



Republic of Bulgaria  
ECONOMIC  
AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

## **ANALYSIS**

**on**

**"TRENDS IN MIGRATION ATTITUDES  
OF SECONDARY SCHOOL GRADUATES IN BULGARIA"  
(own-initiative analysis)**

Sofia, 2016



The Economic and Social Council (ESC) included in its Action Plan for 2016 an analysis on the topic: "Trends in migration attitudes of secondary school graduates in Bulgaria" to be elaborated on the basis of the second survey, conducted by the ESC itself, of the opinions of graduating secondary school students during the academic year 2016/2017.

The elaboration of the analysis was assigned to the Labour, Income, Living Standards and Industrial Relations Commission (at a leading body) and the Social Policy Commission.

Plamen Dimitrov, ESC member of Group II - Trade Unions and chairperson of the Labour, Income Living Standards and Industrial Relations Commission, was appointed rapporteur on the analysis.

At its meeting, held on 16 December 2016, the Plenary Session of ESC adopted this analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

During the academic year 2014/2015 the Economic and Social Council (ESC) conducted a survey of the migration attitudes of secondary school graduates across the country<sup>1</sup>. On this basis, ESC developed and adopted an analysis entitled: "Migration attitudes of young secondary school graduates in Bulgaria".

In this analysis ESC found serious problems among graduates regarding their intentions to leave the place of residence and the reasons for this migration. ESC also presented its assessment of the attitudes of these students to migrate abroad and the reasons behind this choice, as well as the most important conditions to change these migratory desires.

The conclusions and findings of the ESC became the object of wide public interest, including on part of representatives of legislative and executive powers.

Considering the results and assessments ESC conducted a second survey among secondary school graduates in the academic year 2016/2017<sup>2</sup> Based on which it developed this analysis of "Trends in migration attitudes of secondary school graduates in Bulgaria."

This analysis is not intended to reveal all aspects of the problems in secondary education and the reasons for their migration attitudes, and the ensuing consequences. The ESC agrees that every aspect of this issue can be a separated object of study, stating its readiness to continue its work in this direction in the presence of the necessary public and institutional interest.

Therefore, the main objective of this analysis is to carry out further assessment of the problems and to present formed trends and changes in migration attitudes of graduating secondary school students.

With this analysis ESC strives to alert again Bulgarian society and government institutions about the need of very urgent and adequate policies and measures to limit the expected negative demographic consequences of migration attitudes among graduating secondary school students.

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1 The survey covers 2131 students from 61 schools throughout the country, ensuring representation of the three main regional levels - the four largest cities (Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas); other regional centres; other towns and villages.

2 The second survey was conducted among 2295 students from 65 schools in the country preserving the scope, territorial representation and methodology of the first one.

## **I. MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

1. Based on its surveys, ESC found the formation of a migration trend, according to which about two thirds of secondary school graduates are determined to leave their place of residence.
  - 1.1. ESC expresses concern about its finding that in regional towns with population up to 300 thousand citizens the problem is much more serious because 80% of graduates in the academic year 2016/2017 express the intention to leave their place of residence.
  - 1.2. Equally alarming are the trends in small towns and villages where this migration potential is estimated at 70%.
  - 1.3. At the same time, ESC points out that these are still only migration attitudes expressing potential intentions and most likely will be realised by only part of the secondary school graduates.
2. ESC finds very serious attitudes about leaving the place of residence among graduates with the highest academic results, which presents very serious demographic and human capital challenges to most towns and villages.
  - 2.1. ESC also blows the whistle that about three-quarters of graduates with excellent academic results during the previous school year report readiness to leave their place of residence.
3. ESC notes that family environment is a very important factor for the formation of migration attitudes among students.
  - 3.1. However, no differences are observed in students' intentions to leave their place of residence according to parents' education. ESC believes that this is a very serious signal that the possibility of moving to a different place after completing secondary school is a topic that is discussed in every family irrespective of parents' education.
4. During the academic year 2016/2017 too the difficulty to find employment in the place of residence remains the main problem facing secondary school graduates. In this respect, ESC finds a definite increase the differences between the academic results of students from Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas, and those from other settlements, which is the first fundamental prerequisite for emerging attitudes to settle in major cities.
  - 4.1. Moreover, according to ESC, parents' education is a factor with a much stronger influence on student's attitude to the possibility of finding work than their academic results during the previous year.
5. Inability to obtain higher incomes is another major problem in the place of residence which forms the desire of secondary school graduates to

leave.

- 5.1. This problem is much more influential for students with academic results averaging above 4.50 as opposed to those with lower results.
- 5.2. ESC finds clear differences of opinion between students depending on parents' education.
6. ESC also finds improved opportunities for finding a job in the four largest cities in the country.
  - 6.1. Although this trend is generally observed in other regional cities, according to secondary school graduates, it is still difficult to find suitable employment and higher incomes there.
  - 6.2. Moreover, regardless of the opinion of students from Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas that there are improved conditions for finding a job, including suitable employment, they still think that the problem of securing a high-income job not only remains, but even increases.
  - 6.3. ESC emphasizes that while secondary school graduates in regional towns indicate as a problem the inability to obtain a high-income job as a major future problem, in other towns and villages students are worried about finding a job at all.
7. ESC draws serious attention to the fact that just as during the previous academic year 2014/2015, during the last academic year 2016/2017 between 26% to 28% of graduating secondary school students identify the education received by them as another major problem of the place of residence.
  - 7.1. This problem is identified as the most serious one by students in regional cities - up to 300 thousand people, as well as by students with the highest academic results. The higher education of parents also significantly influences the increase in negative opinions of students about the quality of education in the place of residence.
8. Based on its survey, ESC found that real intentions to migrate abroad are observed in about 20% of students and 60% of these students have already decided to move immediately after completing secondary education, while the remaining 40% - over the next 2-3 years.
  - 8.1. ESC notes that attitudes to leave the country are to be found equally among students of different places and do not depend on the size of the place of residence.
  - 8.2. Attitudes to migrate abroad are much more pronounced among graduates with excellent grades from the previous school year and among boys.
  - 8.3. Both ESC studies found that students whose parents have either university or primary or lower education, the desire to migrate abroad is

- higher as compared to their peers who have parents with secondary education.
9. Within the total group of students that intend to leave the country ESC found some differences in relation to the purposes for which they want to do it.
    - 9.1. Students from the four largest cities have the greatest express a desire to continue their education abroad and then return to Bulgaria compared to their peers from other settlements. However, graduates from Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas also demonstrate the strongest desire for permanent resettlement abroad compared to all other graduates.
    - 9.2. According to ESC, the smaller the settlement, the more pronounced the desire of secondary school graduates to find temporary employment abroad and then return to Bulgaria.
    - 9.3. Moreover, the desire for permanent resettlement abroad is about 60% stronger among students with excellent academic results from the previous year, as compared to students with results up to 4.50.
    - 9.4. Secondary school graduates with the lowest academic results from the previous school year have a much greater desire to find temporary employment abroad and return to Bulgaria, as compared to students with higher results.
  10. According to ESC, the family environment and in particular the education of parents are another fundamental prerequisite for emerging differences between students in terms of objectives for going abroad.
    - 10.1. Among students whose parents have higher education the desire for permanent resettlement abroad is much more pronounced as compared to other students. They also show a stronger inclination to continue their education abroad and then return to Bulgaria.
    - 10.2. However, students whose parents have secondary or lower education more often express a desire to look for temporary work abroad and then return to Bulgaria.
  11. In both studies ESC found that the possibility of higher income and standard of living is the main reason behind secondary school graduates' intention to migrate abroad.
  12. At the same time, ESC found that securing a well-paid job in Bulgaria is a factor that may change these migration intentions. If they find such a job, about two-thirds of graduates with attitudes to migrate abroad would remain in the country.
    - 12.1. According to ESC, finding a well-paid job in Bulgaria would change to a much greater desire the intention to migrate abroad of graduates in small towns and villages as opposed to graduates in regional centres,

- especially in the four largest cities.
- 12.2. Moreover, the possibility of securing a well-paid job would result in a much greater change in the migration intentions of students with academic results up to 5.50, while the influence of this factor over excellent students would be much smaller.
  - 12.3. Well-paid work in Bulgaria would change more substantially the intention to leave the country of students whose parents have secondary or lower education, while the impact of this factor on graduates with university educated parents would be much smaller.
13. The second most popular reason for going abroad, according to ESC's study, is the possibility of receiving good higher education. The impact of this factor is much smaller than that of securing higher income and standard of living.
- 13.1. However, the difference in the impact of this reason for migration attitudes on students with excellent grades and those with results up to 4.50 is manifold.
  - 13.2. Also, the possibility of receiving good higher education is twice as strong a factor for going abroad with students from regional cities as compared to their peers in other settlements of the country.
14. The financial support for the family is another reason which occurs in about 5% of the students with the intention of leaving the country.
- 14.1. This reason is much more significant for formation of attitudes to migrate abroad among students with the lowest academic results.
  - 14.2. Also, financial support for the family is much stronger motive for migration abroad among graduates whose parents have the lowest education.
  - 14.3. This reason for the formation of intentions to migrate abroad is much more common among students from small towns and villages compared to larger settlements.
15. ESC finds that students with higher results from the previous school year are more likely to change their intention to migrate as a result of improved overall economic situation in the country and finding work in their specialty.
- 15.1. Moreover, these students show the strongest reaction to the existence of political stability and the reduction of corruption as a reason to change their plans to migrate abroad, as well as higher requirements for significantly improving health care.
16. Once again, ESC stated that in the country there are already formed trends in migration attitudes of secondary school graduates that are the result of



the existing problems in the place of residence and in the country as a whole.

- 16.1. ESC, however, stresses that there are certain differences in the migration attitudes of students depending on their place of residence, sex, academic results and the education of their parents.
- 17 ESC draws urgent attention to the finding of both studies that less than four percent of the respondents, who have expressed desire to migrate abroad, have indicated as a reason their reluctance to live in Bulgaria.

## **II. TRENDS IN THE INTENTIONS FOR LEAVING THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND PREFERRED MIGRATION DESTINATIONS**

1. ESC notes that in 2016 the trend that two thirds of secondary school graduates intend to leave their place of residence is preserved without any difference between the academic years 2014/2015 and 2016/2017.
  - 1.1. The size of the settlement is a major factor for the formation of migration attitudes.
    - 1.1.1. In regional centres, except Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas, there is the highest potential of intention to leave the place of residence. Over 80% of graduates express such desire, both studies conducted by the ESC show.
    - 1.1.2. Small towns and villages are also a source of serious potential for migration. Just like in the previous year in 2016/2017 over 70% of graduates there intend to change their place of residence.
    - 1.1.3. In the four largest cities in the country intention to leaving the place of residence was observed in 40-45% of students that have completed their secondary education in 2015 or will complete it in 2017.
  - 1.2. ESC draws attention to the emerging serious differences between the four largest cities and other settlements in the country regarding intentions to leave the place of residence after graduation - reaching up

to two times.

2. Among students graduating in 2017 there is a greater desire to leave the place of residence in girls than in boys. ESC found a similar trend in its previous study among students graduating in 2015.
3. Higher academic results are a strong factor in forming the intention to leave the place of residence.
  - 3.1. The overall trend in the whole country is that about three-quarters of secondary school graduates that have achieved excellent results from the previous year consider the possibility of change the place of residence, while this is typical for just over half of the students with results up to 4.50.
  - 3.2. According to ESC, students with the highest results have highest requirements for living conditions, jobs and income, and experience the highest level of dissatisfaction. Therefore, their desire to migrate forms mainly due to their need to look for a higher standard and better living conditions.
4. Family environment is undoubtedly a factor in the formation of migration intentions, as the higher education of parents forms higher requirements and goals of graduating students and hence - such students more strongly desire to leave the place of residence.
  - 4.1. ESC finds that in 2014/2015 and 2016/2017 academic years there has been a marked similarity in migration intentions of students according to the level of their parents' education.
5. ESC stresses, however, that differences in attitudes to leaving the place of residence among secondary school graduates are much greater depending on the results from the previous year than depending on the education of their parents.
  - 5.1. Obviously, higher results is a prerequisite for greater independence manifested in the formation of intentions to leave the place of residence, than the influence of family environment measures in terms of parents' education.

- 5.2. To ESC this is evidence that with increasing results increase not only the requirements for higher standards and better living conditions, but also the wish to achieve them.
6. In its study ESC found certain differences in the preferred place for settlement of secondary school graduates. It is worth noting that for graduates in 2017 migration abroad is a preferred destination than moving to Sofia, while in the school year 2014/2015 the capital was the slightly more desirable place for settlement.
7. The size of the settlement has a significant influence on the choice of migration destination. With increasing size of the settlement increases the desire to migrate abroad, and the less is the location, the more pronounced is the intention to settle in another city except Sofia.
  - 7.1. For more than half of the persons that declared intention of leaving the four largest cities, the preferred destination was abroad, while in other settlements that intention was more than twice less pronounced.
8. ESC found that secondary school boys are more typical to desire to migrate abroad than girls, who are more willing to change their place of residence within the same country.
9. Academic results from the previous year is a factor in forming preferences for future place of residence - a finding confirmed by both studies of ESC.
  - 9.1. The most serious differences in the migration destination according to academic results are observed with respect to the intentions of migrating to the capital - Sofia.
  - 9.2. ESC found that with increasing results very significantly increases the proportion of those willing to move to Sofia as compared to all secondary school graduates with comparable results and intention to leave the place of residence. Similar to the findings of the study conducted in 2016/2017, that in 2014/2015 showed that this share of students with excellent results is two times greater than the corresponding indicator for those with results up to 4.50.
  - 9.3. More substantial differences in the intentions of settling in another city except Sofia exist between students with excellent results and other

secondary school graduates, where the intention expressed by the first group is definitely not as strong.

- 9.4. ESC notes that during the academic year 2016/2017 the academic results from the previous year did not significantly affect the formation of differences in the intention of students to migrate abroad, while in 2014/2015 this intention was most pronounced among students with results for the previous year up to 4.50.
10. The higher is the education of the parents, the stronger the intention of the students to move to Sofia. At the same time, the lower education of the parents forms strong attitudes in secondary school graduates to migrate to towns other than Sofia.
  - 10.1. Overall, ESC establishes certain similarity in the intentions of students to settle in Sofia or in another town depending on their academic results from the previous school year and parents' education.
11. Regarding the intention to migrate abroad there are differences between students depending on their parents' education.
  - 11.1. In the academic year 2016/2017 the strongest desire to migrate abroad was observed in graduates who have parents with higher education and second among those who have parents with primary or lower education.
  - 11.2. In the academic year 2014/2015 students who have parents with the lowest education expressed slightly higher intentions to leave the country as compared to those whose parents have higher education, but again lower desire to migrate abroad is expressed by students who have parents with secondary education.
  - 11.3. There are reasons to conclude that the intention to migrate abroad form stronger in graduates who have parents with the lowest and the highest education. In the 2016/2017 academic year obtaining better higher education is the stronger incentive for such migration.
  - 11.4. There is also a trend that secondary school graduates who have parents with secondary education express the least desire to migrate abroad.
12. ESC finds that the overall family environment and in particular the education of parents has much more influence for the differences in

migration attitudes as compared to differences based on academic results for the previous school year.

### **III. MAIN PROBLEMS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL GRADUATES IN THEIR PLACE OF RESIDENCE**

1. ESC found that both during academic years 2014/2015 and 2016/2017 the main problem identified by students with respect to their place of residence is the difficulty of finding a job. However, there are certain changes in the secondary school graduates' evaluation, including also with regard to the size of the settlement.
  - 1.1. While in 2014/2015 the difficulty to find a job was a problem for 65% of respondents, in 2016/2017 it is identified as such by 54%.
  - 1.2. There are also changes in their evaluation with regard to the different size of respondents' settlements. During the 2014/2015 academic year the problem with finding any job was identified by all students and there were no significant differences between different locations. During the 2016/2017 academic year the share of respondents indicating this problem in small towns and villages is 45% higher than that in the largest cities - Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas. Moreover, there is a serious increase in the differences between these four cities and other regional centres in terms of the possibility of finding work as secondary school graduates.
  - 1.3. Difficulty in finding a job is regarded as a more serious problem by boys as compared to girls. This is the observed trend during both observed academic years and independently from the decrease in identifying this problem by each of the two sexes, the differences between them are maintained.
  - 1.4. In general, the expectation of difficulty in finding a job after completion of secondary school is typical for all students, but it shows stronger in those with academic results up to 4.50. Nevertheless, academic results from the previous year are not as strong a factor for the formation of differences as the place of residence.
  - 1.5. ESC finds much stronger correlation between students' anxiety about

finding a job after graduation and their parents' level of education. This problem is certainly more characteristically identified by graduates whose parents have secondary or lower education, especially by those who have parents with primary or lower education.

2. Another major problem identified by students is the inability to obtain higher income. It is stated by one in two secondary school graduates in both academic years.
  - 2.1. Girls graduating in academic year 2016/2017 identify the inability to obtain higher income as a more serious problem than boys, while in students' graduating in 2014/2015 no difference between the sexes was observed.
  - 2.2. There are serious differences in the evaluation of this problem between graduates with academic results above 4.50 and those with lower grades.
  - 2.3. There are also significant differences in the evaluation concerning the inability to obtain higher income between students who have parents with primary or lower education and those who have parents with higher education.
3. Difficulty in finding a good and appropriate job is the third major problem identified by secondary school graduates, in all locations.
  - 3.1. While in 2014/2015 this problem was more common among graduates in the four largest cities, in 2016/2017 it is more characteristic of students in other regional towns with population below 300 thousand inhabitants.
  - 3.2. Difficulty in finding a good and appropriate job is often defined as a problem by graduates with academic results up to 4.50 during the previous year as opposed to students scoring above 4.50.
4. These three issues characterise the primarily economic reasons and the state of the labour market in different types of settlements. In this connection there is a trend of difference between settlements depending on their size.
  - 4.1. Certainly, the conditions for finding any job have improved in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas, which can be seen in the fact that fewer respondents identify this problem in the country as a whole.

- 4.2. Despite a decrease in the percentage of those who identified this problem in regional towns with a population of 300 thousand inhabitants, in this type of towns there is a substantial increase of opinions about the impossibility of obtaining higher income and finding an appropriate job.
- 4.3. Based on its study ESC finds that these smaller regional towns provide probably better opportunities for finding any job for secondary school graduates, yet there are increasing problems for these students to find an appropriate or good job that would secure higher incomes.
- 4.4. It also finds an increase in respondent's evaluations in the four largest cities about the inability to obtain higher incomes regardless of their expressed opinion that there are better conditions for finding a job as well as an appropriate job.
- 4.5. ESC emphasizes that the desire for higher incomes and the inability to negotiate them are very typical and increasing problems in regional towns, while in other towns and villages the main challenge facing graduates is that of finding any job and maybe that is why they do not press for higher payment.
5. ESC draws attention that during academic year 2016/2017 secondary school graduates identify as the fourth major problem in their place of residence the poor education they receive. During the 2014/2015 academic year, this is the opinion of 26% of graduates, while in 2016/2017 academic year that of 28%.
  - 5.1. The highest rate of such responses come from graduates in regional towns with population below 300 thousand inhabitants, while between 31% and 33% of them have indicated this problem in both studies conducted by ESC.
  - 5.2. The percentage of those who identified poor education as a major problem in most large towns is close to the national average and in most small towns and villages students have the lowest expectations in regard to the quality of their education.
  - 5.3. Graduating secondary school girls are much more critical of the quality of education than boys.
  - 5.4. With increasing academic results a clear trend is observed of more

serious increase in the negative opinions of graduates concerning the education they receive at their place of residence

- 5.5. Also with increasing education of parents observed undoubtedly increase the percentage of graduates who identify the inability to obtain a good education as one of the main problems connected with their place of residence.
6. The poor state of roads, transport and social infrastructure were other problems in the place of residence according to secondary school graduates.
  - 6.1. While assessments of the state of roads and transport is similar among students in different types of settlements, their response to the insufficient opportunities for enjoyment and sports is growing very significantly the smaller their settlement is.

#### **IV. ATTITUDES TO MOVING ABROAD**

1. ESC found that about a third of secondary school graduates in 2017 are willing to migrate abroad. Around 40% of students with such intentions want to leave immediately after completing secondary education and 22% expect to do so over the next 2-3 years.
2. Slightly stronger intention to migrate abroad is expressed in the largest four cities of the country, but overall differences with other regional centres as well as other smaller towns and villages are not very large.
  - 2.1. A higher percentage of students from the largest four cities express the intention to continue their education abroad and then return to Bulgaria to other regional towns and smaller settlements.
  - 2.2. At the same time, in smaller settlements there is an increased willingness of graduates to seek temporary work abroad and then return to Bulgaria.
  - 2.3. Definitely stronger attitudes for permanent resettlement abroad are shown by graduates in the four largest cities than in regional cities, especially in smaller towns and the villages. The share of students from Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas who have indicated permanent migration as likely is by 13% larger than those in other regional cities, and 65% larger than those in other towns and villages.



3. The study showed no differences between graduating boys and girls in terms of their desire to continue their education abroad and then return to Bulgaria.
  - 3.1. The intention of working temporarily abroad and then returning to Bulgaria is more likely to occur in boys as compared to girls graduating secondary school.
  - 3.2. There are minimal disparities between the intentions of graduating boys and girls to move to live permanently abroad, an average of one in six of them shows such attitude.
4. Intention to migrate abroad is much more typical of students with excellent grades from the previous school year as compared to other finishing secondary education.
  - 4.1. The share of students with academic results up to 4.50 who intend to seek temporary work abroad and then return to Bulgaria is 76% higher than that of graduates with excellent results from the previous school year.
  - 4.2. Conversely, the intention for permanent resettlement abroad is 60% more common among students with excellent results from the previous school year as compared to those with results up to 4.50.
  - 4.3. ESC restates its concern that graduates with the lowest education much more typically desire to work temporarily abroad and then return to Bulgaria, while students with the highest results show stronger determination to permanently settle abroad.
5. Graduates whose parents have university, primary or lower education are more willing to migrate abroad than those whose parents have secondary education. This is a trend that has been observed in both school years studied by ESC.
  - 5.1. The family environment and especially the education of parents strongly influences the motive for moving abroad. The share of graduates with very high probability of continuing their education abroad and then returning to Bulgaria - who have parents with higher education - is over 50% higher than that of students whose parents have the lowest education.

- 5.2. The desire to find temporary work abroad and then return to Bulgaria is more pronounced for students whose parents have secondary or lower education compared to those who have parents with higher education.
- 5.3. At the same time, it is about 90% more likely students of parents with higher education to move and live permanently abroad as compared to graduates whose parents have primary or lower education.
6. The most preferred country for migration of secondary school graduates is the UK, it is identified by one in four respondents intending to leave the country.
  - 6.1. The UK is preferred by students in big cities rather than those in smaller towns and villages.
  - 6.2. Around 23% of students who wish to migrate abroad have identified Germany as their preferred destination. But attitudes about immigration in this country increase in smaller settlements.
  - 6.3. On average one in ten graduates indicated the US as preferred destination.
  - 6.4. Another attractive country is the Netherlands, this preference for this country is greater in larger settlements.
  - 6.5. Intentions to move to Spain, France and Italy are expressed by about 4% of graduates.
7. The UK is much more preferred destination country among students with excellent grades from the previous year as compared to those with results up to 4.50. The difference between these two groups being over 60%.
  - 7.1. Students with the lowest academic result express slightly stronger desire for moving to Germany than those with higher results as compared with the previous year.
  - 7.2. As compared with the previous year, student with higher results increase their preference for moving to countries like the USA, the Netherlands, France and Austria.
8. ESC also found an increase in the share of students who intend to migrate abroad alone. If in the academic year 2014/2015 such an

intention was declared by 25% of graduates desiring to migrate abroad, in 2016/2017 this is typical of 30%.

- 8.1. There are differences in the indicator of readiness to leave the country alone after completion of secondary education between students from settlements of different sizes. The share of graduates in regional centres with the intention of going abroad alone is by 33% to 43% higher as compared to that of graduates from smaller towns and villages in both academic years. According to ESC, this is evidence of the definitely greater security and confidence of graduates of the larger cities in terms of their ability to find realisation and generally to deal with problems abroad.
- 8.2. About 15% of students with the intention of leaving the country intend to do this with their family. This percentage is higher in small towns and villages than in other places, which is another indicator for the higher determination and confidence of graduates in larger cities to succeed abroad.
9. In both studied school years, the share of boys who prefer to go alone abroad of all boys with the intention of emigration is definitely higher than the corresponding indicator about the girls.
  - 9.1. The share of boys with the intention of leaving the country with friends is higher than this share of the girls.
  - 9.2. Overall, it can be inferred that there is greater security and confidence in boys for a successful career abroad as compared to girls.
10. The academic results of the student is an indisputable factor for his or her sense of security and confidence in realizing his or her intentions to migrate abroad. There is a proportional relationship between high academic results from the previous school year and the willingness of graduates to migrate abroad alone.
  - 10.1. In the previous academic year graduates with excellent academic results showed 50% higher intention to migrate abroad also as compared to those with results up to 4.50.
  - 10.2. In both studies, ESC finds a correlation between students' lower academic results and their desire to migrate abroad together with their

family.

11. Parents' education is also a factor that impacts their opinion about how to migrate abroad, there is a direct link between having parents' with higher education and strongly expressed students' intention to leave the country alone.
12. The two studies conducted by ESC show that on average about 70% of graduates desiring to migrate abroad have close relatives outside the country whom they intend to join there.
  - 12.1. There is a tendency according to which the smaller the size of the settlement the larger the share of students who intend to join their relatives abroad. While in the four largest cities presence of this fact is stated by 64% of graduates with attitude to migrate abroad, in most small towns and villages this is the case reported by 74% of students.
  - 12.2. According to ESC, this is evidence of more dynamic depopulation of small towns and villages as compared to bigger cities resulting from the migration abroad of previous years.
  - 12.3. Also the high percentage of students who indicate the presence of relatives abroad can be considered in itself a factor in forming migration attitudes given the relative security such relatives afford to migrating graduates.
  - 12.4. ESC finds that the share of girls with the intention of leaving the country who have relatives abroad is higher than that of boys - both in 2014/2015, and in 2016/2017.
  - 12.5. The share of graduates with excellent grades from those who state they have relatives abroad is lower than that of graduates with lower results, and especially those with results up to 4.50.

## **V. MAIN REASONS FOR MOVING ABROAD AND WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO DECIDE AGAINST IT**

1. Higher incomes and standard of living are the main reason for moving abroad identified by secondary school graduates in both academic years studied.
  - 1.1. The possibility of receiving good higher education is another reason - although three times less important according to respondents, it has increased its significance between the two studied years.
  - 1.2. Comparable importance as a migration factor is assigned to the possibility of finding a good job abroad.
  - 1.3. Financial support for the family as a precondition for going abroad is identified by about 5% of the students expressing an intention of leaving the country.
  - 1.4. Unwillingness to live in Bulgaria is the reason for less than 4% of graduates, who indicate that the reasons for leaving the country are of another nature.
2. The possibility of receiving good higher education is two times stronger motive for moving abroad for students from regional towns as compared to those from smaller towns and villages.
  - 2.1. The opposite trend is observed in that the possibility to find a good job abroad is a much more important reason for moving abroad in small towns and villages as compared the largest cities - Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas.
3. ESC notes that the possibility of higher income and standard of living is definitely a stronger reason for moving abroad for graduating girls than for boys.
  - 3.1. Also many more girls express a desire to migrate abroad to obtain better higher education than boys.
  - 3.2. However, a much stronger motive for moving abroad among boys is the possibility of finding a good job.
  - 3.3. Boys express a little more often than girls a desire to migrate abroad in

order to help their family financially.

4. Students' results from the previous school year correlates with differences among graduates regarding the reasons for desiring to migrate abroad.
  - 4.1. ESC establishes a very strong tendency of correlation between the increasing importance of the possibility of obtaining better higher education as a reason for moving abroad and the high academic results of graduates.
  - 4.2. The prospect of finding a good job was a much more important reason for forming the intention to migrate abroad among graduates with lower academic results in the previous academic year.
  - 4.3. ESC finds that the possibility to help their family financially as a reason for moving abroad has much more importance for students with lower academic results than for those with higher ones, especially for those with excellent grades.
5. Parents' education has a strong impact on the attitude to migrate abroad, as well as on the conditions to decide against moving abroad among secondary school graduates.
  - 5.1. There are many significant differences with regard to the possibility of receiving good higher education abroad as a reason for leaving the country between students whose parents have higher education and those whose parents are less educated.
  - 5.2. Among students whose parents have the lowest education, financial support for the family is a motif of much greater importance as compared to other graduates with migration attitudes.
  - 5.3. There are differences also in terms of the opportunities for achieving higher income and living standards as a reason for migration which is more pronounced among children whose parents have higher education.
6. For every two out of three secondary school graduates intending to migrate abroad finding better-paid employment in Bulgaria is a condition for them to remain in the country.

- 6.1. ESC emphasizes that improving the economic situation in the country is a condition for changing migration attitudes in about 40% of students showing intention to leave the country.
- 6.2. Finding a job in their field is another condition for changing migration attitudes identified by about 30% of graduates.
- 6.3. The possibility of starting their own business is yet another condition identified by them.
- 6.4. Two other factors that may change graduates' intention to leave the country are political stability and a significant reduction in corruption.
- 6.5. The possibility of finding well-paid work in Bulgaria is more important condition for remaining in the country to boys as opposed to girls in the school year 2016/2017, while in 2014/2015 no difference between the sexes is observed.
- 6.6. Also starting your own business is much stronger factor to change the migration intentions in boys as compared to girls graduating secondary school.
- 6.7. Finding work in their area of expertise in Bulgaria has stronger impact on girls' migration attitudes as compared to boys.
- 6.8. Girls identify more often improving the economic situation in the country as a condition for changing their migration attitudes.
- 6.9. Finding a well-paid job in Bulgaria would have much stronger impact on migration attitudes of graduates with academic results up to 5.50, while those with excellent results find it less significant.
- 6.10. Starting one's own business would again have stronger impact on graduates with results up to 5.50, and much weaker impact on those with excellent grades.
- 6.11. Secondary school graduates with higher results for the previous year report that their migration attitudes are more likely to change based on improvements of the economic situation in the country and better prospects for finding employment in their area of expertise.
- 6.12. Moreover, students with higher grades are much more sensitive to the presence of political stability and reduced corruption as a condition for

changing the intention to migrate abroad.

- 6.13. It should be noted that students with the highest results have definitely the highest requirements also for improvement of health care identifying it as another condition for remain in the country.
- 6.14. Finding a well-paid job in Bulgaria is an essential condition for changing the migration attitudes of graduates whose parents have secondary or lower education.
- 6.15. Also, for students who have parents with secondary and higher education a much more essential condition for changing migration attitudes, as opposed to students who have parents with lower education, is the existence of political stability and reducing corruption.
- 6.16. The higher education of parents is also associated with increased requirements of graduates for health care as a condition for changing their migration attitudes.

In conclusion, ESC once again stresses that in Bulgaria at the moment there are already formed migration attitudes among secondary school graduates which creates extremely serious problems for the development of a number of municipalities in the country.

Therefore, migration attitudes and opportunities to act on the factors for their formation should be viewed not only as a major problem of demographic development, but also as a crucial prerequisite for the future of many settlements in Bulgaria.



(signed)

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