

**ON-THE-MOVE – "The reality of free movement for young European citizens
migrating in times of crisis"**

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PERSPECTIVES ON FREE MOVEMENT:

Drivers and barriers to free movement in
sending countries

Cross country report

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Summary

The present report summarises and compares the experiences of young people from 'sending' countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Romania) who mainly 'export' (young) movers as regards drivers and barriers to their movement to other (Western) EU Member States. The experiences of young EU citizens moving to 'sending' countries are also discussed. Some aspects of the case of 'mixed' countries which both export and import young movers, are related too.

In Part A, drivers of economic, non-economic, as well as personal nature are discussed for the movement of young people. They relate to both push factors, driving them away from their home countries, and pull factors, attracting them to better paid, more stimulating jobs and better functioning societies.

In Part B, the barriers perceived by those who wish to move and the actual barriers faced by returnees as well as by the EU citizens living in sending countries are presented. Those barriers are a combination of a lack of certain abilities (e.g. language) and difficulties with the setting of a new life in a foreign country.

Part C reflects on the factors for attraction of young people to sending countries.

Each part closes with interim findings, reflecting the main conclusions reached by the project teams. In the last part, conclusions and recommendations are synthesized.

Part A: Drivers for young people to exercise their right to free movement

1. Drivers motivating young people to exercise their right to free movement

Young people from sending countries the *On the move* initiative covered (Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Romania) elaborate on various drivers motivating them to exercise their right to free movement and go to live and work in another EU Member State, mostly in Western Europe. Drivers vary due to a number of reasons. Some drivers of young people from 'mixed' countries like Austria, Cyprus and Italy are also explored.

For some, motives are different depending as much on their personal circumstances, ambitions and career goals as on their previous experience of living and working abroad or lack thereof. Those who have no experience of free movement whatsoever are largely driven by a desire to escape from the reality in their own country (push factors) and seem to have a more idealistic vision on what 'abroad' is like (Bulgaria):

"I know I can do any kind of work there and I will be paid much better so I will also feel much better than I do here." (A BG24, female, 27 years, BG national)

In comparison, those with some experience of living in a foreign country before and those who have spent a longer period of time abroad justify their choice by focusing on one or more aspects of living in their selected destination country which they are attracted to (pullfactors) (Bulgaria). An interesting elaboration on this point, however, comes from young Romanians, according to some of whom the connection between living abroad and living a better life is 'premature':

"I don't think that listening to your friends should have a huge impact on your decision to move. Everyone has a different story, their success or their failure must not be taken as a general situation... I don't know if I would have a better life or better perspective on employment, I do not know what to answer. I suppose I will find out in a few years and only by being there" (A RO12, male, 30 years, RO national).

For others, motivation varies depending on whether they wish to discover the world and get new experiences, where they would work at jobs requiring no or little previous experience and would move back in a year or two, or they would move specifically because of work (Estonia). A variation of that dichotomy is displayed by those desiring to leave on short term for economic reasons to save money for a better life and then go home and others who opt for definitive departure due to unpleasant experiences in their own country and believing that they would live better anywhere (Romania). Another division is between those who would leave as soon as they are offered a job and those who will leave if they had access to a secure position (Romania).

In general, factors motivating young people to wish to exercise their right to free movement, both in terms of pull and push factors, can be divided into

economic and **non-economic**. A number of **personal reasons** are also elaborated upon.

Economic motivation

Regarding **economic motivation**, monetary considerations are often given, regarding the **higher wages** one would earn in another EU Member State. Better salaries are mentioned along with better professional opportunities (Greece, Romania, Portugal) and lowering of income at home was noted in a number of aspects, like to deterioration of families' standard of living (Greece). Other interviewees wish to improve their financial situation immediately and earn more than in their home country (Poland):

"It hurts me a lot that I have a higher education degree, I am very devoted to my work and still I cannot afford going skiing in the winter break and somewhere else in the summer while my friends who work in the UK not exactly in their professional area, for example in the gastronomy sector, travel a lot to Brazil or some other countries. It encourages me to move because I also want to see something in my life." (A PL6, female, 27 years, going to the UK).

For many, lower wages at home are seen as factor together with high (youth) **unemployment** rates (Portugal).

"The unemployment rate is very high in Portugal. The wages are too low and there is no support for recent graduates." (A PT22, Female, 27 years, PT national)

Conversely, higher wages abroad are directly linked with the **expectation of a better life** (Portugal), better **financial security** (Greece) and a more **adequate remuneration** for the same work and qualifications one has at home - 'European requirements – European pay' (Bulgaria).

The **financial crisis** is mentioned as a specific push factor in Greece, where income decreases, while taxes and social security payments increase and, in particular, professional effort and qualifications depreciate (see section on country specific drivers).

Wages, both as pull and push factor, are intrinsically linked with **professional prospects** and **opportunities for better professional development** which stand somewhere in between interviewees' economic and non-economic considerations. For some, there is frustration over the fact that despite high education and qualifications they cannot find financially and professionally satisfying employment at home (Poland).

On a related note, people's **negativism and dissatisfaction with environment** stemming from low standard of living is mentioned as highly demotivating to stay in one's own country (Bulgaria).

"The biggest obstacles here? Well, the way people live... not just me but everyone. You wake up in the morning, you go to work and you see how everyone is irritated or stressed out about something... most of the times this 'something' is the lack of money." (A BG28, female, 25 years, BG national)

Better professional prospects are sought on many levels. For many, these are the prospects of finding a job better suiting their qualifications than those at home (Estonia). In particular, such considerations are heard from those whose field is still new and not so popular and well developed in their home country or those wishing to grow professionally in the non-profit sector. In the view of the respondents, specific work fields particularly developed in one Western Europe country or another are management consulting, international trade law, EU law and politics. Lack of opportunities for career advancement due to the state of the national healthcare system is pointed to as motivator in particular by two final year medical students (Bulgaria). IT, communications, (digital) marketing, international studies and political sciences, human rights, consultancy, etc. are also mentioned as fields where opportunities for professional advancement are fewer at home than in other countries (Greece). Young Polish respondents also want to develop professionally in an international environment, or be able to set up their own business activity, or have better long-term professional opportunities.

Others seek foreign work experience which will help advance their careers (Estonia). The need to acquire specialised professional experience would sometimes even precede the economic crisis in the list of motivators to move to another EU Member State (Greece).

"I have come to a point where you say now I either move forward or I have zero at everything..." (A GR21, male, 35, GR).

Conversely, for a number of respondents (Greece) moving is not unconditional and they would not leave their country to do any, or a low paid job with no qualifications required. Finding employment first is also one of the conditions for moving (Greece).

Curiously, even coming from a poorer EU Member State, young respondents emphasise on the lack of sufficient professional opportunities at home rather than on the high rates of unemployment, the difficulty of young people to enter the labour market upon graduation and the usually lower salaries (Bulgaria). One hypothesis to explain the same phenomenon in another group of respondents emphasises on the higher education level of the interviewees, who, rather than work for the highest possible salary, are more focused on educating themselves and gaining new experiences (Estonia).

Non-economic motivation

Being young EU citizens, respondents show keen interest in current political and societal affairs in their home countries, including as motivation for them to move to another EU Member State.

Respondents in more than one country cite **general political instability and lack of trust in institutions** (Bulgaria), combined with high levels of bureaucracy. Some young, highly educated urban dwelling, Poles feel fundamental rights in their country are threatened as a result of policies introduced by (right-wing) government and are afraid of growing nationalism and xenophobia.

In terms of pull factors, respondents throughout the sending countries unanimously point to **better quality of life** and **higher standard of living** as a non-financial, more far-reaching expression of the expectations young people have when moving. Expectations, however, depend on the length of experience interviewees have had abroad and those with some experience already know that higher wages in Western Europe go with much higher prices and a lot busier and more stressful life. Quality of life can, however, be both push and pull factor that would lead some respondents to return if life abroad does not turn out as expected (Greece).

Mirroring the criticisms towards institutions and jobs at home, respondents praise the **reliability of state institutions** abroad and the better **work morale and conditions** and the more rewarding atmosphere (Bulgaria). Young Romanians elaborate on destination countries' societies as 'very functional mechanisms' in terms of valorisation of labour, medical system/health insurance and educational system.

Education also proves to be a decisive factor for potential movers with some modalities in their attitudes. Some emphasise its better quality than the one at home and aim to pursue studies to secure better employment prospects ahead (Bulgaria). For others, although not excluding the better professional prospects motive, it may be a 'transitional' solution especially if they have not found jobs yet (Greece).

Many wish to move to another EU country to learn/improve their **language skills** (Estonia, Poland). Language in general is a determinant in the choice of destination country (Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, Portugal), especially in the case of the United Kingdom due to the leading role of the English language, although many of the interviews were done before the Brexit referendum.

Other lifestyle pull factors mentioned are the **culture** of the destination country and the more favourable **climate** (Bulgaria, Estonia). Culture and climate justify preferences towards destination countries in the Mediterranean for the Greek and some Polish potential movers and some Greeks' dislike towards Northern and Scandinavian countries:

"I do not think I could live in Northern countries... the weather and the lack of sunshine are more important factors than one that has never lived abroad would imagine" (A Male, 29, GR).

On a more abstract psychological scale, many young respondents talk about aspirations like **personal growth** and **sense of exploration** (Bulgaria), the need to experiment and live in different environments (Greece, Romania), especially when it comes to children (Greece):

"... I am doubtful whether my children will get what they want by staying in the country the way that things evolve in the social and political domain..." (AGR21, male, 35, GR).

Young **Cypriots** and **Italians** elaborate in detail on institutionalized mobility programmes funded by the EU, such as the Erasmus programme. The internationalization of higher education is also an important topic for them.

Personal reasons

Being together with spouses and partners, i.e. **family reasons**, is cited as main reason for moving in a number of cases. Often, one partner has found a job abroad and the other one moves as well even though sometimes he/she has a stable job at home (Greece). Cases of joining partners who are citizens of another EU country are also not uncommon (Poland). Having family abroad sometimes serves as important example and motivator for the respondents. On the other hand, not having a family of their own could be a facilitator for young respondents to decide to leave; and having family in another country can help the choice about where to move (Portugal).

Relatives and friends play a substantial role in the choice of destination country as a support network for movers' first steps (Greece, Poland, Romania, Portugal).

One very particular personal case mentioned were **sexual orientation**, where an LGBT person (Estonia) feels he cannot yet live in his home country as he would live in other EU countries.

2. Drivers that actually motivated young people to exercise their right to free movement

Similar to the potential movers, returnees chose their initial destination countries due to a number of reasons like knowledge of the language, familiarity with the labour market and having friends, and again, their drivers can be generally divided into economic, non-economic and personal. Again, for some leaving home country was a must, while for others it was an opportunity they grabbed (Romania).

Economic motivation

Like for those wishing to move, returnees had major economic factors motivating them to leave their home country – **financial difficulties, work positions** abroad (Greece, Estonia, Portugal), **lack of promising prospects**, wishes for more **professional experience** to improve career prospects (Greece). Not having employment after university graduation is mentioned and many wanted any kind of job, while other sought specific employment opportunities (Poland).

On the other hand, economic pull factors also played a major role in young Europeans deciding to move to another Member State. In the impression of some, jobs were found either easily, or in advance before leaving home country (Romania):

"I knew something about this job before I left, I was my cousin's ex-work place. I went for a conversation with the coffee shop owners, not a rigorous interview. They oversaw me for a couple of days and after that they let me do my job, coming from time to time to check on me. You won't see such thing in Romania, the owner will breathe in your back all the time" (B RO16, female, 27 years, RO national).

"After the first job, it is easy. People were very responsive, even if you are not employed for on full-time (only casual events), because if you are ok, they will give you work." (B RO8, female, 36 years, RO/BE national).

Factors like educational and medical systems, security and cleanliness of cities and effectiveness of authorities are mentioned along, and in relation, to the **cost of life**, which was found to be similar to home or slightly higher but with significantly bigger wages (Romania).

Non-economic motivation and personal motives

Education played a major role in the movement of young Bulgarians (see section on country specific motivators). Young Estonians and Romanians also often moved to obtain a higher education degree.

In relation to education, a number of returnees moved to learn (Poland) or practice a language they already know (Greece, Portugal, Romania), especially as regards English and the UK, and get to know better foreign cultures:

“In southern countries people smile more often which is contagious. I had the impression that when I speak Spanish I am a more cheerful person than when I speak Polish, although I was talking about the same things and had the same thoughts. The way of talking, vocabulary or maybe intonation makes Spanish language more optimistic.”(B PL31, male, 31 years, returned from Spain)

As with those wishing to move, **family ties** played a varying push/pull role as a driver in respondents' decisions to move to another EU country – respondents were unable to provide for their families at home, or used relatives' ties abroad in their dealings with institutions (Bulgaria), or joined their parents or partners (Estonia, Poland). Family ties are a special emphasis also for the Portuguese returnees, out of whom only one went abroad alone. However, the main reasons even for those accompanying family members were found to be economic and professional. Two Austrian cases of moving abroad display the various hypotheses of one partner joining another. If a partner is already resident in the destination country, he/she can provide support, but if he/she is a newcomer too, the accompanying partner can suffer from exclusion, as the first one at least has a job and some social contacts.

Friends and acquaintances already settled in the respective EU Member States are also cited as initial drivers and sources of support (Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Romania):

“My biggest issue, just like that of every other immigrant in England, was finding a job. There was very little information available and I didn't even know where to look for it. So I had to rely on friends who had lived there longer than me and had more experience.”(B BG12, male, 37 years, BG national)

“I had two friends who invited me to come... they explained how one can find work in London...it was the easiest solution... I had two people who could put me up ...”(BGR25, male, 35, GR).

On a more abstract level, respondents mention the **lack of concrete plans** at home and the **need for independence** (Portugal). Portuguese respondents also elaborate on their modest initial expectations, probably a strategy to prevent disappointments, yet having hope for a better life:

“I think that anyone who goes to other country always leave with this idea. Otherwise it is not worthwhile” (PT6, Male, 31 years, PT national)

Again on the issue of expectations, young Portuguese had their met in general or even exceeded, although issues like the impossibility to pursue further studies because of jobs, to find a job in a specific area or to integrate children successfully are also mentioned.

Personal development was also elaborated upon as an issue of importance (Romania).

3. Drivers that might make young people exercise their right to free movement again

Young **Romanians** are positive about **repeating** their **foreign experience**, as their impression is generally positive –their stay abroad helped them in their personal development, in improving their linguistic skills and general knowledge as well as their financial status.

Greek returnees are also considering moving again to find suitable employment, this time better prepared to face potential problems. Thus, young respondents would go wherever the best offer takes them. Even those who do not wish to move again, consider that possibility if the situation at home gets hard again.

Young **Portuguese** also consider moving again in case of need.

4. Country specific drivers

Throughout their interviews with young respondents from sending countries, research teams came across a number of country-specific themes which interviewees elaborated upon profoundly and were visibly agitated about.

A recurring theme for **Bulgarian** respondents has been the susceptibility of both the public and private sectors to corruption as a major factor encouraging them to leave Bulgaria. Different views are expressed as to which the most problematic areas are, depending on the personal experience of each respondent –political corruption in combination with the weak public institutions, slow pace of judicial reform and distrust in the functionality of the legal system in Bulgaria, widespread corruption at medical universities. An interviewee with fire-safety engineering background even explains that fire safety plans, developed by engineers for new construction projects and requiring substantial investments on the part of owners, are easy to scrape out by controlling authorities, if owners bribe them to avoid the investment, thus compromising public safety.

Bulgarian respondents show specific preference towards obtaining **foreign-based education** even over finding jobs and professional fulfilment. One respondent started his education abroad already in high school, but the majority went to pursue university studies. Thus, a number of the jobs respondents held in various EU Member States were temporary/part-time, in parallel with their studies. For young Bulgarians, education abroad is also related to their fear what they will do with their qualifications, i.e. **the perceived lower opportunities for qualified workforce in Bulgaria** and the need for personal connections in order to land at a good job:

“I had absolutely no idea what options I had in Bulgaria... I didn't really know enough about the available opportunities in Bulgaria, what the labor market was and what I could do there with a qualification like mine... and it was just much easier for me to stay in Germany.”(BBG15, female, 32 years, BG national)

"I had a degree in International Relations and I always thought I would work in an international environment... Moreover, I don't have any diplomats in my family to be able to say that I had a network of contacts in Bulgaria... Whereas here, most of my friends from university who had connections managed to start working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs... but I didn't have any connections."(BBG10, female, 38 years, BG national)

Some Bulgarian respondents pursued university studies in Bulgaria before they went to study in another EU country. In those cases, distinctly **critical opinions** were given on **home universities**, thus making education a push factor for some as well.

Estonian respondents point to a particular angle of the relation between going to another EU country to find a job in their field of interest and the challenges in their home country. It is found common to get higher education in a foreign country, or study in a specified field at home, with limited possibilities to work in this field in Estonia after graduation. This has been found also in the previous studies (see e.g. Kõiva et al 2010) when people reason their move to another country by the **"smallness" of Estonia**. There are less possibilities to work in a very specialised field compared to the possibilities of some other, larger country.

In line with expectations, many **Greek** respondents mention the **financial crisis** as a more or less important push factor. For them, revenues are significantly reduced while taxes and contributions to the social security funds are increasing. The resulting 'depreciation of effort and professions' is also elaborated upon:

"It is not so much the financial aspects of the crisis but the professional depreciation... of the work you are trying to do. Our whole profession is depreciated, so you have to look in order to see how to make use of what you know and what you can do in other areas... You reach a point where you want to capitalize what you have done and have some recognition and instead of this you get the opposite... not just the financial... also the moral part is very important (AGR21, male, 35, GR).

For Greek returnees, the economic crisis was not the main reason for moving, but a push for pre-existing reasons. Some unemployed respondents, for example, started seeking their future abroad without having exhausted opportunities in Greece:

„...I had a difficult time, I was at a personal shock... I was unemployed... my financial situation was tough... To be honest, I could not see any light ahead... any hope... I really couldn't figure out what I could do in Greece"(B GR25, male, 35, GR).

5. Interim findings

Young people from sending, and mixed countries under consideration displayed a mixture of economic, non-economic and personal reasons for deciding to move to another, often Western European, Member State.

Lower wages, high (youth) unemployment, lack of economic and job perspectives for highly and lower educated young Europeans play a decisive role in their decision to temporarily or permanently abandon their home countries and settle elsewhere in the EU. Regardless of whether they just want to earn some money and go back, or settle in Western Europe in the long term, movers-to-be or returnees before they moved sense lack of future at home and make an effort to build themselves a better life.

At the same time, young EU citizens seem genuinely affected by political and societal problems their countries experience and seem reluctant to put up with them, but rather wish to move to better functioning democracies and societies. Corruption, malfunctioning judiciary, lack of trust in institutions, problems in the health and educational systems, far right governments and insufficient protection of human rights (of vulnerable groups) seem to be bothering young movers substantially and they do not spare criticism to their home countries and their institutional structures. Meanwhile, despite bureaucratic problems, a general positive attitude is expressed towards the relatively smooth functioning of Western institutions.

As for personal factors, young movers are being influenced by friends and family both towards and against moving. Family, friends and acquaintances abroad play a strong role of a supporting net for new movers and a positive example that things abroad may work out. Spouses from another EU Member State are a decisive factor for moving as well. At the same time, family may 'tie' young people to their home countries and be some form of hindrance to their right or wish to freely move.

Personal motives are also a projection of the economic difficulties/push factors young people experience. For many, looking for suitable job perspectives abroad implies searching for better personal and professional development and fulfilment. Young people are also looking to experience new cultures and ways of life.

Part B: Barriers

1. Perceived barriers – those wishing to move

The young people from the sending countries who wish to move identify some common barriers.

In all countries (including the 'mixed' countries such as Austria and Cyprus) young interviewees mention the need to use a different **language** and the lack of sufficient skills regarding the language of the receiving countries as a perceived barrier.

This kind of barrier seems to be more evident when there is the wish to move to a non-English-speaking country (as it was specifically referred in the reports from Poland, Estonia and Romania). In countries where the main language is different, English skills will help but may not always be enough (Estonia).

It is also perceived that the lack of foreign language skills could affect the general integration process and create difficulties in everyday life (Estonia). That's why, in some cases, language is clearly a factor that influences the choice of the destination (Portugal, Greece).

"I would prefer a country where, at least initially, I could use a language I am familiar with... because if you do not know the language, things are even more difficult (AGR6, female, 25, GR).

Living in countries with **different lifestyles and different culture** is seen as a challenge that could lead also to barriers in what concerns the building of a social life and a social network (Portugal, Bulgaria, Poland) and the sense of belonging to a new society.

"It is going to be a challenge. I'm afraid of the language and of having to deal with a different culture but it is a challenge. I also think that it may be possible that I cannot have the same social life there as I do have in Portugal (APT24, female, 25 years, PT national).

The (high) cost of living in the receiving countries is also a common concern and a perceived barrier to the exercise of the right to free movement. In most of the country reports (including Austria) the difficulties with the cost of living are mainly related with the **difficulties to find an accommodation**.

"I have heard that finding accommodation in big European cities is extremely difficult – as difficult as looking for a job." (ABG35, female, 25 years, BG national).

High prices and unsatisfactory quality of accommodation are problems identified specially by those who wish to move to London, Paris or Berlin.

For Bulgarian, Polish and Greek interviewees however, mentioning those difficulties is also used to point out another barrier: the "selective attitude" of the landlords in what concerns the choice of a tenant giving preference to local people.

Following this idea, there is also the **fear of discrimination**, when applying for jobs. This is present in the interviewees' narrative of countries such as Bulgaria and Poland.

"I think finding a job abroad is much more difficult than finding a job in Bulgaria. (...) I have talked with a lot of friends of mine living abroad and they tell me that it is simply too difficult sometimes for Westerners to accept you and treat you as an equal." (ABG28, female, 25 years, BG national).

There is also the perception that **some nationalities are seen in a negative perspective**. In Greece several respondents refer to the negative image of Greek people particularly after the crisis – "after the crisis has started, they treated me as if I was a burden..." (AGR19, female, 35, GR).

For others like the Romanian movers the way they will be perceived by the citizens of the host country plays an important role in their adaptation. This concern maybe similar for those Portuguese for whom the possibility to move back is not excluded, in case they do *'not fit in a new society'*.

Even if people are moving for economical reasons, searching for a better or more qualified and adequate job, **the strong competitiveness in the job market** in some EU Member States is perceived as an important barrier (Portugal, Bulgaria).

Among the other cited barriers were **administrative difficulties and lack of information about the destination countries**(laws and customs)(Portugal, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania).

2. Actual barriers - returnees

The barriers and obstacles faced in their free movement experiences by those who moved and returned to their country of origin seem a confirmation of the perceived barriers by those who wish to move.

As a matter of fact, the free movement experiences of the 'returnees' group allows us to expressly state that lacking or insufficient knowledge of the local language is a real obstacle for movers (Portugal, Greece, Estonia, Poland and Romania).

Even if it can be overcome, **lack of knowledge of the local language** was an important barrier in everyday life, in establishing relations with locals (Greece) and in dealing with administrative issues (Poland). Some Portuguese, Greek and Polish interviewees also point out the insufficient knowledge of the language of the host country (and a foreign accent) as a reason for feeling discriminated in their social contacts and social relationships.

According to some young Polish even for those who speak good English, and some also fluent in the local language, this was not sufficient to fully integrate into host societies:

"The quality of life without the knowledge of local language is lower, that's for sure. There is certain frustration that you have a language barrier even when you are trying to deal with the easiest things, in shops, and so on. It affected

my decision to move back to Poland. Without the necessary language skills the quality of my life in Germany would never be the best possible." (BPL27, male, 30 years, returned from Germany).

Reinforcing this idea, Romanians who returned to their home country say that the linguistic difficulties also restricted, or made harder, their access to the different systems in host countries, in particular the labor market but also the health care system and education.

In terms of initial, and further, settlement into their chosen EU Member State, finding **accommodation** is widely cited by the respondents as an important barrier. As anticipated by those who wish to move accommodation in big western cities is considered by those who returned very expensive, and interviewees frequently faced **discriminatory attitudes** by landlords. Those aspects make the process of finding a house to live and a place to settle more difficult and longer, as evidenced by this interviewee: "*Finding where to stay in Milan took 2 months and 'two pairs of shoes'*" (B BG18, male, 35 years, BG national).

Discriminatory attitudes in the labor market are also reported by Bulgarian interviewees: people with foreign name were hardly accepted; longer working hours, less qualified and lower-paid jobs (especially in agriculture); disrespectful attitudes towards Bulgarian students in universities.

In the Bulgarian case, the educational level is mentioned as an important variable: on the one hand, more educated people from host countries tend to be more open to social diversity and less prejudiced; on the other hand less educated movers tend to be more exposed to discrimination, particularly in the labor market context.

In general, discriminatory practices in the labor or house renting market were not translated into the society's attitudes as a whole. With the exception of some Bulgarian movers, most of the respondents did not feel cut off from the communities where they lived in host countries; however in almost all cases they had to deal with **negative images and prejudices**. Specifically:

- Romanian movers are often confused with Roma people. On the other hand, in some countries, Romania is strongly associated to orphanages and "people that sell their children";
- Polish have to face disparaging jokes and social images that link Polish people to homeless people in some countries;
- Greeks are considered as being noisy, not being punctual;
- Bulgarians are frequently associated with poverty situations.

As previously said for those who wish to move, the **insufficient knowledge** on the host country is considered as a barrier for the integration process specifically for people from Romania, Portugal and Poland, having insufficient awareness of local resources, benefits and obligations. It also means a lack of awareness about the demands and competitiveness of the local labor market and its functioning.

Finally, Estonia, Romania and Greece also report a missing sense of belonging while in host countries, a lack of close interaction at social level with local people and constraints in their social relations. Being homesick (Portugal), in general, is one of the main reasons to return.

However, moving back home is not free of problems. These young people who had been living in countries with more open societies, sometimes experience a reverse culture shock after returning to their home countries (Estonia): *“Finding a job and accommodation was all easy but the everyday culture and such things... On average I still get shocked once in two weeks or so.”* (EE3, female, 28 years, EE national)

Others mention problems in restoring their health insurance and social security as well as in having their experience and foreign diplomas recognized (Bulgaria).

3. Actual barriers – EU citizens

The young Europeans currently living in the sending countries are, in general, facing the some problems as those who already returned to their home countries.

Dealing with bureaucratic organisations and environments; having difficulties in getting the right information in an easy way; facing language obstacles and labour market constraints as well as having difficulties in establishing positive social relations with local citizens in the host countries, are, in sum, the most important actual barriers faced by young Europeans living abroad. However the experience of these barriers depends from one country to another as it can be seen in next section.

Discrimination does not appear as a great issue or obstacle to free movement, even though some **interviewees notice direct experiences of discrimination and some negative attitudes towards** colleagues and acquaintances:

- In Greece finding accommodation and settling is mentioned by two respondents as a slight difficulty mainly for people who originated from Balkan countries.
- In Estonia a youngster with a Southern European origin and semi-dark skin experienced several incidents of negative discrimination. Local Estonians on the streets publicly insulted him and called him names, e.g. “Turkish, go home!”. He also experienced “random” security checks in a store with self-check cashier as well as from the police. Frequently, a non-white skin colour person is perceived as not “traditionally Estonian”.
- On the other hand, also in Estonia some of the interviewees felt positively discriminated, i.e. their background of being from an EU country helps them: *“If the move wouldn’t be in EU, it would have been much harder and you know... I can just put my Dutch passport on the table and I am free. I don’t have to request a visa or working permit or all these kinds of things.”* (C EE6, male, 26 years, NL national)

- In Poland similar negative attitudes mentioned were mainly related to skin colour of people from outside the EU but also of citizens from Southern European countries, such as Portugal.
- In Bulgaria alleged police abuse of power towards people due to their looks is mentioned.

These reports raise the question of whether the European society, and the national institutions, are really prepared for a multicultural approach that is promoted by the right to a free movement.

4. Country specific barriers

A cross analysis of the different reports of the sending countries allows to organize those countries according to the barriers that they create for those youngsters in a free movement process.

However there is a common barrier – common to all the sending countries and the different groups of movers. This barrier is related to the information provision and how the information reaches the public. In general, people report problems with the access to information and with the lack of quality and relevance of the information available.

Other barriers can be identified according to the following groups of movers and the different countries.

i) Barriers for EU citizens

Portugal, Greece and Poland are countries which present problems in what concerns **bureaucracy and information procedures**– *“I am lost with everything that has to do with the Portuguese bureaucracy”* (PT13, Female, 31 years, Spanish). Often information is incomplete or incorrect and even authorities are sometimes not well informed about the EU and the free movement. Interviewees from Bulgaria, Romania and Portugal living in Greece witness their own experience with national authorities who did know that their countries of origin are EU members.

Language is a major obstacle for those who are living in Bulgaria, Greece, Estonia and Poland, especially in the interaction with authorities - either because the young movers do not speak the local language or because authorities do not speak any English:

“For me it is a bit comical to work at an immigration center and not to speak any English... it is not very welcoming to foreigners.” (C BG1, female, 25 years, FR national).

As mentioned before, language can be a serious barrier to find satisfactory employment but also to fulfilling social relations or a sense of independence (Poland).

This problem can be overcome by learning the local language but in countries like Estonia it is difficult to find suitable courses and learn the language onward from complete beginners' level.

On the other hand, for those who are living in Estonia, Poland and Romania the **labour market presents some constraints**. In Estonia interviewees have faced shorter periods of unemployment but according to the Ministry of Interior foreigners face most problems when applying for medium-level jobs. In Romania all EU citizens who go to work mentioned the lack of perspectives in the labour market. In Poland the issue of getting a job according to the preferences and interests of the interviewees is raised.

Difficulties in networking with locals are mentioned by young people living in Estonia and Poland. Some of them refer to their social relations as a “disaster”.

On the other hand, Greece, Estonia, Bulgaria and Poland are countries where **negative attitudes towards foreigners or police abuse behaviours were reported**. Furthermore, some interviewees expressed **concerns related to political developments** in Poland to the extent that it may impact their decision on leaving the country in the future.

ii) Barriers for national citizens on the move

Analysing countries in another perspective, it can be said that **having a certain nationality** (such as Romanian, Polish, Bulgarian, Greek) **may act as a ground for prejudice and discrimination in host countries**. A negative image of these countries can strongly affect the integration of young movers in host countries, as it was said before.

On the other hand, in societies such as Cyprus, Bulgaria and also Portugal, **family** is a regular source of help and support and can act as a barrier to those family members who want to move. This is particularly important to those who have young children; this seems to affect women in particular (Cyprus).

Finally, the Polish report refers to the **feeling of insecurity** that some people on the move experience due to terrorism: *“To be honest, right now I am afraid of the terrorist attack. I have some friends in France so I have been thinking about it much more recently. And yesterday something happened in Germany, too. I am afraid of what is happening in this world, and not only in London, but also in Poland. Recently, when I was in Warsaw during the NATO summit, I was also anxious (...) I am not particularly interested in politics but from what I know there is the same probability to be attacked in the UK as in Poland.”* (B PL, female, 27 years, going to the UK).

The Brexit referendum¹ is also mentioned by interviewees from Poland and Bulgaria as something that could have a negative impact on free movement and on movers' rights.

¹It is worth noting that most of the interviews were conducted before the UK Brexit Referendum.

4. Interim findings

Young people who wish to move perceive the same barriers as the ones experienced by those who already exercised their right to free movement.

These barriers can be summarised as follows:

- Lack of knowledge of the national language, particularly in non-English-speaking countries. This is a major obstacle regarding interaction with authorities.
- Difficulties to get practical and useful information on the daily life in host countries;
- Bureaucracy and unclear information procedures mainly in some sending countries when these assume the role of hosting EU citizens;
- High living costs in Western countries, especially in what concerns accommodation.
- Severe competition in the labour market in Western countries. On the other hand, EU citizens living in the sending countries are facing some labour market constraints namely low wages and lack of career prospects.

Discrimination is not a big issue but some interviewees report negative attitudes towards themselves or to colleagues and acquaintances. Discrimination practices seem to be frequent among landlords in the biggest cities; and some countries report discrimination attitudes in the labour market.

In some countries there is a concern about policy abusive behaviours and, on other hand, individual security in Europe.

Even if the contact with other cultures and other ways of living is valued and considered as a positive challenge, sometimes living in another social environment can lead to serious difficulties in networking with locals and, therefore, to a feeling of loneliness.

Part C: Drivers to attract young people to sending countries

1. Drivers to attract nationals to return

None of the sending countries under consideration has an effective strategy to attract nationals to return. In Portugal there is a National Plan for Migration (2015-2020) and one of its aims is to support the return of Portuguese people living abroad but none of the interviewees knew about its existence. Bulgaria has also defined a goal to attract its (young) people back but so far with little result.

Therefore the reasons that attract people to return to their own countries are mainly a combination of family and personal issues with a certain failure of their mobility projects.

The importance of **family ties** and, in general, the **homesickness** are important drivers referred by people from Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, Poland and Romania. Loneliness is a feeling frequently reported by those who experienced difficulties in making friends and in establishing strong relationships when they were abroad. This thus leads to a combination of push/pull factors to influence their return.

Sending countries also present some new job opportunities for those who returned even if sometimes these are lower paid jobs. Business opportunities are also in place on sending countries' developing markets (Bulgaria).

In Estonia the existence of e-services and the help provided by the Estonian embassy or consulate are a significant support to the returnees.

2. Drivers to attract EU citizens

Choosing a country to live that is predominantly a sending country in most cases has to do with **personal and/or family reasons**.

This European citizenship that the young people interviewed identify with is partially built around mixed families. Many of those interviewed have husband/wife with nationality of their host countries (Greece, Estonia, Poland). On the other hand, programmes like Erasmus also promote knowledge of the respective country and allow the establishment of a friendly relationship with local people, an important condition for a future integration (Portugal).

Additionally there are drivers that have to do with the **attitude and nature of the locals**. In Bulgaria, Greek and Portuguese people are considered as 'nice people', 'open and easy-going':

"I find Bulgarians to be great people. I got so much help from them. I was really surprised at how nice people are and how much they are willing to do for you." (C BG3, male, 28 years, EE national).

Despite much lower incomes, the sending countries are able to offer a **good quality of life**. Prices in general are lower as well as the living cost (Portugal, Bulgaria, Poland) and life can be more easy going, allowing a greater personal satisfaction (Portugal, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania).

“My expectations related to work were not accomplished but my life quality was improved. Here life is more peaceful, more bohemian, however economically more difficult. In Barcelona I had a job with a salary of 1400 euros/month. I left this for coming here but I do not regret: here I am happier”
(C PT12, Female, 28 years, Spanish)

It can be said that these youngsters are looking not only for a good wage but mostly for a better quality of life. However, even in the sending countries, finding a job may be a reason for staying. In all the sending countries there are people who manage to find a job that match their education or previous work experiences.

On the other hand, the curiosity for the unknown (Romania) and the will for **experiencing other cultures** made them choose these countries.

3. Country specific drivers

Greece, Portugal and Bulgaria are perceived as countries with nice people with whom it is possible to establish good and easy relations. At the sametime, despite much lower incomes, Portugal, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania can offer a good quality of life for those who are looking for a more easy-going daily life.

In countries like Portugal, good weather is also seen as a reason for choice and stay.

On the other hand, Romania, having a different culture, can raise curiosity and attract people.

Every country was able to create job opportunities for EU citizens.

4. Interim findings

Strong family ties combine with weak relationships in the host countries are main drivers for return back home.

On the other hand, for EU citizens, choosing a sending country to live has to do with personal and/ or family reasons such as having a family where different nationalities are present.

For those who are committed to having a more quiet life and satisfactory relations with local people, sending countries seem to be a good option.

Part D: Analysis and recommendations

1. Synthesis of results and conclusions

Drivers for young people from sending (and mixed) countries under consideration to exercise their right to free movement can be broadly synthesised as economic, non-economic and personal, combining within themselves both push and pull factors.

Economically speaking, young movers are pushed away from their home countries by high (youth) unemployment, low job prospects both for highly and lower educated citizens, inadequate wages and unsuitable jobs for specialists. This leads to overall dissatisfaction with what sending countries have to offer and general wish to look for a better life elsewhere in (Western) Europe.

As for non-economic and personal factors, they range from the role of family, friends and acquaintances to motives, related to political and societal challenges sending countries experience, such as corruption, non-functioning institutions, bad experiences with health and educational systems.

Regarding the barriers people are facing (or expecting to face), the lack of knowledge of the national language, particularly in non-English-speaking countries; difficulties to get practical and useful information on the daily life in host countries; bureaucracy; high living costs in Western countries; and the severe competition in the labour market are the most important ones. Discrimination is not a big issue but some interviewees report negative attitudes towards themselves or towards colleagues and acquaintances.

2. Recommendations

Respondents universally recommend improved level of information on jobs, settlement opportunities throughout Europe and tax and social security systems.

Less bureaucracy and more effective performance is required from institutions in receiving but especially in sending countries, as their work is a direct push factor for young nationals, but also a barrier to the settlement of Europeans in sending countries.

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