

Briefing 2017 - Individual and contextual factors of Romanian migrants' motivation

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Introduction

This briefing presents the main results from the analysis of the qualitative data gathered by the Romanian country team under the WP 4 – Lived experiences of migration - of the GEMM project at the end of the year 2016 and the first half of 2017. It focuses on the individual and contextual factors with relevant impact on the formation and development of Romanian migrants' motivation. The Romanian team conducted 48 interviews, of which: 10 with prospective migrants, 28 with actual migrants from Germany, Italy, UK, and Spain, and 10 with managers and staff from recruitment agencies. The sampling plan for migrants aimed at maximum diversity in terms of age, gender, education, and length of migration experience. The recruitment of interviewees was based on the snow-ball method in the case of prospective and actual migrants and on direct approach from a list in the case of recruitment agencies; public agencies were selected as to cover both national and county levels and at county level from regions with different levels of socio-economic development; private agencies were selected based on the information available on the Internet as to have different areas of coverage (local, regional, national, and international). The interviews were mostly conducted face-to-face but in a few cases via Skype.

Findings:

1. The economic restructuring occurred after the change of political regime in Romania has led *inter alia* to a lack of jobs for people qualified in industrial trades previously required by the Romanian economy, while the education system was unable to adapt to the new requirements of the labour market. The transportation facilities that used to enable domestic mobility of the labour force have been discontinued, so that the employment opportunities have further decreased. The restitution of rural properties to the former owners did not help very much in the conditions of most rural households lacking the technical means for working the land in a profitable manner. Hence, large categories of workers have become redundant and many of them opted for working abroad as a means to ensuring a decent living for themselves and for their families.

“Because in our country we haven’t had the possibility to work, neither I nor my husband, and we could not achieve anything.” (Actual migrant, female, 47 y/o)

„The answer is one fold: for a better living, because in our country we had nothing to do. We were working in our kitchen garden, money was scarce, there were no available jobs.” (Actual migrant, male, 40 y/o)

„First of all I wished to provide my child with better living; to build a future for him; although I haven’t has, at least to offer him everything he needs.” (Prospective migrant, female, 28 y/o)

2. The socio-economic development in the Western countries had led *inter alia* to the occurrence of a lack of labour force in several sectors, requiring mainly unqualified and low qualified labour force, but not only. On the other hand, the political evolution aiming at European integration has brought along large opportunities for peoples' mobility, including for education and work purposes. New and more permissive regulations have been adopted at the EU level to encourage mobility in education and on the labour market.

<p>“We (his wife and he), in principle, had been pretty well established in Bucharest; we had our apartment there, everything was very well, we had been travelling through Europe, we had already big salaries ... , we started thinking to move for a certain period but not too long and live somewhere in Europe. And thus - this is my impression - after Germany announced that Romanians may work in Germany without work permit, I was recruited by a company from German...” (Actual migrant, male, 33 y/o)</p>	<p>“We are going to have a baby ... and we would prefer him to live in a much more open environment, more democratic and more civilised as compared to what it is foreseen to exist in Romania in the next 5-10 years.” (Prospective migrant , male, 35 y/o)</p>	<p>„ After the Christmas Holidays (she had spent holidays in Italy at her sister) ... I went with my sister to her workplace (in a restaurant); the owner saw me and said come to work with us in the kitchen. My sister had been cleaning there and I had come along to help her ... The next day I went to work and remained there eight years.” (Actual migrant, female, 39 y/o)</p>
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3. While confirming the important role of economic factors in the migration phenomenon, our research findings have also revealed that other contextual factors play important roles in the decision to migrate and the development of motivation to follow that way. Thus, our research findings have revealed that almost half of our migrant interviewees were fairly satisfied with their living conditions in the home country, which does not mean that such migrants were not looking for better living conditions but that other factors have to be explored for accurate understanding of the migrants' motivation. Our analysis revealed that 4 out the 10 prospective migrants and 16 out of the 28 actual migrants evoked also factors relating to the social climate and/or to the political climate.

<p>„ ... it depends on what kind of persons we are speaking of; there are persons with university degrees and high qualifications and these people look for a safer social and political environment and a society, so to say, developed, where social services have reached an acceptable level, while persons with lower qualifications or unqualified look for incomes that they may bring back home and turn themselves round” (Expert public recruitment agency, male, 40 y/o)</p>	<p>„Yes, we have come to a period at the limit, a saturation regarding the mentality and the way in which things were going on in our country” (Prospective migrant, male, 35 y/o)</p>	<p>“... in Romania the hospital was paying me somehow but was putting me in a position of dependence upon a relationship in which, so to say, the patient had to sponsor the medical services. ... This is actually prostitution; one has to prostitute him/herself in order to obtain the money that in normal conditions s/he would be entitled to receive from the hospital in its capacity of employer.” (AM, M, 44)</p>
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4. In terms of life goals relating to migration, we have identified several categories of migrants, from migrants without any life goals or with goals that seem only incidentally linked to their motivation to migrate through migrants with life goals relating to a higher social status based on professional development or career advancement, living in different social contexts and reaching higher income and better standards of living.

<p><i>„In principle, professional fulfilment; when learning six years and achieving a profession one wants to practice it in the best conditions...”</i> (Actual migrant, male, 31 y/o)</p>	<p><i>„... I've always been curious to see other places as well and to study in other places as well, to keep studying and improve my professional qualification...”</i> (Actual migrant, female, 31 y/o)</p>	<p><i>„... I've chosen to come here because at that moment I thought that going to the best university in the world means better education”</i> (Actual migrant, male, 25 y/o)</p>
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Policy recommendations

In a view to increase their effectiveness and efficiency the policies aiming at minimising the loss of human capital should pay special attention to migrants' motivations and include measures tailored to their needs and aspirations while also considering the general interest of the society. Such policies should aim at:

- Better and larger cooperation between public and private recruitment agencies in the sending countries, especially in the area of information and advice for prospective migrants.
- Improved regulations regarding the responsibilities of migrant parents towards their children left behind along with improved cooperation between child protection services from the sending and receiving countries in a view to minimise the negative impact of parents' migration on the development of their children left behind.
- Setting up welcome structures in the countries receiving important numbers of immigrants with a view to facilitate their social adaptation; such structures should provide at least language courses, information on labour market and labour legislation as well as on institutions related to the labour market, information and advice regarding social norms in the host communities, information and advice regarding the social protection and the health system.
- Promotion and support for projects aiming at facilitating social adaptation of migrants to host communities and improvement of their social life.
- Enhanced efforts in both sending and receiving countries to minimise the access to the black labour market as a means to avoid underemployment and improve the use of human capital.

Many such policies or policy measures may be also developed as projects financed from EU funds.