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The Possibility of Meeting University Studies by Migrants

Casen PANAITESCU[1]

Abstract

Effective integration policies must be considered as a priority on the migration agenda of any government, regardless of whether migrants are temporarily staying or permanently settling in the country. Integration is essential for all stakeholders to benefit from migration and the contribution it brings to the security, prosperity and stability of society.
Addressing the role of online socialization platforms in the mobility period knows in the literature a duality of experts' opinions. That is why the present work focuses on the advantages of socializing in the virtual environment, in the sense that these interactions facilitate the integration in the new academic environment and overcome the cultural shock, against the voices who believe that the use of these instruments favors the phenomena of loneliness, social anxiety, etc.

Keywords: *Integration policies ; international relations ; migration.*

1. Introduction

After the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty from 1997, the migrants have enjoyed the European Union's initiative to grant visas and residence permits based on the migration policy that was implemented in the European space. Thus appeared a new concept of European mobility, by assuming and understanding the need for the absorption of migrants in the community. But as a result of the social instabilities that have emerged in some of the non-EU states, the phenomenon of the migration crisis appeared in 2015. Approximately one million refugees and migrants were registered in the EU in 2015 and 2016. After this peak of the crisis, the EU improves the conditions of acceptance by increasing border security. Following investigations conducted by the European Union, it is noticed that the data reporting the number of migrants for Bulgaria during 2008-

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2011 is missing. But out of over three million European-wide migrants, Bulgaria and Romania are among the countries where the number of emigrants exceeded the number of immigrants [eurostat 2018]. Between 2014 and 2016 Bulgaria has registered a number of 32.2 thousand migrants, and Romania a number of 38.8 thousand migrants [1, 2].

The pursuit of a form of education in the European area by migrants and political refugees is an EU priority. Policies and strategies in this area make the integration of migrants into the European education system a solution for its support, following the demographic decline.

But how many of the migrants from the European area intend to benefit from a higher education? Do the policies and strategies in the field of university education help them fulfill their dream of studying in the EU? Are the higher education systems prepared to sustain this student invasion? Are there any barriers? How do migrants choose their form of study and how do they choose faculties in the EU? All these are questions that we hear more often when new policies and strategies are being developed and when the autonomy of the university works correctly, but needs medium and long term predictions to ensure a non-discriminatory and qualitative learning system for all the participants. Unlike Romania, in Bulgaria, there is a decision-making system at the organizational / university level. Its decentralization is interesting for other states, as it can be a solution to develop specific actions. They can control the integration of migrants and can ensure the long-term quality of the system without any disturbance. But the best system was created in Germany, where DAAD scholarships and the INTEGRA program were established. Mandatory Language Examination did not reduce the annual demands for migrants to enroll, but it is a barrier to be taken into account. Through social media platforms, through specific web technologies, information, audio-video content and text can be shared. Of course, when you want to increase the visibility of an institution both internationally and nationally, their use is welcome and even indicated.

Since 1995, according to the Law of Higher Education, there are 3 stages in the Bulgarian Higher Education System, namely - a bachelor's (four years of education), a Master (at least one year after the Bachelor's degree) and a doctorate (at least 3 years after Master's). External monitoring and evaluation is under the responsibility of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency [3,4]. The Agency was established by the Higher Education Act as the statutory body for assessment, accreditation and quality monitoring in higher education and scientific institutions.

A member of a third country who has already been admitted as a student in a Member State of the European Union and who asks to take part of the education period with which he is employed or to complete him / her

with a related training course in Bulgaria may receive a prolonged period of leave for a period consistent with the duration of the studies [5,6].

The idea of the present paper started from the fact that discussions and common ideas within these platforms have led to the overcoming of social and educational barriers among migrants. Also, the risks associated with these platforms have not been forgotten: misinformation, substitution of persona, building racist groups, ignorance, etc. The mobility for migrant students is a current solution to attract foreign students to study in the countries where they reside. In Romania, the number of migrants enrolled in education has increased since 2005, from 7893 to 8471 in 2006, 8698 in 2007, 8470 in 2008, 11616 in 2009 and 12587 in 2010. Out of these, the number of those enrolled in universities in Romania was about 80%. However, it should be borne in mind that most of those who come to study in Romania are part of families with a Romanian member, so the policies and strategies for their integration at national level are easily assimilable, the family being a factor of stability in this case.

2. Target group

The target group consisted of 50 people from the Petroleum - Gas University of Romania and 50 people from partner universities with the same profile from Bulgaria. It was not chosen accidentally, it took into account the communities where there is a migrant that is integrated into the higher education system but also in the local communities through the family members that have stable jobs and benefit from the policies of the respective country.

3. Research Methods. Methodology

The surveys for the target group were distributed online and they were based on the benefits of social media. It was taken into account a maximum error margin of 1.8% calculated at a 93% level of confidence. The target group consisted of 50 people from the Petroleum - Gas University of Romania and 50 people from partner universities with the same profile from Bulgaria. It was not chosen accidentally, it took into account the communities where there is a migrant that is integrated into the higher education system but also in the local communities through the family members that have stable jobs and benefit from the policies of the respective country. The use of social media for the questionnaire made the answers independent of stereotypes. The respondents introduced comments and opinions from the community they live in. The qualitative research in this case had a double role: improving the integration policies in academic

education for migrants, as well as solutions for expanding and adapting outgoing and incoming mobilities to the requirements of this social category. All the migrants were students from oil engineering faculties.

A parallel was initiated between the policies for admission of foreign students to studies in two countries of the European Union and explicitly between two universities with approximately the same profile: Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti and St. Ivan University of Mining and Geology Rilski, Bulgaria. The comparison between the two universities is possible because both the structure of the study programs is similar and the evolution after 1990.

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In Bulgaria there are 51 institutions considered higher education (37 public and 14 private). Of these 42 are universities and 9 are colleges (3 years of study). St. Ivan Rilski University of Mining and Geology is the only higher education institution in Bulgaria that offers high quality studies in the field of prospecting, mining and processing of minerals and energy resources. Nowadays, more than 350 specialists work at UMG "St. Ivan Rilski" - teachers, associate professors, assistants, lecturers and administrative staff teachers. The University has 2700 students in various fields of geology, mining and technical sciences. In 2006, UMG "St. Ivan Rilski" obtained the highest degree of accreditation in Bulgaria. There are 43 masters courses at UMG "St. Ivan Rilski".

Structure:

- Faculty of Mining Technologies
- Faculty of Geology and Exploration
- Faculty of Mining Electromechanics
- Department of Humanities
- Kardjali branch of the UMG “St.Ivan Rilski”

In order to obtain the extended right of residence on admission to full-time studies at "ST.IVAN RILSKI" UNIVERSITY, third-country nationals must provide the following documents:

1. a certificate of admission to studies in the Republic of Bulgaria issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science and a certificate

issued by the higher school stating that the applicant of the third country will be trained during the respective year;

2. a proof of the fee paid for enrollment in higher schools which will be presented after the person has entered the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria with a visa.

4. Results and discussion

The questionnaires were online using the Survey Monkey platform. The answer was chosen from the predefined responses list. The responses were analyzed using the "Analyze results" option. Of the 50 migrant people at the Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti, 82% were male and 18% were female. Of the 50 people - migrants from the partner universities in Bulgaria - 56% were male and 44% were female.

The questions that have been asked and their answers are outlined below.

1. The reaction of the community when they find out that you are a migrant is positive or negative. The answer was "yes" or "no".

The responses received from the migrants studying in Bulgaria were totally different from those received from migrants enrolled at the engineering departments of the Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti. Thus, 48% of Bulgarian students responded that the impact is positive, compared with only 23% of Romanian students who responded that the impact is positive.

2. Did you choose the university considering the national ranking? The answer was “yes” or “no”.

The feedback received from the two categories of students was similar. Students who responded with "yes" in Romania were 69%, and those in Bulgaria were 73%. The rest responded with "no".

3. Did you choose the university based on its location in the EU? The answer was "yes" or "no".

11% of Romanian students did not answer this question, 23% said no, and the rest of 66% answered yes. 44% of Bulgarian students responded yes, 56% answered that they did not.

4. Did you receive information about universities on socialization platforms and were you influenced in your choice? The answer was "yes" or "no".

8% of Romanian students said no, and the rest of 92% answered yes. 6% of Bulgarian students responded yes, the rest responded with "no".

5. Have you chosen the university considering the distance from your native country? The answer was "yes" or "no".

42% of Romanian students said no, and the rest of 58% answered yes. 31% of Bulgarian students responded yes, 69% answered no.

So it does not matter to migrants away from the country where they were born and studied high school.

6. Have you chosen the university for its reputation internationally? The answer was "yes" or "no".

88% of Romanian students said no, and the rest of 12% answered yes. 76% of Bulgarian students responded yes, 24% answered that they did not.

7. Was the interview selection difficult, easy or medium? On a scale of 1 to 5, please appreciate the quality of the interview. 1 corresponds to the appreciation very easy and 5 very difficult.

68% of Romanian students gave grades ranging from 3 to 5, 12% scored 2 and 20% did not dare to answer this question. 66% of Bulgarian students gave grades in grades 3 and 4, 34% scored 2.

8. Have you chosen the study program according to the competencies offered? The answer was "yes" or "no".

22% of Romanian students said no, and the rest of 78% answered yes. 46% of Bulgarian students responded yes, 54% answered no.

9. Are you still in contact with your former college or high school colleagues? The answer was "yes" or "no".

88% of Romanian students said yes, and the rest of 12% answered no. 76% of Bulgarian students responded yes, 24% answered that they did not.

10. If yes, do you tell them on your social media platforms about your academic experiences? The answer was "yes" or "no".

1% of Romanian students said no, and the rest of 99% answered yes. 4% of Bulgarian students responded yes, 96% answered no. So the role of socialization platforms is very important in disseminating students' study and social experiences.

11. Do you think that academic learning mobility improves the situation of the migrant in the current socio-political context? The answer was "yes" or "no".

2% of Romanian students said no, and the rest of 98% answered yes. 1% of Bulgarian students responded yes, 99% answered no.

This explains the openness of migrant students to study mobility abroad. From the experience of the partner universities in the two countries involved in this study, migrant students are the most important category of applicants for scholarships offered by the various programs.

12. Is access to education easy in Romania? The answer was "yes" or "no".

28% of Romanian students said no, and the rest of 72% answered yes. 66% of Bulgarian students responded yes, 34% answered no. The proportions in the two countries are similar and that the education systems are compatible in terms of study programs.

13. Is access to education easy in Bulgaria and Romania? The answer was "yes" or "no".

22% of Romanian migrant students said no, and the rest of 78% answered yes. 41% of Bulgarian students responded yes, 59% answered no.

14. Is there a sense of school belonging? The answer was "yes" or "no".

22% of Romanian migrant students don't answer, 34% answered yes and the rest answered no. 4% of Bulgarian migrant students don't answer, 43% answered yes and the rest answered no.

15. Have you experienced any bullying? The answer was "yes" or "no".

88% of Romanian students said no, and the rest of 12% answered yes. 36% of Bulgarian students responded yes, 74% answered that they did not. The answer given by Bulgarian students is worrying for the integration of migrants in this higher education system.

5. Conclusions

Effective integration policies must be considered as a priority on the migration agenda of any government, regardless of whether migrants are temporarily staying or permanently settling in the country. Integration is essential for all stakeholders to benefit from migration and the contribution it brings to the security, prosperity and stability of society.

Immigrants' access to the Romanian education system takes place in the context of ensuring the conditions for the integration of foreigners who have been granted a right of residence in Romania, in the country's economic, social and cultural life. According to the provisions of the National Education Law, compulsory education in Romania is of 10 grades and includes primary, secondary and high school education. At the age of 18, the obligation to attend 10-grade education and frequent courses, ceases. Migrants must bring their diploma from home. If these cannot be brought, the EU proposes "special methods of recognition of diplomas": self-declarations, exams, interviews with university professors, etc.

Obstacles identified in persuading migrant students to study in Bulgaria and Romania

• The incompatibility of Bulgarian education with the current needs of an international community that is heading towards globalization, requiring individuals with a broad orientation - highly cultivated and with a vision of the liberal world.

• Higher education does not play a leading role in developing opinions on public capacities and opportunities for development but is instead used to provide explanations (and a positive one, as is often expected) about policy decisions that were made;

• Lack of a clear long-term development strategy for Bulgarian higher education and Bulgarian society;

• Insufficient funding, which would not allow the necessary changes to be made on a large scale in thinking.;

• The Western European higher education funding model would not be adequate for Bulgaria, as Western European universities are suffering a crisis: they are unable to provide their own funding, they are based on the sponsorship of a prosperous state.

• Lack of the relationship between the dynamics of higher education and the dynamics of the changes taking place in the country:

• Ambiguous identification of faculty members with the universities they work for.

• Bulgaria has always maintained close relations regarding education with countries in the region, with a number of actively supported bilateral agreements that have had an important impact in supporting cultural and educational diversification in the region.

Recently, Bulgaria has also been involved in encouraging the exchange of information and experience, studies and research, teacher training (regional educational projects of particular importance) at regional level. Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, which coordinates international cooperation in the field of education, youth and science at national level, has taken important steps towards conceiving "national schemes" for the development of mobility. These are not only intended to improve the international mobility of teachers and students engaged in higher education but also to strengthen the governmental framework for academic research and activities in a wider context. In addition, the project National Youth Strategy 2010-2024 identifies the creation of a favorable environment for young people from and coming to Bulgaria. This act encourages them to participate in intercultural and international dialogue as one of the strategic objectives for youth development.

The importance of internationalization of university education in the process of admission of foreign students to Bulgaria

The internationalization of university education in any society isbased on [1]:

• the way society perceives education in the context of social and cultural economic development;

• continuous adaptation of university programs to technological change;

• integrate the education process in the international context to meet the requirements of society and graduates;

• preparing the future specialists in the context of a high demand for their mobility;

• providing ancillary resources / research / programs meant to lead to the stability of the university system in the context of decreasing government funds.

In Bulgaria universities have a high level of autonomy and therefore there is no common curriculum. There is also a lack of teaching resources and a lack of teachers and lecturers with knowledge of teaching these subjects.

The existence of a Facebook account used to maintain social ties, based on responses from study subjects, finds similarity in the Bicen and Cavus study in 2011 that identifies communication and information as the main motivations for using this platform[7]. The study also highlighted the fact that international students succeed in identifying co-national students in the host country, although the main purpose of the mobility period was to meet academic requirements. The use of online socialization platforms during periods of mobility represents only a small part of the spectrum of analyzes undertaken in the field of sociology of higher education, a complex social phenomenon with multiple faces and consequences for all the actors involved in it. The decision to study abroad is of an individual nature as well as the use of online social media platforms, being determined by a multitude of socio-cultural, psychological and financial factors. The unprecedented technological revolution and unprecedented development of the internet network and devices that can be accessed by the virtual environment is a contributing factor in building and maintaining the social capital of individuals who choose to spend a period of life in academic mobility. Addressing the role of online socialization platforms in the mobility period knows a duality of experts' opinions. If much of the opinion goes to the benefits of socializing in the virtual environment, in the sense that these interactions facilitate integration into the new academic environment and

overcome cultural shock, there are voices who believe that using these tools favors loneliness, social anxiety, etc.

• Other examples of educational offers: PLOTEUS: the information sorting is the strength of the site that presents the underside offer from 30 states.

• Effective integration policies must be considered as a priority on the migration agenda of any government, regardless of whether migrants are temporarily staying or permanently settling in the country. Integration is essential for all stakeholders to benefit from migration and the contribution it brings to the security, prosperity and stability of society.

Bulgaria, like many other countries, believes that one of the keys to addressing the problem is the entrepreneurial skills of young people. The easy transition from education to work can be achieved through internships, business training, professional courses. Consequently, it was decided to set up a thematic group composed of experts from the Member States and the European Commission, aiming at the exchange of good practices in promoting the creativity and innovative potential of young people by identifying the skills and abilities acquired through formal and informal learning relevant to the labor market.

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