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## ► Temporary labour migration: Towards social justice?



Edited by  
Christiane Kuptsch  
and Fabiola Mieres



# ▶ **Temporary labour migration: Towards social justice?**

Edited by Christiane Kuptsch and Fabiola Mieres

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## ▶ Contributors

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▶ **Mariana ALVARADO**

Senior Researcher, University of Geneva, Switzerland

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▶ **Ryszard CHOLEWINSKI**

Senior Migration Specialist, Decent Work Technical Support Team, ILO Regional Office for Arab States, Beirut, Lebanon

---

▶ **Daniel COSTA**

Director of Immigration Law and Policy Research, Economic Policy Institute, Washington, D.C., United States

---

▶ **Paula HOFFMEYER-ZLOTNIK**

Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Cologne, Germany

---

▶ **Joanna HOWE**

Professor of Law, Associate Dean (Research), Adelaide Law School, The University of Adelaide, Australia

---

▶ **Sophia KAGAN**

Independent researcher in labour migration, Melbourne, Australia

---

▶ **Christiane KUPTSCH**

Senior Specialist in Migration Policy, Labour Migration Branch, ILO, Geneva, Switzerland

---

▶ **Sandra LAVENEX**

Professor of European and International Politics, University of Geneva, Switzerland

---

▶ **Philipp LUTZ**

Senior Researcher, University of Geneva, Switzerland; and Assistant Professor in Political Science, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands

---

▶ **Fabiola MIERES**

Researcher, Research Department, ILO, Geneva, Switzerland

---

▶ **Etienne PIGUET**

Professor, Institute of Geography, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

---

▶ **Natalia POPOVA**

Senior Labour Economist, Labour Migration Branch, ILO, Geneva, Switzerland

---

▶ **Ludger PRIES**

Senior Professor, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany

---

▶ **Aurelia SEGATTI**

Labour Migration and Mobility Specialist, Decent Work Team North Africa and the Horn, ILO, Rabat, Morocco

---

▶ **Christian SCHRAMM**

Postdoctoral Researcher, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany

---

▶ **Ronald SKELDON**

Emeritus Professor, University of Sussex, United Kingdom; and Emeritus Professor, Maastricht University, The Netherlands

---

▶ **Leah F. VOSKO**

Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Distinguished Research Professor of Political Economy, York University, Toronto, Canada

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▶ **Berna Şafak ZÜLFİKAR SAVCI**

Postdoctoral Researcher, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany

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## Chapter 3.

# ► Mobility within the European Union: Capturing its complexity to guide policy

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Christian Schramm

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

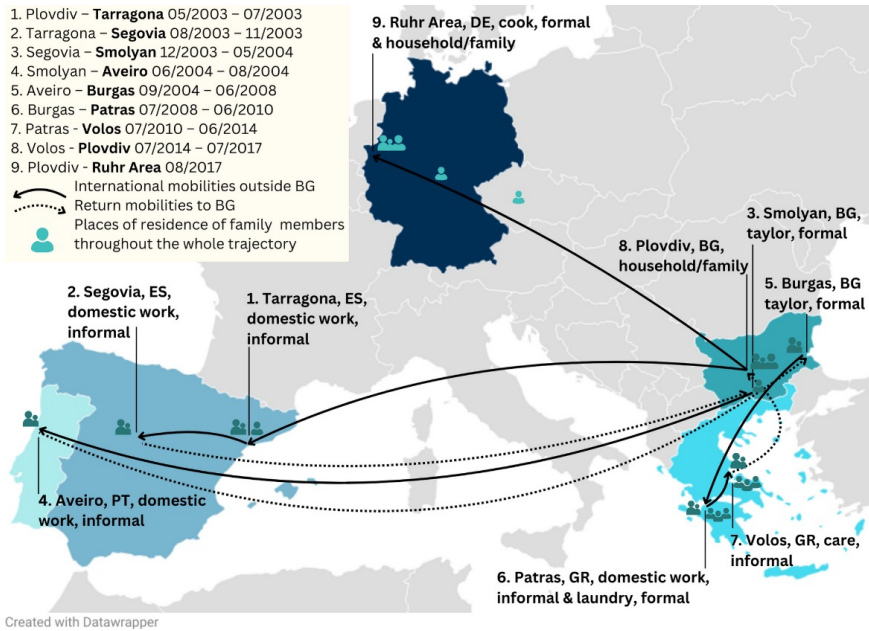
Viktoria, born in 1977, left Plovdiv, Bulgaria, for the first time in May 2003 because “life in the country was not easy and I wanted to give my child a better future”. For several months she worked informally as a domestic worker in Spain and later in Portugal. In the autumn of 2004 she returned to Bulgaria, to the city of Burgas. In 2008 she went to Greece, and after a period of informal work, again in the domestic sector, she managed to find formal employment in a laundry and later again informally as a care worker. In 2014 she returned to Plovdiv, where her second child was born. She looked after the household and family until 2017, when she moved to Germany. There she initially worked as a cook with a formal contract, but later decided to stay at home to care for her family exclusively. At the time of the interview in 2022, her partner was considering taking up a job in another European Union (EU) country, so she had to decide whether to move again.

Throughout her mobility trajectory, Viktoria was part of a changing transnational family arrangement, with some family members living in the same place and others in different countries. She experienced divorce, new partnerships and new motherhood. **Figure 1** summarizes Viktoria’s trajectory.<sup>2</sup>

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1 All of the data presented here was collected and analysed as part of the project “ZuSudo: Migration from South East Europe – Enabling participation and cohesion at the municipal level”, a project focussing on migration dynamics between Romania/Bulgaria and the German Ruhr area. For more information, see Schramm and Pries (2024) and: <https://eu2migraruhr.eu/>.

2 For anonymization purposes, exact placenames have been replaced by larger administrative units.

► **Figure 1. Viktoria's migration**

Source: ZuSudo project.

Viktoria's case illustrates multiple movements between different EU countries, starting in 2003 when she was not yet an EU citizen with the right to free movement in the region. There were a number of longer and shorter stays both abroad and in the home country (in different places). Initially, one finds recurring configurations of the type and conditions of employment she experienced in the home and host countries (formal work as a tailor versus informal domestic/care work), which begin to diversify after the end of the transitional arrangement for workers from Romania and Bulgaria and the application of full freedom of movement in Greece in 2009. Her migration project is rather of a contingent character and linked to the course of the events when she says that "it all depends on the mood and where we've got to and what the future holds". Her decisions to move were based on different reasons, sometimes more economic, sometimes more family-related, sometimes more individual. Her social relationships and self-positionings span several changing countries. At one moment they are more clearly centred in one place, at another less so. Throughout her mobility and work trajectory, she has been classified as a *migrant* and *third-country national*, as a *long-term mover* in need of comprehensive integration support, and as a *short-term mover* who only wants to work abroad for a limited period of time.

State and non-state actors – such as nation States, EU institutions, trade unions, local municipalities and migrant organizations – all apply categories on which they base their respective policies of support and/or control and restriction. But in which category would we place Viktoria’s case? Is she a long-term migrant or is she exercising temporary labour mobility – and at what stage(s) of her trajectory could she be considered either? What is the significance of her international social, economic and other life references? What might a programme look like that addresses her changing needs over time in terms of access to labour and social rights in different EU countries? What about recognition of acquired experiences? Or a programme that supports her in managing a work–family balance and finally provides tailored information to guide her towards future biographical projects? Where should such programmes be implemented, and by which type(s) of actors?

To answer these questions, it is first necessary to clarify the understanding of migration as a complex social process (Massey 1987; Pries 2020). Migration takes place in interaction with a variety of actors, rules, norms and principles at different levels (local, regional, national, international). Migrants are always embedded in social networks (of kinship, religious or political groups, professions, and so on) and should not be considered as isolated actors. They are in a constant process of negotiation with themselves and others, which makes migration projects always open to change. Cross-border migration generally contributes to the internationalization of the individual life worlds of both migrants and non-migrants.

Viktoria’s example illustrates a specific type of linking of different places across national borders, which could be classified as transnational migration and which we will describe in more detail below. The term “transnational” is used here to refer to the processes by which migrants “forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch, Schiller and Szanton 1994, 6). Transnational migrants exhibit cross-border economic, social, cultural and political practices and pluri-local life references in several countries. Where these are sufficiently persistent, dense and frequent, they form transnational social spaces that have a significant impact on the everyday lives of migrants and non-migrants (see also Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Tedeschi, Vorobeva and Jauhiainen 2022). In contrast to the understanding of migration as a complex social process, the term mobility here refers to spatial movement over a certain period of time between and within countries of origin and arrival.

The main thesis of this chapter is that we first need to better understand the complexity of intra-EU migration and mobility in order to develop appropriate migration and social policies. Therefore, we propose a typology of intra-EU migration that helps to identify the specific characteristics of different types of mobile EU workers. Based on this typology, specific programmes could address the needs associated with each of these types. As an empirical example, we present an analysis of Romanian and Bulgarian (temporary) labour migration. We use a mix of quantitative and qualitative data – a survey with 600 respondents and eleven semi-biographical interviews, with a special focus on mobility and work trajectories – collected in the German Ruhr Area and in places of origin in Romania and Bulgaria in 2021–22.

Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007, in the second round of the EU's eastward enlargement. Similar to the first round in 2004, this enlargement was met with controversy in many Western European countries due to concerns about the potential negative impact on national labour markets and welfare states. Until 2014, some countries limited the full right of movement for workers and restricted access to labour markets and welfare entitlements (Barbulescu and Favell 2020). Challenges faced by both state and non-state actors, particularly in the areas of local integration or law monitoring and enforcement, are linked to the high level of socio-demographic diversity among migrants, the complex patterns of mobility, the related modes of participation in the labour and housing market as well as schooling, and the differentiated entitlements and access to social rights (Black et al. 2010; Recchi 2015; Engbersen et al. 2017). Labour migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, including Romanians and Bulgarians, are an essential workforce in various occupational sectors such as hotels and catering, agriculture, construction, manufacturing, domestic work and the medical professions. However, they often face challenges such as overqualification, lower wage levels and occupational status, atypical employment relationships, precarious working conditions and labour exploitation (DGB Bildungswerk 2023; Leschke and Weiss 2023; FRA 2019).

This chapter is structured as follows. The next section provides an overview of the framework of the intra-EU labour migration regime and the main labour mobility patterns. Subsequently, a brief literature review on intra-EU migration is presented, with a special focus on Central and Eastern European migrants. In the main section of the chapter, we present quantitative and qualitative empirical data to illustrate the different types of migration and their related needs. Finally, we outline the main features of potential support programmes for migrants.

## The intra-EU labour migration regime

### The regime setting<sup>3</sup>

In the European Union, international labour migration under the principle of freedom of movement is a fundamental right for EU citizens, guaranteed by article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and article 15 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. EU Regulations and Directives specify the rules for employment, equal treatment, workers' families and conditions to reside in another EU country for more than three months. As case law applies to the free movement of workers, the Court of Justice of the European Union has played an important role in further defining categories of workers, the right of residence for jobseekers and the access to social benefits (European Parliament, n.d.-a).

EU law distinguishes between standard labour migration of workers with a regular dependent employment contract and a residence in the respective Member State and various forms of seasonal employment, cross-border workers (between neighbouring countries), self-employment and the posting of workers. This implies differences in employment and working conditions, freedom of association and opportunities for participation in collective bargaining, social security and tax obligations, as well as different configurations of national regulatory frameworks to which workers are subjected (Wagner and Hassel 2016; Ulceluse and Kahanec 2023; Siöland et al. 2023). The most complex transnational configurations between companies, workers and authorities are to be found in the case of posted workers, to which article 56 TFEU relates (De Wispelaere, de Smedt and Pacolet 2022; ETUC 2016). To address these complexities and the increasing difficulties faced by national authorities in monitoring compliance with and enforcing existing international regulations, the European Labour Authority (ELA) was established in 2019. The ELA supports the creation of fair European labour markets and welfare systems (Cremers 2020), and was established following consultations with Member States, trade unions and employers' associations.<sup>4</sup>

Interacting state and non-state actors are located at the international, national, regional and local levels (Scholten and Van Ostajen 2018). Local authorities in origin and arrival countries have limited capacity to inform (potential) migrants of how to avoid and respond to fraud and abuse. To address this issue, some European trade unions have established transnational advisory networks

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<sup>3</sup> Here we understand a migration regime as a set of institutionalized rules, expectations and practices related to mobility, involving a variety of state and non-state actors.

<sup>4</sup> Following the principle of social dialogue (European Parliament, n.d.-b).

and introduced new forms of flexible membership for mobile workers.<sup>5</sup> There is also a wide range of different types of formal and informal intermediaries that provide and shape employment relations, access to housing and social protection in general. They are located in countries of origin and arrival as well as in other EU countries, and may have different types of organizational structures (Shire et al. 2018; FRA 2019; Voivozeanu and Lafleur 2023).

In this setting, decisions to move to a certain place, for how long, into which sector of employment, with or without the family members and so on are not restricted by visa requirements or influenced by quotas set by States or employers.<sup>6</sup> Migration projects and mobility trajectories are instead shaped by individual experiences, preferences, expectations and available resources, and are embedded in networks of social relationships.

## Intra-EU labour mobility patterns and measurement intents

The enlargements of the EU in 2004 and 2007 significantly altered mobility patterns both in terms of volume and direction. It is estimated that in the short period between 2003 and 2009 approximately 3 million “new” EU citizens moved into the “old” EU-15 countries (Holland et al. 2011, 49). Since the turn of the century, the total number of European citizens residing in a Member State other than their own has more than doubled, reaching approximately 15 million (Wiśniowski, Aparicio-Castro and Yildiz 2023, as cited in Sanchez Gassen 2023, 8).<sup>7</sup>

Data on intra-EU labour mobility is usually drawn from Eurostat and the European Union Labour Force Survey, or it is estimated through specific methodologies. Data collection has proven to be challenging due to the characteristics of these movements, and because the different instruments that Member States use to measure movements have in themselves deficiencies and are not easy to harmonize (see Fries-Tersch et al. 2020, Annex 3). The European Commission nevertheless makes an effort to classify intra-EU mobility into “long-term movers” (residence for at least 12 months in another country) and

5 See the network Fair European Labour Mobility assisting mobile EU workers from Central and Eastern European countries: <https://www.fair-labour-mobility.eu/>.

6 Yet there are also efforts to create recruitment programmes for certain sectors. An example is the project “Fair recruitment procedures for workers in the meat industry”. Negotiations were initiated in 2021 between the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the employers’ association of the German meat industry, trade unions and EURES (European Employment Services), but no results have been achieved.

7 The data used in this and the following section follows the logic of presentation in Hassan et al. (2023). It may include citizens from EFTA countries (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein) but usually does not include the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. For detailed information see Hassan et al. (2023).

“short-term movers” (residence abroad for less than 12 months). These two groups can be further subdivided, partially based on legal grounds. Cross-border workers (residence in one country but employed or self-employed in another with regular movements across borders) are classified as short-term and include mainly frontier workers (between neighbouring countries) but also refer to seasonal workers and some posted workers. The European Commission further collects data on returnees as long-term movers, the number of postings of workers and the overall number of posted workers (see Fries-Tersch et al. 2020, 17-19 and 80-113).

The Eurostat data on the stock of long-term movers show that in 2021, 10.2 million EU citizens of working age (20 to 64 years) were living in another EU Member State, making up 3.9 per cent of the total EU working-age population. In 2020, 589,000 long-term returnees were counted (Hassan et al. 2023, 21-22). To estimate the extent and development of short-term mobility, data on posting of workers, cross-border workers and the length of employment contracts are considered. The general trend shows a growing importance of the posting of workers and short-term contracts limited to 12 months throughout the EU. However, different corridors between countries of origin and arrival can show their own characteristics regarding shorter or longer stays. For example, short-term mobility was very high between Poland and the Netherlands, while long-term mobility predominated between Poland and Austria (Fries-Tersch et al. 2020, 80-113). In 2021, there were an estimated 2.6 million posted workers and 1.7 million cross-border workers (Hassan et al. 2023, 22). One form of short-term mobility is seasonal work, which is particularly difficult to capture and can only be roughly estimated at 650,000 to 850,000 seasonal workers (Siöland et al. 2023). Germany remains the most important single destination country, receiving around 40 per cent of intra-EU migrants, followed by Spain, Italy, Switzerland and France. Romania is by far the most important country of origin, accounting for 27 per cent of the migrant population, followed by Poland, Italy, Portugal and Bulgaria (Hassan et al. 2023, 34-39). Romania and Bulgaria are among the EU countries with the highest percentage of their working-age population living in another Member State. In 2020, Romania ranked first with 18.6 per cent; Bulgaria was fourth with 10.3 per cent (Eurostat 2020).

EU data on flows show millions of EU citizens enter or leave an EU country (including their own) every year. In 2019, this figure was 3 million people (Hassan et al. 2023, 47-50). While Germany has been leading the net immigration statistics for years, Romania remains by far the main net sending country even during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hassan et al. 2023, 31). The growth rate of the number of Romanian and Bulgarian citizens living abroad has slowed down, but the inflow and outflow mobility for both countries remains high (Hassan et al. 2023, 47-50). In recent years, the number of third-country nationals moving to Central and Eastern European countries that were previously characterized by emigration, such as Poland, Croatia or Romania, has risen sharply. These

third-country nationals are being recruited abroad by a rapidly growing number of private agencies seeking to meet the labour demand in these countries (Rannveig Mendoza 2020).

## Labour market participation patterns

On average across the European Union, EU migrants have slightly higher activity rates and fairly similar employment rates compared to nationals, though there are few differences between long-term and short-term migrants. However, unemployment is higher in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of the type of employment relationship, EU migrants on average have much lower rates of self-employment than nationals and higher shares of fixed-term contracts and part-time employment (Hassan 2023, 62-73). The largest employment sectors for EU migrants are manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and construction (Hassan et al. 2023, 82). Compared to nationals, EU migrants are under-represented in occupations requiring higher skill levels and over-represented in occupations requiring low to medium skills, such as cleaners and helpers; labourers in mining, construction, manufacturing and transport; building and related trades workers; and personal service workers (Hassan et al. 2023, 142.). In these occupations, EU migrants are more likely to be overqualified (Hassan et al. 2023, 146-149).

However, these overall averages can vary considerably depending on the country corridors and nationalities studied. Cross-border workers, referring mainly to the legal category of frontier workers, are usually analysed by macro-region, but in general it can be said that they are more likely to be employed in manufacturing and construction than other EU migrants (Hassan et al. 2023, 103). For posted workers, construction and international road freight transport are the main sectors, again taking into account certain differences such as the importance of agriculture and shipbuilding in France, or live-in care from Poland to Germany (De Wispelaere, De Smedt and Pacolet 2022, 43). Seasonal workers fill labour demand when local supply is not available at certain times of the year. They do this mainly in agriculture and in the hospitality and tourism sectors (Siöland et al. 2023).<sup>8</sup> Another increasingly important form of labour mobility is human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation. This occurs mainly in the construction, agriculture, forestry, food processing, hospitality, cleaning services, and domestic work sectors, and affects many Central and Eastern European migrants (Pamporov 2023; GRETA 2019).

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<sup>8</sup> Estimations for Germany, for instance, indicate that during the peak months of May and June, around 26 per cent of the total workforce in agriculture are seasonal workers, mainly from Poland, Romania and other Central and Eastern European countries (Siöland et al. 2023, 21).



## Research on intra-EU migration

As shown in the previous section, labour mobility in the EU and individual migration projects are highly complex. There have been many academic efforts to characterize them. Research can be broadly grouped into three strands: the first adopts a macro-regime perspective, emphasizing linkages across national and international levels; the second examines the specific dynamics in places of arrival or of origin, including policy responses and micro-level impacts on migrant workers and their families; and the third adopts a more pronounced transnational perspective.

In the first strand we find studies that examine the interrelationship between different types of labour mobility, their legal categorization, contextual conditions (for example, transitional arrangements) and changes in labour markets, welfare systems and policies (Dølvik and Eldring 2016; Engbersen et al. 2017; Heindlmaier and Blauburger 2017; Arnholtz and Leschke 2023; Michel and Schmitt 2023). In the second strand we find studies that focus on the integration of Central and Eastern European migrants in places of arrival (labour market, housing, schooling, health, social protection/welfare state) and the interactions with local authorities, organizations and other intermediary networks (Jennissen et al. 2023; Scholten and Van Ostajen 2018; Voivozeanu and Lafleur 2023). Besides the focus on how to manage complex migration/integration patterns, the emphasis of the second research strand is often on precarious working and living conditions in general. Some studies focus on the origins and discriminatory effects of categorizations based on ethnic-cultural attributions (Magazzini and Piemontese 2019; Ratzmann 2022; Lewicky 2023). There are also studies that look at the demographic, social, political and economic impacts in countries of origin, namely political participation of migrants, brain drain, youth drain, labour shortages, unequal development, remittances and returns that influence social structures (Anghel, Fauser and Boccagni 2019; Garrote-Sanchez, Kreuder and Testaverde 2021; King et al. 2022). We also find studies here that apply a life-course approach (Vlase and Voicu 2018), and some edited volumes seek to integrate these different perspectives (Black et al. 2010; Glorius, Grabowska-Lusinska and Kuvik 2013).

The third line of studies aims to analyse the different countries or places of origin and arrival within an integrated perspective, including transnational approaches to cross-border mobility. While these studies may cover different regions of the world, they are helpful in developing more appropriate typologies of cross-border labour migration. They combine the spatial and temporal aspects of *mobility* with the subjective self-perceptions of migrants, their varied cross-border life references and the constant negotiations with themselves and others during the complex social process of *migration* (Massey et al. 1987; Pries 2004; Favell 2008; Vertovec 2009; Engbersen et al. 2013; Andrijasevic and Sacchetto 2016; Fauser and Anghel 2019; Paul and Yeoh 2020; Salamońska

and Czeranowska 2021; Ahrens and King 2023). Within this discussion, Ludger Pries (2004) suggests five ideal types of migrants,<sup>9</sup> four of which are relevant here:

- ▶ **Immigrants/emigrants:** Their goal is a permanent change of the centre of life, with perhaps shorter visits to relatives back in the country of origin, but the goal is a new life in the place of arrival for themselves and their children.
- ▶ **Return migrants:** Their aim is a medium-term stay in the country of arrival for education or to save money, with a clear intention to return. The family migrates only to a limited extent, and there are clear projects in the country of origin.
- ▶ **Transnational migrants:** Here, centres of life are distributed over different places and countries. There is no clear arrival/return strategy, and successive–iterative migration patterns are visible.
- ▶ **Circular migrants:** This type involves fairly frequent and purposeful (often seasonal) commuting between fixed places of residence in the country of origin and various places of work in one or more other countries (see **table 1** for a recent adaptation).

▶ **Table 1. Four ideal migration types**

	Emigration/ immigration	Return	Circular	Transnational
<b>No. of changes of countries</b>	1	2	many	many
<b>Geographical references</b>	bi-local	bi-local	pluri-local	pluri-local
<b>Centre of life, social relations</b>	from origin to destination	origin	origin	pluri-local
<b>Migration reasons and contexts</b>	complex, better life	work, education, forced	work, often seasonal	complex “risk diversification”
<b>Socio-ethno-cultural self-perception</b>	from origin to destination	origin	origin	transnational

**Source:** Pries (2024).

<sup>9</sup> Ideal types are conceptual constructions that emphasize certain characteristics of a social phenomenon, thereby creating consistency and making it easier to understand and explain. Empirically, these combinations of characteristic values can rarely be found (Weber 1968).

## Constructing EU migration types using the empirical case of Romanian and Bulgarian migration

In this main section, we will first show complex patterns of labour mobility that go beyond the rather rough Eurostat data. We then draw on the migration typology of Pries (2004) presented above and relate it to our empirical data from a survey of 600 Romanian and Bulgarian nationals and from qualitative interviews<sup>10</sup>. Among the 600 survey interviews, a total of 506 were conducted in the German Ruhr Area and an additional 94 were done with (temporary) returnees in Romania and Bulgaria.<sup>11</sup>

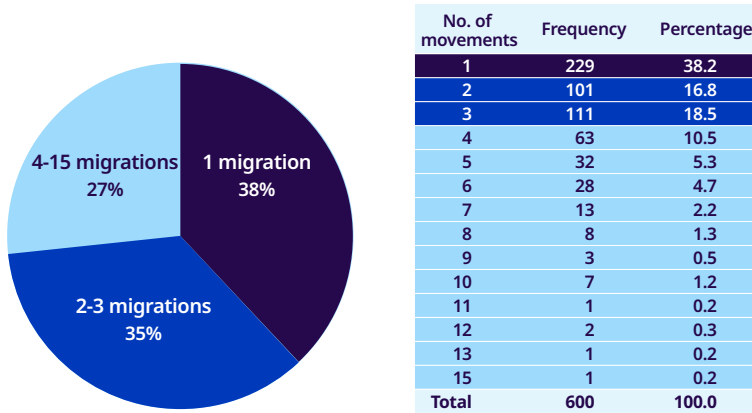
### Mobility patterns

In order to capture individual mobility trajectories, we started with the survey respondents' first international movement and then recorded all subsequent international or intra-national movements.<sup>12</sup> Our sample can be roughly divided into three groups: Individuals with one movement (38 per cent), those with 2 to 3 movements (35 per cent) and those with 4 to 15 movements (27 per cent). Across the sample group, the number of respondents decreases rapidly from the fourth movement onwards ([figure 2](#)).

<sup>10</sup> This includes: 50 ethnographic interviews, 11 biographical qualitative interviews with migrants, 63 interviews with municipal representatives for migration/integration, in agencies and migrant organizations in the Ruhr region and 9 interviews with municipal representatives in Romania.

<sup>11</sup> In all, 98 per cent of the respondents were of working age (16 to 65) at the time of the interview. There was a small percentage of people who were not of working age at the beginning of their international mobility trajectory and who were above 65 at the time of the interview. The sample was drawn mainly according to gender (50 per cent female and 50 per cent male), educational qualifications (20 per cent up to primary school; 60 per cent secondary school, vocational training or high school diploma; 20 per cent university degree) and nationality (Romanian: 55 per cent, Bulgarian 45 per cent). All persons with Romanian and Bulgarian citizenship were eligible to participate, including persons who also had Moldovan citizenship and whose trajectory began in a country other than Romania or Bulgaria. For reasons of clarity, we have refrained from mentioning these and other special features of the data. It is difficult to define the structural characteristics of the population when we are considering mobile populations and achieve representativeness through a random sample. Our sample is no exception in this regard, but it shows many similarities with the data available at the Romanian, Bulgarian and German national levels in the categories of gender, age, education, religion, language group, length of stay and in some aspects of labour market participation.

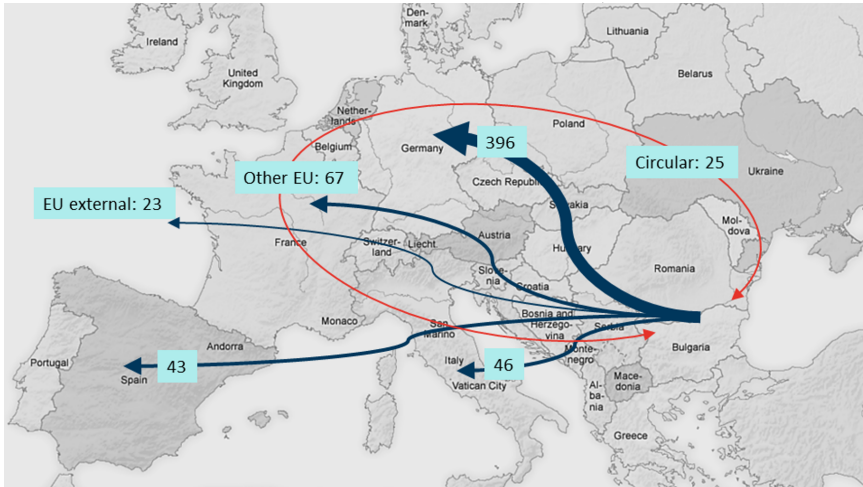
<sup>12</sup> For methodological reasons, circular movements of several weeks or a few months over a longer period of years had to be recorded as one mobility event. This applied to 42 respondents.

► **Figure 2. Number of movements among survey respondents (n=600)**

Source: ZuSudo project.

In total, we counted 33 different countries of arrival, of which 21 were inside the EU (including the United Kingdom) and 12 were outside. [Figure 3](#) shows the first movement of Romanian and Bulgarian nationals to different countries. Two thirds first went to Germany, which is not surprising given that the bulk of survey respondents were interviewed in that country. Italy and Spain were the next most common first destination, with each accounting for roughly 7.5 per cent of respondents. A slightly bigger share was distributed among a mix of other EU countries. Italy and Spain were typical destinations for Romanians, while Bulgarians were more spread out between these and other EU countries, such as the United Kingdom, France and Greece. Two smaller groups went to countries outside of the EU or engaged in circular movements.

► **Figure 3. First movement from Romania and Bulgaria among survey respondents (n=600)**

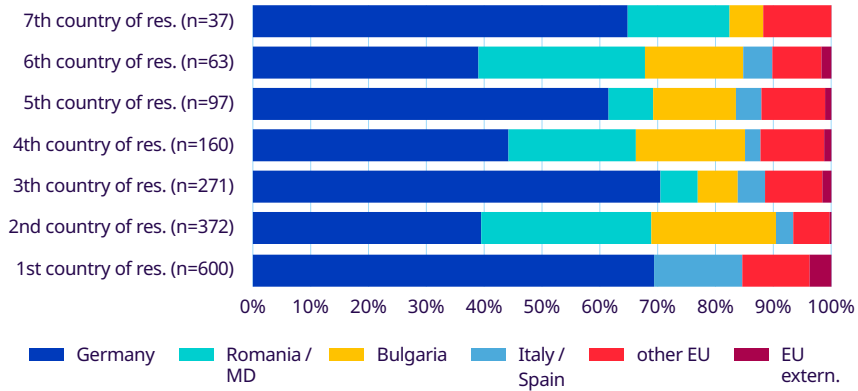


Source: ZuSudo project.

When analysing the combinations of destination countries throughout respondents' entire mobility trajectory, we find that the vast majority of people with two to three mobilities have either moved within Germany; moved from Italy, Spain or another EU country to Germany; or they had a return experience before moving to Germany.<sup>13</sup> For those with more than three mobilities, Germany and Italy/Spain were less important destinations at the beginning of their trajectories, while other EU countries and Romania/Bulgaria were more important. Later on in their mobility paths, the range of the movements narrows to destinations inside Germany or between the countries of origin and Germany. **Figure 4** shows the sequence of countries of residence with a wave-like pattern, which is mainly caused by the oscillating mobility pattern between Germany and the countries of origin. From the third movement onwards, the importance of "other EU countries" remains more or less the same.

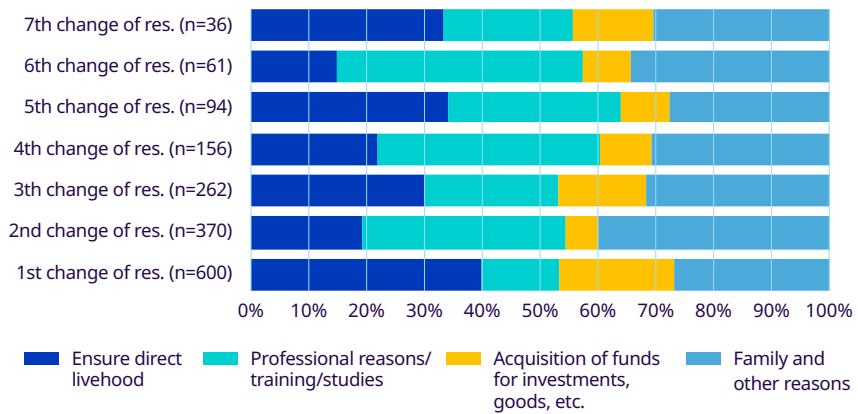
<sup>13</sup> Of the 94 returnees interviewed in Romania/Bulgaria, 30 per cent had two to three movements, the larger share had moved four or more times.

► **Figure 4. Sequence of countries of residence, first to seventh movements**



Source: ZuSudo project.

► **Figure 5. Sequence of reasons for mobility, first to seventh movements**



Source: ZuSudo project.

Figure 5 shows the frequency of the different reasons for moving, which follow a fairly similar pattern, suggesting a link with the destination countries shown in figure 4. Here we find the greatest variation in the categories of “ensuring direct livelihood” and “professional reasons/training/studies”. Moving to Germany seems to be very often associated with the first category. “Family or other reasons” (such as, homesickness or seeking medical care) seem to remain relatively stable, with a slightly larger deviation for the second movement.

## Types of migration

Typologies serve to organize our knowledge of social phenomena, and in doing so they help us to explain and understand them. Typologies highlight certain characteristics and create consistency, but at the same time, they have a certain degree of contingency and should *not* be read as deterministic classifications. There are four main variables that have guided the empirical construction of these types: (1) number of changes of residence; (2) average length of stay per residence; (3) total number of changes of employment relations or of employment status (employed versus unemployment/education) during the whole trajectory; and (4) current place of residence of partner and children. These variables are presented here with their average values for each type, after which a description of other characteristics follows. The presentation of the types immediately below follows a comparative logic, while statistical terminology is kept to a minimum.<sup>14</sup>

**1. Immigrant/emigrant families:** Respondents grouped into this type had on average, changed their place of residence 1.6 times and had changed their employment relations/status 2.6 times. Both of these average values are the lowest compared to all the other types. On the other hand, they had the longest duration of stay per residence, at an average of 6.5 years. These immigrants had moved with their partner and children, and they make up almost half of the sample. Their migration projects most commonly started in the period between 2014 and 2019, under conditions of full freedom of movement. They tended to have migrated for family-related reasons and to secure an immediate livelihood, and they did not send as much money abroad as others. They had above-average contact with the authorities and expressed a need for support in all areas of life. Language learning is an important part of personal development and is linked to social mobility in the host society. For example, from the perspective of a meat factory worker interviewed for the study, changing one's employment sector is very closely linked to language, and "only those who cannot do more in their lives stay in the factory". However, immigrant families also expressed a desire for help with their children's education and with access to health more frequently than other types. And even if the initial period of adjustment in the host society was often described as difficult, immigrants tended to have a "you either adapt or you go back if you are unhappy" attitude. Having adapted successfully, they were more positive than the other types about their chances of living up to their expectations, and they intended to stay for the long term.

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<sup>14</sup> The typology is the result of a two-step cluster analysis. The first four resulting clusters/types were then subjected to a bivariate analysis with several variables (contingency tables) to test for characteristic features. Unless otherwise stated, all the variables mentioned have shown significant associations with the respective clusters/types (min. 95 per cent).

**2. Bread-winner returnees:** This first subtype of returnees showed medium-level values compared to the other types in terms of the average number of changes of residency (2.8), the average number of years spent in each place (4.4) and the average number of changes in employment relations/status (3.7). At the time of the interview, they lived alone in the place of arrival, while their partner and children were in another country (mainly in the country of origin). This type represents 15 per cent of the sample. The time of the initial migration was more or less equally distributed before and after 2014. Securing an immediate livelihood was a more important reason for both their first and most recent movements. For their most recent movement, more general reasons related to employment or education had also become more important. As mentioned above, the typical mobility trajectories of these moderately mobile individuals included either a Southern European country or Germany as the first destination and very often a return to the country of origin before moving to their current location in Germany. It seems that for this type, securing a decent standard of living for their family by the means of migration was only a temporary solution, and after a certain period of return home, during which professional and material livelihood expectations were not met, a new movement became necessary: "If I were better off in Romania, I would go back home. ... I stay out of necessity. I lose two more years, but not more." They tended to send monthly remittances back home. Respondents in our sample who belonged to this group were disproportionately male and over 40 years old. More often than others they had no contact with local authorities or organizations, and they had the lowest values in terms of daily contact with neighbours or other people who are not compatriots or work colleagues. Also, more frequently than other types, they had an irregular residence status at the time of the interview and lacked health insurance, indicating a certain degree of precariousness. This is also suggested by the fact that respondents in this group had a greater need for support in the area of housing. This could indicate a desire to bring the family with them but an inability to do so. They also had a rather negative view of life in their current place of residence and intended to move again in the near future. The majority intended to return to Romania/Bulgaria.

**3. Young singles with a return/onward migration orientation:** This second subtype of returnees showed similar average values to the bread-winner returnees in terms of number of changes in place of residence (2.2), years lived in each place (3.7) and number of changes of employment relations/status (2.9). They tended to be younger, between 16 and 31 years old, have above-average values relating to professional education or a high school diploma, and they were mostly without a partner or children. They make up around 13 per cent of the sample. Their migration project started mainly after 2014 and was more often linked to professional/educational reasons or to future investments, or as one interviewee put it: "to get even further



and make more money". Like older returnees, they had less contact with local authorities or organizations, and more often an irregular residence status at the time of the interview. This type was neither overly positive nor overly negative about their chances of leading a life according to one's own expectations at the current place of residence. The intention to move again in the near future was more pronounced and, for some, probably linked to a certain achievement of previously set goals, as the same person said: "I have run enough for the money, now it is time for the money to come to me." However, this group of younger people seemed to have less clear plans. Among those who would consider moving, half would move back to Romania or Bulgaria and half would move elsewhere, mainly within Germany.

- 4. Transnationally oriented families:** This transnational type has the highest average number of changes of residence (5.1) and of changes of employment relations/status (7.2) compared to the other types, and the lowest average number of years lived in each place (3). In other words, they have moved much more, stayed for shorter periods and changed their employment relations/status more often than others. They were more likely than other types to have had their first international movement either before 2007 or between 2007 and 2013 and, similar to the young singles, they were more likely to have been motivated by work or earning money for investment. While half of this group travelled alone for their first move, a large majority travelled together with their partner and children from the second movement onwards. In our empirical sample, therefore, we cannot speak of transnational nuclear families scattered across different countries, but rather of transnationally oriented (nuclear) families with varied life references in different countries, as the case of Viktoria in the introduction to this chapter illustrates. About a quarter of the total sample can be classified as belonging to this type. In terms of remittances, the interviewees tended to send some money abroad, but not with the same frequency as the breadwinner returnees. They had less contact with local authorities and organizations than the immigrant families, but more than both types of returnees. Similar to the immigrant families, they more often expressed a need for assistance with their children's education. These respondents most commonly belonged to the younger middle age group of 31 to 40 years old, and they were over-represented among those with a high school diploma or university degree. They also had more knowledge of languages than the other types, probably acquired during their more varied mobility trajectory. They showed significant differences from the other types in regard to perceiving more discrimination, in expressing a more negative outlook on the possibility of living a life according to one's own ideas in their current place of residence, and in their more pronounced intentions to move again in the coming years. However, they generally did not want to move back to Romania or Bulgaria and were less certain about where they will go next.

**5. Circular migrants<sup>15</sup>:** The circular migrants in our sample mostly moved alone between specific rural and urban locations in different countries, and over a shorter period of time (from at least three weeks to a few months). On average they did this for six years, with the shortest reported period of circular movement being seven months and the longest being more than 15 years. These circular movements usually involved the countries of origin and one specific destination country. However, we also found a few cases where the country of origin was not part of the circular pattern or where three countries were involved. In two thirds of the circular movements identified, the respondents were employed in the destination country, mainly in agriculture and construction, and were unemployed at home; in the remaining third, they would work in both countries. In about half of the circular movements described, employment relationships were informal and there was no provision for health insurance. More than half of the circular migrants were involved in circular movements at the beginning of their mobility trajectory. Most of them would later be classified as “immigrants” or as “returnees”. The other half of the circular migrants showed these short-term circular patterns at some point in their overall trajectory and very few were still circulating at the time of the interview. These respondents tended to have the characteristics of *transnational migrants* with movements involving several countries and with some respondents choosing circular patterns more than once in their overall trajectory.

In terms of commonalities across the five types, the majority in all types expressed a need for support in the area of work and training at the current place of residence. Overall, we found only a small number of irregular stays and employment relationships at the time of the interview. However, looking at the whole mobility and work trajectory, we found that all five types quite often experienced at least one informal employment relationship during their first stay abroad, with this particularly being the case among breadwinner returnee respondents (49 per cent) and transnationally oriented family respondents (45 per cent). As respondents moved from location to location the proportion holding at least one informal job per location decreased with each successive movement, but this decrease was less pronounced for the transnational type. There were similar tendencies in the area of health insurance, with access becoming increasingly common with each successive movement, although less commonly so among breadwinner return type respondents. In terms of whether belonging to one of the various Romani- and Turkish-speaking minority groups was linked with a particular type of migration, we found only a weak

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<sup>15</sup> The fifth type of “circular migrants” was not constructed using cluster analysis because not all of their stays abroad could be accurately captured in the survey. We therefore used frequency analysis of variables related to the number of movements, places of residence and work, time periods, moments when circularity occurred in the overall mobility trajectory and other work-related aspects.

association.<sup>16</sup> The data show that they are slightly over-represented among immigrant families. This finding contradicts certain stereotypes, such as the supposed prevalence of high mobility among Roma and rather points to the general diversity of these groups and their mobility patterns (Toma, Tesăr and Fosztó 2018).

## Conclusion and way forward

Temporary labour migration takes different forms, ranging from frequent seasonal cross-border mobility, one-off stays and return migration to pluri-local transnational migration. Based on a survey and qualitative interviews with Romanian and Bulgarian migrants, we proposed to distinguish five types of intra-EU migration: emigration/immigration, circular migration, transnational migration and two subtypes of return migration. Such a distinction seems important because each type relates to specific vulnerabilities and resources. We also argued that people might shift between these types.

In terms of policy implications for authorities and organizations at the international, national and local levels, we consider it important as a first step to develop differentiated programmes that address the needs of each specific type, while recognizing the dynamic and contingent nature of migration processes, during which these needs can change rapidly. This implies that any consideration of migration programmes needs to be closely linked to issues of (pluri-local) integration. National and lower-level actors at destination focus more on immigration and the challenges of integration, a context in which mobility is perceived as an obstacle. National and lower-level actors in the countries of origin included in this study tend to have little incentive to proactively prepare people they perceive as potential emigrants, for fear of losing them in the longer term. Their temporary mobility and transnational engagement, whether political, cultural or economic, is viewed with ambivalence. On the one hand, it is encouraged, but on the other hand, it also challenges the status quo. Finally, organizations and authorities at the international level tend to focus more on the issues related to different forms of mobility, the way it is organized and its consequences for migrants, employers and the countries involved. For example, trade union networks or the European Labour Authority (ELA) look at how situations of fraud and abuse arise and how to respond to them, while other EU bodies are concerned with regulating access to and the portability of social security rights. Bearing in mind the potentially fluid nature of the five types, we will use them for the recommendations that follow.

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<sup>16</sup> We used mother tongue as an analytic category to capture ethnic self-identification (see Messing (2019) on further methodological considerations).

For **type 1, family immigration**, the most appropriate programmes are multi-dimensional integration programmes at the local level that address all areas of life, including family and child support, education and culture, housing, decent work, political involvement and so on, and which enable equal participation. As migration and integration are to be understood as open processes in which needs and expectations can change, different types of measures should be offered simultaneously. An important improvement could therefore be to further differentiate these programmes into services for:

1. Migration, where data and knowledge on potential countries of origin, global and European trends are continuously developed.
2. Arrival, where basic information on registration, job search, housing, schooling and access to networks is provided; where open language courses, including literacy, are offered; with clearing centres for health insurance and so on.
3. Participation, focusing on the selected areas of life – for workers, this may be housing, labour rights, the recognition of qualifications or further vocational training.
4. Integration as participation with equal opportunities in all areas of society (see Schramm and Pries 2024, 229-230).

**Type 2, older bread-winners returnees**, are the most vulnerable (as concerns employment, housing and social relations in the host society) and need support in the destination country but also in the country of origin where their partner and children live. They are less mobile, but tend to be more connected to their own socio-cultural contexts and countries of origin. As such, they need a mix of services that should include integration services provided by local authorities and organizations, but also transnationally oriented services, such as those recently set up by trade unions targeting more mobile people. At the transnational level, they may face particular challenges in claiming the social rights that derive from formal employment in the country of destination and that relate, for example, to benefits for children living in the home country. They should also receive advice before and after returning, for example, on pension rights and claiming procedures.

For **type 3, the young singles with return or onward migration intentions**, the search for professional opportunities and investment possibilities takes place mainly between the country of destination and the country of origin. On the one hand, they are the ones who are most likely to be reached by vocational training programmes (see Jeon 2019). On the other hand, they are also likely to be the most receptive to advice on investment – for example, in their own businesses in the country of origin.

**Type 4, the transnationally oriented families**, have the widest range of resources as well as the widest range of needs. They have a wider variety of work and other experiences acquired in other countries, which are often not recognized in the current country of residence. Recognition of prior formal and informal learning is key to positioning this type in the labour market (see ILO 2020), but can also play an important role beyond that, for example, when dealing with authorities or when children enter the host country's school system. They will also find it more difficult than others to claim their social rights, given their complex work trajectories. Finally, they also face the greatest challenges in terms of intra-family negotiation processes regarding the future spatial localization and the corresponding life orientations of the different generations. All in all, they need the broadest portfolio of support and advice: very local on the one hand and with a strong transnational orientation with an EU-wide focus on the other.

**Type 5, the circular migrants**, locate the centre of their lives in their place of origin. At the same time, they are most likely to experience precarious living and working conditions abroad. The work of the authorities in monitoring and enforcing regulations in the country of arrival, as well as the relevant counselling services for circular migrants, which are currently provided mainly by trade unions, need to be complemented by a dense network of easily accessible counselling centres in countries of origin. However, in order to be successful, any counselling service in countries of origin or arrival must take into account the often complex intertwining of interdependencies in migration networks involving a variety of actors, from relatives to companies to authorities, and the resulting configurations of interests.

In conclusion, all of the temporary migration types would benefit from greater cross-border cooperation between authorities and organizations at all levels. The content and scope of services – such as those currently provided by the European Employment Services (EURES)<sup>17</sup>, part of the ELA and responsible for providing information and services to workers and employers – appear to be insufficient, particularly in relation to Central and Eastern European countries. Current proposals to strengthen the network of trade union advice centres under the umbrella of the ELA and following the principle of “fair mobility” (Michel and Michon 2023) are a first step.

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17 For more information about EURES, see: <https://www.ela.europa.eu/en/eures-network>.

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