LABOUR AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

# MOLDOVANS: OUT-SIDERS OR INSIDERS?

Situation of migrant workers in Romania

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Our research analyzes the trends of labor migration and the situation of migrant workers in Romania coming through the entry points of employment agencies and international higher education programs from Moldova.

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The bursary programme for Romanians living in neighbouring countries is clearly conceived by the Romanian state as a means of encouraging a brain-drain into Romania. It provides scholarships and accommodation for more than 2,500 new students each year.

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IT sector bacame a primary entry point, without the intermediation of the universities. IT specialists integrated in the field can manage to find a job on their own. Employers use their Moldavian network to find trustworthy and competent workers.

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

LABOUR AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Romania is considered mainly a sending or transit country, however in the past few years the number of incoming migrants is growing. This can be grasped both in the number of work permits issued in a year, the different statistical data on foreign born citizens in the country and the number of files submitted for the (re-)acquisition of Romanian citizenship. One of the groups that present the largest growth are Moldovans, who – according the 2007 amendment of the citizenship law – can apply for the reacquisition of Romanian citizenship as well.

Romania clearly differentiates between different migrant groups, preferring to integrate 'cultural kin'. While the labour market is rather closed for other migrants, Moldovans, having already applied for Romanian citizenship can easily integrate on the labour market. By focusing on the situation of this 'preferred' group, the report makes suggestions how the Romanian immigration system could be improved.

Based on the conducted field research two main conclusions can be drawn.

1. Despite the favourable formal conditions, most Moldovans argue that labour market integration can be achieved when acquiring Romanian ID. When this happens, from a legal perspective at least, they cease to be considered immigrants. However, in order to acquire Romanian ID, a person need to acquire Romanian citizenship and to provide evidence of stable residency in the country. In addition, based on the stories of Moldovans arriving before 2007, when the citizenship law was amended, the research also shows what is it like to be a migrant in Romania. Most people have a hard time applying for a visa or citizenship, while communication with the Romanian authorities is cumbersome and unpredictable.

2. One of the main entry-point where Moldovan citizens arrive is the bursary programme for Romanians living in neighbouring countries. The programme provides a good opportunity for young Moldovan migrants to study in Romania and to prepare for their stay there. One could

even consider it a 'rite of passage', when integration into the host society occurs. From the state's perspective, the programme is clearly conceived as a means of encouraging a brain-drain into Romania, as it provides scholarships and accommodation for more than 2,500 new students each year. Some of the best students in Moldova go to study in Romania, remaining in the country in the end of their studies. Despite the clear advantages that the bursary program provides for the Romanian labour market, it does not always work most effectively. In many cases the best universities or domains are not open for the program, while the newest decentralization and anonymization of the admission process, as a result of the GDPR regulations makes hard for prospective students to provide proof at consulates that they got accepted.

One of the most important finding of the research in this context is related to intermediaries and stakeholders. Moldovan students have organized themselves in student organizations, which go well beyond their original purpose and initiate numerous diverse programmes to integrate young Moldovans, create a strong Moldovan network and to strengthen Romanian–Moldovan relations. In addition, some of the programmes take over integration tasks from Romanian government agencies and even 'head-hunting' for universities.

3. Romania clearly presents work force shortage in several areas. Although, the IT sector in the country is a lively and still developing sector, at least in Cluj, has outgrown the possibilities provided by the universities in Cluj, and many experts speak of labour shortages in the area. This not only strengthen IT specialists' bargaining power but force many companies to look for workers outside the city and eventually in the country. However, as a result of the fluidity and high mobility of the workforce in the sector, it is hard for companies to provide hard evidence of the labour shortage officially, which is needed to enable them to look for migrants in order to fill vacancies. In other words, Romanian migration policy binds companies' hands in hiring migrants and they need to look for alternative solutions.

Moldovans having or in the process of applying for citizenship are one of these, while collaborations with Moldovan companies or opening Moldovan branches are another.

Based on the report the most important recommendations were the following:

1. Revise, making more transparent and predictable, the application system for residence permits and citizenship for third-country migrant groups.

2. Support and strengthen migrants' bridging organisations so that migrants can be better informed

3. Locate and communicate prominently sectors with a considerable labour force shortage and focus migration policies in those areas

4. Rethink the bursary programme for Romanians living in neighbouring countries and smoothen the admission process by accelerating the publication of lists of successful scholarships

5. Recommendation for universities: play a more active role in accommodating foreign students by helping them to deal with paperwork with the public administration (Immigration Bureau, Health Insurance Office) in an organised manner

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

The main objectives of the present research are to reach a better understanding of migrant employment and integration policies in four countries in central and eastern Europe (CEE) and in South-eastern Europe (SEE) – Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Romania – and, by mapping regional similarities and differences, to create a common knowledge-base for policymakers. As most of the countries included in the research – and Romania in particular – are considered to be mainly sending or transit countries, it is important to understand what policies would facilitate the integration of immigrants in these societies and help to encourage them to stay there rather than proceeding on to Western Europe.

Romania clearly differentiates between different migrant groups, preferring to integrate 'cultural kin'. The Romanian immigration system could be improved by looking more closely at this differentiation and by analysing the experiences of the 'preferred' group. The research also focuses on understanding the entry points for legal migration. These formal or informal organisational structures facilitate migrants' first contact with the country, whether they be high- or low-skilled workers. The present report focuses on two such entry points: (i) Romanian universities, which provide preferential places for foreign students in general, and Moldovan students in particular; and (ii) the IT sector, a success story for the Romanian economy, which employs high-skilled migrants.

The research tries to understand migrants' perspectives, arguing that in order to understand how the different channels work and identify the different challenges and forms of exclusion in the current system, we need to go beyond the formal legal, policy and institutional context and focus on how people perceive these systems.

# SECTION 1.

# POLICY AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS IN MIGRATION: AN OVERVIEW

## IMMIGRANTS AND FOREIGN LABOUR IN ROMANIA

### Emigration and immigration: general trends

Romania might be classified as part of the Western European labour frontier, which is mainly a consequence of post-1989 developments. Emigration was present under state socialism, too, but at that time the authorities exercised more control over migratory flows (Horváth 2005). Romania's evolution into such a labour frontier, as well as a country of emigration, has been striking. In 1990,[1] only around 3.5 per cent of the population emigrated, mainly ethnic minorities (Jews, Germans and Hungarians). By 2017 the proportion of emigrants in the total population was 18.2 per cent (meaning that around 3.6 million Romanian-born people were residing abroad), a figure identical to that of Bulgaria, a country which started with a larger emigrant stock in 1990.

The foreign-born population was fairly low in 1990 and consisted mainly of ethnic Romanians who were born in territories ceded to the Soviet Union (Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina) and Bulgaria (Southern Dobruja or *Cadrilater*).

Immigration began to grow significantly only following 2010. This process had two major sources: return migration (or statistical registration) of foreign-born Romanian children and 'real' immigration. In the case of Romania this kind of 'return migration' is very visible statistically. In 2017 it included 148,445 people born in the European Union, 50,893 born in Italy and 39,492 born in Spain. According to Eurostat data (differing from the UN migration matrix), in the case of the 'Spanish immigrants' 94.2 per cent were children aged 0–14, while in case of the 'Italians' it was 85.9 per cent.

As for 'real' inflows, one should distinguish between foreign and Romanian citizens. The number of registered immigrants is extremely low in Romania compared with other European countries. In 2011, four years after Romania's accession to the EU, the total number of foreign residents in Romania was 98,073, most of them from Moldova, Turkey, China, Italy and Germany.[2] More than two-fifths of the foreign residents were from the EU. These numbers did not increase significantly until 2018 (see Table 1 in Annex).

Nevertheless, the number of (effective) immigrants has grown considerably, as there was an inflow of Moldovans, who constitute the most numerous group. Moldovan-born people already numbered more than 50,000 in 1990 and their number did not increase markedly until 2010 (see Horváth/Kiss 2015, for more details). Following 2010, however, immigration from Moldova increased drastically and in 2017 the number of those born in Moldova was more than 150,000.

One should emphasise that many (effective) immigrants enter the country with Romanian citizenship. This is the case of 'transborder Romanians' from Moldova and Ukraine. For these groups Romania has become an attractive receiving country only recently.

### Labour market processes and their impact on migration

Labour market processes constitute the most important aspect of the macroeconomic context. To explain Romania's evolution into an emigration country we should mention the collapse of industrial production following regime change. The number of people employed in the industrial sector fell from 4.169 million in 1989 to 2.004 million in 2000. This went in parallel with marked changes in the patterns of internal migration. From the 1950s until the 1990s, the prevailing direction of migration was from rural to urban areas. From 1992, the direction changed: the number of those moving from rural areas (villages) to urban centres (cities) started to decrease, while mobility in the opposite direction increased. In 1997, the migrants from urban to rural areas outnumbered their counterparts. This is because a substantial number of people

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[1] According to official figures the total number of inhabitants was 23.2 million in 1990.

[2] Total inhabitants: 20.2 million.

responded to the shrinking labour market by returning to their villages. These were primarily people (or their children) who had moved to urban areas in previous decades. The bulk of these returnees became active in agriculture, generally subsistence farming. A major consequence of the (re-)migration to rural areas was the emergence of a large sector of subsistence farming that, according to Okólski (2012) might have far-reaching effects on the country's migration system. Under these circumstances, more and more villagers started to emigrate after 2000 (Sandu 2006).

One might argue that, until recently, Romania was characterised not only by a large subsistence agriculture sector, but also by a labour force surplus. Between 2002 and 2007, however, and following 2014, marked changes – including economic restructuring – have occurred.

Three major processes should be emphasised:

1. The massive contraction of subsistence farming. This is closely correlated to massive emigration. It is important to emphasise that subsistence farming is no longer a labour reservoir for the non-agricultural sectors in Romania.

2. The restructuring of industrial production in Romania, shifting from low value added sectors (such as textiles and wood) to machinery. This means that the structure of Romanian industrial production now resembles that of the Visegrad countries.

3. With the restructuring of industrial production, the contraction of subsistence farming and economic recovery an acute labour shortage developed in some sectors, including construction, services (such as hotels and restaurants), the IT sector, several industrial sectors (especially the low value added sectors that lost their workers to the machine industry) and health care.

The acute labour shortage was a publicly debated issue as early as 2002–2007. According to a 2007 survey, approximately 15 per cent of the companies in these sectors reported staff shortages, the most severe problems being reported in the textiles and clothing sector (Șerban/Toth 2007). Today the labour shortage is even more evident, linked directly to Romanian emigration. Romanians prefer to work abroad in construction, commerce, hotels, and domestic and care services (including women who previously worked in the textile industry), earning at least twice as much as they could get doing the same job at home. Under conditions of economic growth, but with an internal labour market profoundly affected by emigration, several sectors have faced labour shortages that could not be tackled by transferring local workers from other sectors or by returned emigrants. We shall look at the policy responses to this situation.

## PUBLIC OPINION

Migration is not a central topic in Romanian politics. Political parties do not have or at least propagate well-defined opinions and policy-options on the issue, although from time to time stories about migrant workers are picked up by the Romanian media. For instance, the poor housing conditions of Vietnamese guest workers were reported (later that year Romania signed an agreement with Vietnam enabling the entry of more Vietnamese workers). Another report concerned the strike at the ASTRA wagon factory in Arad and the employment of Indian guest workers. According to several media reports, they received considerably lower wages than had been promised, the accommodation and other conditions were often poor and, in general, the employers paid little or no attention to the immigrants' integration into society or their cultural needs. In some cases, tensions escalated to the point of conflict and businesses unilaterally terminated contracts, leading to the workers' repatriation.

Despite these news stories, the issue has not been politicised, and the government tends to adopt rules and regulations without public pressure. In contrast, stories concerning Romanians living in neighbouring countries are far more prominent. Although there are no real debates on the issue, as most political actors agree with the involvement of and benefits provided by the Romanian state, the topic has come onto the national public agenda several times in the past couple of years. A key figure in this development is Traian Băsescu, the previous president of the country, who was the first Romanian post-communist official to speak openly about the unification of Romania with the Republic of Moldova, initiating Law No. 299/2007 regarding support for Romanians everywhere.

Interestingly, although the topic is rarely on the public agenda, Romanians tend to overestimate the percentage of migrants. According to the Special Eurobarometer 469, Romanians believe that, on average, 9.7 per cent of the population was born outside the European Union, which is 8.1 times bigger than the percentage reported by the official Eurostat data (Eurobarometer 2018).

This overestimation does not necessarily entail a negative assessment of all migrants. As the data in Figure 8 show, only a small percentage of Romanians oppose granting social benefits and services to migrants, but while in the case of Romanians living abroad most would allow them to integrate after one year, in the case of migrants in Romania itself a larger segment of the population would wait a lot longer before conferring citizenship.

Another question focused on people's willingness to open up the social system to migrants. As the data in Figure 9 show, a larger number of people believe that migrants are more of a cost to the country than a benefit, while they consider Romanians living in neighbouring countries more of a positive asset.

The acceptance of Romanians living in neighbouring countries is reflected in other attitudes as well. As shown in Figure 10, the overwhelming majority of Romanian citizens agree with the policies of the Romanian state targeting Romanians living in neighbouring countries and even support possible unification of the Republic of Moldova and Romania. Moreover, these attitudes have not changed over time, remaining stable for the past few years.

## MIGRATION POLICY IN ROMANIA

### General framework: national migration strategy

Romania developed its national migration strategy rather late, in 2015,[3] linked mainly to European accession. The policy will be adjusted in the next few years, as a new four-year strategy is under debate.[4] The main elements of the current strategy are: (i) promotion of legal migration, (ii) fighting illegal migration, (iii) the development of the asylum-seekers system and (iv) Romania's participation in seeking international solutions to migration. Beyond this, the 2019–2022 strategy introduces measures on the entry of illegal migrants, plans on institutional development and resource allocation to migration-related policies. Looking more closely and comparing these documents, several conclusions can be drawn.

First, the strategies make reference to several EU documents and one might argue that they were drafted in response to or in concordance with EU directives and policies. In fact, this research was conducted at a time when migration was under the spotlight after Romania had become a labour frontier for the Western European core, without signs of becoming a country of immigration. This aspect is emphasised by Soltész (2019), who argues, based mainly Geddes and Scholten (2016), that central and eastern European countries developed their migration policies mainly because this topic had become important in the EU accession period. In other words, Romanian migration strategies take over and comply with the dominant discursive elements of the EU policy. This is most visible in the fact that the documents frame migration in a security policy context. They make reference to challenges, destabilisation and waves of migration, and adopt the EU's 'policy models and ideas about borders, security and insecurity', before actually facing immigration (Geddes/Scholten 2016).

A second important characteristic concerns the content of the two strategies. Comparing the two it seems that the 2015–2018 strategy was not implemented, as almost all objectives are planned to be included in the 2019–2022 document, almost identically. There are only two exceptions, one improving asylum procedures and social integration measures, and the other enhancing control of legal residence and the employment of third-country nationals on the territory of Romania. This lack of implementation is also strengthened by the fact that institutional development and resource allocation goals appear only in the new strategy.

A third important characteristic are the slight discursive and strategic shifts. From a discursive point of view, Romanian migration strategies can be characterised by a modest liberalisation. The two most important examples are the access of third-country nationals to the territory of Romania and the resettlement of refugees. While the 2015–2018 document talked about 'facilitating the access' of third-country nationals, and '[f]ulfilling Romania's obligations on the resettlement of refugees', from 2019 the focus is on 'facilitating *and simplifying* access' and '[f]ulfilling Romania's obligations on the resettlement of refugees *and promoting other legal channels of admission into the territory of the state*' (authors' emphasis).

From a strategic point of view, the 2015–2018 document talks about traditional sender countries (Moldova, China, Turkey),[5] while the 2019–2022 strategy pays special attention to third countries that are close to Romania (Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine).[6] This is an important attitudinal shift that reflects the Romanian state's intention to counteract net emigration. As we will point out in the following subsection, it is reflected at the policy level as well.

### Legal and institutional setting of Romanian migration policy

Romania does not have a legal framework to regulate migration; the issue is touched on by several laws, government emergency ordinances and government ordinances. The most important of these are the following:

– Government Emergency Ordinance (GEO) No. 194/2002 on the regime of aliens in Romania
– GEO No. 102/2005 on the free movement on Romanian territory of EU, EEA and Swiss citizens
– GO No. 44/2004 on the social integration of aliens who were granted a form of protection in Romania
– GO No. 102/2000 on the status and regime of refugees in Romania

Also, several aspects of Law No. 299/2007 on support for Romanians living outside the borders of Romania and of

**3** National Strategy on Migration – 2015-2018 – Decision No. 780/2015 on the approval of the National Strategy on Immigration for the period 2015–2018 and of the Action Plan for the year 2015 for the implementation of the National Strategy on Immigration over the period 2015–2018.

**4** Project on the National Strategy on Migration – 2019–2022 (http://webapp.mai.gov.ro/frontend/documente_transparenta/188_1549983152_Anexa%20nr.%201%20-%20Strategia%20na%C5%A3ional%C4%83%20pentru%20imigra%C8%9Bie.pdf – accessed on 17 June 2019)

**5** National Strategy on Migration – 2015–2018, p. 5.

**6** Project on National Strategy on Migration – 2019–2022, p. 16.

Law No. 21/1991 regarding Romanian citizenship can be considered important.

From an institutional perspective the most important institution is the General Inspectorate for Immigration, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This institution implements policies regarding migration, asylum and foreigners.

According to the legal corpus presented above, people migrating to Romania are differentiated depending on their country of origin and ethnic origin. Like most EU countries, Romania differentiates between EU, EEA and Swiss citizens, refugees and third-country citizens. It also introduces a fourth category, however, Romanians living outside the borders of Romania, who receive specific treatment in several areas. This differentiation is in accordance with the above-mentioned shift in migration strategy, although it is not reflected in general legislation and on migration, but rather introduced by the additional legislation mentioned above.

In what follows we will present the Romanian immigration regime, focusing mainly on third-country migrants and Romanians living outside the borders of Romania.

The evaluation of Romanian migration policy can be based on the MIPEX database, which, although containing data from 2014, is accurate for assessing the current situation. Accordingly, Romanian migration policy goes halfway, with some restrictive aspects (access to education, political participation and citizenship) and some more favourable (labour market mobility, permanent residence, family reunion and anti-discrimination) (MIPEX 2014). If we look more closely, however, there is a clear difference between how third-country citizens and how ethnic Romanians from third-countries are evaluated.

The Romanian labour market is rather closed; only a predetermined number of third-country nationals are eligible for work permits (see Table 2). Each year the government publishes these numbers in the Official Monitor, adjusted if need be.

The number of annual work permits is also low, although in 2017 the yearly quota of work permits issued for third-country nationals had to be supplemented. The number of work permits that can be issued peaked in 2019 at 20,000. The economic dynamics conjoined with the amplified emigration of Romanians and led to a labour shortage in some sectors, especially in construction (both infrastructure and housing). Under these circumstances, immigrant labour seems to be a mid-term solution for addressing the problem.

Romania has not yet experienced a major influx of foreign labour. Nevertheless, some important lessons might be underscored. Probably neither the authorities nor businesses are prepared to manage the influx of foreign workers. The slow procedures and the direct and indirect administrative costs hinder the access of people willing to work in Romania.

Persons receiving a work permit can work at a single employer or entity and permits are obtained by the employer. Work permits are issued if the employer proves that vacant positions cannot be filled by Romanian citizens of EU/EEA Member States or by permanent residents in Romania. Also, the candidate needs to satisfy the training, work experience and authorisations specific for the job.[7] Romanians living outside the borders, however, can receive work permits free of charge.[8]

Another way of obtaining a work permit in Romania is through a residence permit. Possessors of long-term residence permits can work on Romanian territory without authorisation. Residence permits are issued both to EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and third-country citizens. While in the former case a stay of up to three months is granted by default and the registration certificate can be acquired rather easily (which will be valid for five years), in the latter case obtaining a residence permit is similar to naturalisation.[9]

From an immigration perspective the most problematic point of Romanian legislation is the citizenship law. On one hand, it does not offer a clear path to citizenship for ordinary immigrants and children (MIPEX 2014), while on the other hand, it offers preferential citizenship for co-ethnics, allowing former Romanian citizens (and their descendants) who live in 'lost' territories to re-acquire Romanian citizenship without having to move to Romania (Dumbrava 2017). Furthermore, as Bărbulescu (2013) points out, in parallel with this particularistic liberalisation amendments of the law have made it more restrictive.

In order for a third-country national to obtain citizenship, they need to fulfil the following conditions: eight years' residence in the country,[10] a knowledge of Romanian, a basic grounding in the culture, the Constitution and the national anthem,[11] sufficient economic means, and evidence of good behaviour and loyalty. In contrast, Romanians living outside the territory of Romania need to comply only with the loyalty elements of the legislation.

Another problem that is well documented in the literature is the vagueness and arbitrariness of the procedure for obtaining citizenship. Both the information available for applicants and the requirements concerning economic means and 'cultural knowledge' are very vague, as there are no formal criteria. For example, knowledge of Romanian culture is tested through an oral interview, based on very general materials provided in advance for preparation. Also, it is not clear what precisely constitutes 'sufficient economic means'. In other words, applicants cannot

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7   For details see the webpage of the General Inspectorate for Immigration: http://igi.mai.gov.ro/en/content/seeking-advice

8   Art. 5 d1 of Law No. 299/2007

9   See Section 2 of GEO No. 194/2002

10   In 1991 the condition was of 5 years.

11   References to culture, the constitution and the national anthem were introduced in 2003.

calculate what is needed for a successful application, and if rejected do not receive any explanation (see Bărbulescu 2013 for further analysis).

A further drawback of Romanian immigration policy is that, according to the law, foreigners are not allowed to participate in political life. According to Art. 4 GEO No. 194/2002, third-country citizens cannot organise or fund political parties or be a member of one, nor can they occupy public positions. It is important to mention that this is not the case for EU, EEA and Swiss citizens, or for Romanians living outside Romania, whose political participation is regulated by different laws. Although third-country Romanians (such as Moldovans, or those living in Serbia) would fall under this restriction, however, their options regarding the acquisition of citizenship clearly favours them in this matter.

Another area in which the legislation differentiates between EU, EEA and Swiss citizens, Romanians living outside the territory of Romania and third-country citizens is education. According to the law, Romanians living outside the territory of Romania are entitled to study Romanian freely in Romania and to obtain scholarships for this purpose. Also, they are entitled to places in public education and universities, as well as accommodation in student homes financed by the Ministry of Education. In contrast, third-country citizens need to apply for a long-term student visa. Analysing the requirements published on the website of the General Inspectorate of Immigration, beyond proof of acceptance and proof of payment of tuition fees, a candidate needs to present 'proof of means of support in the amount of at least a minimum net wage for the entire period inscribed on the visa'.[12] This condition limits the number of people who can take advantage of this possibility, as an average student needs to present an annual guarantee of at least EUR 3,600 for at least three years.

## Policies targeting 'Romanians abroad'

Romania lost substantial territories at the beginning of the Second World War, ceding Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria, and Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union. Following a population exchange practically no Romanians remained in Southern Dobruja (see Figure 6). The official Romanian view is that Romanian speakers living in these territories, as well as Romanians living in Serbia, Hungary and Zakarpatia (who live in territories that have never belonged to Romania) belong to the culturally defined 'Romanian nation' (*români de pretutindeni*). However, there is a difference in their treatment depending on whether they live in territories that formerly belonged to (Greater) Romania.

Romania (alongside Croatia) was the first eastern European country to grant extra-territorial citizenship for most of its ethnic kin. The 1991 law introduced the possibility to 'reacquire'[13] Romanian citizenship for former Romanian citizens and their descendants who had lost their citizenship 'against their will or other reason for which they are not to blame'.[14] This law was applied to populations that were denaturalised *en masse* as a result of territorial changes after the Second World War, namely former Romanian citizens living in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. It is important to mention that Romanian citizenship law takes a permissive stance toward double citizenship.

It is also important that in the context of the pre-accession period Romania not only abstained from actively promoting union with Moldova, but practically suspended the 'reacquisition' of citizenship. The process was restarted only in 2008. A total number of 531,936 files were assessed in the period between 1991 and 2016, the overwhelming majority positively. As one file could contain the application of more than one person (in the case of parents and minors), the number of naturalised persons could be as high as 600,000.

As can be seen in the empirical section, by acquiring extra-territorial Romanian citizenship Romanians living abroad do not receive automatic benefits as regards the labour market. As many of our interlocutors pointed out, the real divide is between those who have Romanian identity documents (ID), and those who do not. Moldovan dual citizens without Romanian ID fall into the intermediate labour market category. On the other hand, the process of acquiring Romanian ID is not complicated for extraterritorial Romanian citizens: they need merely to present a document attesting Romanian citizenship, a Romanian birth certificate, ID or passport issued by foreign authorities and a certificate of property proving the applicants' Romanian home address. This does not necessarily have to be in that person's name: they can live at the domicile of an acquaintance, who guarantees that they live there.

# SECTION 2.

# ENTRY POINTS

The concept of the 'entry point' is central to our investigation. As already mentioned, entry points are formal or informal social or organisational structures that facilitate migrants' first contact with the destination country.

As we saw in the previous section, Romania clearly differentiates between migrant groups, preferring 'ethnic kin'. We decided to analyse the experiences of this 'preferred' group. In this way, it might be possible to improve the Romanian immigration system.

1. The first entry point is the bursary programme for Romanian students from abroad, which targets Romanian-speaking students from Moldova and other neighbouring countries (see Table 3). We decided to concentrate on tertiary education, as this is more closely linked to the labour market.

   Characterising this entry point in terms of the dichotomies mentioned above, it is formal and government-driven, targeting high-school graduates belonging to the preferred category of ethnic kin. It involves students' educational migration. Some of them will be integrated into Romania's primary labour market as highly skilled Romanian workers (after a process of naturalisation).

2. Our second entry point is an IT firm that has bases in Romania and Moldova, and in Romania employs primarily well-trained Moldovans. It should be emphasised that employment in the IT sector in Romania (and primarily in Cluj) is ethnically or quasi-ethnically segmented with a kind of dual labour market, with lower wages for Moldovan employees. Based on the dichotomies already mentioned this is a formal, market-driven entry point targeting highly skilled professionals who are employed formally in the primary (however ethnically segmented/dual) labour market. The people that use this entry point belong to the (ethnically) preferred category of immigrants involved in labour migration and settle permanently (or at least for an extended period) in Romania.

The section is structured as follows. First, the scholarship programme is described in detail, presenting how Mol-dovan students arrive in Romania and the role of student organisations in the process. Second, the IT sector as an entry point is presented. Here we emphasise different ways in which Moldovans find jobs in the sector. The third part of the section focuses on the migrant perspective, describing the most significant problems Moldovans face and how they manage to use education as a bridge to the labour market.

## DESCRIBING THE SAMPLE

For the purposes of the study 20 interviews were conducted, ten related to the bursary programme and ten related to the IT sector (see Table XX for details).

All of the interviewees in the bursary programme, both migrants and stakeholders, came to Romania through the programme and most were born in the early 1990s, arriving in Cluj in the early 2010s. One was born in 1978, coming young people Romania in the 1990s, and one was born in 1998, coming to Romania in 2017. These last two interviews helped us to understand how the bursary system, and the attitudes of institutions and students towards it, had changed. All interviewees came from Moldova, and the overwhelming majority possessed Romanian citizenship at the time of the interview. Nevertheless, not all were citizens when they came to Romania. All the interviewees currently live in Cluj-Napoca, but some graduated from high school or university in other cities (Deva, Baia Mare). Of those who had already graduated, four hold a BA in economics, four in political science or journalism and one in psychopedagogy. All interviewees except one are employed and most are single. The two stakeholders are/were involved in the leadership of a Bessarabian student organisation involved in the organisation and integration of Moldovan students in Cluj.

In the case of the IT sector the stakeholder is an owner of a company, who has a preference for hiring Moldovans, and who is a Moldovan migrant himself, not having Romanian citizenship at the time of arrival. Most of the interviewed migrants were born in the 1990s and they are predominantly male. All except one had Romanian citizenship at the time of the interview, but not all of them came to Romania as Romanian citizens. More than half of them are

working as programmers, while three are working in the IT support sector. This differentiation was important as in the latter sector people with various backgrounds, professions and skills can make a career, and the remuneration is lower. More than half of our interviewees had stable relationships or even children. One of the selected subjects graduated in engineering in Chişinău in the Republic of Moldova and decided to come to Romania after earning his degree . His experiences were important in illustrating whether there are any differences in integration and carrier between Moldovans in the IT sector who come to Romania to study and remain, and those who come only for work.

In order to get started, we located a stakeholder in the bursary programme who helped us to contact other possible interviewees. In the case of the IT sector, after finding the first subject we used the snowball sampling method to widen the pool of possible subjects. Moreover, after discussions with the stakeholder, we decided to interview several people from his firm in order to understand the rationale behind their hiring policies and involvement.

In the following sections first we present the main characteristics of the bursary programme and then those of the IT sector.

## FIRST ENTRY POINT: THE BURSARY PROGRAMME IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ROMANIANS LIVING ABROAD

Romania offers a varied system of scholarships and secured places at universities and high schools for Romanians living abroad, although the system has undergone radical changes in recent decades. After Romania joined the European Union the Romanian parliament adopted Law No. 299/2007 on support for Romanians living outside the borders of Romania. This new law ensured ethnic kin the possibility to study in Romania, both at high school and university level, in a more organised and transparent way.

EU accession and the changing policy context are important for Moldovans coming to study in Romania, dramatically changing how Moldovans looked at the possibilities Romania can offer. In the 1990s the two countries started more or less from the same position economically. Only a small number of scholarships were offered, and the application process was not transparent. In addition, the Romanian authorities were reluctant or in many cases hostile towards Moldovans applying for documents. Furthermore, as the statement presented below shows, students from Moldova had a very bad reputation both among Moldovan and Romanian students and university staff.

*A lot of discrimination was due to previous generations. They were like ... so in short: the boys were bandits, and the girls were sluts. That would be the most rudimentary description. (IT18)*

This changed radically in 2007, with EU accession and the new legislation, when Romania started to become the main destination country for the best students from the Republic of Moldova. Many of our interlocutors argued that they needed to look very carefully at what university to choose as the top universities and the best specialisations were chosen by those who had the best high school grades. Others had managed to find a place only second time around, or at lesser universities because their grades fell short. There are several reasons for this change. First, by becoming member of the European Union, Romanian diplomas were now recognised all over the world, while Moldovan diplomas still need to undergo a recognition process. In other words, studying in Romania had become an asset even for those who wanted to migrate further West at a later date. Second, Romania offers scholarship accommodation and education without tuition fees for ethnic Romanians, which is not the case in the other countries previously preferred. Some even argue that these opportunities are better than the ones in the Republic of Moldova, where only a handful of students manage to obtain scholarships. Third, Romania developed economically and standards of living are higher in Romania. Many hope that by applying to university they can achieve better integration.

A further reason that appeared frequently in the interviews, and which was not found in the 1990s, is the quality of education. Many of our interlocutors argued that the education system in Romania is a lot better than the one in Moldova and that the Romanian system is more transparent and fair. In the Republic of Moldova bribery is widespread, and it is very hard to graduate and pass exams without it. These ideas cannot necessarily be confirmed by evidence, however. Most educational statistics show that the education system in the Republic of Moldova it is comparable to the one in Romania[15] and even the interviewees recognise that they know people back home who managed to pass exams without offering bribes to professors.

*The stories of bribery are so high on the agenda that when you start college in the Republic of Moldova, somehow you assume that ... even if you do not need to pay a tuition fee, or you have a scholarship, it is assumed that you must have a sufficient budget for bribing teachers for your grades. (HE01)*

After 2007, the changing perceptions on Romania resulted not only in a growing number of good Moldovan students going there, but in the appreciation of Romanian language skills and identity. Many of our interviewees emphasised that a strong Romanian identity, proficiency in Romanian and better integration as a result of cultural proximity were important reasons behind their choice to go to Romania.

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**15** According to the 2015 PISA results both countries find themselves in the last (below 450 points) third, Romania scoring an average in math, science and reading of 437.7, while the Republic of Moldova scores 421.3 (OECD, 2016, p. 44).

## University application procedure

As the number of places offered for ethnic Romanians living abroad had grown, a different application methodology was needed. In the first couple of years after 2007, application forms had to be submitted at the Romanian Embassy in Chisinau, when the admission period was announced. Students could apply only to three specialisations or universities. Each year the Ministry of Education published the list of universities that would receive ethnic Romanian students and the number of places available for them. One of our interviewees remembers this as follows:

> *I went [to the embassy], and I remember there was a big poster, of A3 size ... or even bigger ... with all the universities listed in very small characters, and I was in front of the list ... I knew what I would like to do, and when I was there, I copied on the application form, what I saw on the poster. (HE01)*

What is interesting that students did not have any relationship with the universities until they arrived for study. The whole admission process was organised and managed by the Ministry of Education, which transmitted the results to both the students and the universities. Then, based on the decision, students could apply for visas and travel to the city they were assigned to, where the university administration gave them accommodation and the necessary certificates to apply for the residence permit. Without personal contacts students arrived at the university without any direct knowledge of it. Also, if a new student did not receive the information they needed (for example, the successful applicants list was not transmitted to the university), in many cases they were reluctant to do anything about it.

The admission procedure was changed in 2017, when the Ministry of Education partially decentralised the system, allowing ethnic Romanian citizens to handle their application directly with the university. Although the centralised quotas for each university remained, the three-specialisation limit was lifted – students could apply to as many universities as they wanted. Moreover, potential students needed to contact the universities from the very beginning of the process, excluding the possibility of miscommunication mentioned above. In addition, many universities introduced online application, making applications for Moldovan students a lot easier. Despite this, Moldovan students need to adapt fast, and many of them choose universities from different cities in order to succeed:

> *I applied to Cluj, Suceava and Iași. (…) I thought about applying to Bucharest, but I missed the registration period. Each Romanian university has different deadlines. This is rather complicated for students from Bessarabia. You do not know where to apply, then wait for the results. Romanians are more determined. If they wanted to go to Cluj they applied in Cluj. Romanians do not apply to more than one city. (HE07)*

Although decentralisation made the application process easier, not all aspects have been changed. Universities were given the right to handle applications and make suggestions to the Ministry regarding the number of places offered, but they do not determine how many scholarships are made available to Romanians from outside the country's borders. Usually each university is officially notified by the Ministry of Education before the admission period. It is not clear who is responsible for the internal distribution of these scholarships. Based on the fact that in official documents only the total numbers of scholarship appear for each university, however, there is a strong probability that they are distributed at university level. This lack of transparency and centralisation regarding the distribution of the places has two negative consequences. On one hand, cities with more prestigious universities receive fewer scholarships,[16] as Moldovan students are guided toward smaller and less prestigious ones. On the other hand, universities seemingly limit access to top specialisations. Many of the pupils who want to come to Romania are affected by this. One of our interviewees experienced these policies in the following way:

> *I was not successful in the first wave (...) I reapplied in the second. My parents encouraged me to apply in Baia Mare, because my cousin had a husband from Baia Mare and he had connections there (...) I wanted to move to a bigger city. I applied in the second round, they called, they said Baia Mare, I said thank you ... and everyone was happier than me ... and I got there. (HE01)*

Other interviewees emphasised that within universities the most in-demand specialisations are not always open for Moldovans:

> *I wanted to go to FSEGA,[17] to study finance and banking in French (...) I was so excited, and I knew (…) that in five years I could end up in France. But when I got there to apply (...) I realised that for this specialisation they do not give places and scholarships for Moldovans. Somehow, crying, desperate, in crisis, hungry and poor, I started to look for scholarship places for Moldovans. (...) I found a place at FSPAC, political science. It was very handy, I clicked on it, and I was accepted. It wasn't what I wanted. (HE06)*

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16  In the 2018/2019 school year, out of the total 2,503 scholarships offered at BA level, 70 were at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj, and 52 at the Technical University in Cluj. By comparison, less prestigious universities are allocated more: Ovidius University in Constanța has 68, the University of Craiova 149, the 'Dunarea de Jos' University in Galați 452 and the 'Stefan cel Mare' University in Suceava 240 scholarships. (See Cifra de școlarizare acordată romanilor de pretutindeni, ciclul de studii LICENTA, în anul universitar 2018–2019, available at: https://edirect.e-guvernare.ro/Admin/Proceduri/ProceduraVizualizare.aspx?IdInregistrare=663393&IdOperatiune=2)

17  Faculty of Economics and Business Administration.

As a result, stakeholders report that a growing number of students choose to come to Romania outside the bursary programme, meaning that they can apply to any specialisation without restrictions, but they come as international students, meaning that they do not receive accommodation from the university and have to pay a tuition fee.

Most of the interviewees applying for scholarships in Romania agreed that the system is easily accessible and as many Moldovan students study in Romania it is easy to gather information regarding the application procedure. Most would-be students have somebody from their broader social circles who study, or have studied in Romania, and who is eager to share their knowledge, not only about the documents needed, but also about possible destinations and even student life. Also, there are several Facebook groups, which those who study, or want to study, can join, and where information is available on the application procedure and student life in the different cities. In addition, the Initiative Group of Bessarabians and similar student organisation organise various programmes targeting high school students in order to give them a comprehensive picture of Cluj and its universities.[18]

After 2017 new problems arose at many universities, although the system had become more accessible from many perspectives. Bigger universities had to apply the GDPR regulations in the admission process. This meant that no names appeared on the admission lists, just numbers. As prospective students needed proof of their admission in order to receive visas, they could not use these lists anymore; they had to travel to the university to ask for one, and then back to the embassy or one of the consulates in Moldova to submit the application.

As we could see, most Moldovan students coming to Romania for study chose from the existing scholarship options, which are not necessarily in line with the demands of the labour market, as most were interested in specialisations that are not open for them through the programme. Nevertheless, only a few of the interviewees complained about the place they were offered. Moreover, as already mentioned, most Moldovans perceive the job opportunities and living conditions in Romania to be a lot better than those in Moldova, thus it is not so much the specialisation itself that matters but the visa, scholarship, and other benefits that come with the programme. By contrast, students who are determined to take up a particular specialisation can opt to enrol as an international student. In these cases students pay a tuition fee and their own living costs.

## Arriving at Cluj

Moldovan students starting their studies in Cluj needs to obtain three documents: a certificate that their application

was successful; the decision confirming the scholarship; and a student visa. The latter is conditional on the first two. Since 2017 the certificate has been issued by the university, and the decision on a scholarship by the Ministry of Education. Before that both documents were issued by the Ministry.

> *After I was admitted I applied for a visa. I waited for the order of the Ministry of Education to see whether I was on the list – because that it where it says whether I received the scholarship or got admission without a scholarship. The students from Bessarabia have scholarships for Bessarabians. I received my visa the day before school started. (HE07)*

One problem is that the Ministry of Education tends to make information regarding scholarships official rather late. Before 2017 this meant that all Moldovans needed to wait until the Ministry had published the results and received visas in the same period, a couple of days before university started. Since 2017 this only affects those who need to wait for the decision regarding their scholarship.

Because of this key difference, many aspects of the migration experiences of those who arrived before 2017 differ from those of students who arrived in later years. But many aspects remained similar. Before 2017 most Moldovan students came in a fairly organised manner, as all of them received their visas at around the same time. This meant that most Moldovan students arrived at a specific part of the year, a few days before the university year started. Since 2017, the start of the school year has unfolded similarly, but as the decision regarding admission is known in advance and those who do not receive scholarships are not entitled to free places in college dorms, many choose to come earlier.

After arriving in Cluj, students need to find accommodation. Usually they receive places in dorms, but each faculty and department has a different accommodation policy. While in some cases you apply online, in other cases you need to file the request in person. In some cases, prospective students need to acquire documents from the university first; in other cases they go to the dorm's administrative office . After taking the necessary steps, they receive accommodation and usually are put together with other Moldovan students in the same room. Not all like this 'segregation', as many of them have Romanian friends and colleagues who would share a room with them.

> *(…) Now I have more Romanian friends than Moldovans. During the exams you make friends easily. The problem is that in the hostel where I stay usually the administrator does not want to put together Moldovans and Romanians. Somehow, I understand that. This is due to the previous generation of Moldovans. They were a little … (savage?)… Yeah, that's the right word. Maybe that's why he doesn't want to put us together. (IT14)*

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**18** The role and activity of the Initiative Group will be presented in a subsequent section.

## The Initiative Group of Bessarabians in Cluj (GIB) – a stakeholder in the migration process

A central role in the accommodation and integration of students from the Republic of Moldova is played by the Initiative Group of Students from Bessarabia in Cluj (Grupul de Inițiativă Basarabeană in Romanian: GIB), which is involved in contacting, informing and helping (prospective) students in the whole process of studying in Cluj. However, the organisation has a more diverse range of activities, which makes it the most important entry point to Romanian society for students from the Republic of Moldova in Cluj.

One of GIB's main activities is to help Moldovan freshmen with their accommodation and administration. They help them to submit application forms at secretariats and find temporary accommodation until they received a place in the dorm.

This has multiple benefits. On one hand, GIB manages to reach all students who come to Cluj, connecting them to the Bessarabian community. On the other hand, GIB could count on the support of bus companies when they want to bring their own guests from Moldova.

Another important activity of this type was a meeting organised for freshmen at the beginning of the year in order to give them the most important information on their stay in Cluj. Usually at these meetings GIB invites the Immigration office and the Campus Police. The representatives of the former can explain the whole application process for residence permits in person, which helped to improve relations between Moldovan students and the authorities, making paperwork a lot easier for both sides. The Campus Police are invited to meet the students from Bessarabia, and to give them details about campus rules in person. These activities not only help to make relations between students from the Republic of Moldova and the Romanian authorities better, but probably had a trust-building effect as well, helping to change the rather bad reputation that Moldovan students had 15–20 years ago. In addition, it helps to build up a good relationship between the Campus police and GIB, which is usually contacted when students from the Republic of Moldova fid themselves in trouble.

Beyond the information and integration campaign GIB specialises in organising different events (parties, the Miss Bessarabia contest, concert and plays by artists from the Republic of Moldova) whose objective is to organise and connect the community of Moldovan students in Cluj. These events not only strengthen the Moldovan network but helped to integrate newcomers.

Two of the largest events organised by GIB in Cluj are the Bessarabia Cultural Festival, organised in March, and the Bucovina Cultural Festival, organised at the end of November each year. Both festivals are organised to commem-

orate the historical regions with Romania, and they go beyond the idea of gathering students from the Republic of Moldova for a meeting. As former members of GIB underline, the two festivals are advertised across society and are organised in order to make Moldovan culture better known in Romania. In addition, by emphasising the close and historical ties between Moldovans and Romanians they have an important bridging role. Each year, for example, the symbolic closing act of the Bessarabia Cultural Festival is a public gathering, where participants dance and sing together the Dance of Unity (Hora Unirii), a Romanian national song on the unity of Romanians all over the world.

> We organise a cultural evening each year. It features things specific to Bessarabia. This year a winery came, and they also had a sommelier, who presented the wines. Also candies that are specific to us. We organised a poetry recital. Poets from Bessarabia. We also organise sports competitions. It's very diverse. Usually at the end of the festival we come and dance the dance of unity in the city centre. (HE07)

## Advocacy, bridging role and the position of the student movement

One of the first activities that reached beyond Moldovan students and the local community was a policy recommendation and lobbying of the Ministry to change the law on bursaries and to raise the monthly stipend. After EU accession the EUR 65 monthly scholarship became too little for students to live on. Also, as Moldovan students were not allowed to work while studying at university at that time (not even part-time) they found themselves at the limit of subsistence.

> We made our voice heard and people considered our voice and the organisation made it possible to lobby for the possibility of taking part-time jobs 4 hours a day. We even managed to increase the scholarship. We had a little discussion with the Ministry of Education back then and asked them nicely. We said that it is very nice of Romania that it offered the bursaries, but the problem was that they were very small. Not initially, but prices were rising fast. (IT18)

In 2015 Cluj won the European Youth Capital title. GIB participated in several events in the project. This was a good opportunity to become more integrated in the youth life of the city and to make connections. As a result, the idea was born to help Chișinău to win the title. The role of GIB was crucial, as they not only promoted the project in Moldova, but got involved in developing it. Chișinău had managed to reach the final in 2018, but did not win the title.

These activities are good examples of how the organisation had become an important link between Moldovan

students and the two states. By taking the role of the representative of Moldovan students in Cluj and raising its voice on policy issues regarding Moldovans, actors from both states consider them the official representative of Moldovans in Cluj, and treat them accordingly.

One of the major consequences of this role and the formal organisational framework is that they can receive funding from different Romanian government and local institutions. Although they do not receive regular funding, their eligibility to apply for non-refundable financial support was an important step in their institutional development. GIB regularly applies for funding at the Cluj local council and some of its projects were financed by the Ministry of Young People and Sports. Also, their information campaigns conducted in the Republic of Moldova are materially supported by the Babeș-Bolyai University. The local council finances the most important cultural event of the organisation, the Bessarabia Cultural Festival, while the university helps them to prepare for the University Fair.

This recognition of the organisation is further reflected in its role in official or semi-official delegations from the Republic of Moldova. In many cases they are invited by the parties involved to mediate between them and the local authorities. In some cases they receive an invitation as representatives of the Bessarabian community in Cluj.

Funding and support can be interpreted in several ways. First, by supporting their participation in the Chișinău University Fair, Babeș-Bolyai University uses them as a recruiting agent, which could bring better students to Cluj. By the same token, by supporting their cultural festivals and different events the local council and other state institutions in a way outsource the implementation of various policies aimed at promoting the integration of Moldovans. In other words, local and state institutions, as well as the university are relieved of the need to focus on these matters, as GIB and similar organisations do so more effectively.

Consequently, the Initiative Group of Bessarabians in Cluj is a good example of a successful bridging organisation, which has managed not only to organise the Moldovan community in Cluj, but to catalyse their integration in society. Furthermore, through their cultural programmes they have tried to build bridges with local institutions, both in Romania and Moldova. Moreover, the organisation has managed to build trust and a fruitful relationship with state authorities and has even taken over several tasks in order to facilitate the bureaucratic integration of Moldovan students. Also, by their involvement in strengthening Moldovan–Romanian relations they have managed to put paid to a number of stereotypes that made the integration of Moldovans harder in the past.

In addition, GIB can be considered a best practice organisation for other migrant groups. Universities in Romania provide educational opportunities for other foreign students as well, although neither scholarships nor accommodation are provided. Despite these differences, migrant

student organisations help in preparing and informing students about Romania before arrival and represent the community to the Romanian public through different events. This could help with the integration of those coming from abroad even after graduation, if they decide to stay.

## Summary

The bursary programme for Romanians living in neighbouring countries provides a good opportunity for young Moldovan migrants to study in Romania and to prepare for their stay there. One could even consider it a 'rite of passage', when integration into the host society occurs. On the other hand, the programme is clearly conceived by the Romanian state as a means of encouraging a brain-drain into Romania, as it provides scholarships and accommodation for more than 2,500 new students each year. Some of the best students in Moldova go to study in Romania, remaining in the country in the end of their studies.

Also, as the state regulates the number of scholarships and places at each university, and less prestigious universities are preferred, it helps these institutions to consolidate their student numbers. This practice does not discourage Moldovan students from coming to Romania, however.

## SECOND ENTRY POINT: THE IT SECTOR IN CLUJ

In Cluj, the IT sector is one of the most prestigious fields of employment. The sector has emerged in the city not just as an opportunity to work in an in-demand activity with great future prospects, but also as most attractive in terms of pay and working conditions (impressive headquarters, as well as great flexibility of working hours). People directly qualified for this kind of job are at a considerable advantage. In Cluj, two large universities have departments offering training for IT specialists: the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca and the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Sciences at Babes-Bolyai University. Also, many students graduating from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration find job opportunities in IT support. The demand for workers is substantial,[19] and so IT companies organise professional training courses. Anybody wanting a higher income and a professional challenge can participate in such courses and, if successful, they may have a bright future before them in IT support.

The Cluj IT sector of course attracts not only Romanians, but also workers from abroad. IT incomes and available accommodation in Cluj are attractive. Moreover, although

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[19] According to a study published in 2017, in 2016 there were 14.339 companies working in the domain in Romania, with more than 100 thousand employees. The study predicted the number of companies will reach 17.000 in a short period of time. (Studiul Pieței de IT – Analiză Comparativă Națională. Aries Transylvania. https://aries-transilvania.ro/studiul-pietei-de-it-in-cluj-analiza-comparativa-nationala/, accessed on June 19, 2020)

Cluj is one of the most developed cities in Romania, offering its inhabitants the comfort of a medium Western town, as IT workers are among the best paid in the city, their experiences and the problems they face are similar to those of IT specialists working in other cities (Bucharest, Timișoara, Iași and so on). The IT sector is also attractive to Moldovans living in or coming to Romania.

Many Moldovans choose the IT sector in Cluj after graduating in related specialisations at the universities in Cluj. The number of scholarships offered in the field is shrinking year by year,[20] thus those choosing these specialisations need to come outside the bursary programme. Furthermore, many Moldovans come to Cluj to work in the field after finishing university in the Republic of Moldova, and some IT companies are owned by Moldovans who came to Romania earlier on.

In the following section, first we present some characteristics of the IT sector, as described by Moldovans working in the sector. We focus on the different paths that prospective employees can take within it. In order to understand the career possibilities and challenges, we differentiate between IT specialists and the IT support sector. In the second section, three entry points will be discussed in detail: internships, the Moldovan network as an entry point and targeted headhunting.

## Migrant perspectives on the IT sector

The IT job market is divided roughly into several subsectors. On one hand, there are the IT specialists, responsible for the implementation, monitoring and maintenance of IT systems. Usually they have graduated in domains such as informatics or technology. On the other hand, there are the people working in IT support, who work in project management, communications, HR, PR or other technical sectors. Working in a supporting field either at an IT company or a partner company, one can receive almost the same working conditions as the specialists, although the pay is different. Nonetheless it is still higher than that is available in similar positions outside the IT sector.

One of the main characteristics of IT specialists is their freedom of movement in the sector. As there is a high demand for quality workers, they can move freely from one company to another – even if they come from another country – and bargain effectively. Furthermore, the sector provides fairly clear-cut and projectable upward mobility for IT specialists. Those working in the IT sector are aware of their future possibilities. In addition, many of our interviewees (IT19, IT20, IT15 and IT12) were constantly looking at opportunities and did not reject the possibility of working in a similar position – for a short time – in another

EU country or in the USA. These opportunities, however, are measured by the possibility to enhance their professional experience and then to come back to Cluj.

Those working in IT support do not necessarily come from informatics and technology; they may graduate in economics, communications or even political science and European studies. Many of those working in such positions consider themselves lucky and value the career opportunities:

> This would mean becoming a senior expert in project management, which is very good and also ensures you a decent salary. (IT19)

The ideal job for IT19 is not viewed with the same amount of enthusiasm by other Moldovans, who came to Romania in another period, with different hopes and dreams and for whom association with the IT sector in a support role is a kind of compromise. One person in such a situation is IT01, who, after time spent in the EU doing various low-skilled jobs, returned to Romania and obtained a PhD economics very quickly. After graduating, and with no real chance of remaining in academia, he decided to train in IT support at one of the largest IT companies in Cluj, and to work for them. Even though it was not what he wanted – he would have liked to become a marketing specialist at a time when the profession was still in its infancy in Romania – at least he feels he has not lost out because IT has a good future. A similar case is that of IT07, who came to Romania at 14 and, after graduating high school, and achieving a BA and an MA, switched between several workplaces and cities, ended up working in IT support at one of the most prestigious IT companies in Cluj. Although not complaining, for her this job is clearly not ideal. Working in the IT sector is not always the fulfilment of a dream, especially if one changes career at a certain age. It is often rather a means of living decently in one of the most expensive cities in Romania, when one has no family support and at an age when one must think of helping one's family.

## Entry points in the IT sector

In our empirical research we located several entry points to the IT sector that are used by Moldovans to come to or remain in Romania and make a decent living. In the following section we present three of these, which enable high-skilled Moldovan migrants to find a place in the IT labour market: (i) internships and scholarships, (ii) the Moldovan network and (iii) targeted headhunting by companies.

### (I) INTERNSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

In the past couple of years many young Moldovans have come to Romania with the specific aim of studying and working in IT. IT15, for example, came to Cluj with the scholarship programme and was one of the few who managed to study engineering with a Moldovan scholar-

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**20** This change in the number of scholarships is probably related to university policies. Specialisations related to the IT sector are among the most sought-after in the country, and many Moldovans choose to apply as foreign or Romanian students.

ship that year. At university he accepted an internship at one of the partner companies of his faculty, and he continued working there after graduation,.

> *Yes, it is an ideal job … it could always be better, but it is good here (…) The programme is super flexible, there is no ordinary management structure where you have to report to a lot of people about what you do. We have a horizontal structure and there is a manager and the manager usually … at least in our department, we have two managers, who are super nice and understand people and no one ever asks for reports. … Yes, that is an important factor too, and there are benefits … packages like …, since we moved from the former headquarters to the current headquarters, at the company we have a swimming pool and a gym within the headquarters. (IT15)*

IT19, a young economist working in IT support, has a similar story. Studying management at university, he chose to take an internship at one of the IT support NGOs in Cluj. Soon after graduation he found himself working for the organisation.

Interns, however, do not necessarily come only from universities in Cluj. The story of IT20, a 24-year-old junior Android developer, is particularly interesting. Although he studied at a university in the Republic of Moldova, having a brother in Cluj he chose to do his internship at an IT company in Romania. Then, after finishing his studies, he moved to Romania and got hired by the company.

> *I stayed on good terms with the company and I think that this mattered. I was fortunate, too, that the company was growing and was interested in taking on new people … I'm very lucky from this point of view … (IT20)*

Although this type of relationship is rather new to both IT companies and universities in Chișinău, it clearly shows that the Romanian IT sector can rely on other universities besides the ones in Romania when recruiting people. IT20 explains this process as follows:

> *The university did not have experience in sending someone to a summer internship abroad. I was the first to try. I went to the dean's office, I wrote that I was going, the head of the company where I currently work came as well. He signed all the papers in order to take me on and there I was. (IT20)*

## (II) THE MOLDOVAN NETWORK

The existence of Moldovan networks and employment based on these ties is not that obvious in the IT sector at first sight. Many people working in large IT companies say that they got their jobs without using these networks, and do not even mention these ties. Moreover, it seems that many Moldovans don't really keep in contact with each other within these companies. IT15, for example, when asked about other Moldovans at the company, presents the situation in the following way:

> *Yes, there are a few… (…) I'm not in very close relationships with them. We are not on the same project, we do not talk that often. I know them, and we talk when we meet. There is this girl, who was at the same high school, she was two years older, but we never interacted, not even back then. (IT15)*

In contrast, for Moldovans employed in smaller IT companies these ties are much more important. Although many IT specialists do not need it when looking for jobs, as these firms have only a small number of employees people with the same background notice one another and it is an additional bonding opportunity.

Work relationships in the IT sector are fluid and bi-directional. Some of our interviewees noted that, parallel to their studies or their current work, they accepted project-based jobs for companies in the Republic of Moldova. One interviewee explained that although studying in Romania, he managed to work for a multinational company with an office in Moldova, at first physically present in the Republic of Moldova during the summers, and later remotely, while studying (IT12). Another interviewee (IT20) reported that he is regularly contacted for smaller projects by IT companies from Moldova, while others (ex. IT18) noted that their company based in Romania engaged in projects in which they needed to collaborate remotely with programmers living in the Republic of Moldova.

In addition, many citizens from the Republic of Moldova come to Romania and are hired directly in IT companies, without studying in Romania. Most of them come through Moldovan networks, meaning that programmers tend to recommend their acquaintances, 'Moldovans from the Republic of Moldova'[21] (IT12), to the small companies they work at. The openness of smaller companies can be explained by the fact that fast growth and labour shortages are more characteristic of them and they are more open to suggestions from their own employees. Furthermore, the Moldovan network and ties in many cases are used by company owners as well when looking for employees.

## (III) TARGETED HEADHUNTING BY COMPANIES

An important example of how company owners use Moldovan networks or ties when looking for employees is the career of IT18, a young Moldovan IT specialist, who decided to start his own company.

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[21] This formulation is not accidental, our interlocutor distinguished between Moldovans coming to study first in Romania and those studying in Moldova and then coming to work in the IT sector.

IT18 can be considered a model of success for young Moldovans coming to study IT in Cluj. When he applied to university, he knew he wanted to study IT and immediately after graduation, he started a long collaboration with an IT company that offered him the opportunity to work as a specialist in a very challenging context (collaborating with Nokia during its brief presence in Cluj), and even the experience of working in the IT sector in New York. He has done almost everything that an IT specialist in Cluj can achieve, including working abroad. That is why he decided to pass on to the next stage, starting his own company. All his previous experience, including his relationship with clients developed in the United States, has been of help.

Although his partner is Romanian, out of the five employees, three are from Moldova, whom he recruited through his personal network. The argument for working with young Moldovans is that he wants to work with people who can 'understand his way of thinking' and being Moldovan was a decisive factor. Also, he was looking for people who wanted to develop. The interviews with his colleagues from the Republic of Moldova confirmed this. IT13, for example, came to the company for an internship. They not only helped her but after that employed her in small projects, leaving her time to write her thesis. IT14 told a similar story. IT18 hired him through the Moldovan network and they welcomed him openly and supportively.

> There was a Facebook group for Bessarabians from Cluj and he posted the announcement there. Plus, he also posted on the site of GIB. (…) The interview was really weird because he called me for a beer. It was him and his colleague, F. He explained to me what their situation was. He asked me a few questions and, somehow, I got along and started working with them. (IT14)

In all of these cases IT18 used the existing Moldovan networks and his personal ties to GIB (IT18 is one of the founders) to find suitable candidates for his company, and he invested in them both professionally and personally. One could say that when choosing his employees, their origin was important; it is a bonus that can creates a bond with his employees, both personally and professionally.

> Currently, three of our employees are Moldovans. This can be explained by the fact that we, the two people with broader experience, were looking for people who would become colleagues and who would want to change. But most importantly in this field, you need to work with people who think the same way as you. This process is much harder, but it's also nice to have someone you don't have to keep checking on. Recruitment was done mostly through the Association … and through Moldovan networks. (IT18)

Another type of relationship that probably heightens the migration of Moldovan IT specialists to Romania is related to the fact that an increasing number of Romanian IT companies are opening businesses in the Republic of Moldova. As one of our interviewees involved in a similar project noted that the rationale behind this is twofold. On one hand, the salaries there – although on the rise – are still far below those in Cluj, and on the other hand, given the advantage of a common language and a positive view of Moldovans, it is an attractive growth opportunity for a lot of companies.

> all kinds of IT companies are starting to flourish in Moldova. Even Romanian companies have branches in Chisinau. (...) So I worked on a start-up with Moldovans. They were thinking of opening a branch in Chisinau because … on one aspect we could not agree. They said that Moldovans are much more diligent than Romanians. And I being from Moldova I did not agree with him. I said that you were not lucky enough to meet the right Romanians … but on the other hand, on the financial side it is much cheaper too… (IT12)

## Summary

As we have seen, the IT sector in Cluj is a lively and still developing sector, which, regarding its workforce, has outgrown the possibilities provided by the universities in Cluj. Labour shortages not only strengthen IT specialists' bargaining power but force many companies to look for workers outside the city. Also, as a result of the fluidity and high mobility of the workforce in the sector, it is hard for companies to provide hard evidence of the labour shortage officially, which is needed to enable them to look for migrants in order to fill vacancies. In other words, Romanian migration policy binds companies' hands in hiring migrants and they need to look for alternative solutions. Moldovans having or in the process of applying for citizenship are an ideal solution. Collaborations with Moldovan companies or opening Moldovan branches are a viable alternative, and the IT sector is becoming an easily accessible entry point on the labour market for high-skilled young Moldovans who choose to study in Romania. In addition, as our fieldwork shows, the emerging Romanian–Moldovan relations in the sector are boosting a new kind of migration, in which the IT sector is becoming a primary entry point, without the intermediation of the bursary programme and the universities.

From an employee perspective, relying on the Moldovan network to find jobs is not necessarily characteristic in the sector. IT specialists already integrated in the field can manage on their own. This does not mean that Moldovans do not keep track of each other, or do not socialise, however. Bonds are created, mainly at smaller firms. Furthermore, Moldovan networks are very helpful for newcomers, as many employees recommend their Moldovan acquaintances to their supervisors.

A totally different picture of the sector emerged from an employer perspective. As our case study showed, in order to find trustworthy and competent workers Moldovan company owners rely on the Moldovan network to find their employees.

# SECTION 3:

# INTEGRATION OF MOLDOVANS IN ROMANIA. A GENERAL OVERVIEW

Most Moldovans do not feel discriminated against in Romania. Although those who came in the 1990s or early 2000s had some negative experiences, people coming in the past decade largely have a good opinion about Romania and feel that they are able to integrate. This is explained mainly by the fact that newcomers manage to acquire citizenship fairly easily, while those coming before 2007 had a very hard time with various state agencies and institutions. Moreover, this does not mean that differentiation between Moldovans and Romanians, or negative stereotyping have disappeared altogether, or that the state authorities cannot improve. It only means that Romania, at least from the perspective of highly skilled Moldovan migrants, has become a desirable destination country.

In order to understand the dynamics of immigration in the case of Moldovans we will analyse six aspects: citizenship, the bridging role of education, identity and boundary construction, stereotyping and self-stereotyping, networks, and relations with authorities.

## CITIZENSHIP

An important institutional factor in integration is the acquisition of citizenship and residence in Romania. As we have seen, the citizenship law provides both strict and vague conditions for most migrants, but Moldovans – who are considered ethnic Romanians by law – are in a privileged position and can opt for the 'reacquisition' of citizenship, which is an easier process.

Most respondents believe that most Moldovans coming to Romania possess Romanian citizenship before coming to Romania or apply for it while studying in the country. As Moldovans acquire citizenship extraterritorially, in order to be considered ordinary Romanians, after receiving their citizenship, they need to apply for several other documents. In order to get access to the labour market without restrictions (as Romanian citizens) they need to acquire a birth certificate and an ID. This latter document can be acquired only if the person in question provides evidence that they have a stable domicile in the country.

Those students who come with a scholarship apply only for Romanian passport during their studies, because accord-ing to the law if they have a stable domicile in Romania they lose their scholarship, being automatically considered 'normal' Romanian citizens and not ethnic Romanians from a neighbouring country.[22]

Eleanor Knott (2018) argues that there are three typical reasons that explain why Moldovans apply for citizenship: identity, strategy and legitimacy. In the first category, people identify as Romanian and by 'reacquiring' citizenship they consummate this identification. In the second category, people apply for Romanian citizenship to obtain access to the benefits provided by it, most importantly EU citizenship, which allows free travel and access to Western European labour markets. People in the third category apply for citizenship because it is their right and – as Knott argues – it is a normal and accepted process. By acquiring citizenship, a bond is created with the Romanian state, but this is not necessarily strengthened emotionally.

Those who come in the bursary programme, or work in the IT sector combine these reasons. However, most of those who decide to leave the Republic of Moldova and to come to Romania present a strategic or identity-related rationale. But it is not the acquisition of citizenship itself that is important, rather that the additional documents allow greater mobility. Seeking permanent residence and applying for Romanian ID is an additional tie with the Romanian state. Most of those who take this step like it in Romania, and do not plan to move further West. Although some of them keep their options open, they recognise the benefits of living in a country that is similar culturally and those language they speak at the highest level. Nevertheless, some of our interviewees noted that it is not uncommon for students to study in Romania and leave for more developed countries after graduation. But most of those who plan to leave will not apply for Romanian ID, as they can opt for a Romanian passport, which can be acquired without permanent residence, and gives the same opportunities in terms of mobility. By the same token, our interviewees are highly skilled migrants living in a developed region of

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22  According to Article 29(1) of Annex 2 of Ordinance no. 3900/2017 of the Ministry of Education, those Romanians from outside the border of Romania, who change their stable domicile to Romania during their studies, from the next academic year will continue their studies, however as a Romanian citizen from Romania

Romania, where they can find well-paid jobs easily. There is a high probability that in the case of low-skilled migrants the latter strategy is more prevalent.

## BRIDGING ROLE OF EDUCATION AS REGARDS THE LABOUR MARKET

As already mentioned, most Moldovan students who plan to remain in Romania after graduation acquire citizenship and after receiving their diplomas submit their papers for a Romanian ID. Most Bessarabian students have only limited contact with the labour market during their university years, because if they receive a scholarship, they are forbidden to work full-time. Many of those arriving in the early 2000s were not allowed to work at all, however at the insistence of GIB and other organisations representing students from Bessarabia, the legislation was amended, allowing Moldovan students to take part-time jobs. Some accepted typical student jobs, others worked without contracts. Asked whether they worked in college one student replied:

*Yes, illegally. I was a waitress. In the first year I worked as a waitress… illegally, but after that I also worked legally. In the second year I worked at a call centre. The residence permit allowed us to work part-time. I was theoretically hired for four hours, but I was working six. I have worked the whole second year, but after that the call centre was closed. (HE06)*

Most of the Moldovans applied for ID after graduation,[23] because the lack of Romanian documents (ID or permanent residence) is a handicap on the labour market. Without valid Romanian documents, despite their reacquired citizenship, legally they would not differ from other non-EU migrants. As we saw in Section 1, this would mean that in order to hire them, the companies would need proof that they tried to hire Romanian citizens, and they would need a work-permit as well. Many of those who came in the 1990s or did not acquire Romanian ID experienced such problems. Some remember this period as one of permanent control:

*It is quite difficult to hire Moldovans who do not have [Romanian] citizenship. [Companies must] prove that there were no candidates from Romania or other EU member countries. They even came from the immigration service to see if I was working. (HE09)*

Another interviewee remembers how hard it was for her to manage when she came back to Romania as a labour migrant. HE08 returned to the Republic of Moldova after graduation without a diploma, but after a short stay back home, when coming for her final exams she decided to

stay. Her story is important as it emphasises the difference between migrants and 'preferred' migrants in Romania.

*When I came back to the country, I found out what it means to come with papers and what it means to come without them… when I came, I could enter the country, because I came to finish my exams. I had a visa. I went to the immigration office to say the purpose of my visit, the time-period, I declared the period for which I came. Well, I came for exams. At one point that visa expired, and then I had to extend it. Then the problems and complications began. The visa cost 10 million lei (RON 1,000, around EUR 250 back then), I said, good. Then I found a circle of friends … I don't know how I found them, but I started working with them in all kinds of seasonal jobs. (HE08)*

It was almost impossible to find better paid jobs, without Romanian ID, and in the end, together with her Romanian boyfriend (later husband), she decided to establish a company, through which they managed a small network of shops (first groceries, then clothes). Paradoxically at that time it was easier to establish a company than to get hired without citizenship.

Those who managed to acquire Romanian ID in time did not face different problems from their Romanian-born colleagues. Graduates in economically profitable sectors, such as IT, finance or management, found well-paid jobs that they are happy with. Students from other areas of the economy also manage, although many have had several jobs in a few years and their job-satisfaction is not that high:

*Cluj is a pretty rough city from the point of view of rent, living costs and so on, and my state job offers me the stability I need. It looks pretty boring, tiring, in the sense that there are weeks when I work overtime, I don't do something to… I feel like I am not fulfilling myself, but at the same time I get home tired, because [as an HR assistant] I am responsible for 200 employees who all want something from me. I work at the secretariat … and I no longer have the energy to continue with the company. (HE01)*

A challenge that most Moldovan students face after graduation is the lack of a protective network that they could rely on until they find the right job. Many of our respondents who did not find a job just after graduation argued that, while Romanians can look for a job for several months, as their parents and wider family support them in this process, Moldovans run against the clock and need to accept any job they can find.

## Identities

As already mentioned, one reason why Moldovans choose to study or work in Romania is a strong sense of belonging and the belief that it will be much easier to integrate

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**23** The process is described in detail in Chapter 1

because they speak the same language. This means that many people come identify themselves as Romanian and feel more connected to the Romanian nation than to the Moldovan one.

> Somewhere in the 9th or 10th grade I joined a circle of unionists. I became a member of the Wake-up Romanian (Deșteaptă-te Române) association. We started social awareness campaigns related to our Romanian identity. We were a very active group of young people. We had meetings, issued statements, we went to the police. At that time, 2008 or even earlier, in 2007, Traian Basescu organised camps for Romanians everywhere. I went to one of those camps to Sulina and I met the president. Somehow, I had such a strong sense of belonging to Romania. (…) We were singing exclusively patriotic songs. Our anthem was the Romanian anthem. There was no bigger holiday than 1 December. School mattered a lot. (HE09)

Although not all Moldovans had these experiences, many who feel Romanian feel that their integration was smoother and they do not want to return to Moldova. This is the case of HE09, who, although not particularly happy in her current job and work prospects, categorically rejects the possibility of returning to Moldova.

> Returning to Moldova is a fantasy … [some] people … go home and try to do something there as well … but I do not think that I would … I have adapted to the society here and when I go home, I find it difficult to … accept it. There are things that I have in mind … I go home and people are sad. Cramped, you go to a bank, to a store, you get in a maxi taxi and everyone is … they don't laugh, they step on your feet and you are the one apologizing … It's a very cold environment for me. (HE01)

GIB tries to promote this kind of identification with its events. The cultural festivals described in the previous section are linked to the unification of Moldova with Romania, despite some cultural differences. They try to strengthen the common roots of Moldovans and Romanians through symbolic actions, such as dancing the Dance of Unity and similar events.

Not all Moldovans identify themselves as Romanians. Most of them recognise the cultural proximity, but develop their own sense of belonging. As we could see in the case of IT8 in the previous section, this is reflected mainly in their hiring policies (as employers) and their relationship to their country of origin. For IT18, being Moldovan, with a common identity and socialisation, was an important factor in choosing its employees.

Others, such as HE03 or IT20, would not rule out a return to the Republic of Moldova in the medium term. Promoting the development of Moldova has an important place

in their sense of belonging, and they imagine themselves making some sort of contribution.

> In the next couple of years, I am not sure [that I would return] but in my opinion after 10–12 years I would go home. I think I can be much more useful there than here. (HE03)

Some of those who do not plan to break their ties with the Republic of Moldova emphasise their Moldovan identity. Although they do not question the decisions of those who identify as Romanian, and say that they could pass as Romanian as well, they believe that they are Moldovans and not Romanian.

> I would say I am Moldovan. I have the documents, I can say that I am Romanian, I have friends even in Moldova who say they are Romanian, but I am Moldovan. My dad is Russian, my mum is from Moldova, I can't say I am a pure Romanian … I would say Moldovan. This is me: Russian + Romanian … Moldovan. (IT20)

Despite the cultural proximity and positive self-identification, in many cases Romanian society is not so open that the boundaries between Moldovans and Romanians can be erased. A key element in the construction of these boundaries is the accent and vocabulary of Moldovans, despite the common language. In recent decades, since the Republic of Moldova declared independence, the language policy of the Moldovan state has been a key issue both in Moldova and Romania, and the labels used for the state language, the alphabet and its standardisation are closely linked to the political debates regarding the future of the state.[24] Also, the Russian influence left its fingerprint, and there are regional differences between the language spoken in the Republic of Moldova and in Romania in terms of both accent and vocabulary.[25]

From a migration perspective these linguistic differences mean that people from the Republic of Moldova speak the Romanian language with a clearly distinguishable accent and sometimes use archaic Romanian words that are not that common in Romania, or phrases borrowed from Russian. Most Moldovans have stories related to how they speak, similar to the two presented below.

> I arrived at the dorm and didn't know what to do. The accommodation-deadline was already over. I was sitting in front of the building. There were some guys from the 4th year, who were on

24  For details on competing language policies in the Republic of Moldova see: Matthew H. Ciscel (2006) A Separate Moldovan Language? The Sociolinguistics of Moldova's Limba de Stat, Nationalities Papers, 34 (5), 575–597.

25  On the historical aspects of this process see: Charles King (199) The Ambivalence of Authenticity, or How the Moldovan Language Was Made, Slavic Review, 58 (1), 117–142.

*the committee and asked me what I was doing. They asked me whether I was from the Republic and if I had contacted the admin or not. I was talking with a Moldovan accent. I had to say my name to the admin about four times and he still could not find me on the list... (IT13) There may be positive discrimination, in the idea that some are culturally or sentimentally attached to Romanian citizens from the Republic of Moldova. I noticed this, because there are many who have told me that I have a very nice accent, although I do not agree with them, or that they like my vocabulary. (IT19)*

Such stories are not necessarily negative, but they do become a deeply interiorised memory of migration experiences. Also, it clearly shows that they create a sense of discomfort in the speaker, even if they appear in a positive context. Most Moldovans believe that how they speak exposes their origin, and that this could affect their smooth integration. Some of them have a hard time socializing because of that feeling. Some even try consciously to change how they speak. IT20, for example, recounts his feelings of this issue as follows:

*Most people compliment my accent. When I came here, it was difficult for me to talk freely to people and I tried to change my accent and choose 'more Romanian' words. We have some words that are used only in Moldova, and there was this occasion when I was going to a party, and I took a taxi … and there was a young lady at the wheel and I was thinking about this and she asked me where I was from, and why I was so quiet. I told her that I am from the Republic of Moldova, and I told her that I don't like it that people recognise my accent and she said that she has a friend from Moldova and the accent is really nice, and I shouldn't make it a problem … somehow, with the approval of a foreign person I understood that this is who I am and I cannot change, and that I don't have to become a different person, and I said that maybe with time it [my accent] will become more 'academic', but now I don't care anymore. (IT20)*

His formulations are interesting from two perspectives. First, it illuminates how simple positive input from strangers can lower the barriers that migrants feel when arriving to their country of destination. Second, most importantly, by labelling standard Romanian 'academic' the speaker clearly labels his own language and way of speaking as inferior to the variety spoken in Romania.

It is important to mention that there are some cases when linguistic differences clearly lead to exclusion. Two of our interviewees have experiences related to this. Both remember a situation when they were clearly mocked because of their accent. Although this did not affect their grades or career at the university, it created a sense of discomfort and exclusion.

## Stereotyping and self-stereotyping, and attitudes toward Moldovans

Another element of identification is related to the stereotypes used in relation to Moldovans. This appears in the discourse of both Romanians and Moldovan migrants.

The strongest stereotype which dominated the perception of students from the Republic of Moldova in the 1990s and early 2000s was that they are aggressive and not too eager to study. This perception clearly had an effect on opinions about more recent arrivals as well, and in some cases it is reflected in how Moldovans are treated. One direct consequence of this perception is how they are accommodated in dorms, or how they are treated at the university by teachers or administrative personnel.

*I've heard remarks such as 'you use the Romanian state, you come here and you use the benefits of the Romanian state, that in fact you come, because you can stay for free and study without paying any money'. (HE01)*

This perception regarding their supposed free-riding in the university system is present in other ways as well. It is not widely known that separate places are set aside for Moldovans at universities. As a result, many believe that Moldovans 'steal' Romanian scholarships or that Romanians have to pay taxes because Moldovans took their places at the university.

*The publicly financed places for us are separate from the places provided to Romanian citizens. Not everyone is aware of this. In the first year of study I had a discussion with a colleague who was frustrated that – he believed – he needed to pay a tuition fee because of me. I told him that these places are separate. … Some have the impression that we take their places … But if you do not say anything, or if there was a Bessarabian who is not so calm and who would have got angry, an open conflict might emerge. (HE02)*

As we have seen, such tensions do not necessarily cause lasting problems in the integration of Moldovan students, but more transparency about the status of Moldovans improve integration.

In some cases, however, stereotyping and negative attitudes are clearly a consequence of feelings of superiority on the part of members of the majority population. Interestingly, these attitudes are not confined to students from the Republic of Moldova, but also affect students from Romanian Moldova, who not only have a similar accent, but in many cases are perceived as economically and civilisationally inferior by the inhabitants of other regions.[26]

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26  On the internal developmental hierarchies in Romania see Kiss (2017).

*With some it was OK, with others it was a little harder. It was really easy for me to become friends with people from Moldova (the Romanian part), with colleagues from Suceava, Iasi, Vaslui. They were very open. They were so simple in their own way and they were very shy. There were ugly situations too. It happened during the first weeks. The professor said that somebody should wipe the board, and one of the wise guys shouted that Moldovans should be doing it. It was a bit nasty, but I didn't say anything then. Anyway, the guy didn't pass the first year. (IT14)*

Bessarabians targeted by negative remarks of this kind may develop their own self-stereotypes. The most widespread of these is the image of the 'diligent Moldovan student' who is respected and acknowledged by both teachers and bosses. Although not explicit in the quote presented above, the fact that the respondent mentions that the guy with the negative attitude did not pass the first year clearly points in that direction. On the other hand, there are people who are more direct.

*One thing, something that even some teachers recognise, is that Bessarabians who come here are more motivated to learn, to succeed. We are aware that we come from another country, and that we come from weaker schools, we must study more. And this is also true for the workplace … When you are used to working more, and that coming from another country is a handicap, so to speak. (HE02)*

These self-stereotypes not only help them to maintain their dignity and raise their self-esteem, but also promote a more positive image of Moldovans in Romania.

In addition to stereotyping and self-stereotyping, there are stereotypes that may dominate even collegial relations. Some of our interviewees pointed out that colleagues take note of their origin, but none more than those coming from other parts of Romania or having a different ethnic background. HE01, for example, describes her experiences as follows:

*There are probably some Hungarians, but the rest are from Romania, we don't have colleagues from other countries. I am the only one who is from the Republic of Moldova, so from that point onwards I am the 'Moldovan' in the company. (…) Relations are good, if you mean, whether I feel discriminated against or not. The answer is 'no', not actively. That does not happen, but there are allusions to the fact that I'm a Bessarabian, that we like wine, that we are very loud, you know there are some allusions, which are quite funny, and even if someone is deliberately mean, which happens once in a … I don't know … I see it more as ignorance. (HE01)*

## Networks

When Moldovan students come to study in Cluj or other cities in Romania, their first contact is generally with fellow Moldovans. In many cases a group of friends arrive together, or if not, they meet in the rooms they are assigned to, or at meetings organised by GIB. In past decades many tended to stick together, form communities, some of them even communicated in Russian to set themselves apart. These boundary construction mechanisms, however, did not construct a 'Moldovan' ethnic group, similar to minority ethnic groups in Romania, because identification boundaries can be crossed with ease. IT18 explains these processes as follows.

*The Moldovan community was quite marginalised. The Russian influence has also played a role in this. Being Russian speakers, you could somehow build up your own 'house'. This was predominant. Moldovans tended to be with the Moldovans and to stay together. Somehow, I don't know why … The Hungarian community might be similar. But they somehow tend to defend and to preserve themselves, while we did not have this. It was just language … Moldovans used Russian, and somehow, they felt that they were different. Not worse or better, but not 100% the same as the Romanians here. (IT18)*

The first Romanian ties are made during university years, and as time goes by the number of Romanian acquaintances grows. When asked about problems that Moldovans face with integration, one respondent said:

*Generally speaking, I don't think … at least I didn't notice … maybe some would say that they noticed things like that, that there is a tendency among Moldovans to group together. I didn't even feel it in college. Even though we were a fairly large group of Moldovans. Even though we stayed together. I think that until the fourth year all of us have become quite well integrated. We became parts of different groupings which included Romanians too. I think that today I am fully integrated. (IT16)*

Even if this is the case, the closest ties will remain with the group of friends they arrived with, or the people they met in the first couple of years. The Moldovan network remains active and is used by many to find jobs or (for business owners) employees. A good example is IT18, who, as mentioned in the previous section, prefers to hire Moldovans and finds them through GIB channels. In many instances the people involved do not necessarily need to know each other first – a similar life path or origin bring them together. HE01, for example, found her first job like this.

*I wrote an email to this girl who posted on Facebook an ad because she wanted to hire salespeople for a clothing store, and I thought that, although I would have wanted to be employed*

*at a bigger company or to do something else… I sent my CV, I went to the interview, I went into the store, hello-hello, then she asked me to say something about myself, I said I am from the Republic of Moldova, her reaction was, oh, me too … let's have some tea. (HE01)*

A very special case of bonding is that of those who come to attend secondary (high) school in Romania. As mentioned in Section 1, the Romanian state offers both university and high school scholarships. Similarly to higher education scholarships, those for high school are dispersed throughout the country, many pupils travelling more than 500 km for their studies. These children are usually taken to the city where they will study by their parents. They are accommodated in school dormitories and left there for the semester. Usually children of the same age are put in the same room and Moldovans are segregated. In many cases they do not have a tutor, although some teachers help them if they are in need.

> *I think I was lucky that I was staying in a room with five boys, all from the Republic. We were all in our first year of high school. None of us knew anyone, and … because I didn't know anyone and they did not either, we became very close friends. I was 15 or 16 years old. I was living in the dorm. It was quite strict, they locked the doors at 10 PM. There was communication between the dorm and my head teacher, but honestly speaking, they didn't help us that much. (HE04)*

As the quotation suggests, the students' families did not have much information about the places they sent their children, who were left alone with others of their own age. Under these circumstances the children needed to rely on each other, and friendships were formed. As most of them remained to study in Romania even after graduation, these ties formed the foundation for their social networks.

Another type of strategy is seen among migrants who arrive after finishing university. IT20, for example, followed his brother to Cluj. He came on an internship first, when he was in the second year of college in Chişinău. After graduation he was hired by the very same company and he moved to Cluj. He works in the IT sector and most of his friends are Moldovans working in the same sector. Although he does not rule out making friends with Romanians, he has a harder time establishing closer bonds with them. He explains this as follows:

> *I would say that it is easier to socialise with Moldovans. As I did not study in Romania, I did not learn this 'academic' language, I speak as people speak in Chisinau, sometimes I use a Russianism or two. At the company, Moldovan colleagues always correct me in case I forget and use a Russianism or use words that are not used here. In the presence of Romanians, I sometimes need to choose my words carefully … (IT20)*

## Relationship to state authorities

The last pillar of integration that needs to be analysed is relations with the state authorities and their behaviour toward Moldovans. As already mentioned, in the past decade a growing number of Moldovans have acquired Romanian citizenship before arriving, or applied for it while there. After receiving it, many apply for a birth certificate and Romanian ID. When this happens, from legal point of view they cease to be identified as Moldovans; they are considered regular Romanian citizens. Before 2007, when the currently valid amendments to the citizenship law had not been adopted, being Moldovan was not an advantage at the Immigration Bureau; they were treated similarly to other migrant groups. Most people had a hard time applying for a visa or citizenship, communication with the Romanian authorities was cumbersome and unpredictable.

> *After ten years, in 2010 I received citizenship. (…) after finishing college, in 2000, year after year I was trying to acquire it. (…) All those years … it was a very complicated procedure. Just as I managed to gather all the needed documents (…) When I arrived at the embassy, the rules had changed … the papers gathered so carefully in Cluj were not the right ones. I also phoned, called and checked. But when I arrived on the spot, something was always missing. (HE08)*

In other words, since 2007 most Moldovans entering Romania have had experiences with the Romanian authorities as citizens of the Republic of Moldova only during their college years and before entering the country, when submitting their application forms. In relation to this short period the most often mentioned institutions were the Immigration Bureau, the university secretariat, the campus police, hospitals and the Health Insurance Office.

In the case of the Immigration Bureau and the campus police, GIB has played a crucial role in reducing tensions.[27] By inviting the representatives of the Bureau and the police to meet freshmen coming from the Republic of Moldova and getting them to explain the process of acquiring residence permits in person, most students coming to Cluj were informed. This does not mean that the two institutions favour Moldovans, but there is less likelihood of miscommunication or abuse.

> *There are raids that catch everybody in the dorm. They wake us up at seven in the morning. They do it once or twice a year with agents from the immigration bureau. I had my residence permit for another dorm, because there were no more places in the dorm where I usually stay. Normally, after making the changes I should have*

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27 Interviewees who went to Romania before these annual meetings had become regular, stressed the rigidity and lack of cooperation from the Immigration Bureau.

*modified my residence permit too. But I did not do this. They charged me 270 lei (EUR 60), at a time when I didn't have much money. In the second year I managed to escape the raid, but they caught me during the third year. One morning they knocked on the door, when I sleepily opened the door the police were there. Documents, please. When he saw my Moldovan documents, he immediately called the guy from immigration. They, of course, were always there. He took my papers. He did not ask me any questions but simply told me: nine o'clock at the office. (IT14)*

Although the campus police and the Immigration Bureau are very strict, in many cases migrants themselves make mistakes. Neglecting deadlines, when one needs to apply for an extension of the permit, is one of the main problems that could arise.

*I stood in the queue [at the Immigration Bureau], but there were too many people. There were around 40–50 people in front of me and there was only one hour. There was effectively no time to serve everyone. I was with a colleague, and I said I'm going to classes instead, because at least I can get there. He told me, OK, but he will stay, as he has nothing else to do, anyway. Later he told me that, just after I left, a lady came out and got those in front, whose visa was about to expire, because others were entitled to stay until March. She said, come up to the front those whose visa is about to expire. Good… but*

*they could have said something from the beginning, then I would have stayed. I went back on Monday, but they gave me a fine for being two days late. That was it. I made a mistake. (HE04)*

Another problem regarding the authorities concerns health insurance and hospitals. Although theoretically all students are insured, a difference between foreign students and students from Romania is that the former do not automatically have a Health Card, they need to apply for one at the Health Insurance Office. Although the process is only another administrative round at a different institution, most students are not interested in completing it. Many complain that the process is sluggish, with a lot of paperwork and queuing. Problems arise when students need to go to the doctor, in some places the residence permit and a certificate from the educational institution is accepted, in others only first aid is given, while for lengthier treatment they ask for the card.

People working in domains such as the IT sector have fewer problems. In many cases even the smallest company helps them with their paperwork and in their relations with the authorities.

*In IT, the focus is on the individual. He must feel comfortable in order to work at his best. We have an HR specialist, who is like a mother to us all, because she takes care of us so we feel good. (…) If you have a health problem you tell her, and she tries to help you. (…) I know that my brother found his GP with her help. (IT20)*

# SECTION 4.

# SUMMARY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Although Moldovans are in a privileged position in comparison with other migrant groups in Romania, from several perspectives, insights into their integration, the problems they face and how their situation has changed in recent decades can shed light on Romanian migration policy in general and on how the implementation of migration policy can be improved.

Based on the report the following recommendations can be made.

**Revise, making more transparent and predictable, the application system for residence permits and citizenship for third-country migrant groups**

As we have seen, Romania faces a severe challenge as many of its workers choose to leave the country. Despite this, in many instances its migration policy is defensive and, according to MIPEX, it is one of most closed countries in the EU from this perspective. However, if we look more closely at the implementation of these policies, a more nuanced picture appears. First, although the legislation regarding labour migration, work permits, residence and citizenship has not changed, in the past couple of years Romania has gradually increased the number of work permits issued to third-country citizens and differentiated between different migrant groups, clearly favouring ethnic Romanians living in neighbouring countries, many of whom have already acquired citizenship. In addition, these people – formally at least – become 'Romanian' after a short transitional period. Our first entry point described this 'rite of passage' in detail. Many Moldovan young people choose to come to study in Romania, acquire Romanian ID after graduation and start their journey on the labour market as ordinary Romanian citizens. From a general migration perspective the experiences of those who came to Romania before this path was available are important. Those interviewees who spent time in Romania without a permanent residence permit or citizenship, described the Romanian immigration system as very bureaucratic and unpredictable, and they complained about the limited possibilities

that a third-country migrant life offers. These examples clearly point toward a revision of the implementation of the current immigration system, towards a more transparent and predictable process (clear guidelines about requirements, administrative reform, shorter waiting times).

**Support and strengthen migrants' bridging organisations so that migrants can be better informed**

One of the most important finding of the research is related to intermediaries and stakeholders. The detailed analysis of Moldovan students' organisations showed that they go well beyond their original purpose and initiate numerous diverse programmes to integrate young Moldovans, create a strong Moldovan network and to strengthen Romanian–Moldovan relations. In addition, some of the programmes take over integration tasks from Romanian government agencies and even 'head-hunting' for universities.

Moldovans' level of acceptance in Romania is fairly high. By initiating programmes that highlight the cultural proximity between Romanians and Moldovans these organisations help to maintain this acceptance and take the issue off the political agenda.

Although one could argue that Moldovans already have a lot in common with Romanians, such as language, shared cultural memory and sense of belonging, these organisations strengthen these ties. The rationale behind supporting these organisations further would be that programmes are centred on similarities and the legitimacy of the migrants' presence would be strengthened.

Similar organisations that could facilitate cooperation with and networking of foreign students could work in a similar way. Student or migrant organisations could emulate GIB in mediating between the authorities and newcomers, and by organising cultural events, ties could be created with the host society.

**Locate and communicate prominently sectors with a considerable labour force shortage and focus migration policies in those areas**

The Romanian state offers a growing number of work permits to third-country nationals, but these do not always solve the labour shortage in all domains. One reason for this is that emergency sectors that need special attention are not featured prominently. The example of the IT sector shows that, when this kind of shortage appears, companies will manage to find solutions to resolve the situation for themselves, but these are not necessarily the best for the national economy. In the IT sector two widespread solutions preferred by companies are (i) founding local branches in neighbouring countries, or (ii) working with third-country citizens remotely. These resolve the labour shortage, but could also lead to the withdrawal or relocation of major stakeholders from the sector. A more focused labour market and migration strategy developed by state officials, which flagged emergency sectors and used work permits to draw the workforce into specific domains, could resolve labour shortages, at least for the short term, and would draw highly skilled labour migrants to the country. In addition, involving companies in the development of these strategies could strengthen cooperation between stakeholders in the sector and the government.

**Rethink the bursary programme for Romanians living in neighbouring countries and smoothen the admission process by accelerating the publication of lists of successful scholarships**

One of the main government programs focusing on migration is the one implemented by the Romanian Ministry of Education, which offers scholarships for Romanians living in neighbouring countries at both high school and university level. Although framed in nationalistic terms, through conduit this many Moldovan young people (more than 4,000 new students each year), obtain the possibility to study at Romanian universities or high schools. In the past two decades the programme has changed radically; initially, it mainly attracted students who had failed to get into college in the Republic of Moldova. While the number of places offered by Romania has grown, the orientation of Moldovan students has changed as well. The main turning point was Romania's 2007 EU accession, when many prospective Moldovan students reoriented toward Romania, hoping to receive an education recognised all over Europe. In addition, the citizenship programme offered by the Romanian state promised easier integration besides training.

Our empirical research revealed several small problems regarding the programme. On one hand, the state favours less prestigious universities, when deciding on the number of scholarships at each university, while better universities seemingly block the access of Moldovan students to top specialisations. Therefore, a clarification

of the primary goal of the programme would be welcomed. The programme clearly serves to attract the best students from the Republic of Moldova, who can easily integrate in Romania. At the same time, it targets consolidation of student numbers at less prestigious universities. In the long term the two goals could come into conflict, as the closure of some universities and specialisations to Moldovan students could discourage outstanding students from the Republic of Moldova from applying in Romania, thereby changing established migration patterns. A further possible expansion of the problem could link scholarships to sectors in which there is great demand. In this way, students could be targeted strategically to fill vacancies in domains in which the labour shortage is acute.

Under the new system introduced in 2017, however, students apply directly to the university, while information regarding scholarships is published by the Ministry. Some of our interviewees noted that universities, in accordance with the GDPR regulation, anonymise results, and the Ministry tends to inform students receiving scholarships rather late. As a result, in order to request a visa, prospective students need to travel to Romania before applying, and ask for a document in person from the university. Although some universities offered them online, revision and optimisation of the process would be welcomed.

It is important to mention that although the programme has been extended to other countries, such as Serbia and Ukraine, significantly fewer students come from these countries. A better targeted promotion of the programme would make it more effective in these territories as well.

**Reconsider and supervise the tutoring of minors with scholarships**

Although not a central topic of our enquiry, many of our respondents reported that they came to Romania at the age of 14 with the high school bursary programme. The places offered are dispersed throughout the country, and many children end up hundreds of kilometres from home. The concrete practical outcome of the programme is that they are accommodated in school dormitories with other Moldovan children of the age for long periods, as they do not have the possibility to go home on weekends, and their parents cannot visit them either. According to our interviewees, the state should organise the tutoring of these children, since this hardly ever happens. In most cases, more conscientious teachers volunteer to do this work. Children at that age living in their own age groups without close adult monitoring are extremely vulnerable and are exposed to several dangers. A concrete recommendation would be to solve the problem within schools. There should be more emphasis on better integrating them in the classroom, which would help them to create stronger ties with Romanian peers at an earlier age.

**Recommendation for universities: play a more active role in accommodating foreign students by helping them to deal with paperwork with the public administration (Immigration Bureau, Health Insurance Office) in an organised manner**

Our desktop research shows that, after arriving, Moldovan students are left by the universities to make their stay official and to resolve their health insurance. Some of these problems are resolved by the student organisation, which mediates between the Immigration Bureau and Moldovan students, helping the office to disseminate information, participating actively in setting appointments, but students need to go to the Immigration Bureau to resolve the paperwork.

The case of health insurance is a different story. Although according to the law university students have basic health care insurance and can turn to the university doctor with minor issues, when they need hospital treatment they need to present a healthcare card to receive it free of charge. Although obtaining the card is not complicated, the bureaucracy and slow administration at the Health Insurance Office discourage students from commencing this process, and many end up without a health card.

Universities could play a key role in this, as they could facilitate the resolution of these problems by collaborating with specific state institutions. Two solutions could help. (i) In a best case scenario, universities could set up a one-stop-shop office, where students could apply for these documents, which could transmit them to state institutions. (ii) Another solution, assuming less of a commitment from universities, would be a greater effort to inform students concerning the papers they need and special provision for students at university offices.

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## ANNEX: TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1.
**Stock data on foreign citizens residing in Romania between 2010 and 2018**

|      | Total   | EU/EEC/CH | Third countries |
|------|---------|-----------|-----------------|
| 2010 | n.a.    | n.a.      | 58,424          |
| 2011 | 98,073  | 40,862    | 57,211          |
| 2012 | 102,759 | 46,936    | 55,823          |
| 2013 | 98,975  | 40,478    | 58,497          |
| 2014 | 98,586  | 41,115    | 57,471          |
| 2015 | 104,139 | 43,882    | 60,257          |
| 2016 | 112,114 | 47,211    | 64,903          |
| 2017 | 112,909 | 49,697    | 63,212          |
| 2018 | 120,358 | 51,217    | 69,141          |

Source: Eurostat

Table 2.
**Government ordinances on the number of work permits that can be issued**
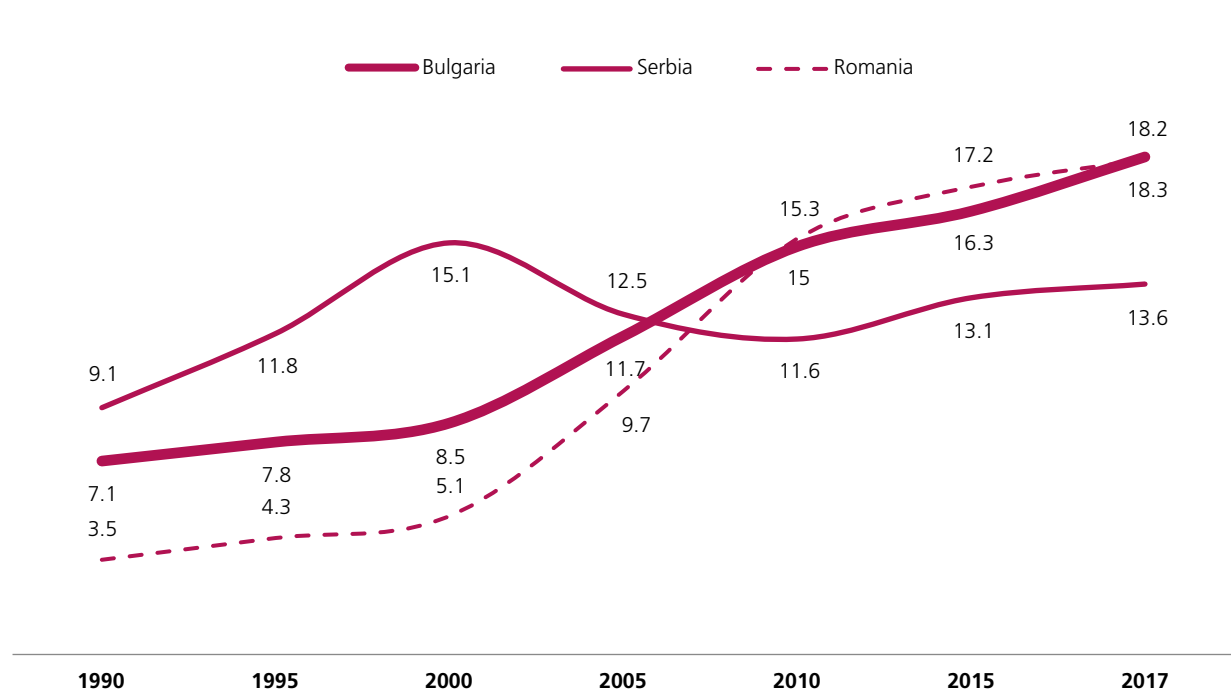
|                                   | For year | Total  |
|-----------------------------------|----------|--------|
| GD 1577/2009 16 December2009      | 2010     | 8,000  |
| GD 1345/2010 23 December 2010     | 2011     | 5,500  |
| GD 1261/2011 21 December 2011     | 2012     | 5,500  |
| GD 925/2012 12 September 2012     | 2012     | 5,500  |
| GD 1253/2012 12 December 2012     | 2013     | 5,500  |
| GD 992/2013 11 December 2013      | 2014     | 5,500  |
| GD 52/2015 28 January 2015        | 2015     | 5,300  |
| GD 105/2016 24 February 2016      | 2016     | 5,300  |
| GD 35/2017 27 January 2017        | 2017     | 5,500  |
| GD 891/2017 14 December 2017      | 2017     | 8,500  |
| GD 946/2017 28 December 2017      | 2018     | 7,000  |
| GD 596/2017 8 August 2018         | 2018     | 15,000 |
| GD 34/2019 30 January 2019        | 2019     | 20,000 |

Table 3.
**Bursaries for ethnic Romanian students from neighbouring countries in Romania** (2016/2017 school year)

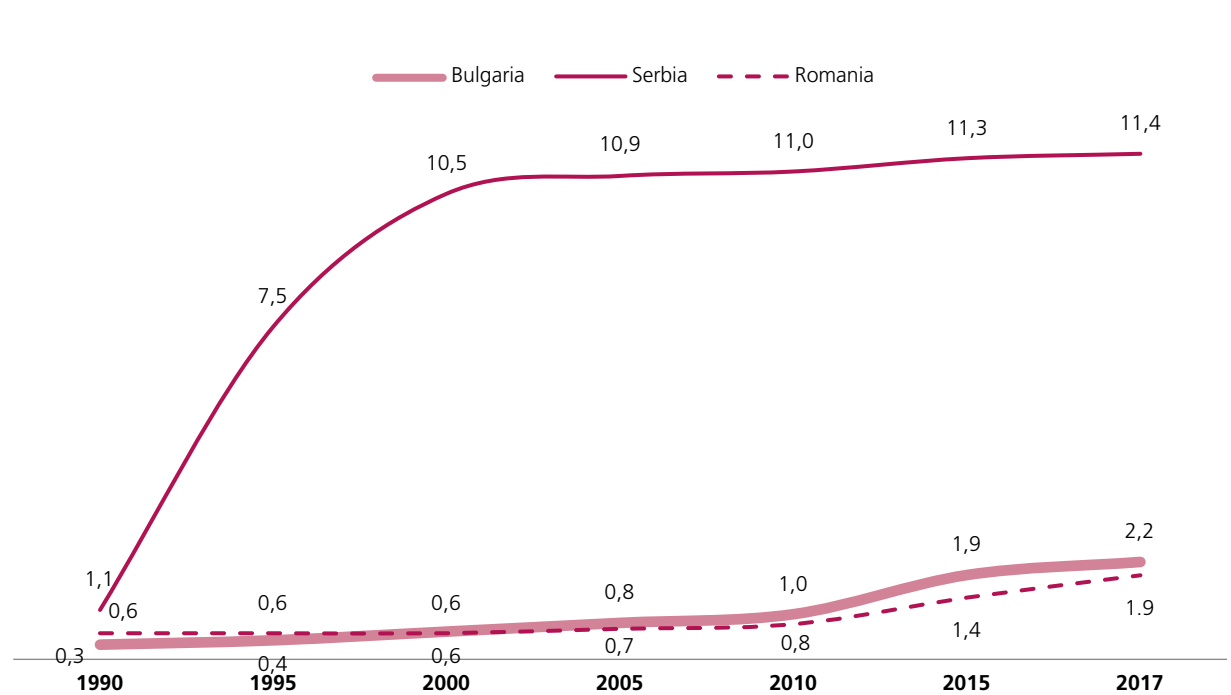|                     |                 | Republic of Moldova | | Other countries | |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
|                     |                 | Whole bursary       | Only school fees | Whole bursary  | Only school fees |
| Secondary education |                 | 1,041               | 700              | 150            | 150              |
| Tertiary education  | BA              | 1,200               | 800              | 500            | 405              |
|                     | MA              | 250                 | 300              | 113            | 270              |
|                     | Medical trainee | 25                  | –                | 112            | –                |
|                     | PhD             | 25                  | 100              | 25             | 2                |

Source: Ministry of Education

Figure 1.
**Emigrant stock in Romania compared with other South-eastern European countries belonging to the labour frontier** (%)

Bulgaria — Serbia — — Romania

18.2
17.2
15.3
18.3
16.3
15
15.1
12.5
13.1
13.6
9.1
11.8
11.7
11.6
9.7
7.1
7.8
8.5
5.1
3.5
4.3

1990    1995    2000    2005    2010    2015    2017

Source: UN international migrant stock database: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates17.shtm



Figure 2.
**Immigrant stock compared with resident population in countries belonging to the labour frontier** (%)

Bulgaria — Serbia — — Romania

10,5    10,9    11,0    11,3    11,4

7,5

1,1
0,6    0,6    0,6    0,8    1,0    1,9    2,2

0,3    0,7    0,8    1,4    1,9
0,4    0,6
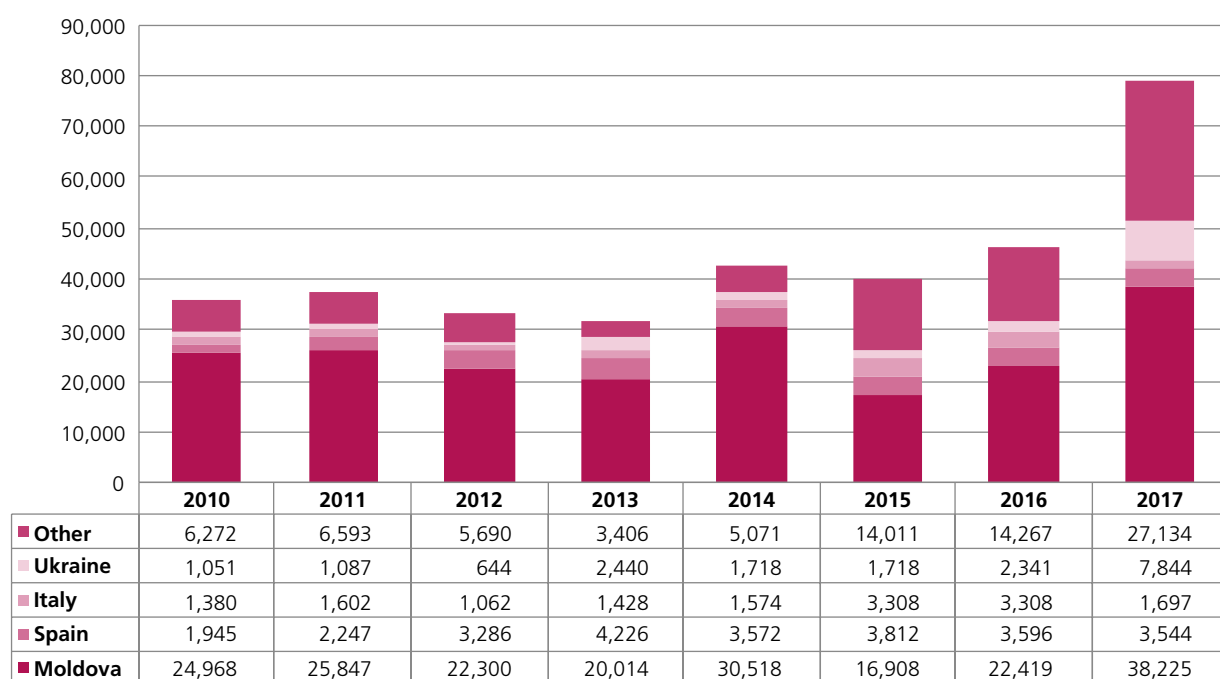
1990    1995    2000    2005    2010    2015    2017

Source: UN international migrant stock database: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates17.shtml

Figure 3.
**Flow data on immigration by country of birth**

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Other | 6,272 | 6,593 | 5,690 | 3,406 | 5,071 | 14,011 | 14,267 | 27,134 |
| ■ Ukraine | 1,051 | 1,087 | 644 | 2,440 | 1,718 | 1,718 | 2,341 | 7,844 |
| ■ Italy | 1,380 | 1,602 | 1,062 | 1,428 | 1,574 | 3,308 | 3,308 | 1,697 |
| ■ Spain | 1,945 | 2,247 | 3,286 | 4,226 | 3,572 | 3,812 | 3,596 | 3,544 |
| ■ Moldova | 24,968 | 25,847 | 22,300 | 20,014 | 30,518 | 16,908 | 22,419 | 38,225 |

Source: Eurostat.

Figure 4.
**Percentage of value added in GDP by economic sector and percentage of employees in each sector** (1990–2018)



◆ Proportion of those employed in agriculture    □ Value added to GDP by agriculture
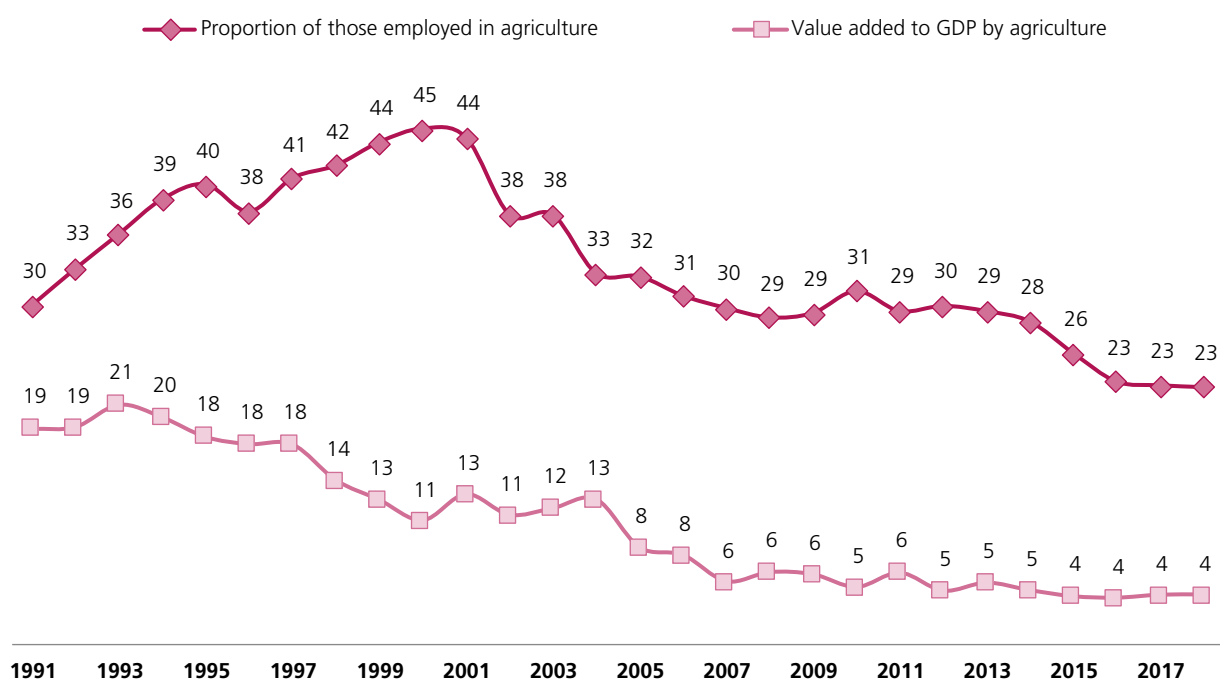
Source: World Bank.

Figure 5.
**Evolution of number of employees in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors**
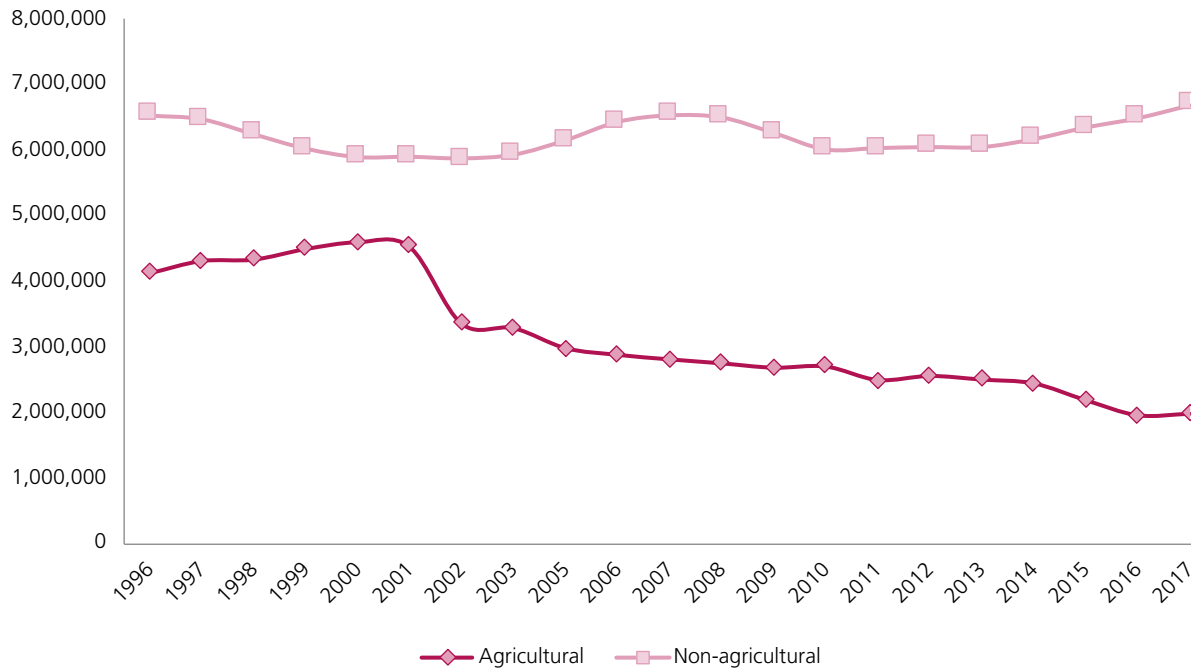
Source: World Bank.



Figure 6.
**Romanians, Moldovans and Vlachs inside and beyond Romania's borders**

Distribution of Romanians, Moldovans or Vlachs
Areas inhabited by an absolute majority (50% or more)
Areas inhabited by an important minority (10% or more)

Source: http://languages-of-the-world.blogspot.com/2010/09/eastern-romance.html

Figure 7.
**Number of files concerning the reacquisition of Romanian citizenship proceeded with between 1991 and 2016**
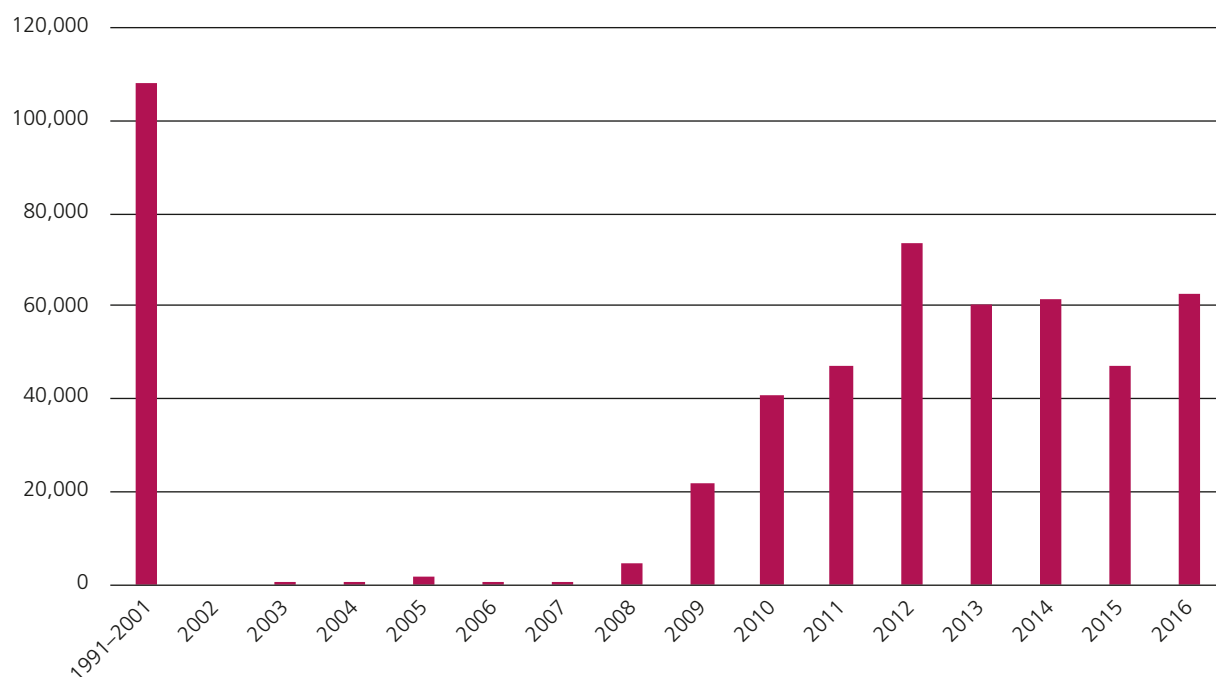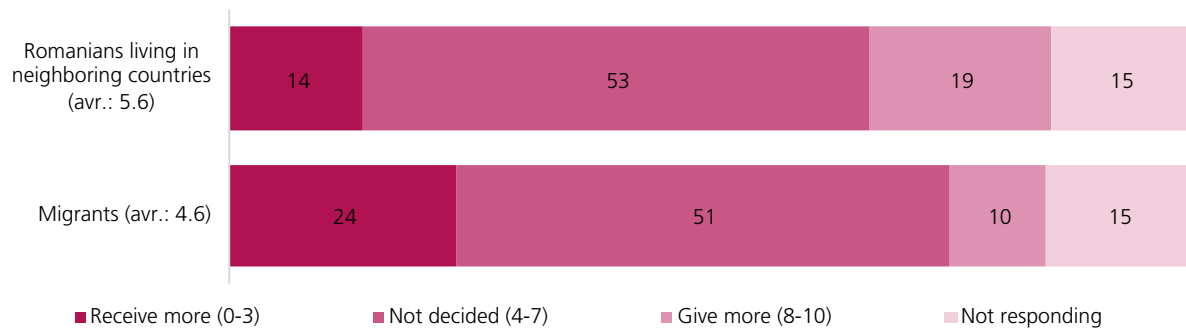


Source: National Immigration Bureau.

Figure 8.
**Question: When should foreigners who come to live in Romania from other countries receive the same rights to social benefits and services as Romanian citizens already living here? What about Romanians coming from neighbouring countries, such as the Republic of Moldova?**
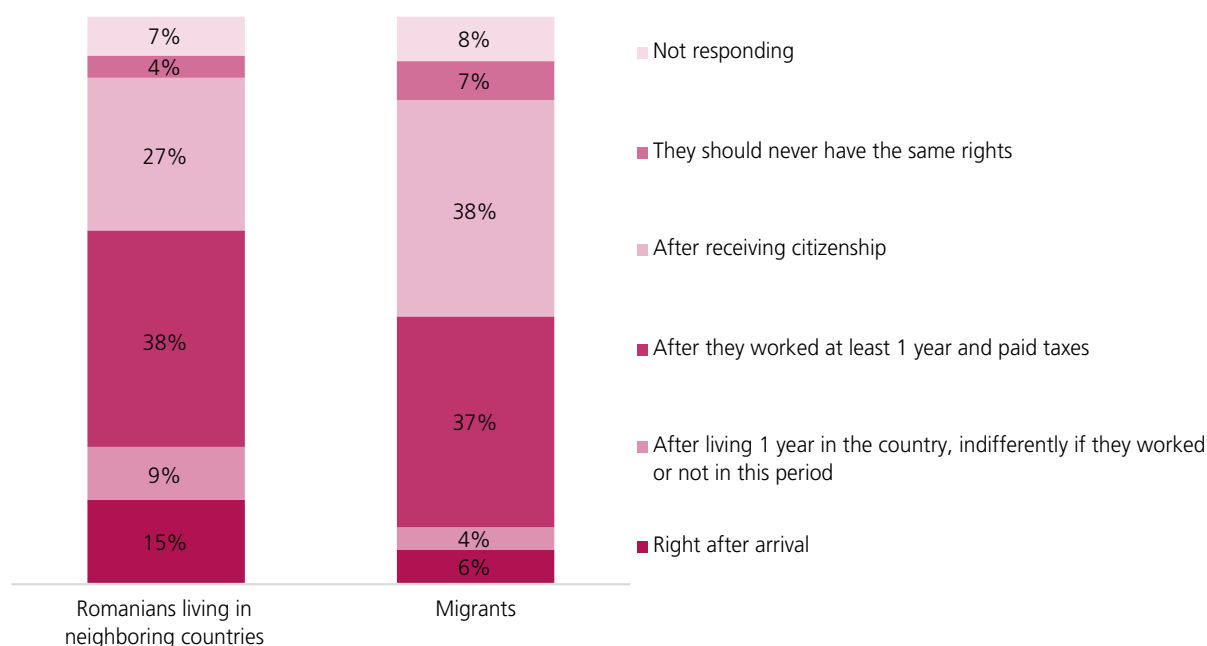


Source: Authors' calculations based on Kiss, Csata, and Toró (2020).

Figure 9.
**Overall, do you think that migrants and Romanians coming from neighbouring countries receive more from the state than they contribute, or contribute more than they receive?** (0 to 10 scale, where '0' means they get receive much more than they contribute, and '10' means that they contribute much more than they receive)
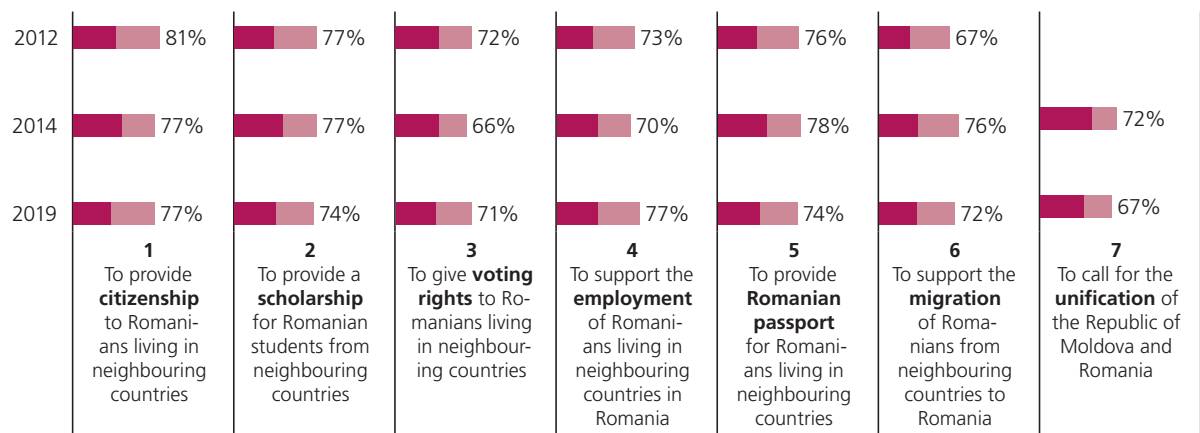
| | Receive more (0-3) | Not decided (4-7) | Give more (8-10) | Not responding |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Romanians living in neighboring countries (avr.: 5.6) | 14 | 53 | 19 | 15 |
| Migrants (avr.: 4.6) | 24 | 51 | 10 | 15 |

■ Receive more (0-3)　■ Not decided (4-7)　■ Give more (8-10)　■ Not responding

Source: Authors' calculations based on Kiss et al. (2020).

Figure 10.
**How much do you agree with the following statements?**
(The percentage of 'fully agree' g and 'rather agree' g responses by year of research)

| | 1 To provide **citizenship** to Romanians living in neighbouring countries | 2 To provide a **scholarship** for Romanian students from neighbouring countries | 3 To give **voting rights** to Romanians living in neighbouring countries | 4 To support the **employment** of Romanians living in neighbouring countries in Romania | 5 To provide **Romanian passport** for Romanians living in neighbouring countries | 6 To support the **migration** of Romanians from neighbouring countries to Romania | 7 To call for the **unification** of the Republic of Moldova and Romania |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2012 | 81% | 77% | 72% | 73% | 76% | 67% | |
| 2014 | 77% | 77% | 66% | 70% | 78% | 76% | 72% |
| 2019 | 77% | 74% | 71% | 77% | 74% | 72% | 67% |

Source: Kiss et al. (2020, p. 140).

Table 4.
**Detailed data on the interviews conducted in the project**

| Code | Sector | Gender | Year of birth | Year of arrival | Citizen-ship | Qualifications | Work | Family status |
|------|--------|--------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|------|---------------|
| HE01 | Higher education | Female | 1992 | 2011 | Dual | BA in Journalism, MA in Fine Arts | Public sector | Single |
| HE02 | Higher education | Male | 1991 | 2010 | Dual | BA and MA in Econo-my | Data analyst | Single |
| HE03 | Higher education | Male | 1995 | 2013 | Dual | BA and MA in Finances | PhD student | Stable relation-ship |
| HE04 | Higher education | Male | 1996 | 2011 | Dual | BA and MA in Econo-my | Data analyst | Single |
| HE05 | Higher education | Male | 1995 | 2011 | Dual | BA and MA in Jour-nalism | Unemployed | Single |
| HE06 | Higher education | Female | 1994 | 2010 | Dual | BA in Political science | Secretary | Single |
| HE07 | Higher education | Female | 1998 | 2017 | Moldovan | High school | Studying Geography | Single |
| HE08 | Higher education | Female | 1978 | 1996 | Dual | MA in Psychoped-agogy | Psycho-peda-gogy | Single parent with 1 child |
| HE09 | Higher education | Female | 1990 | 2009 | Dual | BA and MA in Euro-pean studies | Project coordi-nator | Married with children |
| HE10 | Higher education | Female | 1991 | 2010 | Dual | BA in Economy, MA in Business | Tourist agent | Single |
| IT11 | IT sector | Male | 1981 | 1999, than in 2014 | Dual | PhD in Economy | IT software tester | Single |
| IT12 | IT sector | Male | 1990 | 2008 | Dual | BA in Computer Engineering | Programmer | Stable relation-ship |
| IT13 | IT sector | Female | 1995 | 2014 | Dual | BA in Computer Engineering | Programmer | Stable relation-ship |
| IT14 | IT sector | Male | 1996 | 2016 | Moldovan | High school | Studying IT, programmer | Single |
| IT15 | IT sector | Male | 1992 | 2011 | Dual | BA in Computer Engineering | Programmer | Single |
| IT16 | IT sector | Male | 1993 | 2012 | Dual | BA in Computer Engineering | Programmer | Stable relation-ship |
| IT17 | IT sector | Female | 1980 | 1994 | Dual | BA in IR, MA in Communications | IT support | Married with children |
| IT18 | IT sector | Male | 1980 | 2001 | Dual | BA in IT | Owner of IT company | Married with 1 child |
| IT19 | IT sector | Male | 1995 | 2013 | Dual | BA and MA in Man-agement | IT support | Single |
| IT20 | IT sector | Male | 1995 | 2016, than in 2018 | Dual | BA in Engineering (in Moldova) | Programmer | Stable relation-ship |

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# MOLDOVANS: OUTSIDERS OR INSIDERS?

## Situation of migrant workers in Romania

→

→

→

Although Moldovans are in a privileged position in comparison with other migrant groups in Romania, their situation can also shed light on how the implementation of migration policy can be improved. The Romanian immigration system is very bureaucratic, the procedures should be much more transparent and predictable with clear guidelines about requirements and shorter waiting times.

The Romanian state offers a growing number of work permits to third-country nationals, but these do not always solve the labour shortage in all domains. A more focused labour market and migration strategy, which flagged emergency sectors, could help very much. In addition, involving companies in the development of these strategies could strengthen cooperation between stakeholders in the sector and the government.

The Romanian Ministry of Education offers scholarships at grammar schools and universities for Romanians living in neighbouring countries. In the past two decades the programme has changed radically. State favours less prestigious universities, when deciding on scholarships, while better universities seemingly block the access of Moldovan students to top specialisations. Therefore, a clarification of the primary goal of the programme would be welcomed.

University students have basic health care insurance when they need hospital treatment. The healthcare card is free of charge but the bureaucracy and slow administration at the Health Insurance Office discourage many students from commencing this process – many students end up without a health card. Universities should solve this problem in collaboration with the state.

Moldovan students' organisations showed that they initiate beyond their original purpose numerous diverse programmes to integrate young Moldovans. Some of the programmes take over integration tasks from Romanian government agencies. They should be more supported.

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