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► **To cite this version:**

Oana Mihaela Stoleriu, Octavian Groza, Radu Ionut Dimitriu, George Turcanasu. Visions of Europe at the European Union eastern border. Focus on Moldavian migration to Romania. 2011. halshs-00638253

HAL Id: halshs-00638253

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00638253>

Submitted on 4 Nov 2011

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Migrants and Borders Romania and Moldova

From deliverable 3.4

March 2011



**Visions of Europe at the European Union eastern border.
Focus on Moldavian migration to Romania**

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Abstract: This paper, issued from the final report of the work package 3 (migrants and borders), presents Europe's representations among different types of Moldovian migrants. While some plan to migrate, some are asylum claimers, and other ones already live in Romania. Based on qualitative interviews realised in the framework of the EuroBroadMap project, this paper demonstrates that Romania became an important access point to European Union for migrants but that, most of the time, it is also considered as a first step rather than as a final destination.

Key-words: Romania, Moldova, migration, migrants policy, representations

Cover: The regional centre for the accommodation and processing of asylum claimers in Timisoara

http://migrant.ro/file/pagesleft/3_migrantinromanianr3.pdf

General framework of the Moldavian migration to Romania and Western Europe

The study focuses on a major migratory flow affecting the Eastern border of European Union (EU) - the Moldavians. The choice of this group is based on their special status within the context of the Romanian migration policy and on its recent echoes in the European press. The Moldavians represent the most important migration group registered in Romania.

They've always had a special status within the Romanian migration and external policy, based on the memory of a common past. Furthermore, the border with the Republic of Moldova represents 33% of the Eastern EU border in charge of Romania (681 km length) and the second most active Romanian frontier as regards the number of illegal actions, after the Hungarian one.

Due to its recent development, the immigration phenomenon in Romania occupies a very low place in the scientific literature, forcing us to use background data from different sources: national statistics, the Romanian Immigration Office (RIO), media, specialized websites, surveys, and studies engaged by public institutions or NGO's.

The migration policy in Romania - a major point in the EU accession process and in the international political discourse

The strategic position of Romania at the external border of the European Union and as Schengen border, since 2011, generated a major change in the external perception of the country and on its migration policy. Recent statistics reveal the passage from an emigration country to an attractive migration destination for non-EU citizens: in 2008, Romania was the second EU member as regards the non-UE immigrants' rate (86%), after Slovenia¹. As a new gate for entering the EU space, Romania is expected to become even more attractive for non EU migrants in the future².

Therefore, an important part of Romania's accession to the EU, has been the constant request to strengthen the migration policy, aligning it with the EU acquis. In this purpose, Romania has received technical and financial support from the European Commission (EC) to reinforce its administrative detention capacity and also establish secure transit centres for the asylum seekers.

Highlighted since the first list of reforming processes requested by the European Commission (1997), the Romanian migration policy has been closely supervised and mentioned in all the European reports: progresses in the

¹According to the Romanian newspapers *Financiarul*, November 2008, www.financiarul.ro.

²According to the estimations of RIO (2008), the number of immigrants was expected to grow up to 200.000-300.000 persons until 2013.

visa policy (1998) and the management of frontiers (1999) were observed in the first years. Then, the Aliens Law of 2002 establishes the rights and obligations of foreigners entering, residing, and/or working in Romania, as well as their exclusion, expulsion and/or detention. An agreement with the International Migrations Organization (2002) granted the cooperation for assisted voluntary returns and humanitarian assistance. In 2004, the EU and Romania established a National Migration Strategy, in order to consolidate Romania's migration, asylum and citizenship laws, and to streamline the coordination of government agencies working on asylum and migration-related activities; it was followed, in 2005, by a national plan aiming to decrease the illegal migration. In 2007, the Romanian Immigration Office was formed, merging the Authority for Aliens and the National Refugee Office.

Since 2002, the EC reports highlighted also progresses in the management of frontiers: starting with the reorganization of the Romanian Frontier Police (in 2002), the increasing professional capacity, as well as integrated programmes for securing the frontiers (2003-2007). Now, Romania is still expected to finalize in time the informatics Schengen system.

Visa policy in Romania

Excepting the transit case (through airports or crossing the territory for 5 days at the most), Romania grants two main types of visas for foreign citizens: short-stay visa (offering the possibility to reside in Romania for 90 days within a 6 month period and cannot be extended), long-stay visa - with one or more entries (offering the possibility to reside in Romania for 90 days within a 6 months period and can be extended, upon request), and transit visa. The short-stay visas are granted for the following purposes: official government mission, tourism, business, private visit, transportation, participation in sports activities, as well as cultural, scientific or academic events. The long-stay visas are granted for economic activities, professional activities, commercial activities (such as investment), religious or humanitarian activities, work, studying, family reunification, research and other purposes that do not breach the Romanian laws³.

Getting the visa for professional activities involves extra taxes that a foreign worker and his employer have to pay to the Romanian government, or, in the case of intermediary firms, there are very high commissions and very high prices for the documentation and transport. Long-stay visa for commercial activities is granted to aliens who are or will become shareholders or associates, in management and administration positions, within Romanian

³Activities such as volunteering (if the host-organization provides the accommodation, financial means, and the medical insurance for the entire period), unpaid training (the migrants must prove the financial means in amount of at least one medium monthly salary, for the entire period), aliens temporarily seconded to Romania by foreign companies, aliens accepted for long-term medical treatment within Romanian medical institutions, etc.

companies. They need an endorsement from the Romanian Agency for Foreign Investments. The visa for education requires a residence permit in Romania as well as proofs of an economic living support. The foreign students are allowed to work 4 hours per day, with a special authorization obtained by the employer. For scientific research in Romania, the migrants have to provide endorsement of the National Scientific Research Authority and ROI, as well as the reception agreement of a certified Romanian research institution. The visa for family reunification is granted by RIO to aliens holding a temporary residence permit valid for one year or a permanent residence permit, to those benefiting from refugee status or subsidiary protection, if they prove the financial means of supporting the family member. Visa for religious or humanitarian activities is granted to aliens representing religious or humanitarian organizations legally established in Romania, based on the proofs of the space of dwelling and the financial means (in amount of three medium salaries) and the endorsement of the Romanian Ministry of Culture and Cults or the Interdepartmental Commission for Co-ordination and Support of Humanitarian Activities within the Ministry of Health. This type of visa is sometimes used as a cover motivation to get to Romania for economic purposes, as highlighted in the interviews from the detention centres for migrants.

The Romanian citizenship

The Romanian citizenship can be obtained by birth, adoption or by application. A major innovation in the process was introduced in 1991: the controversial law 137/11.06.1990 granted the ('restored') citizenship to the persons who could demonstrate that either they, their parents or their grandparents, had been born on the Romanian territory before 1940 (before the separation of Basarabia), to those who had lost or had been forced to give up their Romanian citizenship under different historical circumstances. The applicants could get the citizenship even if continuing to live abroad and maintaining another foreigner citizenship. The citizenship was granted by the Romanian Ministry of Justice, based on the solicitors' loyalty to Romania⁴ and their abilities for a social insertion: language knowledge, legal job or other economic support, no previous criminal convictions. The 1991 law granted by the citizenship access to full social and political rights in Romania, a tax-free transfer of their goods over the border and, after the accession to the EU, a visa-free travel in Central Europe (explaining why most of the requests were submitted after 1998, when Romania started the negotiations with the EC). The main beneficiaries of this law were the inhabitants of two former soviet states: the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The opportunity of visa-free travel in the Schengen space increased furthermore the number of citizenship requests after the beginning of negoti-

⁴The conditions are reflected in the discourse of the migrants from the detention centres.

ations for the EU accession (1998). The additional measures took by the Romanian government in March 2000, in order to speed up the procedure for the restoration of citizenship (to three and a half months), reinforced the number of citizenship claims: after a peak, in January 2001, the citizenship granting process has been suspended for 6 months. Afterwards, the number of claims continued to increase, encouraged by further simplified citizenship procedures⁵ and the decision of eliminating the tourist-visa for Romanian citizens travelling in the Schengen space (2001). In consequence, 19.000 requests were received by the Citizenship Office in Bucharest, only between August and December 2002.

Alerted by the echoes of the Moldavians immigration in the European press and constrained by its international engagements, the Romanian government issued the Ordinance n°160/2002, suspending the stipulation on repatriation introduced by earlier regulation. The number of granted citizenship was reduced to only a few hundreds per year, compared to an average of 9.941 per year, between 1991 and 2001. The citizenship was granted after 8 years of sustained residence in Romania (4 years for the Moldavians)⁶, or 5 years, for the persons marrying a Romanian citizen. Exceptions are made in the case of entrepreneurs who make a significant investment in Romania. A Labour Force Migration Office was created in order to manage the inflows of foreign workers and to provide information and guidance to the Romanians wishing to work abroad. Exempted from the visa requirements allied to the other non-EU states⁷, the Moldavian citizens still needed their passport to cross the border.

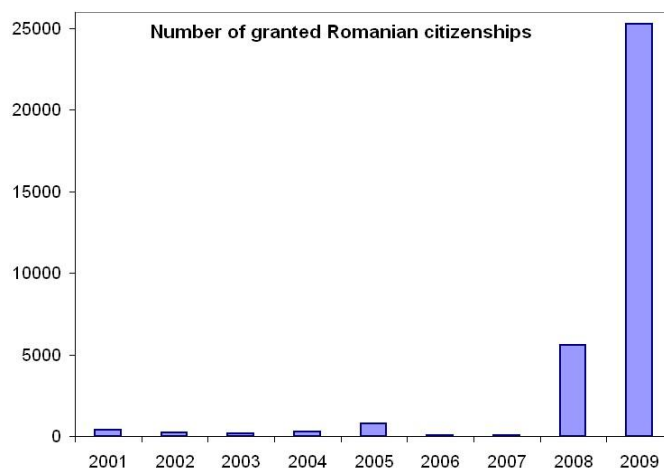
In 2006, before the integration in the EU, the migration policy has become even more restrictive: the Moldavians needed a visa and an invitation from a Romanian citizen, and their stay could not exceed 90 days. But this did not stop the increase of the citizenship applications, reaching about 500.000 requests only in 2006. Still, the number of granted citizenships decreased until 2009, when the electoral context introduced new facilitations speeding-up the process of granting the citizenship. Based on similar citizenship legislation from Hungary (2001), Poland (2000), Israel, Bulgaria, etc., in 2009, the Government Ordinance 36/15.04.2009 expanded the 'restored' citizenship rights to third line relatives (instead of second line relatives as before). The capacity of processing the citizenship dossiers have been substantially increased by the creation of five new regional offices and the reduction of the check deadline from six to five months. In consequence, 25.257 persons (21.299 Moldavians) regained the right to a Romanian citizenship in

⁵The Romanian Government Ordinance n°68/2002 eliminated the interview and accepted the delivery of citizenship dossier also by intermediaries.

⁶Law HG 29, May 2003.

⁷The chapter 24 (closed in December 2004), from the adhesion negotiations documents, regarding the Justice and Internal affairs.

Figure 1: The number of granted Romanian citizenships, 2001-2009



Source: Eurostat, RIO.

2009, compared to a 5.590 persons, in 2008 (4.967 Moldavians)⁸.

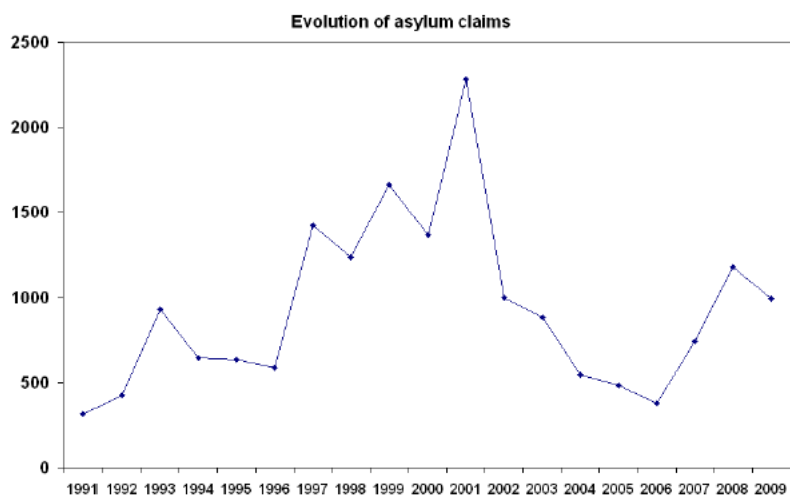
Asylum policy in Romania

The strategic position, as EU border, has also increased the number of asylum applications in Romania, from 484, in 2006, to 1.182 in 2008, and 993 in 2009. Important changes have been introduced along the accession process to the EU: a system for the integration of refugees, including a 9 months financial support (2001); special conditions for the children or single women with children; clarified procedures for family reunion, temporary custody and international protection of asylum seekers (2002); elimination of the work permit for refugees and equality of rights with the Romanian citizens on the labour market (2003); an information system for a better management of asylum applications (2003); new amendments added to the Aliens Law in 2004, regarding the social integration of refugees, in agreement with the convention of Geneva. The Law Regarding Asylum in Romania (2006) respects the U.N. Refugees Convention.

Although asylum seekers are generally not detained in Romania once they enter the official asylum procedures, they can be subject to detention (in 'reception and accommodation centres' run by the RIO), for an initial 20-days period after requesting asylum. Romania also operates a semi-secure 'Emergency Transport Centre' in conjunction with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

⁸According to the Romanian Ministry of Justice, January 2010.

Figure 2: Evolution of the asylum claims in Romania, 1991-2009



Sources: ROI and Eurostat (2009).

The facility provides accommodation for people in urgent need of protection outside their home countries.

According to the 2002 Aliens Law⁹, the foreign nationals who do not have permission to stay in the country (or enter the country illegally or fail to leave the country within the required time after having their asylum applications rejected) can be required to voluntarily depart within a specified period of time and, if they fail to leave within the specified time, they can be issued a ‘measure of return’ and escorted to the border. Romania has two detention facilities for illegal migrants (Otopeni Detention Centre for Foreigners and the Accommodation Centre in Arad, both managed by RIO) and transit accommodation centres located in border zones, managed by the General Inspectorate of the Frontier Police (Bucharest-Baneasa International Airport, ‘Henri Coanda’ Airport in Bucharest; facilities in the harbour of Constanta and in Romanesti, at the border with the Rep. of Moldova; migrants are held in this facilities between 2 and 15 days) and an ‘Emergency Transport Centre’, in Timisoara (operated in cooperation with the UNHCR and the IOM). Help and accommodation are provided to asylum applicants in six centres located near the frontiers: Bucharest, Arad, Timisoara, Radauti, Galati, and Somcuta Mare. The number of applications for asylum in Romania (figure 2) is projected to increase, as the EU Dublin II regulation is enforced, which requires the state where an applicant first enters EU territory to process the asylum claim. The national strategy regarding the integration of foreigners

⁹Regime of Aliens amended in 2004 and 2005.

benefiting from an official protection form in Romania, provides one year free assistance including a Romanian language course, cultural orientation and counselling, accommodation in an immigrant centre during the program and 2 months of financial assistance, until the financial reimbursable aid¹⁰.

A special status for Moldavian citizens

Since 1990, Romania has a privileged legislation regarding Moldavian citizens. In 1992, Romania opened the first foreign embassy on Moldavian territory. Moldavians were allowed to travel to Romania without passport. Directly benefiting from the controversial law of 'restored citizenship', about 300.000 Moldavians have received the Romanian citizenship between 1991 and 2000. The fact that in 2000, about 12% of the Moldavian population held Romanian passports, forced the Moldavian government to recognize the double citizenship (2002).

The relationships across the Eastern Romanian border were reinforced by economic and cultural cooperation programmes (two euroregions were created together with Ukraine, in 1998 and 2000¹¹) and inter-ministerial agreements, granting to Moldavians the right to visa-free and passport-free travel in Romania, as well as free access to Romanian universities and high schools (scholarships of the Romanian government).

But the political climate between the two countries has been strongly affected by pre-adhesion negotiations with the EU and the changes in the political orientations of the Moldavian government. Since 2002, Romania has continually strengthened its migration legislation, affecting also the special status granted to Moldavians: exempted from the visa requirements applied to other non-EU states¹², they were still requested to have the Moldavian passport while crossing the border. Furthermore, the number of Romanian citizenships granted was substantially reduced, to only a few hundreds per year. Thaw, the period of sustained residence in Romania requested for the citizenship was half reduced for Moldavians (4 years, compared to 8 years for the other states).

New restrictions were introduced in 2006, before the integration in the EU: the Moldavians must have an invitation from a Romanian citizen, and their stay cannot exceed 90 days. In 2007, as EU member, Romania had to introduce also the visa for Moldavians: they needed an invitation from a Romanian and their stay in Romania could exceed 90 days. Despite the Romanian government's promises of a free and fast visa granting system

¹⁰Foreigners have access to a reimbursable financial aid (equal to the national medium income), granted for 6 months, with possibilities of extension for another 3 months.

¹¹'Danube Dunarea de Jos', between Romania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova (1998) and 'Prutul de Sus', between Romania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova (2000).

¹²The chapter 24 (closed in December 2004), from the accession negotiations documents, regarding the Justice and Internal affairs.

Figure 3: Crowded rooms at the Romanian Consulate in Chisinau, January 2007



Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

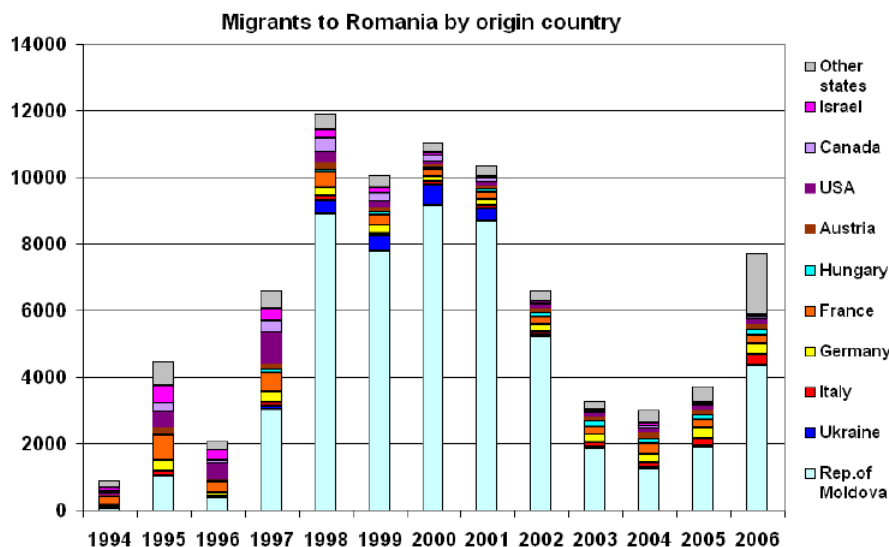
for the neighbours across the Prut River (by extending its consular network with two more offices), the measure was largely criticized by the Moldavian citizens, who felt ‘betrayed’ and left apart by the Romanian government. The disappointment was increased by the chaos created at the beginning of 2007, when the only Romanian consulate in Chisinau was overcrowded with hundreds of visa requests every day (figure 3). The increasing number of citizenship applications after 2006 (500.000 requests in 2006) determined the Romanian government to propose the extension of its consular network with two more offices - in the north and south of Moldova; initially accepted by Chisinau, the proposal was rejected a few weeks later.

But the exception of costs and the extension of the consular network are now the only facilities for Moldavians, as far as it concerns the Romanian visa policy. As other foreigners, they have to face the same difficulties in obtaining a working permit: long bureaucratic procedures, extra documentation and extra taxes paid by the employer and the foreign worker. This is why most of them choose the other way of entering Romania, much more stable and where they are really helped by the legal system - the citizenship.

Immigration in Romania

Romania’s accession process to the EU increased the immigration process but the rates are still very low in comparison with other European countries. Still, the strategic position of Romania in the context of further political

Figure 4: The structure of migrants coming to Romania between 1994 and 2006



Source: NIS.

closure of other active European borders (Southern), the immigration flows are expected to increase in the new-member countries.

Legal migration

The number of foreign citizens legally residing in Romania in 2009 was about 60.000 (compared to 56.745 in 2008). Moldavians are most important group (30.07%), followed by the EU citizens (about 30%, Italians, Germans, French), Turkish (16.08%) and Chinese (13.17%). Conserving a top position (figure 4), the number of Moldavian migrants has evolved along the years depending on the Romanian migration policy and the accession process to the EU: after the peak of 2001 (when 83.88% of the immigrants were Moldavian), their presence has decreased to about 30% in 2009.

Excepting the Moldavians, the inflows from ex-soviet countries have constantly decreased, in favour of other non-EU states from Middle East (Turkey 16.08%, Syria 3.79%, Iraq 1.79%, Israel 2.02%), Asia (China 13.7%), Africa (Tunisia 2.20%¹³) or the Balkans (Serbia 2.38%). Another group benefiting from the ‘restored Romanian citizenship’ law, the Ukrainians increased their number only until 2001. Afterwards, the restrictions in the Romanian migration policy oriented them to other destinations or transit countries to

¹³Source: the Romanian Immigration Office, 2009.

Western Europe.

On the other side, the European integration process induced a progressive increase of investments and citizens coming from Western Europe and North America. Up to 1/3 of the foreigners established in Romania in 2009 were from Italy (4.06%), Germany (3.27%), France (1.62%), Hungary and USA (3.79%), and Canada (2.42%).

Illegal migration

The illegal immigration flows are dominated by the same non-EU countries. For the first time, in 2009, the Moldavians (21.15%) had lost the first position on the top of foreign citizens illegally residing in Romania, because of their facilitations in the citizenship legislation. They were replaced by Turkish (22.87% of illegal migrants) and followed by Chinese (21.11%). An increasing number of non-EU illegal migrants come from Serbia (3.09%), North Africa and Asia¹⁴.

The Romanian Border Police constantly reports increasing flows of irregular migrants trying to illegally cross the frontiers: their number increased after 2007¹⁵. The frontier with Hungary remains the most active, being crossed both by the eastern and southern migration routes: more than 14.100.000 persons (747 foreign illegal migrants) and 6.250.000 vehicles, in 2008. The number of transporters caught in Romania constantly increased, from 44 in 2007, to 209 in 2009¹⁶. The cases of human trafficking reported by the Frontier Police fluctuate more: 180 cases with 501 victims in 2008 and 67 cases with 159 victims in 2009.

Following the illegal migration, the number of immigrants in public custody has also increased and diversified, adding new origin countries from Asia (Vietnam, Pakistan, Georgia, etc.) and Africa (Nigeria, Liberia, Sudan, Cameroon, Somalia, etc.).

Even if their weight fluctuates, most of the migrants from the detention centre of Otopeni are coming from China (22.34% in 2008), Turkey (17.02%), Moldova (6.91%), and Iraq (9.04%). Still, in the last three years, there was an increase of the Bangladeshi, Pakistani (7.76% in 2009), Egyptians (6.12%), Georgians (7.76% in 2009), Indians and Iranians

The centre for migrants in Arad (near the Hungarian border) received 111 persons in 2007 and 232 persons in 2009. They were mainly from Turkey (32.76%), Rep. of Moldova (25.86%), Iraq (7.33%), Vietnam (3.88%), China

¹⁴Tunisia (3.96%), India (1.7%), Syria (1.17%).

¹⁵Despite a decrease in 2009, from 2.120 persons (2008) to 1.602 (2009). 664 were trying to enter Romania and 938 trying to exit, with fake documents or hidden in transport vehicles.

¹⁶91 were Romanians and 59 foreigner citizens. Source: Romanian Frontier Police Report, 2008.

(3.02%), Egypt (2.59%), Albania (2.59%), India¹⁷, Pakistan¹⁸, Georgia, etc.

Following the changes in the Romanian migration policy, the number of asylum applications has increased until 2002 (2.280 applications, compared to 584 in 1996), then regained the ascending trend in 2007, after the implementation of new facilities for immigrants. 16.960 asylum applications were made between 1991 and 2009 (still very low values, in comparison with other EU countries) and only 2.817 were granted a protection form. The non-EU countries dominate the structure of the last years' asylum solicitors: Iraq, Serbia, Somalia, China, Turkey, and Iran.

According to RIO, 3.872 migrants received removal orders in 2007. The main countries to which migrants were returned were Moldova, Turkey, China, India, Morocco, Nigeria, Iran, Liberia, Sudan, Cameroon, and Somalia (JRS website).

Purpose of migration.

The economic motivation is the most often mentioned by the immigrants coming to Romania. Getting a better paid job or a job that they would not get in their origin country, for different reasons, represented 27% of the requests for long term permit, in 2006, and it has continued to increase. The economic growth after 2000 and the shortages in the Romanian labour market represented pull factors for the immigrants' flows from poor African or Asian countries or from neighbour non-EU states (Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and Serbia).

Starting a business in Romania is a motivation often cited by the Chinese (representing 48.35% of the applications approved in 2006 by the Romanian Agency for Foreign Investments¹⁹) and Turkish citizens (23,51%), followed by the Iraqi (10%). The first two groups are actually dominating this category of immigrants since 1990, simultaneously to a light increase of the immigrants from the Middle East.

The economic purpose is also mentioned by illegal migrants using Romania as a transit space to Western Europe countries, where they expect to find a better life and better jobs. A lot of them use legal means for entering Romania and then try to illegally cross the western (Hungarian) border. Others give up their initial plan and try to find a job in Romania. Moldavians dominate also these flows, together with Turkish citizens.

Even if slowly decreasing (about 20% of the long term visa applications in 2008), the category of migrants coming to study in Romania has been constantly dominated by Moldavians: 14.000 Moldavian students were studying in Romania in 2010. That is because of the educational cooperation agreements between the two states, granting scholarships in Romanian high

¹⁷4.14% in 2008.

¹⁸6.51% in 2008.

¹⁹Imigratia si azilul in România - anul 2006, Bucuresti 2007, MAE, Guvernul Romaniei.

schools and universities. Another important migratory group comes to Romanian medicine universities, because of the lower taxes, the reputation of the faculties, and the acceptance of their diplomas in the origin country. Most of them come from Middle East, even since the communist regime (Iraqi, Iranians) and, more recently, from South-Eastern Asia.

The family reunion (representing about 35% of the migrants' motivation²⁰) is a purpose more frequent among people from Asia and Arabian countries.

The migrants from countries affected by political conflicts choose Romania for its stability and social rights. Iraqi, Chinese, Turkish, Iranian, Somali and Serbian citizens dominated the asylum seekers' flows of last years but there is also a fast increase of applicants from Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, India) and Africa (D.R Congo, Cameroon). This increase is expected to continue in the near future, due to EU regulations, which assign responsibility for asylum applications to the state where an applicant first entered EU territory.

The gender structure of immigrants has been constantly dominated by men (about 60%), even if the gap between men and women is not very high. At national level, the structure is balanced by specific migration patterns (where men emigrates first, followed by their family, after finding a job and a house - specific to Chinese and Turkish people²¹) and the demands of the Romanian labour market (foreigners employed in constructions). The gap is a lot higher in the detention centres, because of the danger involved by an illegal trespassing: men represent more than 90% of the migrants from the centres of Otopeni and Arad. Most of the women in the centres are Moldavians (about 3.88% in Arad in 2009), followed by Chinese and Turkish (around 1%).

The age structure of the immigrants is dominated by the active labour (24-40 years old), but the young people's weight (18-24 years old, coming to Romanian schools) is fast growing, as well as the children's, closely linked to an increasing number of Moldavian families established in Romania.

Moldavian migration to Romania

The historical and cultural links between Romania and the Republic of Moldova have always ensured a special status for Moldavians within the Romanian migration policy. Therefore, Moldavians have conserved their position as the most important migratory group in Romania, representing 30% of the foreign citizens residing in Romania in 2009, more than a third of those coming to study in Romania²², 21.15% of the illegal residents, more

²⁰Including those marrying a Romanian citizen.

²¹Imigratia si azilul în România - anul 2006, Bucuresti, 2007, MAE, Guvernul Romaniei.

²²Imigratia si azilul în România - anul 2006, Bucuresti, 2007, MAE, Guvernul Romaniei.

Figure 5: The Flower Bridge across the Prut River, May 1990



Photo: Valeriu Oprea.

than 2/3 of the illegal frontier trespassing cases and 86% of all the non-EU immigrants entering Romania in 2008. The border with the Republic of Moldova is the second most active Romanian frontier as regards the number of illegal actions, after the Hungarian one.

Political and historical background of the Moldavian immigration

The territory of the republic of Moldova was separated from Romania first, between 1812 and 1918, then again, by the Molotov-Ribentropp and Paris treaties (1939, 1944) that included Eastern Moldavia in the Soviet Union. The fall of communism in 1989 was celebrated with enthusiasm and unionist hopes by people from the both sides of Prut river: 'flower bridges'²³ were organized in 1990 and 1991 across this frontier, the Moldavian government recognized Romanian as national language, Romania Government was the first to recognize the independent republic of Moldova (August 1991), offering its economic (temporary gas supply), political (mediation of Transdnister conflict), and cultural support (scholarships for Moldovan students, since 1991).

On the other side, despite the Moldavians' very warm attitude towards Romania, the government of Chisinau has long time hesitated between closer (1990-1998, 1998-2001) and colder political relationships with Romania (especially after 2001, during the Voronin presidency, more orientated to Rus-

²³Flower bridges - during one day, the people was free to cross the river and celebrate with the Romanians on the other border. It was an opportunity to meet relatives living in the other country and make new friends.

Figure 6: Street demonstrations in Chisinau, after the parliamentary elections, April 2009



Photo: <http://www.evz.ro>

sia). The conflict between the government policy and the population expectations was publicly revealed in April 2009: about 30.000 persons gathered in front of the Moldovan parliament, contesting the results of the presidential elections and claiming a second round, then torching and getting into the parliament, waving the EU and Romanian flags (figure 6). The insurgence was brutally stopped by president Voronin, who also blocked the frontiers, the media popularization of the conflict, and the political relationships with Romania. After the Voronin presidency, the Republic of Moldova reoriented its external policy towards Romania and EU.

Motivations and typology of Moldavian migrants

Based on this common memory of the past, the Moldavians have always been granted a privileged position within the Romanian migration policy, like the controversial law of restored citizenship (21/06.03.1991), which specifically targets Moldavians and Ukrainians.

For Moldavians, getting the Romanian citizenship is perceived as a kind of rehabilitation of the historical injustice committed after 1940, when Ba-

sarabia was roped into the USSR. There is a sense of an inherited right to be recognized as Romanian citizens, derived from sharing the same language and history.

Thaw, the purpose of getting the citizenship is most of the times economic. According to the European statistics, Moldova is one of Europe's poorest countries²⁴, with salaries rarely exceeding 100 euros²⁵. That's why most of the migrants want to be closer to West, meaning closer to a better life, better jobs and incomes. Most of them come to Romania first because of the proximity and the facilities here (scholarships, citizenship), but also because of the economic differences between the two countries (Romania is 'their Occident'²⁶). The Moldavians usually go to Romanian cities, covering the labour shortages mainly in constructions²⁷ and the health sector. Moldavian doctors are working in almost all of the hospitals in Romania, a lot of them replacing the gaps left by emigration of Romanian doctors, especially in the rural areas (Eastern Romania).

Another part of Moldavians residing in Romania came here for studies benefiting from the educational cooperation programs between the two states. The Romanian ministry of education number of scholarships granted 4965 scholarships in 2010, twice more than the year before. The scholarship value is 65 euros for university, and 50 euros added to the accommodation and studies fees. The rest of Moldavian students are paying their education in Romanian universities, based on an unanimous expectation: to use the diploma, to get a job in Romania or in another EU country.

After getting the necessary tools in Romania (free travel right granted by the Romanian citizenship, education diplomas), most of the Moldavians continue their journey to Western Europe. The low-skilled migrants stay even less in Romania, using it only as a transit place in their way to other European destinations, where they search for jobs in health care, housekeeping, and constructions.

Migration patterns

The past continues to torment and divide the Moldavians' life and the country's politics between two major poles: West (EU/Romania) and East (Russia). This also affects the migration choices and patterns observed among the population, as revealed by a national survey in 2008²⁸. The economic situation force a lot of Moldavians to choose between more accessible migration

²⁴<http://hdrstats.undp.org>, National Office of Statistics, Rep. of Moldova.

²⁵In 2008, the medium income was about 110 euros in education, 139 euros in medicine, 116 euros in agriculture, 195 euros in industry, according to the National Office of Statistics in Moldova.

²⁶According to the Moldavian doctors interviewed by the Romanian journalists from ADEVARUL, on September 3rd, 2010, <http://www.adevarul.ro/>.

²⁷That's the situation before the economic crisis affecting this sector.

²⁸Migratia fortei de munca, National Office of Statistics, Rep. of Moldova.

destinations, like Russia (lower costs - about 140 US\$, attractive legislation), and a solid but more expensive gate for entering the EU - like the Romanian citizenship. Often both destinations are seen as first migration step, aiming to get the money or the tool for a second step: Western Europe. There, the costs of migration are up to 2600 - 3600 US\$/person.

The family network plays a major role in the migratory project. It financially sustains the departure: about 60% of the people questioned in 2008 obtained the money from lawns, 3/4 of them from family/friends, the amounts reaching about 1324 US\$. As for the money sent home, half of them are meant for every day life necessities of their families and 20% for getting a house.

The family also ensures a safe journey and the social integration at the destination: 57.4% of the Moldavians were helped by relatives or friends²⁹. At the destination, the family network is further consolidated, providing help and information for other relatives and friends. Young people choose the Romanian universities based on proximity and their relatives' location. The small entrepreneurs in Romania usually search for partners or employees in their origin country, including members of their family.

An alternative way for getting a Romanian passport, granting the free travel rights in Europe, is the convenience marriage to a Romanian.

Even if decreasing, the Moldavians conserve a main position in the Romanian illegal migration. Most of them practice a 'disguised migration', entering Romania with legal papers (a tourism visa) and then, trying to cross the western frontier with fake Romanian passports or hidden in transport vehicles³⁰. A part of them appeal to transporters networks for crossing the Prut River, sometimes becoming victims of human trafficking.

Interviews with Moldavian migrants

Methodological aspects

Purpose of the interviews

The interviews aimed to reflect a specific perspective of the migration flows targeting the Eastern EU border managed by the Romanian authorities. Focusing on Moldavians, the research was supposed to highlight the evolution of these migrants' visions of Europe in different stages of their itinerary: in the origin country, in transit (after being caught at the frontier), and at the destination country (Romania).

²⁹While 23% left on their own, 13% through employment firms, 11% answered to press announcements and 11% were directly contacted the employers.

³⁰According to the Romanian Frontier Police press releases and reports.

Limits of the research

The interviews were all made in 2010, in several stages, according to the legal approaches involved (the authorization needed to enter the Romanian accommodation centres for migrants) and the availability of the persons inquired.

There were three main challenges.

Firstly, finding and approaching the migrants. Regarding potential migrants, we used the help of fellow professors from the University of Chisinau in order to identify them. Another issue was getting their trust: after a previous agreement, three Moldavians living in Romania changed their mind about the interview, fearing the potential impact of their answers on their ongoing process of citizenship claiming. As expected, a stronger reticence was observed in the accommodation centres for migrants. Suspicious about our real purpose there (taking us for representatives of official authorities), the subjects didn't answer all the questions. Or, when they answered, they were very brief and precise or they tended to give stereotyped answers, fitting the expectations of the asylum claim and proving certain knowledge of an expected discourse.

Secondly, a strict selection of migrants was not possible. For example, in the Romanian accommodation centres, all the subjects were chosen by the authorities. Furthermore, the short presence of migrants in these facilities (about 20 days) didn't allow us to find exactly the expected categories (only Moldavian migrants) or to get a proper gender balance: there were no women in the centres at the moment of the interviews.

Then, after the first approach (when the subjects are not usually very open to a free talk about their situation), we couldn't come back for getting the migrant's trust and a deeper understanding of their opinions, because of their temporary stay in the accommodation centres, but also because of the distance and time resources needed.

Presentation of the migrants interviewed

The categories of migrants were selected in relation with the location of the interviews and expected typology of visions about Europe and Romania. Three major categories have been studied:

1. Potential migrants, interviewed in the country of origin and reflecting the initial visions of Europe, before the migration.
2. Migrants in transit, held in Romanian reception centres, revealing the visions of Europe after being caught at the frontier.
3. Moldavian migrants residing in Romania, with a migration perception shaped after living in an EU country.

Potential migrants, interviewed in the Republic of Moldova

Five interviews were made in Chisinau, the capital city of the Republic of Moldova. The subjects came from different areas of the country:

- Border regions: a 26 years boy and a 20 years old girl from two cities near the Ukrainian frontier (Briceni and Cimislia), and a 26 years old girl from Falesti, a village near the Romanian border;
- Central regions: a 20 years old girl from Straseni, and a 32 years old boy from Lozova.

The education level of the people interviewed is generally high as well as their families: in three cases, the parents have university diplomas, for the rest, only high school. All the subjects come from families with a medium economic level and migration experience orienting the children's future plans. They all speak Romanian at home, even if they all know Russian also very well, and they declare themselves Orthodox, even if not regularly going to church. Nicolae and Ana³¹ have already finished their university studies in Anthropology, Elena and Olga are still in their second year of faculty (of Geography), while Andrei has finished high school. They didn't have a job at the moment of the interview, but they all have experienced temporary legal or illegal jobs. Ana has illegally worked as a waitress for 3 months in Moscow in 2008; Nicolae worked at the custom during the faculty; Elena and Olga both have done surveys for different associations in Chisinau, and Andrei had several jobs abroad (in agriculture or as a bodyguard in Australia; as a tennis instructor and then he had his own constructions firm, in New Zealand).

The migration project is already very clear for Elena and Andrei: they've already begun the process for claiming the Romanian citizenship, with the precise purpose of 'going to Western Europe', as they both declared. Andrei had previous similar experiences, but his citizenship claim in New Zealand has been rejected. The rest of them only think about leaving their country, their intentions being supported by previous migration experiences in their family: 'On principle, I wouldn't leave Moldova, but if I don't succeed here, I'll go. I would go to get the money for buying me a good job in my country', said Nicolai.

Most of the reasons for leaving their country are related to good jobs and professional fulfilment: a job appropriated to their education and the opportunity to continue their studies seem to be more important than money, and this partially explains the propensity to go towards west and not east, as their parents did, because there are no major income differences between the two migration destinations. Ana earned 1.300 euros as a waitress in Moscow, Nicolai's parents and Andrei's mother work in Moscow for about the same

³¹All the migrants' names in this paper were changed.

income (1.000 - 1.300 euros), in industry and commerce. But the jobs in Moscow are all lower than their professional skills, and mostly illegal. By the contrary, Western Europe is perceived as a place where they could find this professional fulfilment: 'The professional promotion is more important for me than money' (Ana). 'I want to work in anthropology and in Moldova, I have no chances' (Elena).

Other motivations quoted are the standard of living (social protection, beautiful cities), and freedom (of expression and travelling). They are decisive for Andrei: 'I've been abroad for so many years that I cannot live anymore in Moldova. I'm used to the Western standard of living... In Moldova, I have no freedom, any living and healthcare conditions. I want my children to have a better life'.

Major counter forces in their migration project are the loyalty and the emotional attachment to their country: 'I don't want the others to believe I'd betray my country!' said Olga. Even if knowing he can't fit in Moldova anymore (all his family is abroad and he has lived for 10 years in other countries), Andrei keeps coming back home, because he misses it.

Visions of Europe before migration

The selection of the interviewed persons was specifically based on a common family background supporting and confirming their migratory intentions. All of subjects have friends and close relatives abroad: four of them have one or both parents abroad, and two have brothers or sisters living in other countries. The migration experience is mostly related to Russia (Moscow), because the Moldavians can entry this country without visa and remain there to work illegally. Excepting Ana and Andrei (whom brothers and cousins have Portuguese, Suisse or Italian citizenships), the migration experiences and perspectives provided to our subjects are mainly regarding an illegal migratory status. Furthermore, their personal spatial experience abroad is also related to illegal temporary jobs in non-EU states: in Russia (Ana) or in several different countries (Israel, Australia and New Zealand - Andrei). The ex-soviet countries (especially Russia and Ukraine) are the best known as work (Moscow) or tourism (Crimea) destinations, lightly balanced by several visits in Romania (Ana and Andrei). This aspect is closely related to their mobility tools: visa facilities, language, and family network. They all speak Romanian and Russian, but the Western European languages are less known: French (Ana and Olga), English (Ana and Andrei), Italian and Spanish (Ana).

A very important vector of information shaping their migration projects is the media and especially television. All the subjects watch the news and talk-shows, mostly on Romanian TV chains, but they read Romanian and Russian newspapers. This shows the interest and knowledge about two main emigration options (East *vs* West), as well as a general need for an objective

positioning in relation with the international context and their major future choices: 'I read Russian and Romanian newspapers, in order to compare the two points of view' (Olga).

The visions revealed by the interviews in the Republic of Moldova indicate an active concurrence between the two main migration poles: Russia, more attractive as regards the migration costs and visa policy, and Western Europe/Romania, less accessible but more attractive in a long term perspective. The two options seem to be also related to a generation gap, in terms of preferences and opportunities: the parents are all oriented to Moscow, while the children want to go West.

Russia is represented in the migrants' discourse by one city - Moscow. The capital seems to be associated mostly with a negative perception, even if there are not many differences in terms of incomes compared to Western Europe destinations. Furthermore, for both destinations, discrimination is reported: 'I didn't like working in Moscow, because I was seen as an inferior person. As Moldavian, you are discriminated in Russia' (Ana). Besides the Russian media, the image of Moscow is mainly based on their parents' or on their own experiences. In consequence, Russia is mainly seen as a first, easier option for migration, meant to provide fast money for, eventually, accessing later a more attractive destination in Western Europe.

Romania is seen only as a potential transit space, granting a legal tool (the Romanian citizenship) for entering the West European states: this is mentioned by Elena and Andrei, who already made the claim for the Romanian citizenship.

On the other side, the image of Europe is quite poor and mainly associated with countries, not cities. They are also closely related to their relatives and friends' migration experiences. Italy, Spain, Germany and France are the most quoted attractive destinations, followed by Great Britain. The features quoted in relation with these states focus around a satisfying standard of living ('very good' for Germany and Portugal; 'organized' for Germany), freedom and discrimination (for Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Portugal). As far as it concerns the attractive cities, this link to family migration is less powerful, indicating a choice based probably on media and literature inputs. Paris is the most quoted city, followed by Dublin, Dusseldorf, Rome, and Turin.

The images associated to Europe are focused on social and economic aspects that explain the balance of choices between their emigration options, compared to Russia.

Europe is associated with a high standard of living (3 quotations), prosperous economy (1), and opportunities (1). The work opportunities in Europe are the most important migration motivation for the subjects with university education, especially that two of them still don't have a job after finishing their studies. So they are attracted to better jobs capitalizing their education. Money is mentioned by all the subjects but only as a secondary

purpose of their future departure: ‘The professional promotion is more important for me than money’ (Ana); ‘I prefer to live in a beautiful city, even if I earn less money’ (Andrei). By opposition to the girls’ perspective, the welfare and the high standard of living are the first images associated to Europe by Nicolai and Andrei.

The social rights represent also a major pull factor in the migration project, opposing their origin country, where they ‘don’t have freedom, a good standard of living and healthcare services’ (Andrei) to Western Europe, which they associate with culture/civilization, freedom, good organization, diversity, justice and union.

This image of Europe is dominating the girls’ discourse. Elena and Olga associate Europe with freedom, equality, union and justice, and Ana with diversity and culture. On the other side, Andrei and Nicolai are more attracted by the good social organization and civilization.

Still, the image of Europe is not completely idyllic: intolerance and discrimination towards the non-EU citizens is mentioned in all the interviews and dominates Ana’s discourse, who also sees Europe as a special marked by identity crisis and materialism. She and Elena know that her relatives and friends living abroad that Moldavians feel discriminated in Italy, Switzerland or Germany. There is a very clear distinction, between ‘Europeans’ and ‘Moldavians’ in the Elena and Olga’s perceptions: ‘EU is good only for Europeans’ (Elena); ‘Europeans are very different from Moldavians; they are allowed to be different and they discriminate us’ (Olga).

Compared to Europe or Russia, the concurrence of other continents in the people’s migration choices is very low: the most attractive countries are Germany, Italy, and France. They are followed at long distance by USA (quoted by Elena), Canada (Olga) and Australia or New Zealand (Andrei).

Migrants in transit through Romania

Seven interviews have been made in the accommodation centres of Arad and Timisoara:

- In Arad: a Congolese (27 years old, from Bakubo), an Egyptian (28 years old, from Alexandria) and a stateless man of Turkish origin (50 years old, born near Adana, but who emigrated in Hamburg, with his mother, at 8 years old).
- In Timisoara: one Afghan (31 years old, from Kunar) and three Moldavians: Pavel (19 years old) and Ioan (25 years old) are from Chircani and Cahul, and Petre (25 years old) is from Olanesti, near the Eastern Moldavian border.

The migrants in the two facilities have different statuses. The regional centre for the accommodation and processing of asylum claimers in Timisoara

Figure 7: The regional centre for the accommodation and processing of asylum claimers in Timisoara



Photo: http://migrant.ro/file/pagesleft/3_migrantinromanianr3.pdf

(figure 7) was open in 2004, in order to receive refugees in public custody, and, since 2008, it grants temporary accommodation for international refugees. It is an open centre where foreigners can stay until they receive an answer to their asylum claim. The migrants from the centre are free to visit the city, to go to church, but they cannot have a job, and they must return every evening in the centre. If their asylum claim is rejected, they can ask for a tolerated status in Romania, submit another asylum claim (with new arguments) or accept a voluntary repatriation, where the Romanian state pays for their transport back home (a lot of them prefer this last solution).

Opened in 2003, the accommodation centre for foreign citizens in public custody of Arad (figure 8) is a detention centre similar to one in Otopeni, near Bucharest. Managed by RIO, it is a closed centre, receiving illegal migrants caught by the Romanian authorities or brought here based on the Dublin convention. At the centre, they begin the repatriation procedures or they can submit an asylum claim. They can stay in the centre for 6 months at the most; then they are released, receiving a tolerated status³² in Romania, and they are expected to leave the country. Most of the times, the migrants don't leave and they are caught again and brought back to Arad. The Romanian authorities ensure them free accommodation, meals, access to medical services, and the plane ticket to their countries.

The age of the interviewed migrants varies from 19 to 50 but most of them have figured their migration project during their twenties. The education

³²The tolerated status (G.O. 194/2002, art.98) is granted to the persons who didn't get a refugee or subsidiary protection form and, from serious reasons (uncertain nationality, crisis in their country, lack of connecting flights, human trafficking risks etc), they cannot be returned (expulsed) to their origin countries for 6 months (2 years in the case of expulsion). The tolerated status lasts 6 months, and can be extended for another 6 months, with the obligation of a monthly presentation of the migrant at RIO.

Figure 8: Arad - the accommodation centre for foreign citizens in public custody



Photo: <http://www.virtualarad.net/>

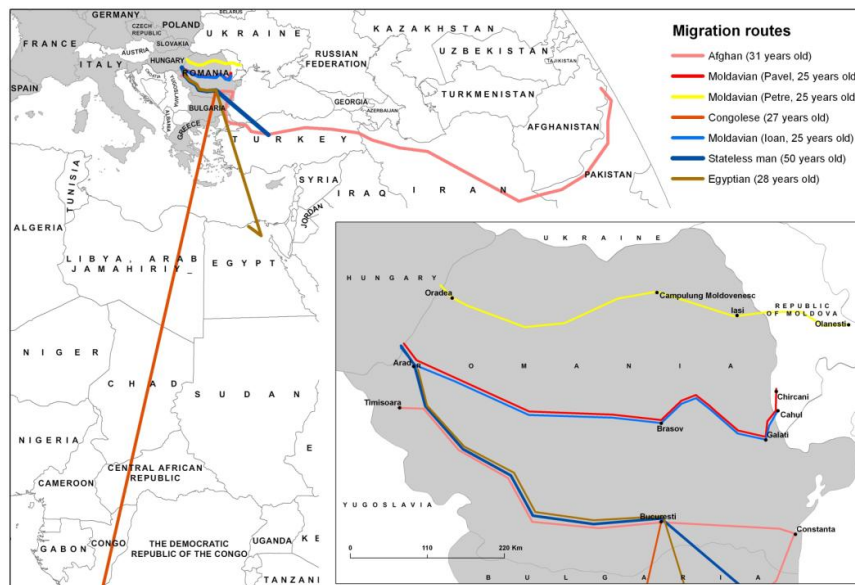
level is generally low, as well as their families'. Four of them have finished high school, one the elementary school (the Turkish), one has no studies at all (the Afghan), and only one has finished the university (the Congolese). Their economic status in the origin country is mostly medium, with two extremes: very poor - the Congolese (who has nothing left after his parent's death and the political conflicts in his country), and very rich - the Afghan. 'I had very much money in Afghanistan. I was earning 1.000\$/month as a driver and it was a lot of money there. In parallel, I had a business with mobile phones and electronic devices', said the last one. The Turkish, who lived in Germany since 8 years old and has been married with a German citizen, also describes his previous life as wealthy.

Excepting the Congolese and the Egyptian, the family network supports and motivates their migration intentions: most of them have relatives and friends in EU countries. The Turkish and one Moldavian's wives are legally residing in EU states (Germany and Italy); the Turkish has also two kids, one living in Germany, with his wife, and one in Romania, with another woman. Their own experiences also support the migration project: 5 years of residence in UK for the Afghan; temporary legal job in Moscow or illegal job in Mangalia³³ for two Moldavians; legal residence in Germany and political asylum in Greece for the Turkish; a denied visa request for USA for one Moldavian.

The ways for entering Romania are different: two of them came with job contracts, employed by Romanian firms (in agriculture - the Egyptian,

³³Harbor city in Romania.

Figure 9: Migratory routes of the persons interviewed in the detention centres



and transports - the Congolese), the Turkish has been expelled and the rest of them came through illegal means: crossing the Prut River and having Romanian fake passports (the 3 Moldavians), or hidden in a truck and guided by paid transporters (the Afghan). The migrants intended to cross Europe and Romania based on informal networks, counting on the information and help provided by transporters, friends or relatives from the destination point (Italy and France).

The motivations for leaving the origin country are mainly economic - to get a job, to earn money and have a better life (the Egyptian, the Congolese and the Moldavians); but also political (the civil war in Congo), or related to family reunion: one Moldavian has the wife and mother legally working in Italy, while the Turkish was trying to visit his father, when he was expelled.

Visions before the migration

Excepting a few cities where they had to change directions or transport means, the migrants have had extremely poor knowledge about their migration itinerary in Europe. They've based only on the indications of the employer firm, illegal transporters or family's recommendations. The costs have been covered by the firm, in the first case, or by themselves, in the second case: the Afghan paid 7.000 euros, while all the Moldavians indicated the same amount of 400 euros, fake Romanian passports included. The illegal journeys were all dangerous and lasted from 5 days to 5 months. Sometimes,

the destination cities were not known at all at the departure point, depending on the context and the transporters' indications. Mainly the countries were targeted, based on the family's (Italy) and friends' indications (France, Austria, Romania).

'The journey was very dangerous', said the Afghan. 'For 4 months, I've travelled by foot and by car through Iran and Turkey. From Turkey I came here hidden in a truck... The transporter wasn't interested in anything, neither in my life, only in money' (figure 9).

Pavel and Ioan began their journey by foot, crossing the Prut river with a raft ('It was dangerous because there were big waves') and then using different transport means to the Hungarian border where they've been caught trying to cross it during the night. After being brought in the centre of Arad, they've escaped and been caught again trespassing the border. Petre crossed the Prut in winter, while the river was frozen. 'It was very dangerous because the ice could have broken and also because of the custom police who could have caught me'.

The migrants' visions of Romania and Europe are quite poor. They are provided by their friends and relatives but also by their own experiences abroad.

Europe is mainly seen through an economic perspective: a space where they could have well paid jobs and a better life. The migrants expect to earn a lot of money in Western European countries, or at least much more than in their own countries. Their expectations related to a better standard of living explain also the Moldavians' choice between Europe and Russia. Still, their expectations are related to high incomes, even from low qualified jobs: Pavel knows from his friends in France that he could earn 3000 euros/month in constructions. From his wife and mother living in Italy, Petre is confident that he would earn 'enough money' in constructions.

As for their previous experiences in Europe, the migrants don't talk much about it. It is mostly related to legal work (the Congolese worked as a driver in Italy, and the Turkish in the automobile industry in Germany), political asylum (the Turkish stayed 3 years in Greece, and the Afghan stayed 5 years in London, working as driver, until the political situation in Afghanistan improved) or legal residence and marriage (the Turkish lived and has a wife and children in Germany). Only the Turkish has visited more Western European states with his wife, for tourism purposes: Netherlands, Denmark, Austria, and Hungary.

Before leaving their country, the friends living or studying in Romania were the main vectors of representations about this country. The internet was also very important, while for the Moldavians a major information source was represented by the Romanian newspapers, TV posts and literature. Most of the migrants had poor knowledge of the Romanian geography, except from the cities included in their itinerary or the cities where their friends lived. Still, they had opinions about the standard of life in Romania. They varied

from positive perspectives ('Romania is a European country, they live well here', said one Moldavian) to negative ones. The Afghan knew from his Romanian girlfriend on the internet that in Romania life was hard and very expensive.

Either destination or transit space, Romania is usually perceived as a part of Europe and EU which makes it an attractive destination (the Afghan) or a gate to enter the EU space (the Moldavians). 'Here is also Europe. UK, Romania, it's the same, it's still Europe', said the Afghan.

The image about Romania was generally built also around the idea of freedom: freedom of travelling (with Romanian passport, the Moldavians knew they could travel in Europe), freedom of living (without the fear of being killed in political conflicts - the Congolese), freedom of expression and religion (the Congolese, the Egyptian and the Afghan).

Excepting the Moldavians, the migrants had no precise knowledge about the European migration policy. They knew that it was easier to go to Western Europe through Romania, with a fake Romanian passport. They also knew that the Romanian citizenship was a big opportunity but the process of claiming was too long and expensive (according to their knowledge, about 4.000 euros were needed to speed up the process).

Visions of Europe in transit

Within Romania, the migrants lived different experiences that shaped their visions about Europe: legal residence (for 4 years - the Turkish), legal work permit (the Egyptian and the Congolese), illegal work (in constructions - Petre), illegal transit in different transport means (the Moldavians and the Afghan), prison (for 10 years - the Turkish) and the centres for illegal migrants, where they were in contact with Romanian authorities and NGOs.

After their short or longer stay in Romania, freedom remained a major point in the migrants' discourse about the country, but their opinions are completed with new images. Difference is another major point of their experience in Romania: the migrants perceive themselves as being different (non-European) from the majority. This feeling sustained their integration efforts, starting with the adaptation to local gastronomy (the Congolese), to a new language, to a much more expensive life (Pavel and Ioan) and required getting to know people better (the Afghan, Turkish). Their integration is facilitated by local acquaintances and the church, and by language knowledge: all the Moldavians speak Romanian, while the Afghan learned it on his two years of online relationship with a Romanian girl; the other migrants have learnt Romanian during their stay here. The other assertion regarding Romania, is that of a better living space than their origin country but generally inferior to their destination point: Romania is 'more beautiful and more organized' than Moldova, but 'France is more beautiful than Romania', according to Pavel. 'There are lower salaries here' than in other EU countries,

said the Turkish.

Negative images are also associated to Romania, coming from work exploitation experiences (12-14 working hours per day and no salary - the Egyptian) or personal relationships: the Turkish reclaimed a friend's treason, causing his time in prison, and the Afghan was disappointed by his Romanian girlfriend ('Romanian girls want a lot of money. I'll never want a Romanian girlfriend anymore').

Most of the personal experiences are not completely negative: all the migrants declared they've been treated well in Romania, inside the centre and outside. 'Romania is a good country for me. I like living here', said the Turkish. 'Romanians are good [...] Everybody talk nice to me here' (the Afghan).

It is interesting that, despite the memory of a common past, the three Moldavians do not put Romania on their migration choices. Even if they know a lot about Romania from different sources (media, friends studying here), they do not target it because their representation of the Romanian migration policy and the costs of living here is not attractive. In consequence, they all want to go either to their destination or back home. Following the procedures, they've all applied for asylum in Romania, but only in the aim of getting the papers allowing them free travel in Europe.

Moldavian migrants residing in Romania

Two students - Alin (21 years old, from Balti) and Ioana (25 years old, from Rezina, married to a Romanian citizen) and a family of two doctors - Vasile (38 years old, from Orhei) and Maria (35 years old, from Calarasi) were interviewed. They all come from border (near) areas in the Republic of Moldova, the border being a reference point several times mentioned in their discourse.

There is a common social and economic background of the migrants, supporting their migration motivations and choices. Most of their families have superior studies and they've expressly encouraged their children to get a good education abroad, in order to have better opportunities in life: the two doctors finished the faculty of medicine in Iasi, Romania, Alin is studying Geography and Political Sciences in Iasi and Ioana has finished the faculty of Geography in Iasi, in 2008, and now she is in the first year at the faculty of medicine, in the same city. Despite the superior level of education, their families in the origin country have a low to average economic situation: 'We had what we need for eating and wearing' (Vasile). Furthermore, the experiences on the Moldavian labour market, either their own (Ioana had a low paid job in Chisinau, as salesgirl) or their parents', have encouraged the emigration intentions, because of the low incomes and difficulties in finding a job there. Both students' parents are now working in Italy, despite their superior education.

There is also a common migration pattern in their families: parents legally working in Italy (the 2 students), sisters and brothers studying in Romania, and then getting/applying for the Romanian citizenship, in order to live here or go further West: the doctors have double citizenship, while the students have both applied for the Romanian one.

The interviews revealed a common memory of the Romanian culture and history. Romanian is the language they all speak in their families; they've all studied in Romanian and, even if abroad, they always try to keep the contact with the language through different means: like the internet, for the relatives established abroad.

All the subjects came to Romania by legal means (for studies), based on a family network already existing here. Besides studies, the other common reason for migration is economic: a better life, higher incomes, and better opportunities.

Visions of Europe and Romania

The main vectors for the visions of Europe are the media (Moldavian, Romanian and Russian), newspapers in both languages and the personal experiences or the relatives and friends' stories. Internet pages in English and French are also mentioned by the students.

As regards Romania, the school and media are permanent vectors of knowledge, establishing and reinforcing a national identity, based on common historical or cultural reference points. On the other side, the young man mentioned a general lack of precise information about the rest of EU, in Moldova: 'There are a few teachers in school who bring up new ideas and inform students about what the EU represents. There is also the Alliance for European Integration party, which tries to say something about this, but even they don't know exactly what the EU really is'. Compared to the doctors, the young people interviewed are more interested in politics, if not actively, at least in order to build their own opinion about things: as the students interviewed in Chisinau, they need 'to be informed, to know the general context, the major changes' affecting their decisions.

The European countries are labelled according to the information received from media and relatives: Germany is the most often mentioned as a 'less welcoming' country, but with a solid economy (Alin and Ioana). Northern Europe (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Latvia) is perceived by the two students as more attractive for economic reasons, and it is preferred by Alin, because of the social freedom and the importance granted to the civil society. For Ioana, Southern Europe is more appealing, with its cultural heritage and warm climate.

European cities are very briefly and rarely mentioned in the interviews. London and Paris are associated by Alin with a good life. Ioana prefers the cultural cities with warm climate (Barcelona, Madrid, Rome), while

Alin prefers economic centres for Northern and Central Europe (Oslo, Riga, Copenhagen, Zurich), but not too big, because he associates dimensions with loneliness: ‘In Paris and London, people are indifferent’.

The personal experience of Europe is very poor and limited to important tourism destinations (France, Monaco), migration destinations of their family’s (Italy), and transit countries (Hungary, Austria). Even in Romania, the subjects did not travel a lot, mostly on holidays or student practical applications.

Europe, an economic and political space

Europe is generally considered a very organized space, associated to economic development. But main positive aspect quoted regarding Europe is freedom: of expression (Alin), of travelling (Ioana, the doctors), of economic exchanges (Ioana).

At the same time, all the European opportunities are perceived as an internal privilege refused to the Moldavians: ‘I don’t like the EU because it keeps away the Moldavians, it constrains them a lot and our access is very difficult. We don’t have access to European tourism destinations’ (Ioana). The negative aspects are less quoted by the doctors. For them, Europe is ‘a welcoming place’, with higher incomes, ‘but it depends on the people’.

The political perception of Europe is linked to the migration policy: it is a restricted space, especially for Moldavians, and sometimes, from the media and their friends’ stories, Europeans have racist and xenophobe attitudes, even with extenuating circumstances, like the law-breaking immigrants or the pressure they put on the western labour markets. Alin, the student in Political Sciences, talks about a specific vision of the EU circulating in the Moldavian intellectual environments - that of a political block, similar to the ex-USSR.

As the access to Europe is limited, the Romanian citizenship is seen as an opportunity for free travel. Only the young man has further knowledge regarding the Romanian migration policy, based on his professional interests (Political Sciences), his own experience (the claim for Romanian citizenship, his life in the proximity of the Romanian border). He mentioned the translation issues of the Moldavians applying for Romanian visas, the delays due to a high number of applicants, and also the facility of getting the citizenship for family reunion.

Visions about Romania

While Europe is less described in the interviews, there are a lot of references about Romania shaped and diversified by the Romanian media, school and their families (often travelling across the Prut River). They are enriched by different personal experiences in relation with Romanian authorities and

citizens.

All the interviewed persons mentioned using multiple information sources, in Romanian and Russian language, a fact closely related to their trust in the national media and the need for objectivity. They compare sources, in order to find the truth, and the Romanian media is a major reference point because 'it shows the reality', while the national Moldavian television is 'controlled by communists'³⁴.

Generally perceived as a geographical and cultural part of Europe and EU, Romania is, for all, a step further west. Still, it is less developed than the rest of EU but also 'a lot more welcoming, like an open gate' (Ioana), where Moldavians feel like home and can adapt easily.

Before coming here, the four people knew about higher incomes, better job opportunities, and proximity to Europe. In all their discourses there is a hierarchy of welfare and opportunities for a better life: Moldova - Romania - rest of EU. Even if satisfied by the jobs, both doctors would want higher salaries - a reason for a possible future migration to other western countries. Still, they all think it's difficult to find a job in Romania and to get the work permit.

The spatial proximity is an important reference point for the migrants: they mention the proximity of the Romanian border, the very short and not expensive journey to Iasi. Proximity was the reason for choosing their migration destination (Iasi has the nearest Romanian faculty of medicine).

The sense of proximity is also tributary to a common memory of the past: 'there is only one Romania, there is no difference between Romanians from Romania and Romanians from Moldova', says Alin. The feeling of belonging to the same territory became one of their main reasons for choosing Romania: 'I knew that Moldova is a part of Romania... Romania is my country' (Maria). For all the subjects interviewed, people in Romania are 'alike' that on the other side of Prut River, and Romania is generally seen as an welcoming country, where they do not feel treated differently.

Their link to Romania, previous to their arrival, is reinforced by the experience here: the young man says that he would go in Western Europe to work and earn money but he would come back to live in Romania.

The families shaped the migrants' vision about education (abroad, and specifically in Romania), as a condition to a better life and better job opportunities. That's why education was the main motivation and a common way to enter Romania: the students came in Romania for high school, the doctors for the university of Iasi. Romania was their first choice because of the educational programmes and the family network existing here, rooted in a common memory of the past: 'We were always aware of Romania, I decided to come here because the brother of my grand father lives in Romania,

³⁴The young man refers to the street revolt of 2009 in Chisinau, broadcasted only by foreign TV chains.

near Iasi, since 1940' (Vasile). Alin has chosen Romania and Iasi 'because my godparents live here and I've been preparing for coming here long time before'; 'My godparents met my parents during the flower bridge, in 1991, and they promised to help me when I come here for school'.

The social integration in Romania is facilitated and guided by the family network, then reinforced through a professional insertion (the doctors), marriage (Ioana) or different social environments (a local football team, Alin).

Living in Romania means living in the EU, which implies better legislation and freedom of travel (Alin). Freedom of expression is also mentioned in relation with Romania and by opposition to the Republic of Moldova. Still, the same hierarchy classify Romania in a lower position of importance granted to the civil society.

As for the competitors of Europe in the migration choices, Canada - is mentioned as an attractive destination ('Better than Romania and Moldova together', according to Alin), as well as Sao Paulo (Alin) and New York (Ioana). The ex-soviet space is usually associated with their parents/relatives migration, for work (Russia) or military purposes (Uzbekistan), while Ukraine, and especially Odessa, is constantly mentioned as a tourism destination.

Conclusions

Relatively recent, the immigration at the Eastern EU border is not yet a very popular topic inside the scientific literature (compared to the migration targeting the southern EU border, for example), but the evolution and the social impact of this process show that it deserves higher attention from specialists and policy makers. That was the purpose of this overview on the main immigration flow targeting Romania: to show the increasing importance reinforce of the Eastern EU border in orienting the future demographical and economic European policy.

Living at the intersection of two major economic and political blocs, both branding their past and future international status, but repetitively disappointed by both, Moldavians still try find their best options in the present international framework. East and West, both attract them with opportunities.

The East - Russia (and Moscow in particular), represents for Moldavians a major work migration destination. Russia means easier access to the labour market, easier insertion (all the Moldavians interviewed speak Russian but very few know Western European languages), lower costs of migration and high incomes (equal to those of EU). All the interviews showed a generation gap in the perception of migration to East: Russia is more attractive for the older generations (the migrants' parents work or have worked there), while for the young ones, it represents only a temporary solution, meant

to provide fast money for accessing then a more attractive destination in Western Europe. Odessa in Ukraine is also often mentioned as a tourism destination.

Western Europe is the promise of freedom, professional fulfilment and a better life. For all the migrants, the EU is seen as a very organized space, associated to economic development and opportunities. Beyond the economic aspect, the main pull factor making the difference between Europe and Russia is freedom: of travelling, of expressing political or religious beliefs, and freedom of living. Politically, Europe is associated to peace but mainly to a closed space for non-EU citizens. Even if they don't have further knowledge of the migration policy, all the migrants know that it's difficult to enter Europe. Reporting on the media and their friends' stories about Europeans' racism and xenophobia, they all expect to be treated differently.

Despite the multiple information sources and their migration efforts, the image of Europe is relatively poor and mainly associated with countries, not cities. The attractiveness level of European countries is closely related, for all the migrants, to their relatives and friends' migration experiences. Italy, Spain, Germany, France and Portugal are the most quoted attractive destinations. Cities are also chosen based on media and literature inputs, Paris being the most quoted one.

The sampling challenges did not allow a highlight of gender differences in the perception of Europe. Still, the interviews in Chisinau revealed women's preference for culture and climate aspects (Southern Europe), while men are more attracted to economic centres, social freedom and organization (associated with Northern Europe). For women, the first associations with Europe are culture, freedom and diversity, while men mentioned the welfare and the high standard of living.

Despite their efforts and aspirations, in both major destinations mentioned above (East *vs* West), Moldavians don't feel like really belonging: 'Europeans are very different from Moldavians; they are allowed to be different and they discriminate us' says Olga, from Chisinau. 'EU is good only for Europeans' but, also in Russia, 'as Moldavian, you are discriminated', said another young woman from Chisinau. That's why most of them talk about temporary or a final come back to their origin country.

The only place where Moldavians do not need to adapt seem to be Romania. Despite the high costs of life (mentioned by all the migrants), they feel accepted in Romania, confirming their previous expectations shaped by the school and family. 'I knew that Moldova is a part of Romania... Romania is not a foreign country', says Maria, a 35 five years old doctor, living in Romania for 17 years.

For Moldavians, the constant political changes affecting their lives induced a general lack of confidence and the need of multiple information sources, in order to form an objective opinion about their future options. In this context, the historical link to Romania and the Romanian media repre-

sented a fact they've long time relied on, even after the disappointment of the hesitant political relationships between the two states.

Politically, Romania is usually perceived as a part of Europe and EU which makes it an attractive destination for non-EU citizens, but, most of the time, it is perceived as a transit space, granting a legal tool (the Romanian citizenship, in the case of Moldavians) or an easier way to enter the Western Europe.

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