data collection was employed to quantify the research findings, while the monographic method was used to study individual cases in more depth.

The data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova supplements and validates the research findings. By combining these research methods and data sources, the study provides a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the state of digital education in European primary schools.

2. Government Funding for Digital Transformation in Primary Schools

Primary schools in Europe are undergoing a digital transformation to keep pace with technological advancements and enhance the quality of education they provide. One of the most common ways to finance this transformation is through government funding. European primary schools can apply for a range of government funding options, including federal and state grants, loans, and tax incentives. However, each funding program has its eligibility criteria, the application process, and reporting obligations.

The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) is one such funding program available to EU member states to support economic, social, and territorial development (European Commission, 2015; Staehr & Urke, 2022). Schools can utilize specific funding streams within the ESIF framework to support their digital transformation efforts. For instance, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) can finance digital infrastructure development, while the European Social Fund (ESF) can support teacher and student skills development and training.

Another funding program is Horizon Europe, the EU's research and innovation funding program for 2021-2027 (European Commission, 2021b; SPINACI, 2021). This program offers specific funding streams, such as the Digital Innovation Hubs and the European Open Science Cloud, to support digital transformation in education.

The Digital Education Action Plan is a European Commission initiative that provides various funding opportunities, including calls for proposals and tenders, to promote digital innovation and improve digital skills and competencies in education (European Commission, 2021d; Muraille, 2020). Besides EU-level funding opportunities, European primary schools can also apply for grants from their national governments. For instance, the UK government offers the EdTech Demonstrator program, which provides funding and support for schools to adopt and implement technology-based teaching and learning practices (Department of Education, 2022).

Tax incentives are another funding option available to companies that invest in digital education initiatives in primary schools. France, for example, offers tax credits to companies that provide school equipment and training (Invest in France, 2022; Molchanova et al., 2020).

Each funding program has its eligibility criteria, which may include the level of need, type of school, intended use of funds, school's past performance, and collaboration with other schools and stakeholders (European Commission, 2021a). Therefore, schools need to carefully review the eligibility criteria to determine if they qualify for funding.

The application process for government funding can be complex and time-consuming, involving detailed proposals and financial reports. Schools need to carefully review the application requirements and deadlines to ensure their application is complete and timely. For instance, the application process for Erasmus+ funding involves submitting a detailed project proposal that outlines the planned activities, expected outcomes, and budget for the project (European Commission, 2021c). The application deadline varies depending on the specific funding stream and the applicant's country. ESIF funding applications generally involve a competitive bidding process, requiring schools to submit a detailed project proposal that outlines the planned activities, expected outcomes, and budget for the project.

In conclusion, primary schools in Europe can access various government funding programs to finance their digital transformation efforts. However, each funding program has its eligibility criteria, the application process, and reporting obligations that schools need to carefully review before applying. By doing so, schools can improve their chances of qualifying for funding and ensure their application is complete and timely.

3. Corporate Sponsorship for Digital Transformation in Primary Schools

Corporate sponsorships can be a valuable source of support for digital initiatives in primary schools (Giroux, 2011). Therefore, primary schools should research companies interested in supporting educational initiatives, particularly those focusing on technology and digital innovation. When researching potential sponsors, primary schools should look for companies with a history of supporting education and digital innovation. Here are some examples of companies in Europe that have a strong focus on education and digital innovation:

- *Apple:* Apple has a long history of supporting education, with programs such as "Everyone Can Code" and "Everyone Can Create" designed to teach students coding and digital creativity skills (Apple, 2018, 2019). The company has also provided funding and support to schools and educational organizations.
- *Google:* Google is another company that strongly focuses on education, with programs like "Google for Education" providing resources and support for educators and students (Google, 2023). The company has also provided funding and support to schools and educational organizations, particularly those focused on digital innovation.
- *Microsoft:* Microsoft has a program called "Microsoft Philanthropies" that provides funding and support for educational organizations and initiatives (Snapp, 2018). The company provides access to technology and digital skills training to underserved communities.
- *Vodafone:* Vodafone strongly focuses on digital innovation in education, with programs such as "Digital Creators" providing funding and support to schools working on digital projects (Manser, 2020). The company has also supported teacher training programs and initiatives to promote digital literacy.
- *Siemens:* Siemens is a company with a strong focus on technology and innovation and has supported various educational initiatives related to digital innovation. The company has provided funding and support for programs related to robotics, coding, and other digital skills (Siemens Stiftung, 2022).

When developing a proposal to secure corporate sponsorship for digital initiatives in primary schools, it is essential to focus on the benefits the initiative will provide students and the community.

Building relationships with potential sponsors is essential to securing corporate sponsorships for digital initiatives in primary schools. Here are some examples of ways that schools in Europe have built relationships with sponsors:

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- *Attend industry events*: Primary schools can attend industry events related to education, technology, and digital innovation to meet potential sponsors and build relationships. For example, BETT (the British Educational Training and Technology Show) is a major annual event in London that brings educators, technology providers, and other stakeholders in the education sector (Bett, 2023).
- *Network with local businesses*: Schools can also build relationships with businesses interested in sponsoring their digital initiatives. This could involve attending local business events, contacting local business associations, or inviting local business leaders to school events.
- *Leverage social media*: Schools can use social media platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to build awareness of their digital initiatives and engage with potential sponsors. By sharing updates on the initiative's progress, highlighting student success stories, and showcasing the initiative's benefits, schools can attract the attention of potential sponsors and build relationships over time.
- *Collaborate with existing partners*: Schools can leverage existing partnerships with other organizations, such as universities or non-profits, to build relationships with potential sponsors. By working together on joint initiatives or events, schools, and their partners can demonstrate the value of their work and attract new sponsors to the cause.

Offering recognition and benefits is essential to securing corporate sponsorships for digital initiatives in primary schools. Here are some examples of ways that schools in Europe have offered recognition and benefits to their sponsors:

- *Naming rights:* Schools can offer sponsors naming rights for their digital initiatives or specific programs or spaces within the school. For example, a school in the Netherlands named its digital classroom after a corporate sponsor in exchange for their support (Kerssens & Dijck, 2021).
- *Brand exposure:* Schools can offer sponsors brand exposure through various channels, such as signage, promotional materials, and social media. For example, a school in the UK worked with a sponsor to create branded materials for a coding club, which were then used to promote the club to students and parents (Dredge, 2014).
- *Exclusive access:* Schools can offer sponsors exclusive access to events or programs, such as workshops or professional development sessions. For example, a school in Germany partnered with a technology company to provide coding workshops for students, and the company was given exclusive access to the workshops (TU Berlin, 2022).
- *Public recognition:* Schools can publicly recognize their sponsors through press releases, newsletters, and other communication channels.

Overall, corporate sponsorships can be a valuable source of support for digital initiatives in primary schools. By researching potential sponsors, developing a compelling proposal, building relationships, and offering recognition and benefits, schools can increase their chances of securing corporate support for their initiatives.

4. Crowdfunding for Digital Transformation in Primary Schools

Crowdfunding has become a popular alternative financing strategy for primary schools looking to finance their digital initiatives. However, schools should choose a crowdfunding platform that aligns with their fundraising goals and target audience. Here are a few examples of crowdfunding platforms used in Europe:

- *Kickstarter:* Kickstarter is a popular crowdfunding platform used by European schools to raise funds for digital initiatives. For example, the "Micro:bit Educational Foundation" raised over £1 million to provide every Year 7 student in the UK with a Micro:bit, a pocket-sized computer that can be used for coding and other digital projects (micro:bit, 2023).
- *Indiegogo:* Indiegogo is another popular crowdfunding platform used by schools in Europe. One successful campaign was launched by "Code Club Italia," which raised over €16,000 to provide free coding classes for children in Italy (Indiegogo, 2023).
- *GoFundMe:* GoFundMe is a global crowdfunding platform popular with schools in Europe. For example, the "Elsley Primary School" in London raised over £30,000 to purchase new iPads and other digital equipment for their students (Elsley Primary School, 2023).
- *Ulule:* Ulule is a European crowdfunding platform particularly popular in France. One successful campaign was launched by the "Ecole de La Touche" in Nantes, which raised over €15,000 to purchase tablets and other digital equipment for their students (Picard-Gallart, 2019).
- *CrowdRise:* CrowdRise is a global crowdfunding platform popular with schools in Europe. One successful campaign was launched by "St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School" in Ireland, which raised over €16,000 to purchase new computers and other digital equipment for their students (Osili et al., 2021).

When developing a crowdfunding campaign for digital initiatives in primary schools, creating a compelling narrative that resonates with potential donors is essential. Schools can showcase their project's benefits, such as improved learning outcomes and increased access to technology, through engaging visuals and personal stories.

For example, the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC) launched a crowdfunding campaign in 2021 to raise funds for digital nature education in primary schools (Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, 2022). Their campaign included a short video that explained how the project would benefit students and showcased the beauty of Finland's nature. They also offered rewards for donors, such as digital nature guides and FANC memberships.

Similarly, a primary school in the UK launched a crowdfunding campaign on JustGiving to raise funds for iPads (Milligan, 2017). Their campaign included a video that showed students using technology in the classroom and testimonials from teachers and parents about the importance of digital tools for learning. They also offered rewards for donors, such as personal thank-you messages from students and invitations to school events.

Schools should set realistic fundraising goals based on the scope of their digital initiative and the size of their donor base. They should also consider the costs of running a crowdfunding campaign, such as platform fees and marketing expenses. Here are some examples from Europe:

- In 2019, a primary school in the UK called Bayton C of E Primary School launched a crowdfunding campaign on the platform GoFundMe to raise funds for their digital technology program (Busby, 2019). They set a realistic goal of £20,000, which they achieved through donations from parents, community members, and local businesses.
- In Spain, a primary school called CEIP La Palma launched a crowdfunding campaign on the platform Verkami to raise funds to purchase laptops for their students (Verkami, 2023). They set a goal of €3,000, which they achieved with the support of parents, teachers, and local organizations.
- In Germany, a primary school called Grundschule am Mühlenberg launched a crowdfunding campaign on the platform Startnext to raise funds to purchase tablets for their students (Startnext, 2023). They set a goal of €4,000, which they were able to achieve with the help of their local community.
- In France, a primary school called Ecole Saint-Martin launched a crowdfunding campaign on KissKissBankBank to raise funds to purchase interactive whiteboards (KissKissBankBank, 2023). They set a goal of €5,000, which they achieved through the support of parents, teachers, and local businesses.

Marketing the crowdfunding campaign is a crucial aspect of its success. Schools should use multiple channels to reach their target audience and promote their campaign.

Examples of successful crowdfunding campaigns in Europe include the "Digital Birds" project in Austria, which raised over €20,000 on Kickstarter to provide primary school students with interactive digital birdhouses (Kickstarter, 2023), and the "Digitale Lernkisten" project in Germany, which raised over €28,000 on Startnext to provide digital learning kits to schools (Startnext, 2023).Schools can incentivize donations by offering perks, such as exclusive access to events or branded merchandise. They should also offer recognition and benefits to more prominent donors, such as naming rights or sponsorships. Here are some examples from Europe:

- *Name a classroom or facility after a donor:* Schools can offer to name a classroom or other facility after a donor who contributes a certain amount of money. For example, a primary school in the UK offered to name their new science laboratory after donors who gave at least £5,000 to their crowdfunding campaign (Perlstein, 2013).

- *Exclusive access to events:* Schools can offer exclusive access to events such as a student showcase or technology exhibition to donors who contribute a certain amount of money. For example, a primary school in Germany offered donors who contributed €500 or more the opportunity to attend a technology showcase where students demonstrated their digital skills (EACEA National Policies Platform, 2022).
- *Branded merchandise:* Schools can offer branded merchandise such as T-shirts, hats, or water bottles to donors who contribute a certain amount.
- Sponsorship opportunities: Schools can offer sponsorship opportunities to more prominent donors.
- *Recognition in school materials:* Schools can recognize donors in school materials such as newsletters or yearbooks.

Crowdfunding can be a powerful tool for primary schools looking to finance their digital initiatives, but it requires careful planning and execution to be successful.

6. Grant Funding for Digital Transformation in Primary Schools

Grant funding is a form of financial support provided by governments, private organizations, and philanthropic foundations to support specific projects or initiatives. Grant programs for schools looking to finance digital initiatives are available in many European countries.

The Erasmus+ Programme is a popular funding source for digital initiatives in European primary schools (European Commission, 2021). Here are some examples of schools that have received funding through this program (EU Monitor, 2021):

- *Bambini Montessori School (Netherlands):* This primary school received Erasmus+ funding to develop a digital game that teaches children about the importance of sustainable living. The game was designed to be used in the classroom and at home.
- *St. Michael's School (United Kingdom):* This primary school received Erasmus+ funding to develop a digital learning platform that uses virtual reality to enhance learning in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects.
- *Scoil Mhuire gan Smál (Ireland):* This primary school received Erasmus+ funding to establish a digital makerspace where students can learn about coding, robotics, and other digital skills.
- *Ecole des Coteaux (France):* This primary school received Erasmus+ funding to develop a digital literacy curriculum for students with special educational needs. The curriculum includes interactive games, videos, and other resources to engage and motivate students.

These examples demonstrate the diverse range of digital initiatives that can be funded through the Erasmus+ Programme, from sustainable living games to virtual reality learning platforms to makerspaces and digital literacy curricula.

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is a funding program that aims to reduce regional disparities and promote balanced development across the European Union (European Commission, 2023a). The ERDF supports various projects that contribute to regional development, including digital school transformation (European Commission, 2023b).

For example, in Spain, the ERDF has supported the development of digital infrastructure and integration technology into education through various projects. One such project is the Digital Education Plan, which aims to improve the quality of education in the Valencian Community through technology. In addition, the ERDF has provided funding for developing digital learning resources and training teachers in digital competencies.

Similarly, in Romania, the ERDF has supported integrating digital technology in schools through the e-Smart School project. This project aims to develop a smart school network that uses technology to enhance teaching and learning. The ERDF has provided funding for the development of digital infrastructure, the acquisition of digital equipment, and the training of teachers in digital competencies.

In Italy, the ERDF has supported the development of digital skills and competencies in schools through the Digital Schools project. This project aims to equip schools with digital infrastructure and tools to support innovative teaching and learning. The ERDF has provided funding for the development of digital learning resources, the training of teachers in digital competencies, and the acquisition of digital equipment.

The ERDF provides a critical funding source for schools looking to finance digital initiatives and promote regional development through technology.

Digital Schools Award is a program funded by the European Commission that aims to support and promote the integration of digital technologies in primary and secondary schools across Europe (Digital Schools Awards, 2023a). The program offers funding opportunities for schools to develop digital transformation projects and provides support and resources to help teachers and students develop their digital skills.

One example of a school that has received funding from Digital Schools Award is the Pierre et Marie Curie Elementary School in France (Digital Schools Awards, 2023b). The school received a grant to develop a digital literacy program to teach students how to use digital tools and technologies responsibly and safely. The program included training for teachers, the development of educational resources, and the implementation of a digital citizenship curriculum for students.

Another example is the "iClass" project at the Gjøvikregionen Primary and Lower Secondary School in Norway, which received funding from Digital Schools Award (Digital Schools Awards, 2023b). The project aimed to use digital tools and technologies to enhance teaching and learning, improve communication and collaboration between teachers and students, and promote the development of digital skills among students. The

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.10

project involved using tablets, interactive whiteboards, and other digital tools in the classroom and training teachers on integrating technology into their teaching practices.

Overall, Digital Schools Award provides a valuable resource for schools looking to finance and implement digital transformation projects. The program offers funding opportunities and support for developing digital skills, helping ensure that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the digital age.

Horizon 2020 was the most extensive EU research and innovation program, with a budget of around 80 billion euros over seven years from 2014 to 2020 (European Commission, 2023d). It is open to organizations of all sizes and sectors, including schools, universities, and other educational institutions. Some examples of digital transformation projects that have received funding through Horizon 2020 include the following (European Commission, 2023c):

- *eCraft2Learn:* This project aimed to create an online platform for collaborative learning in digital fabrication and programming. The project received over 3 million euros and involved a consortium of European partners.
- *Smart-AKIS:* This project aimed to create a network of digital innovation hubs to support adopting smart farming technologies in Europe. The project received over 5 million euros in funding and involved a consortium of partners from nine European countries.
- *WeNet:* This project aimed to develop a social media platform using machine learning to help users build more robust, diverse social networks. The project received over 4 million euros in funding and involved a consortium of partners from Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, and the UK.
- *5G-MEDIA:* This project aimed to develop new media services and applications for 5G networks. The project received funding of over 6 million euros and involved a consortium of partners from across Europe, including academic institutions, technology companies, and broadcasters.

When applying for grant funding for digital initiatives, schools should carefully review each program's eligibility criteria, the application process, and reporting requirements to ensure that they meet the requirements and can comply with the program's requirements. They should also develop a compelling proposal that clearly outlines their digital initiative and its impact on their students and the community.

7. Partnering with Technology Companies for Digital Transformation in Primary Schools

Partnering with technology companies can be an excellent way for schools to access the latest technology and resources for their digital initiatives. Here are a few examples of successful partnerships between schools and technology companies in Europe:

- *Microsoft and the University of Sheffield:* The University of Sheffield partnered with Microsoft to create a digital literacy program for students in the city (Clark

& Simpson, 2020). The program provided students with access to digital tools and resources and training and support for teachers. The partnership also involved the development of a digital skills program for teachers to help them integrate technology into their teaching.

- *Apple and The Netherlands:* In the Netherlands, Apple partnered with a group of primary schools to provide them with iPads and other digital resources (Loohuis, 2020). The program aimed to enhance the learning experience for students by providing them with access to digital tools and resources. The partnership also involved the development of a teacher training program to help educators integrate technology into their teaching.
- *Google and the UK:* Google has partnered with some schools and educational organizations in the UK to provide them with technology and resources (Google for Education, 2023). The company has provided schools with access to Google Classroom, Chromebooks, and other digital tools. The partnership has also involved the development of teacher training programs to help educators integrate technology into their teaching.
- *Samsung and Germany:* Samsung partnered with a school in Germany to provide them with tablets and other digital resources (Google for Education, 2023). The program aimed to improve the learning experience for students by providing them with access to digital tools and resources. The partnership also involved the development of a teacher training program to help educators integrate technology into their teaching.

In each of these examples, the partnerships between the schools and technology companies involved providing digital tools and resources and training and support for teachers. The partnerships were designed to enhance students' learning experience and help teachers integrate technology into their teaching.

8. Community Fundraising for Digital Transformation in Primary Schools

Community fundraising can be an effective way for primary schools to raise funds for their digital initiatives while engaging with their local community (Body, 2017). Here are some examples of successful community fundraising campaigns in Europe:

- *Tech4All (Tech4All, 2023):* A primary school in London launched a Tech4All campaign to raise £10,000 to purchase new iPads and laptops for their students. The school engaged with the local community by hosting a charity auction and raffle and partnering with local businesses to offer incentives for donations. As a result, the campaign raised over £11,000, and the school was able to purchase new technology for their students.
- *EdTech Playground (European Commission, 2022):* A primary school in Belgium launched an EdTech Playground campaign to raise funds for developing a new digital learning center. The school engaged with parents, local businesses,

Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 12.06.2023

and community organizations to promote their campaign and offered rewards for donations, such as personalized thank-you notes and exclusive access to the learning center. As a result, the campaign raised over €25,000, and the school created a state-of-the-art digital learning space for their students.

- *Digital Classroom (O'Reilly, 2022):* A primary school in Dublin launched a Digital Classroom campaign to raise funds for integrating technology into teaching and learning. The school engaged with the local community by hosting a sponsored walk and partnering with local businesses to offer incentives for donations. As a result, the campaign raised over €10,000, and the school was able to purchase new technology and training resources for their teachers.

In these examples, the schools successfully engaged with their local communities to raise funds for their digital initiatives. In addition, by offering incentives and partnering with local businesses and organizations, they generated support and enthusiasm for their campaigns.

9. Public-Private Partnerships for Digital Transformation in Primary Schools

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) can effectively finance the digital transformation of primary schools by leveraging the resources and expertise of both the public and private sectors. PPPs involve the collaboration of public entities such as schools and local governments with private organizations such as technology companies, foundations, and financial institutions.

The Dutch Ministry of Education and Cisco partnership is a successful example of a PPP for school digital transformation (CISCO, 2017). The partnership began in 2012 to create a digital learning environment for primary and secondary schools in the Netherlands. The partnership is part of the broader Dutch education strategy to promote digital learning and improve the quality of education.

Cisco provides the technology and expertise needed to create the digital learning platform, which includes tools for digital collaboration, e-learning, and data analysis. The platform is designed to be flexible and scalable, allowing schools to customize it to meet their specific needs. In addition to providing technology, Cisco also offers training and support to teachers and school administrators to help them effectively use the platform.

The Ministry of Education provides funding and guidance to ensure that the platform meets the needs of Dutch schools. In addition, the ministry works closely with Cisco and other stakeholders to develop a vision for digital learning in the Netherlands and to set priorities for the platform. The ministry also ensures that the platform is accessible to all schools, regardless of size or location.

The partnership has been successful in improving digital learning in Dutch schools. The platform is currently used by over 80% of primary and secondary schools in the Netherlands. As a result, teachers and students have access to a wide range of digital tools and resources, which have helped to improve teaching and learning outcomes. The partnership has also helped to build a strong community of educators and technology experts who work together to continuously improve the platform and promote digital learning in the Netherlands.

PPPs can take many different forms and can be structured in various ways depending on the needs and goals of the stakeholders involved. By leveraging the resources and expertise of both the public and private sectors, PPPs can provide a sustainable and effective way to finance the digital transformation of primary schools.

10. Leasing and Financing Options for Digital Transformation in Primary Schools

Leasing and financing options are popular ways for schools to acquire technology and other resources without paying the full cost upfront. For example, equipment leasing allows primary schools to acquire the necessary technology without paying the full cost upfront. Instead, the school pays a monthly or annual fee to lease the equipment for a fixed period. At the end of the lease term, the school can return the equipment, renew the lease, or purchase the equipment at a discounted price. The advantage of equipment leasing is that it allows schools to acquire the technology they need without paying the full cost upfront, and they can upgrade to newer technology at the end of the lease term. The disadvantage is that the school will pay more in the long run due to interest and fees. Here are some examples of equipment leasing options available in Europe:

- *Dell Financial Services (DELL Technologies, 2023):* Dell Financial Services offers equipment leasing options for schools and other European organizations. They provide flexible payment terms and customized leasing options to meet the specific needs of schools.
- *Grenke (GRENKE, 2023):* Grenke is a European leasing company that provides solutions for technology equipment, including laptops, tablets, and other devices needed for digital transformation in schools. They offer flexible payment terms and customized leasing solutions to meet the needs of schools.

Financing allows schools to borrow money to purchase the technology they need. The school will make monthly or annual payments to repay the loan, typically with interest. The advantage of financing is that the school owns the technology outright and can use it as they see fit. The disadvantage is that financing can be expensive, especially if the school needs better credit.

One example of financing for primary school digital transformation in Europe is the "EdTech Innovation Fund" in the UK (Nesta, 2023). This is a financing program designed explicitly for education technology companies and schools. The program provides funding to schools to purchase technology and software from EdTech companies to promote the use of technology in teaching and learning. The UK government and private investors fund the program.

Another example is the "EIB Education and Digitalization Facility" in the European Union. This financing program funds schools and other educational institutions to invest in digital infrastructure, software, and hardware. The program is funded by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and aims to support the digital transformation of education across the EU (European Investment Bank, 2023). Schools can apply for loans at favorable interest rates and flexible repayment terms.

Lease-purchase agreements allow schools to lease equipment with the option to purchase it at the end of the lease term. The advantage of lease-purchase agreements is that they allow schools to acquire the technology they need without paying the full cost upfront, and they can own the equipment at the end of the lease term. The disadvantage is that the school will pay more in the long run due to interest and fees.

11. Recommendations for Moldovan Primary Schools

In the academic year 2022-23, primary and general secondary education enrolled 334.5 thousand students, a decrease of 0.6% compared to the previous academic year (Mazur, 2022). Regarding gender and place of residence, 51% of students are male, and 55.1% of students study in urban areas. Regarding the distribution of the number of students by territorial profile, at the regional level, 30.2% of the total students were enrolled in primary and general secondary education institutions in Chisinau, 27.6% in the Center region, 24.4% in the North region, 12.6% in the South region, 4.7% in Gagauzia, 0.5% in Transnistria and Bender municipality, under the Ministry of Education and Research.

In the academic year 2022-23, there were 1218 primary and general secondary education institutions (13 less than in the previous year), including 92 primary schools, 781 secondary schools, 336 high schools, seven schools for children with intellectual or physical disabilities, and two evening schools.

Primary and general secondary education institutions have 40.5 thousand computers used for educational purposes (an increase of 9.5% compared to the academic year 2021/22), of which 18.6 thousand (45.9%) are connected to a common school network, and 35.0 thousand (86.4%) have an internet connection. At the same time, 22.2 thousand computers are used by students, 17.2 thousand by teaching staff, and 1.1 thousand computers are used in libraries. Compared to the academic year 2021/22, the number of computers used by both students (10.4% increase) and teaching staff (8.2% increase) has increased.

According to a report by the European Training Foundation, the Republic of Moldova has made progress in integrating digital technologies into education (Rajasekaran, 2022). However, the report also notes that significant challenges still need to be addressed.

One of the main challenges identified in the report is the need for more infrastructure and equipment in schools. Many schools in the Republic of Moldova need access to modern technology or the internet, which limits their ability to incorporate digital technologies into teaching and learning.

Another challenge is the need to improve digital competencies among teachers. For example, the report notes that many teachers in the Republic of Moldova need more skills and knowledge to integrate digital technologies into their teaching effectively.

Despite these challenges, there are some positive developments in digital education in the Republic of Moldova. The government has introduced several initiatives to support digital education, including the Digital Curriculum project, which aims to integrate digital technologies into all subjects in the national curriculum. Additionally, the country has received support from international organizations, such as the European Union, to improve digital infrastructure and promote digital skills among teachers and students.

In this paper, we put forward some recommendations for primary schools in Moldova regarding their financing strategies:

- *Explore government funding opportunities:* Moldova's Ministry of Education offers school funding opportunities. Schools should explore these options and apply for funding that can be used to finance their digital transformation.
- *Look for partnerships with technology companies:* Schools should look for partnerships with companies that can provide them with the necessary technology. For example, they can partner with local technology companies or global technology giants such as Microsoft, Google, or Apple.
- *Community fundraising:* Community fundraising can also be an effective way for schools to finance their digital transformation. Schools can organize fundraising events involving parents, local businesses, and other community members to donate to digital transformation.
- *Leasing and financing options:* Schools can also explore leasing and financing options to acquire the necessary technology without paying the full cost upfront. They should compare the options available and choose the one that works best for them.
- *PPPs:* Public-private partnerships can be another way for schools to finance their digital transformation. Schools can explore partnerships with private companies or organizations to develop digital solutions and infrastructure that benefit both parties.

Overall, schools should develop a comprehensive financing strategy combining different options to ensure they can acquire the technology they need to provide high-quality education to their students.

Conclusions

Integrating digital technology in primary schools is becoming increasingly important today, where technology is an integral part of daily life. The Republic of Moldova has made significant progress in this area, with most primary schools having access to computers and internet connectivity. However, there is still a need for further investment in digital infrastructure and teacher training to ensure that students receive high-quality digital education.

Various financing strategies are available for schools to acquire digital equipment, including grants, leasing, financing, and lease-purchase agreements. Each option has advantages and disadvantages, and schools must carefully consider their financial situation and goals before deciding.

Furthermore, it is essential to consider the distribution of digital infrastructure across different regions and school types and the gender and urban-rural disparities in student enrollment. Addressing these inequalities is crucial to ensure that all students have equal access to digital education and can benefit from its opportunities.

Overall, the successful implementation of digital education in primary schools requires a multi-faceted approach, including investment in infrastructure, teacher training, and careful consideration of financing strategies. By prioritizing these areas, the Republic of Moldova can continue to make progress in providing high-quality digital education to its primary school students.

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Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 12.06.2023

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA SOURCES FOR SIZING THE PHENOMENON OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MAJOR EXODUS OF ROMANIAN LABOR FORCE

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Abstract: *Being a complex and multi-criteria phenomenon, the international migration can have a lot of different meanings, which suppose different scopes and methods of estimating various data, depending on the hypotheses and research objectives pursued. In the last decade the mass-media also gave an increased importance to the phenomenon and in the era of fake news, it led to the fact that the magnitude of the phenomenon was often communicated differently from the real situation or the existing statistics. Even though there is a great diversity of data sources that could be used to estimate international migration flows, these are not directly oriented to measure migration, so great difficulties in terms of data comparability occur very often. In Romania the phenomenon of international migration has taken a large scale, the country being on the first places worldwide in terms of labor force exits to destination countries, but, practically, the Romanian authorities have very less information regarding the residence of Romanian citizens abroad and, implicitly, no data is collected regarding the real volume of the migration phenomenon. This paper aims to inventory the available data sources regarding international migration from Romania and, as much as possible, to propose solutions by which this phenomenon could be better quantified to support the development of effective migration policies. The research methodology consists in the theoretical analysis of data sources and indicators that measure the migration phenomenon in order to identify a possibility to quantify the volume of the migrant population by proposing a model that calculates the potential migrant workforce calculated as a difference between the labor resource and the employed population.*

Keywords: *labor force, potential migrant workforce, international migration, migration statistics, migration flows, migration policies.*

UDC: *314.74:331.556.46(498)*

JEL Code: *F22, O15, J61*

Introduction

In order to analyze the possibilities of dimensioning the phenomenon of migration, it is important to understand the amplitude that this phenomenon takes on a global level and the essential need to create efficient and thoroughly substantiated migration policies, even though one of the major research hypotheses of this paper is that it is currently impossible to quantify the number of migrants from Romania, so there is a need to quantify at least a

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Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 12.06.2023

theoretical amount of population that may migrate, in order to have at least one dimension of the phenomenon.

Migration is a global phenomenon that is gradually increasing in scope, impact and complexity. Today, practically all countries of the world are simultaneously countries of destination, origin and transit for migrants. Migration flows that have become traditional over time are complemented by new waves, generated by economic, demographic, political changes or social conditions, and these new trends affect both the size and structure of the migrant population, as well as the economies and societies in the countries of origin and destination.

Few international economic deals and agreements affect the living standards or financial stability of developing countries to the same degree as migration. As a result, the views on this phenomenon bear the imprint of the field from the perspective of which the analysis is made. On the one hand, for some it is a priority to strengthen and promote the positive impact that migration has, as an opportunity for individuals to increase their productivity in the interest of the country of origin, while others see migration as a safe method and, on a case-by-case basis, quick to let the human resources of a country effectively flow to other horizons and in the economic interest of other horizons.

The reality of the last years and even the last months has shown that migration and current migratory flows require a series of specific measures, whether it is the leakage of personnel with rare or high skills and competences or whether we are talking about extreme phenomena such as forced migration or the illegal one. These measures consist in migration policies that cannot be designed in the absence of coherent migration data and specific statistics.

At the international level, it can be seen that the concerns for studying the phenomenon of migration, identifying specific features or current trends, as well as the proposal followed by the adoption of measures and policies, have grown exponentially. This interest has intensified especially in the last 50 years and since the recent past, migration has become a hot topic for the mass media, further developing the circuit of unscientific information about migration. Practically, migration has become a subject of wide interest for the common citizen, not only for researchers or decision-makers and the mass media and social networks, as factors without which we can no longer imagine the current society, have played a major role in maintaining and dissemination of information.

Obviously, this dissemination of information has shown public opinion that migration is an issue of global interest and that the need for strategies and policies is an obvious and necessary one. Migration is a complex phenomenon and its impact is felt differently in different contexts, which makes generalizations difficult. Also, there is still a need for new tools and information to be able to outline a package of policies to de-escalate some of the problems or a series of concrete recommendations to positively develop this phenomenon. Migration causes the emergence of migrant communities. Their presence is beneficial for the facilitation of economic and cultural exchanges, the support of national interests within and, why not, the promotion of national identity.

Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 12.06.2023

ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.11

1. The issues of migration data limitation

In the home country, the unemployment rate falls and wages rise, reducing imbalances. At the same time, new drivers of economic growth are emerging: the transfer of migrants' income and the improved skills of returning workers. In the receiving country, the pool of human resources increases, leading to a slowdown in capital and wage growth. In the end, migration stops, theoretically, when the wage level is the same in both countries. From this point of view, it is considered that migration can only be a positive process for both parties and, in the long term, there are no winners and losers.

In the absence of the migration movement, the able-bodied population could not be absorbed by the mother country to fit into the labor market. The unemployment rate may decrease as a result of the possibility for citizens to find a job in the territory of another state. This reduces the pressure on the unemployment insurance budget and on the social assistance system in the country of origin. With the experience gained, the migrant worker becomes more valuable to the labor market of the mother country and can even be an employer for other people, contributing to the decrease of unemployment.

At the international level, although there is a great diversity of data sources that could be used for estimating international migration stocks, these are not directly oriented towards measuring migration, which leads to a wide variation of practices in this field. The inconsistency of data sources and the lack of harmonization of methods for calculating/estimating international migration stocks generate significant difficulties in terms of data comparability.

In fact, limitation of migration data is a widely discussed issue in academic literature. The migration data are underreported and studies show that many migrants, especially those who are undocumented or illegal, are often reluctant to provide information about themselves, leading to underreporting or inaccurate reporting of the number, characteristics, and needs of migrants (Koser and Pinkerton, 2017). Also, the lack of standard definitions and categories of migrants has been identified as a major limitation of migration data. Different countries and organizations use different definitions and categories, making it difficult to compare and aggregate data across countries and regions (Betts and Collier, 2017).

Some countries and organizations do not collect comprehensive data on migrants or collect data only on certain categories of migrants, such as refugees, leaving out other categories, such as temporary workers or family members. This can lead to incomplete or biased data (Anderson, 2010). At the European level there are studies analyzing innovative sources of date and how those can be compared to traditional data sources and how the prospects of innovative data transition towards systematically are contributing to official statistics and policymaking (Joint Research Centre of EC, 2022). This need for data is present also at the global level, several major issues concerning the availability of data, consistency in definitions of migration, and a general absence of many of the important migration categories needed to understand the movements, being identified on the Asian continent (Raymer, J. et al., 2019).

The importance and the issues of the migration data concerned in the last years the Romanian researchers too, most of the papers being focused on finding alternatives and better tools to asses the phenomenon like big data that can be seen as digital traces of humans generated by using mobile phones, online services, online social networks, devices within the internet of things, from which valuable information can be extracted. Different questions on migration like migration flows and the economic and cultural effects on the migrants could be answered by combining traditional and new big data (Sîrbu et. all, 2020). The other research topics are related to lack of reliability of migration statistics due the methodology ot the process of statistical data collection itself (Oțoiu and Țițan, 2015).

Collecting and sharing data about migrants can raise issues of confidentiality and security, as it involves sensitive information about individuals and their movements, which can be misused or manipulated. The issue of confidentiality and security in relation to the collection and sharing of migration data is a topic of ongoing discussion and debate among scholars and practitioners in the field of migration studies.

In the meantime, data on migrants can be difficult to access or unavailable, especially in countries with limited resources or in areas affected by conflict or disasters. This can limit the ability to develop evidence-based policies (Haas, 2014).

2. Romanian policies for migration exodus

Today we can say that migration is one of the most important social and economic problems in Romania. One of the main reasons why people choose to leave the country is related to poor economic conditions. Romania went through periods of economic crisis and political instability, which led to an increase in unemployment and poverty. As a result, many Romanians chose to migrate in search of work opportunities and a better life abroad.

Other reasons for migration include lack of educational opportunities, discrimination and corruption, as well as the desire to improve their financial situation and secure a safer future for themselves and their families.

According the OECD data, in 2020, the total number of migrants in Romania was estimated at 3,7 million, which represents approximately 19% of the country's total population. In terms of international migration, Romania was one of the EU countries with the largest number of emigrants in the period 2010-2019. In 2020, it was estimated that approximately 3.2 million Romanians lived abroad (OECD, 2022).

In Romania’s case migration can have both positive and negative effects on the economy and society. In terms of the economy, migration can help improve the balance of payments and reduce unemployment by increasing demand for services and products (Dennett, 2014). Migration can also bring benefits to the Romanian economy through remittances sent by emigrants to their families remaining in the country.

However, migration can also have negative effects, such as the loss of human and intellectual capital, increased social and economic costs of care for those left behind, and family fragmentation. Also, migration can lead to a decrease in the number of active people in the economy, which can negatively affect Romania's economy in the long term.

Both at the European level and at the level of Romania, there are a series of migration policies and measures, although, in the case of Romania, there are no concrete statistical data and exact measurements of migration and implicitly of the population exodus, although the extent of the phenomenon is one evident.

Perhaps the most important decision in the recent history of migration was the removal of political barriers to free movement but unfortunately the respect for the right to free movement of persons was implemented much later in former communist countries and even today this is not it is fully accomplished. The concern of EU countries regarding migration issues is particularly evident recently and it can be said that it has become an unavoidable topic for national governments.

Member States have full decision-making capacity regarding:

- the total number of migrants who can be admitted to the country to look for a job;
- all final decisions regarding migration requests;
- the rules regarding long-term visas – stays for periods longer than three months;
- the conditions for obtaining residence and work permits when no rules have been adopted at the EU level.

In order to manage this major exodus of the labor force, Romania currently has a series of policies and strategies to manage the phenomenon of migration, both in terms of emigration and immigration. These policies include:

- National Immigration Strategy 2021-2024: this strategy was developed by the Government of Romania and aims to improve the management of migration and asylum in Romania, by creating a more efficient and transparent system for managing these problems (National Immigration Strategy 2021-2024, 2021);
- Migration and Asylum Law: this regulates the rights and obligations of migrants and refugees in Romania. This includes rules for access to jobs and health services, as well as procedures for obtaining asylum rights or temporary protection (Government Ordinance no. 102/14.07.2005, 2005);
- migrant reintegration policies: the Government of Romania has developed several policies and programs to help migrants reintegrate into Romanian society after returning from abroad. These include vocational training programs, financial support for setting up businesses and help to find jobs;
- bilateral agreements with other countries: Romania have a number of bilateral agreements with other countries to regulate the mutual migration of citizens. These agreements provide rules and procedures for access to jobs and health services in both countries;

Eastern European Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.11

- cooperation with the European Union: Romania cooperates closely with the European Union in terms of migration and asylum policy. This includes participating in solidarity and support programs for refugees and migrants.

In general, Romania's migration strategy focuses on improving migration and asylum management, protecting the rights of migrants and refugees, and helping them reintegrate into Romanian society after returning from abroad. However, there are still many challenges in managing migration in Romania, including preventing irregular migration and combating human trafficking. Currently, there are difficulties in estimating the stock of emigrants, meaning the number of people who, at a given moment, have their usual residence abroad for at least 12 months. These difficulties are mainly generated by the complexity of the migration phenomenon, as well as by the limited availability of data sources. These challenges cannot be correctly addressed in the absence of the exact data and coherent statistics.

Directive no. 2004/38/EC on the free movement and residence of Union citizens and their family members provides in Article 8(1) that „Without prejudice to Article 5(5), for stays exceeding three months, the host Member State may require Union citizens to register with the competent authorities." (Directive no. 2004/38/EC, 2004)

The record of Romanian citizens abroad is currently regulated by Law no. 248/2005 on the regime of free movement of Romanian citizens abroad, with subsequent amendments and additions that states that during their stay abroad, Romanian citizens have the obligation to inform the nearest diplomatic mission or consular office of Romania, in case of establishing residence or domicile abroad.

Although Romanian law requires Romanian citizens living abroad to register at embassies/consulates, they do not declare their residence in the respective country, so there is no information available about the usual residence of Romanian citizens abroad. There are no advantages to declaring usual residence, but there are also no sanctions for not declaring it.

3. Data and Methodology

The research methodology involves the theoretical analysis of data sources and indicators that measure the migration phenomenon in order to identify a possibility to quantify the volume of the migrant population. The research consists in an empirically analysis of Romania and uses secondary data identified in international statistics providers and starts from the hypothesis that it is currently impossible to quantify the number of migrants from Romania, but it is possible to estimate, at least theoretically, a potential migrant population.

Another hypothesis of this work refers to the fact that following the use of the proposed calculation model, a value at least equal to the estimates from the mass media or from national communiques regarding the volume of migrants will be obtained.

According to EU regulations on migration statistics, the usual residence criterion and the 12-month threshold are used to measure international migration flows, which determine whether a person is considered an immigrant to or emigrant from a certain country. In some EU countries, information on the time criterion is not available, and therefore, they do not comply with the time criterion in transmitting data to Eurostat. (CE Regulation, 2007)

A series of difficulties regarding the estimation of international migration stocks are related to the use of multiple criteria for establishing migrant status. The countries, depending on the availability of data, delimit the persons included in the stocks of emigrants/immigrants, according to the following criteria: time, habitual residence, country of birth, country of citizenship.

Regarding the time criterion, the usual definition requires a period of at least 12 months for the statistical assignment of migrant status. However, countries also use other time periods in their national definitions of migration. The habitual residence criterion is closely connected with the time criterion, because it requires that the person considered a migrant change his habitual residence on the territory of another state, for at least 12 months. (CE Regulation, 2007)

The country of birth is another criterion by which a person can be identified as a migrant. However, the estimation of the stock of immigrants cannot be made exclusively on the account of the number of people whose country of birth is different from the country of residence (in this case, the country being Romania). Citizenship is another criterion that delimits the scope of international migration. Estimating migration stocks based on citizenship involves risks of under/overestimation of the data (Eurostat, 2021).

Also, for Romania, as for most of the EU member states, it is difficult to estimate the stock of emigrants, one of the difficulties being generated by the free movement of people from one state to another, within the EU and there is no single definition of circular migration and, by implication, circular migrant, and therefore it is impossible to quantify this category of migrants or to take it into any account.

In Romania, neither the authorities nor the city halls or other institutions provide specific procedures/norms for Romanian citizens leaving the country to declare that they are leaving abroad for a period of time. There is no standardized form that a Romanian citizen can complete (if desired) and submit to signal that they are leaving Romania. Under these circumstances, collecting and analyzing data on migration is very difficult to achieve. It should be noted that the need to store data on population movements does not restrict/censor the individual's right to freedom of movement, but would represent an advantage at least from a statistical point of view.

The National Institute of Statistics (INS) provides data about the emigrants with a change of residence which are defined as persons (of Romanian citizenship) who emigrate abroad and about the temporary emigrants that are people who emigrate abroad for a period of at least 12 months. Emigration means the action by which a person who previously had habitual residence on the territory of Romania ceases to have habitual residence on its territory for a period that is or is expected to be at least 12 months. (INS Statistics, 2022).

Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 12.06.2023

Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179
Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.11

In the figure below we can observe the migration flows from Romania according the INS data between 2010 and 2021 based on administrative data but it is very obvious that the data availability is very limited and the phenomenon is underestimated.

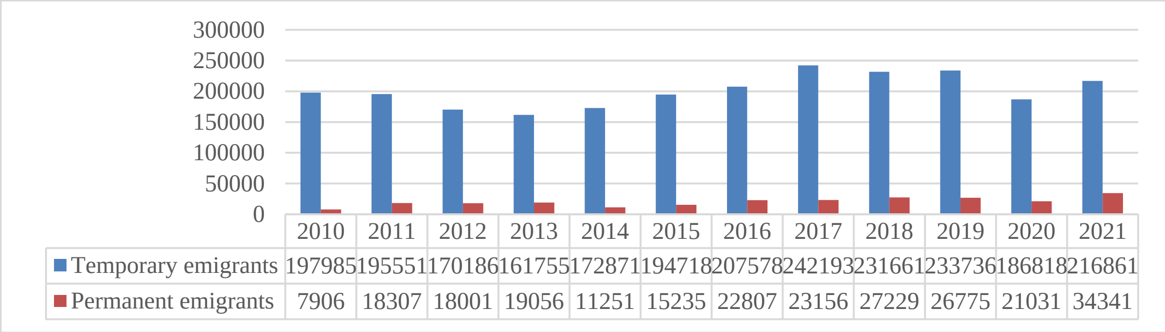

Figure 1. Migration flows from Romania (2010-2021) by INS
Source: *http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table*

The National Institute of Statistics (INS) annually estimates and transmits to Eurostat data on immigrant and emigrant flows, but, regarding migration stocks, estimating them is a challenging endeavor to achieve an acceptable level of estimation quality. The reality of recent years has confirmed this fact for other EU countries as well, for which estimated stocks have undergone large revisions. International migration statistics are also disseminated by other international statistical organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations (UN). The practices of these organizations are different from those of Eurostat, and the results disseminated are evidently different.

As we can see in the Figure 1, there are differences between the migration data from EUROSTAT and OECD even though the same variables were selected (country of birth: Romania, year: 2010-2021, country of destination – selected by the data available: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom).

The stock of migrants is affected by the fact that, in most situations, especially in the countries of the EU space, the cancellation of the registration of people who were part of the migrant population does not take place (a situation found even in countries where there are population registers). Thus, a person could be registered in two European Union countries at the same time. The migrant stock can have different meanings, in the sense that no clear distinction is made between the actual migration stock (in the statistical sense) and the diaspora (people who migrated at a given time, but who have now naturalized in host country) (Eurostat, 2021).

Received: 20.05.2023 Accepted: 12.06.2023

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.11

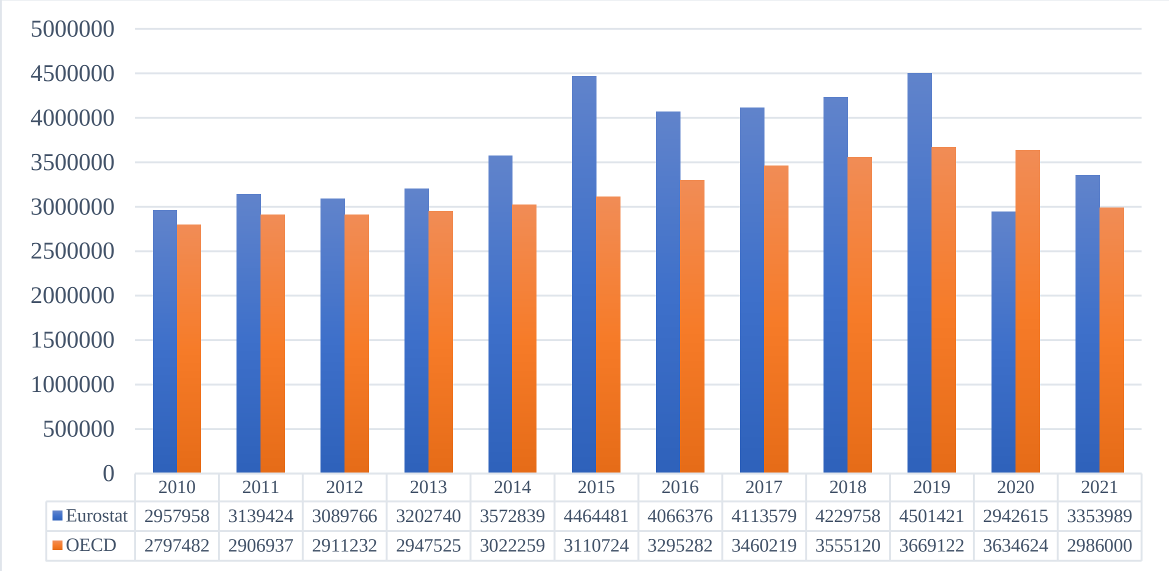

Figure 2. Migration flows from Romania (2010-2021) by EUROSTAT and OECD
Source*: ec.europa.eu/Eurostat, stats.oecd.org*

Among the negative effects of migration (with which Romania also faces) can be mentioned the deficit on the labor market, increasing the probability of brain drain and putting more and more demographic pressure on the country.

Because it is practically impossible to determine the amount of labor that Romania loses annually through migration, this paper proposes a paradigm shift in the analysis of international labor migration, in the sense that, instead of relying on difficult to obtain and limited data regarding the flows of Romanian immigrants, it starts from the already existing statistical data and tries to propose a more accurate calculation method of potential migrant workforce, sizing somewhat the loss of labor force that Romania would have, if all these people leave. Practically, we can assess a labor force value on that Romania cannot rely on at a given moment, regardless of whether this population is migrated or not, even though the full migration perspective is impossible.

The proposed model uses the already existing statistical data regarding the labor resource and the employed population. Labor resources represent that population category that has all the physical and intellectual capacities that allow them to carry out useful work in one of the national economic activities. Labor resources include: the population of working age, able to work, as well as people under and over working age in activity ((http://statistici.insse.ro/, 2023).

The civilian employed population includes, according to the labor force balance methodology, all people who have an income-generating occupation, which they normally exercise in one of the activities of the national economy, being included in an economic or social activity, based on a contract of work or independently (on own account) in order to obtain income in the form of wages, payment in kind, etc. The categories of persons included are: employees who work in one of the activities of the national economy in units of the public sector (full state and public of national interest), mixed, private, cooperative, public sector, owners– managers of private units – who use salaried labor to carry out the activity, self-employed workers, unpaid family workers (http://statistici.insse.ro/, 2023).

The labor statistics from Romania are more exact because starting from 1996, the survey on the labor force in households is carried out quarterly, as continuous research, thus allowing the obtaining of conjunctural data on the size and structure of the labor supply and the highlighting of seasonal phenomena that manifest themselves on the labor market. The survey results are available quarterly and annually (average data) (INS, 2020). In fact, the INS itself mentions in one of reports that even though the official statistics in Romania make permanent efforts to improve the quality of the estimates, by using multiple sources of data, both statistical and administrative sources, the emigration and migration in general are extremely difficult to measure, especially in the community space, where the movement of people is free (INS, 2021).

4. The Model and Findings

The model introduces the concept of potential migrant workforce, this being calculated as the difference between the labor resource and the employed population (civilian). The model is presented below:

$$\boldsymbol{PMW} = \ Labor\ Resource - Employed\ Population$$

Potential Migrant Workforce (PMW) represents the loss of labor force that a country would have in case of full migration and below you can find the results of the calculation for Romania’s case. Of course, that this perspective of full migration is unrealistic but at least these data can be based on more accurate statistics and, if we relate it with the INS data regarding migration, we observe that the PMW includes already the temporary or permanent emigrants. Also, in terms of labor statistics categories, the PMW comprises the unemployed population, the population in professional education and other categories of population (inactive population), which corresponds to the population most likely to emigrate. There are studies that have tried to profile the Romanian emigrant: an active person, from a poor area or regions that have benefited from a strategic geographical positioning, usually women, between 18 and 44 years old, generally high school educated. They are housewives, pupils/students or qualified workers, with incomes of a maximum of 150 RON/month/person or no income. (Stoian et. all, 2017).

A percentage of the weight of the PMW indicator in the labor resource was also calculated in order to have an image of the potential migrant workforce ratio compared to the entire labor resource giving the fact it is based on this.

From the table above we can observe that the potential migrant workforce has declined since 2013 (5448.76 thousand of people), the evolution being totally based on the growth of the employed population only, because the decrease of the labor force was almost insignificant. The decrease was with more than 27% which was a major benefic change for the Romanian workforce. We can observe that the percentage from 2021 is worrying even though the labor resource was not changed in the last year and it is very close to the values from 2010-2013.

Table 1. Potential Migrant Workforce of Romania (2010 – 2021) - thousands

Indicator	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Labor Resource	14047.6	14047.7	14033.7	13997.9	12597.7	12481.1	12562	12432.5	12238.9	12198.3	12216.8	12201.4
Employed Population	8712.82	8528.14	8605.05	8549.13	8613.73	8535.38	8448.77	8670.55	8688.53	8680.32	8521.05	7755.48
PMW	5334.77	5519.55	5428.64	5448.76	3983.96	3945.71	4113.22	3761.94	3550.36	3517.97	3695.74	4445.91
PMW Ratio	37.98 %	39.29 %	38.68 %	38.93 %	31.62 %	31.61 %	32.74 %	30.26 %	29.01 %	28.84 %	30.25 %	36.44 %

***Source**: Made by the authors, based on data from http://statistici.insse.ro/*

Comparing with Eurostat and OECD data, it is obvious that PMW values are higher because they refer and are analyzed upstream at the country of origin and not downstream at the country of destination as are the data from the international statistics. Also, the data from the international statistics are obviously incomplete due to the fact that not all destination countries can be taken into account and the data collection limitations have a permanent character.

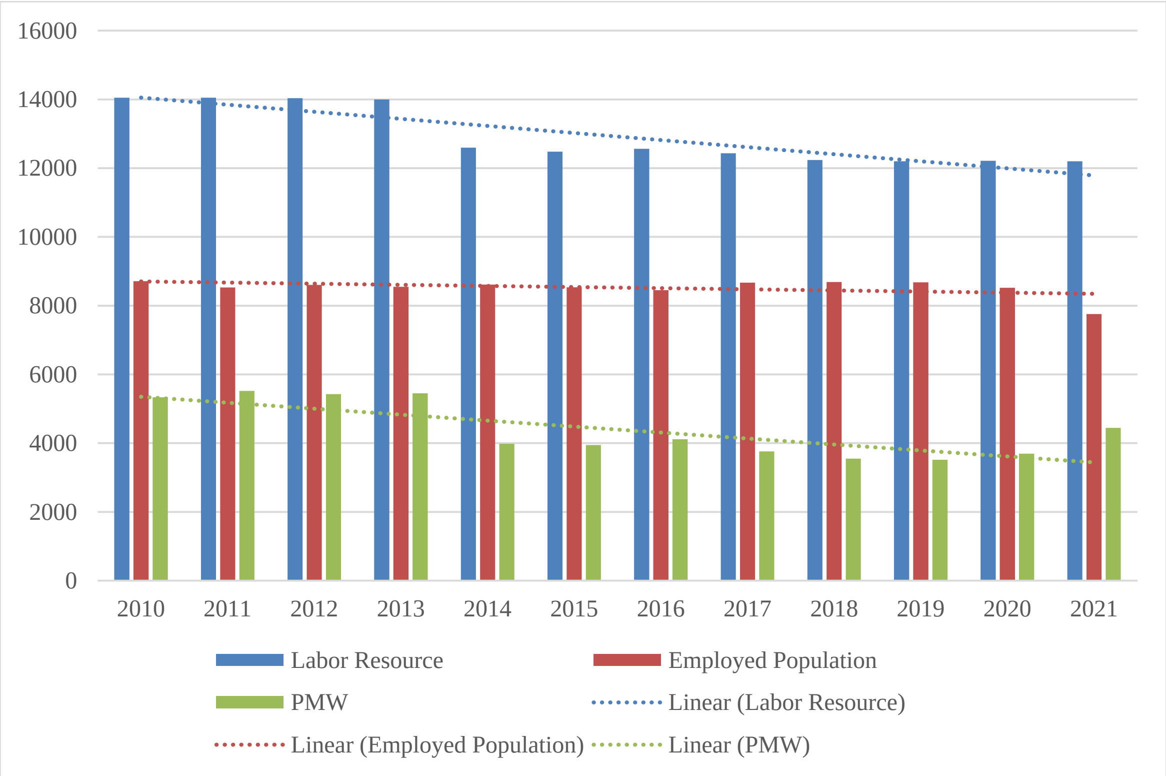

Figure 3. Evolution of the Romanian PMW between 2010 and 2021
***Source**: Made by the authors, based on data from http://statistici.insse.ro/*

As we can observe in the figure above even though the labor resource was almost constant after 2018, due to the fact the employed population has decreased the potential migrant workforce has increased getting very close to the values before 2014.

The highest values for the potential migrant workforce were registered in the years 2010-2013 with a peak in 2011 counting approximately 5428640 people. Giving the fact the labor resource was almost constant, the increase of the PMW is based most on the decrease of the employed population, most probably as a result of the global financial crisis. Even though the trendline of the PMW shows a decline in the span of 11 years (2010-2021) there is another decrease for the employed population in 2021 (a pandemic consequence) influencing the increase of the PMW to 4445910 people and the highest ratio in 8 years (36.44%).

Conclusions

The construction of this model represents an early stage of assessing the risk of labor exodus and it represents an instrument that does not measure migration but measures the labor force that could be lost at a certain point, this information being useful for the development of migration policies. Most of the data available regarding the migration flows are collected downstream at the country of destination and not upstream at the country of origin as this model does, measuring the potential migrant population before the phenomenon takes place.

Although it is a good tool for evaluating the risk of labor force exodus, the model also has some limitations that will require in the future to correct the calculation method for more accuracy: the civilian employed population does not include military cadres and persons assimilated to them, prisoners and employees of political and public organizations and it does not take into account the population that is not able to work. Also, the situation of the unemployed workforce is very volatile. The proposed model practically does not measure the volume of the migrant population focusing strictly on the labor force that is or is not already migrated.

In the future, for the improvement of the model, all categories of the population that could significantly influence the data will be taken into account. Also, the research will continue with a series of correlations with recent phenomena such as the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, but also with the migration policies of the state and last but not least with the natural growth rate.

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Eastern European
Journal of Regional Studies
ISSN: 1857-436X / ISSN: 2537-6179

Volume 9 / Issue 1/ June 2023
https://doi.org/10.53486/2537-6179.9-1.12

LABOR MIGRATION AND THE PHENOMENON OF TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract. *Currently, international migration in the world is experiencing spectacular growth. According to United Nations estimates, in 2020 globally there were around 281 million international migrants, or 3.6% of the global population (IOM, 2022). The upward trend in migration, especially labor migration, continues, so that migration has become a defining feature of the modern global economy.*

An intensification of labor migration is also observed in the Republic of Moldova. According to the Labor Force Survey in 2022, the number of people who went abroad for a period of up to one year in search of a job was about 93 thousand people or about 7.5% of the population out of the labor force for 15 years and over. (Labor Force Survey, 2022). However, the cumulative number of labor migrants in the last 25 years from the Republic of Moldova is much higher. Various sources estimate the extent of labor migration from the Republic of Moldova from 400 thousand to one million people (Zwager N, Sințov R., 2014). The lack of employment opportunities, especially in rural areas, has led to the fact that most labor migrants are from rural areas - about 70%. (NBS, 2022)

Labor migration processes from the Republic of Moldova have become an important factor in combating poverty and increasing the well-being of the population of the Republic of Moldova. Moreover, the economic growth registered by the Republic of Moldova during the last years is precisely due to the remittances of migrant workers.

However, the migratory phenomenon in the Republic of Moldova also generates certain risks, such as human trafficking, accelerated demographic aging and the expansion of the number of transnational families, which also generates the problem of children left without parental care. As such, the phenomenon of transnational families is a global phenomenon, and various countries, through their policies, try to mitigate its negative effects.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the impact of labor migration on the expansion of the phenomenon of transnational families in the Republic of Moldova, as well as the situation of children left without care as a result of labor migration. The article comes with a series of conclusions and recommendations regarding the minimization of the negative effects of labor migration, as well as the development of social services necessary to prevent the phenomenon of children left without parental care as a result of labor migration.

Keywords*: labor migration, transnational families, children left without care after migration*

UDC: *[331.556.46:316.356.2](478)*

JEL Code: *J62*

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Received: 12.05.2023 Accepted: 12.06.2023

Introduction

The contemporary era can certainly be called an era of migration. In 2020, according to United Nations estimates, international migration reached over 281 million people or 3.6% of the world's population (IOM, 2022). Although the COVID-19 pandemic, in a way, has reduced the intensity of migration processes, the trend of increasing migration, especially labor migration, continues. The migratory phenomenon is characteristic of practically any state, and migration has become a defining feature of the modern global economy.

Currently, for the Republic of Moldova, considered as the country of origin, the migratory phenomenon, especially labor migration, has become a defining element of economic development. Labor migration processes from the Republic of Moldova have become an important factor in combating poverty and increasing the well-being of the population of the Republic of Moldova. And the economic growth registered by the Republic of Moldova during the last years is precisely due to the remittances of migrant workers who complete the economic circuit of the country.

According to the Labor Force Survey in 2022, the number of people who went abroad for a period of up to one year in search of a job was about 93 thousand people or about 7.5% of the population out of the labor force for 15 years and above (NBS, 2022). However, the cumulative number of labor migrants in the last 25 years from the Republic of Moldova is much higher. Various sources estimate the extent of labor migration from the Republic of Moldova from 400 thousand to one million people (Zwager N, Sințov R., 2014). According to data from the Population Census over 10 years, from 2004 to 2014, the population witnessed a decline caused by labor migration, from 3.3 million people to 2.6 million people NBS Yearbook, 2022. It should be noted that the share of people who left rural areas constitutes about 70% of all migrants (Labor Force Survey, 2022).

Although for the Republic of Moldova the migratory phenomenon has contributed to several beneficial effects, it also generates certain social risks, such as the decline of employment, the aging of the population, the expansion of the number of transnational families, the problem of children left without care as a result of labor migration. It should be noted that the problem of transnational families is becoming more widespread throughout the world, becoming a global phenomenon.

The problem of transnational families and children left without care as a result of labor migration is already known in the Republic of Moldova. During the last years, several researches were initiated in the field, and the public authorities, being aware of the seriousness of the problem, developed policies and intervention tools, including the Strategy for the Protection of the Child for the years 2014-2020, (Decision of Government no. 434 of 27.11.2014) the normative framework was perfected by the launch of Law no. 140 of 14.06.2013 "Regarding the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents", (Law no. 140 of 14.06.2013), several social services provided at the community level by the assistants were developed social workers, school psychologists, etc.

Received: 12.05.2023 Accepted: 12.06.2023

The most effective management of the situation of transnational families becomes more and more important in the situation where, against the background of globalization processes, labor migration from the Republic of Moldova will register an even greater intensification, and the problem of transnational families and children left without care will become even more widespread and will lead to the emergence of various new social risks. In this context, current research into the situation of children left without care after migration becomes increasingly important.

The purpose of the given article is to analyze the impact of labor migration on the expansion of the phenomenon of transnational families and the situation of children left without care following migration from the Republic of Moldova, to highlight the problems they face, as well as the specific needs of this social group.

1. Literature review

In the process of developing the article, a vast literature in the field was analyzed, studies, monographs, articles, normative acts, official data from government institutions concerned with the social protection of children left without care whose parents are away working abroad who are reflected in the references at the end of the article.

3. Data and Methodology

In the writing of the article and the analysis of international labor migration, its impact on the expansion of the phenomenon of transnational families and children left without care following migration from the Republic of Moldova, various quantitative and qualitative research methods were used, including the analysis of statistical data, the analysis of various documents and normative acts, sociological observation, etc. Statistical data of the National Bureau of Statistics, of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection were used, as well as some data taken from various studies carried out in recent years. The given article is largely based on the research results of the CASTLE project on the impact of migration on the situation of transnational families and children left without care following parental migration. The results of 36 in-depth interviews with parents who migrated for work or stayed at home, 4 interviews with children left behind after migration, 4 focus groups conducted later with these social groups, 11 in-depth interviews with representatives of central and local public authorities were analyzed .

3. Assessment of the situation at the national and local level

The phenomenon of labor migration from the Republic of Moldova has become more widespread in recent years, and both men and women participate in the migratory processes. As mentioned, in 2022, according to the Labor Force Survey, the number of people who went abroad for a period of up to one year in search of a job was about 93 thousand people or about 7.5% of the population outside the labor force for 15 years and over. (NBS, 2022). However, the cumulative number of labor migrants in the last 25 years from the Republic of Moldova is much higher. Various sources estimate the extent of labor migration from the Republic of Moldova from 400 thousand to one million people (Zwager N, Sințov R., 2014).

It is considered that the migratory phenomenon contributes in a beneficial way to the development processes, both from the countries of origin and from the countries of destination by balancing the demo-economic correlation. Thus, if the country is faced with a relative overpopulation, only the migratory factor represents the most operative and efficient solution that would ensure the balance between the population and the availability of economic resources and would avoid the triggering of unforeseen human cataclysms, related to the increase in unemployment and pressure on the labor market. For the countries of destination, the migratory factor can compensate for the shortage of human resources that the country faces due to the specificity of the reproduction processes and the intense processes related to the aging of the population.

Therefore, international labor migration can be considered as an important factor for overcoming imbalances on the labor market both for the countries of origin and for the countries of destination, and migration flows become a mechanism for globally balancing the deficiencies on the domestic markets as well as an important development factor.

For the Republic of Moldova, the main reason for contemporary migration can be considered economic. The economic decline related to the effects of the transition to the market economy, the lack of investments needed to create new jobs, the lack of real employment opportunities, especially in the rural area, led to an essential deterioration of the population's well-being, to an expansion of the risk of poverty, which led a large part of the population to go abroad in search of a job. And the remittances that migrant workers send home to family members really contribute to overcoming problems related to welfare and poverty. It should be noted that in 2022 the volume of remittances in the Republic of Moldova reached the level of USD 1745.74 million (NBM, 2022).

The intensification of international labor migration from the Republic of Moldova has strongly affected the employment situation. The massive exodus of people working abroad was determined, first of all, by the lack of real employment opportunities, especially in rural areas, as well as by the extremely low salary incomes that cannot ensure a decent standard of living. Both low wages and poor employment opportunities in the Republic of Moldova are caused by economic factors inherited from the period of the socialist economy and persisting in the contemporary period, namely: the excess of labor supply, an unfavorable occupational structure, the lack of investment resources, the lack entrepreneurial spirit. All this has led to the establishment of an economic situation that cannot ensure a significant increase in added value, i.e. an increase in the social productivity of work necessary to ensure the increase in the population's income necessary for a decent living.

The data of the Labor Force Survey show that during the last two decades the activity rate, the employment rate and the unemployment rate have decreased, respectively, from 59.9%, 54.8% and 8.5% in 2000, up to 43.3%, 42.0%, and 3.0%, respectively, in 2018. (Figure 1.).

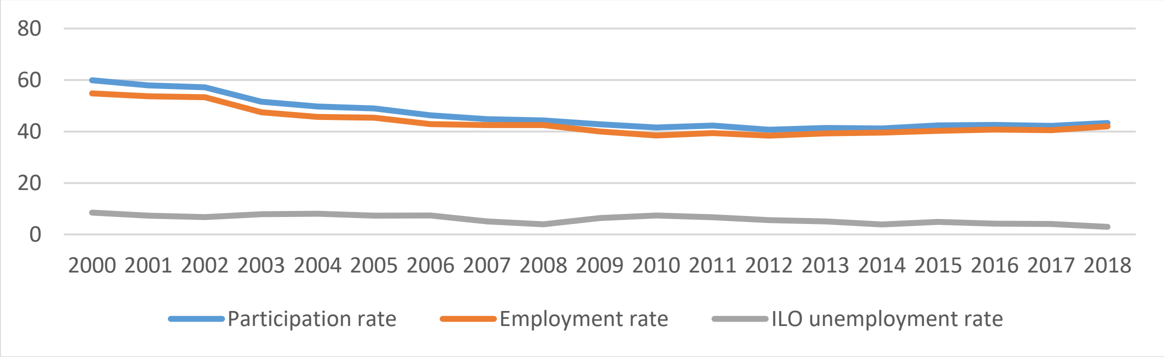

Figure 1. Activity, employment and unemployment rate in the period 2000-2018, %
***Sourse**: NBS*

These trends on the labor market in the Republic of Moldova have put the public authorities on guard, motivating them to take certain measures to rectify the situation, which have materialized in various National Employment Strategies (respectively, for the period 2007-2015 , 2017-2021, 2022-2026). Although the efforts of the government authorities have been major, the situation in the field of employment continues to be critical. The level of employment in the following years did not register any increases, oscillating around the 40% level, while the unemployment rate registered a stable downward trend.

The decline of occupational indicators is taking place on the background of the accelerated growth of labor migration, as well as the number of able-bodied people who do not want to work. In 2022, the number of people outside the labor force constituted 1240.1 thousand persons or 58.2% of the total population of the same age group, of which 46.7% were pensioners, 13.1%, respectively students, 13.0% - people who take care of the family (homemakers), 10.2% - people who are in the country, but who do not want to work in Moldova, because they already have a job (permanent or seasonal) abroad or people planning to work abroad. In this context, the continuous increase of NEET's[2] should also be noted. In 2022, the share of NEET young people constituted 17.2% of the total number of young people aged 15-24, 26.2% - among young people aged 15-29 and, respectively, 29.7% among those 15-34 years (NBS, 2022).

Thus, it can be stated that the population of the Republic of Moldova is not motivated to be present on the labor market in the republic, preferring either work abroad, or activities in the informal economy, or other types of activities than work. Indeed, in the

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[2] *The NEET group (Original English term: "Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)") represents young people aged 15-29, who are not part of the employed population, do not study/learn within the formal education system education and does not attend any courses or other training outside the formal education system.*

Received: 12.05.2023 Accepted: 12.06.2023

situation where people of working age cannot find themselves in their hometowns, and cannot ensure a decent living, labor migration is the most beneficial solution.

A major social risk for the Republic of Moldova related to labor migration also represents the negative impact on demographic processes. Indeed, migration leads to the decrease of the population and therefore of the human potential, which is extremely necessary for the economic and social development of the country or community. At the same time, migration also leads to the modification of the demographic structure of the country or the community in the sense of the accelerated aging of the population, which generates serious social problems. The fact that people of working age and therefore of reproductive age migrate, migration also leads to a reduction in the birth rate, as well as an increase in the economic dependency ratio.

A recognized social risk of labor migration from the Republic of Moldova can also be considered the expansion of transnational families and the increase in the number of children left without care as a result of migration. The expansion of the number of transnational families can be seen as a challenge for the social development of the country, for social cohesion at the community level.

The expansion of transnational families affects family integrity and can generate certain risks related to the situation of children left without parental care following labor migration.

It should be noted that the problem of transnational families is becoming more widespread throughout the world, in the context of globalization processes. Various countries, through their policies, try to mitigate its negative effects.

Currently, the public authorities of the Republic of Moldova, aware of the seriousness of the problem, especially the one related to the situation of children left without care as a result of labor migration, have developed several policies and intervention tools. Can be mentioned such activities as improving the legislative framework related to the protection of children, the development of various services community level, monitoring children left without care after migration. Thus, in 2013 Law no. 140 "Regarding the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents" (Law no. 140 of 14.06.2013), the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection initiated an investigation, the purpose of which is to monitor children at risk and children separated from their parents Investigation CER-103. According to the CER-103 Survey (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, 2021), in 2021 the total number of cases of children separated from their parents on the records of local public authorities was 34,107 children, of which 24,763 children from rural areas. Of these, 29,186, including 21,684 from rural areas, are children whose both parents or one parent are temporarily abroad.

Migration affects, first, the family balance, which has a strong impact on the psycho-emotional balance of the wives and children, as well as the husbands who stayed at home or left for migration to ensure their livelihood and that of their families. Migration strongly influences the psycho-emotional development of children left without parental care, as well as their health, education, and socialization.

Interviews with migrant and stay-at-home parents, as well as with children whose parents are abroad as part of the CASTLE research, showed that the absence of one or both parents causes affective deficiencies in the relationships between parents and children. Affective deficiencies are more severe and irreversible in children abandoned at an early age. Sadness, longing, emptiness, are the consequences conditioned by the lack of parents, the lack of maternal affection, the lack of a secure environment. Children especially feel the lack of parental warmth and love at holidays, including birthdays. The situation is similar when the parents are not with the children even on the most important family holidays - Christmas, Easter, etc.

The psychological impact of parents' migration on children left without care is characterized by the feeling of loneliness, lack of affection, emotional deprivation, these being accompanied by early maturation, anxiety and fear of a possible divorce of the parents. Lack of affection and emotional deprivation cannot ensure children's attachment, security and protection, and this negatively influences children's personality development. They become frustrated not only because of the inability to receive affection, but also to give it. Emotional deprivation leaves its mark on the child's psychological development, influencing self-perception and hindering the process of social integration and assimilation of social roles.

Parents' migration can affect children's diet and nutritional balance. Children feed themselves insufficiently and incorrectly, a fact that leaves its mark on the appearance and development of some diseases. It also increases the risk of developing unsanitary conditions.

CASTLE research has shown that when parents go abroad, children take over their roles not only in maintaining the household, but also in caring for younger brothers and sisters. The internal balance of the family is disturbed by the departure of a parent. The family has to reorganize and adapt, which is a long process that can take several months.

At the same time, children do not possess knowledge and there is no one to inform them about health risk behaviors, about life skills and sexual education. Under these conditions, they fill this informational vacuum by talking with peers, searching for information on the Internet which does not always provide correct information.

Children with parents who have gone to work abroad often do not establish friendly relations with their peers either because they are not understood, or because they do not want to divulge family secrets, or because of a lack of free time, etc. The support networks of these children are poorly developed, most often limited to discussions with managers, teachers, psychologists. Migration conditions the weakening of the interaction of the child with migrant parents with the educational institution due to the lack of supervision and control on the part of the parents, the multiple "new" responsibilities of these children, the misunderstanding on the part of teachers, peers; lack of partnership between family and school, etc.

Although access to medical services, according to the legislation in force, is offered free of charge to all children, when children are left in the care of a minor, they do not know and cannot act promptly on the health changes of the little ones, respectively, the risk of developing complications and serious developments of the acute disease is growing.

The CASTLE research showed that children believe that parents' migration is determined by the intention to escape poverty or to improve life and living conditions, by the lack of employment opportunities at home, by the impossibility of providing children with a good education, etc. The children's acceptance or non-acceptance of parents' migration depends on their age, the way in which the parents requested the children's opinion, the person in whose care they remained and, last but not least, the frequency of communication between children and parents through modern information technologies.

The central and local public authorities in the Republic of Moldova are aware of the seriousness of the given problem and the need to undertake consolidated measures to meet the needs of children left without care whose parents are away working abroad, and to protect their rights in the most complex way possible. For this purpose, the first normative act focused on the issue of children left without care following migration was the National Action Plan regarding the protection of children left without parental care for the years 2010-2011 (Government Decision No. 450 of 02.06.2010). The plan provides for a series of multidisciplinary actions aimed to ensure the protection and well-being of children left without parental care.

At the same time, considering that the problem of transnational families and children left without care as a result of labor migration is becoming increasingly urgent, in 2013 Law no. 140 of 14.06.2013 "Regarding the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents" was launched. (Law no. 140 of 14.06.2013).

CASTLE research has shown that representatives of local public authorities believe that this law allows them to effectively exercise their functions vis-à-vis the situation of transnational families and children left without care as a result of migration.

The change in the real situation in the Republic of Moldova determined that the given law should be adapted to the new conditions. For this reason, in 2020 Law No. 112 of 09-07-2020 "For the amendment of some normative acts" (Law 112 of 27.12.2020) which provides for a more simplified mechanism for establishing custody for children left without care following labor migration instead of tutelage or guardianship.

In order to deal with the situation created in order to avoid the risks related to the problem of the expansion of transnational families and children left without care after migration, local public authorities are also making colossal efforts. At the local level, in order to overcome the risks related to the problem of children left without care after migration, various actors are involved: mayors, social pedagogues, family doctors, social workers, etc. representatives of civil society are also involved, coming up with various innovative social initiatives to make life easier for children in the given category. Effective communication with potentially migrant parents is ensured.

The representatives of the local public authorities also come up with some proposals regarding the improvement of the normative framework focused on the protection of children left without care. Thus, they believe that custody as a form of child protection is good, but with the determination of certain age criteria. However, an 80-year-old person who also needs care cannot be given custody of a minor child.

Thus, it can be concluded that the public authorities of the Republic of Moldova are aware of the seriousness of the situation and react promptly to the various forms of manifestation of the problem of transnational families and children left without care as a result of labor migration, and the problem given in recent years is managed quite effectively.

Conclusions

Labor migration from the Republic of Moldova had a rather beneficial impact on the economic and social development of the Republic of Moldova. By increasing the volume of remittances, international labor migration has led to an increase in the well-being of the population and the fight against poverty.

At the same time, labor migration has also generated a series of social risks, such as the decline of employment on the labor market, the aging of the population, the expansion of transnational families, the problem of children left without care as a migration result.

The central and local public authorities in the Republic of Moldova are aware of the risks of international labor migration and try to overcome them quite effectively, either by the adaptation of the regulatory framework, or by promoting coherent and efficient public policies, or by developing new public services for affected social groups of migration.

Acknowledgement

This article was elaborated within the project "Children Left Behind by Labour Migration: Supporting Moldovan and Ukrainian Transnational Families in the EU (CASTEL), contract number: ICMPD/2021/MPF-357-004

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