

## ROMANIA SEEN FROM THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE PRUT RIVER. PERSPECTIVES ON THE MOLDOVIAN IMMIGRATION

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**Abstract.** This paper describes the main results of a large scale survey on the potential migrants from the Republic of Moldova. Being a topic of major interest, both for the political decision and the economical context of this former soviet republic, the migration affects the demographic structure, the capital accumulation and the geographical and spatial perception. Romania has a specific position in the pattern of the Moldovian migration flows for several reasons – linguistic proximity, member of the EU, political context etc. This combination of factors transformed Romania in a recent destination for the migration flows, a destination where the Moldovian migrants represent the most important group. This study shows that the privileged position of the Moldovian immigration is strongly correlated with the image that Romania presents in the collective perception on the Eastern side of Prut.

**Keywords:** *immigration, eastern side of Prut river, Romania*

### 1. Introduction.

The strategic position of Romania at the external border of the European Union and as future Schengen border generated a major changes in the external perception of the country and on its migration policy. Recent statistics reveal a progressive 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-EU immigrants' rate* (86 %), after Slovenia<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, as a new gate for entering the EU space, Romania is expected to become even more attractive for non-EU migrants in the future<sup>2</sup>.

Due to its recent development, the information on the Romanian immigration is very scarce in the scientific literature, the main data sources offering only partial (and often insufficient) perspectives, such as those expressed by: the national statistics, the Romanian Immigration Office (RIO), media, specialized websites, surveys and studies engaged by public institutions or NGO's.

The Republic of Moldova generates an important migratory flow affecting the Eastern border of the European Union. Based on historical factors and the special status granted in the Romanian migration policy (the citizenship law), the Moldavians represent the most important migratory group in Romania. The

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Romanian newspaper *Financiarul*, November, 2008, [www.financiarul.ro](http://www.financiarul.ro).

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

frontier with the Republic of Moldova (33 % of the Eastern E.U. border in charge of our country) is the second most active Romanian frontier as regards the number of illegal actions, after the Hungarian one.

But the most significant factor adding importance to the Moldavian immigration was the international media attention and worries regarding a possible “*Moldovan invasion*”<sup>3</sup> of Europe because of the Romanian citizenship policies. “Without money and perspectives, 300 thousand Moldavians are headed to us” said an article from Daily Star (Great Britain). The concerns were based on the International Monetary Fund studies, estimating that a quarter of Moldova's economically active population was already working abroad in 2007<sup>4</sup>. Or, *the Romanian passport (citizenship) was only a way for legally gaining access to Western labor markets*, as a survey of IMAS-INC Chisinau indicated, in 2006: 48 % of the Moldavian people declared that they would get a Romanian passport if they could, and 85 % of the same people said they would use the passport to work in the EU.

## 2. The Moldavian migration to Romania: pull and push factors.

With more than 2000 km of frontiers, Romania is automatically responsible for securing a vast external EU border. At the same time, Romania is becoming more and more popular as a destination country for the international migration. After 2000, Romania began to reiterate the migration pattern of every EU new member, progressively changing its status from an emigration country (with constantly negative migratory balance) to an immigration one. Even if the immigration is still low compared to other European countries, these flows are increasing and diversifying. This is mainly due to the attractiveness opportunities offered to the migrants by the **EU membership**, such as: free travel to Western Europe, social rights and facilities, political stability and, in general, a better economic context compared to other countries outside the EU borders. Even if the emigration rates are still very low in comparison to other European countries, the EU membership and the migration patterns of other EU members (Greece, Portugal, Poland etc) considered, the immigration flows towards Romania are expected to increase.

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 in order to reinforce the administrative detention capacity and to establish secure transit centres for the asylum seekers.

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<sup>3</sup> Articles in the British press, from 2006: Daily Telegraph, the newspaper with the biggest edition from Great Britain (“Hundreds of thousand Moldavians could come to Great Britain starting next year ”); Daily Mail; the Daily Star, the Daily Express.

<sup>4</sup> The World Bank statistics indicated a percent of 17 % (705553 persons), for 2007, [www.worldbank.org/data](http://www.worldbank.org/data).

But the **Romanian citizenship policy** has permanently acted like a pull factor, the controversial law 137/11.06. 1990 granting special privileges for the Moldavian citizens who could demonstrate that either they, their parents or their grandparents had been born on the Romanian territory before 1940, to those who had lost or had been forced to give up their Romanian citizenship under different historical circumstances. As the Romanian citizenship granted access to full social and political rights in Romania, as well as a visa-free travel after the accession to the EU, explains the high number of applications submitted after 1998, when Romania started the negotiations with the European Commission. *Between 1991 and 2001, Romania granted a second (Romanian) citizenship to 94 916 residents from the Republic of Moldova.* The tightening of the migration and citizenship legislation after 2002 had the reverse effect: tougher travel procedures (invitation required) and the introduction of visa for Moldavians, in 2007 (still free of charge but difficult to obtain). In this context, the number of granted Romanian citizenship has decreased (to only a few hundreds per year) until 2009, when the electoral context introduced new facilitations speeding-up the process: creation of five new regional offices analyzing the citizenship dossiers and reduction of the processing period. In consequence, 25 257 persons (21.299 Moldavians) regained the right to a Romanian citizenship in 2009, compared to a 5590 persons, in 2008 (4967 Moldavians)<sup>5</sup>.

The **political and historical background** of the two countries has successively acted both as a push and a pull factor. The common cultural and historical heritage has sustained the Moldavians' expectations towards a potential reunification with Romania or at least for closer cross-border relations. But despite its citizens' warm attitude towards Romania, the Moldovan government has longtime hesitated between closer (1990-1998, 1998-2001) and colder political relationships with Romania (especially after 2001, during the Voronin presidency). On many occasions (interviews, online forums) the Moldavian citizens expressed their feelings of disappointment and/or betrayal towards the Romanian government and the Moldavian one.

### 3. The Moldavian citizens in the Romanian migration flows.

According to the national statistics, 310 000 Moldavian citizens were working abroad in the first quarter of 2007, but in fact, the real number was higher. Two thirds were men, and two out of three came from rural areas.

On the western side of Prut River, the emigration phenomenon began with a peak immediately following the fall of the communist regime (96929 Romanian citizens leaved Romania in 1990) and conserved negative migration balances afterward (even if decreasing). But, beyond the Romanians' departure towards

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<sup>5</sup> According to the Romanian Ministry of Justice (press releases from January 2010).

Western Europe (mainly to Germany, Italy and Spain<sup>6</sup>) or North America, Romania began also to attract immigration flows. After a slow start (around 1500 immigrants/year until 1995<sup>7</sup>), this trend closely followed the evolution of Romania's position in relation with the European Union: gaining increasing values between 1998 and 2001, during the discussions regarding the accession to the EU (and reaching more than 10000 migrants / year and even a positive migration balance in 2001), decreasing after 2002 (after the tightening of the migration legislation), reactivated after 2004 (stimulated by Romania's economic growth and its labor market opportunities) and continued, even in the context of the frontiers reinforcement policy since 2007<sup>8</sup> (as an effect of the EU membership).

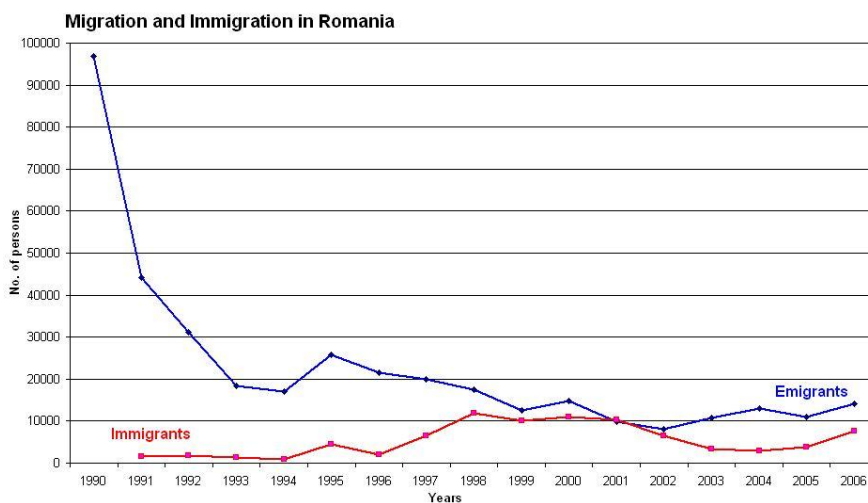


Figure 1. Migration and immigration in Romania. Data source: INS (National Institute of Statistics).

In this context, the Moldavian citizens have a special position, as regards to their percentage and immigration facilities. They've constantly represented *the most important migratory group registered in Romanian* (fig. 2): 70 % of the illegal migration cases, in 2007, and 86 % of all the immigrants received in 2008. In 2009, about 30 % of the 60 000 foreign citizens **legally residing in Romania** were Moldavians, followed by *EU citizens* (about 30 % - Italians, Germans, French etc), Turkish (16.08 %) and Chinese (13.17 %). Still, the number of Moldavian immigrants has evolved along the years in close relation with the Romanian migration policy and the accession to the EU: the flows have decreased

<sup>6</sup> The migration to Spain was separately registered after 2004, even if a high number of Romanians were already leaving and working there before 2004.

<sup>7</sup> They were mainly small entrepreneurs coming from Turkey, China or Middle East countries.

<sup>8</sup> Immigration restrictions imposed by the EU member status.

after the peak of 2001, when 83.88 % of the Romanian immigrants were Moldavian.

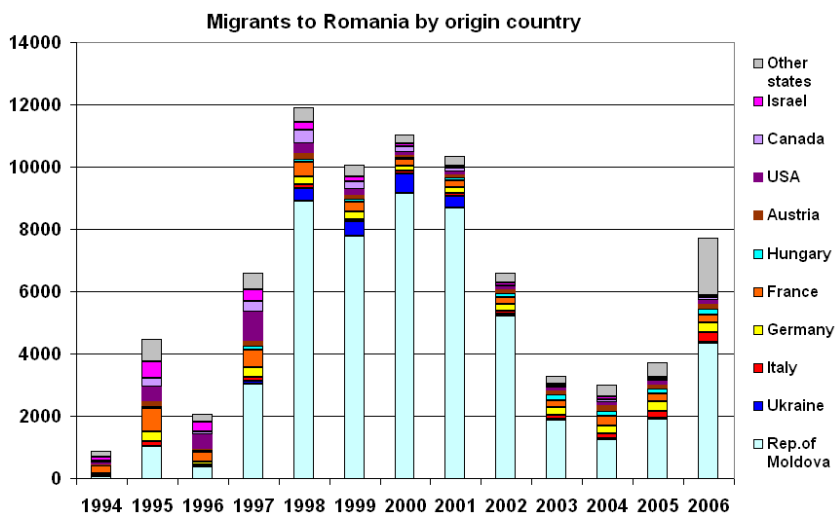


Figure 2. Evolution of the immigration to Romania (data source: INS).

The other inflows from the former soviet countries have decreased faster (even the Ukrainian ones, also targeted by the “restored Romanian citizenship” law), in favour of other non-EU states from Middle East (Turkey, Syria, Iraq), Asia (China), Africa and the Balkans (Serbia), together with an increasing representation of Western European and North American citizens. Up to 1/3 of the foreigners established in Romania in 2009 were from Italy (4.06 %), Germany (3.27 %), France (1.62 %), USA (3.79 %) and Canada (2.42%).

From the beginning of the accession to the EU, the progressive reinforcement of the Romanian frontiers and migration policy, together with the opportunities of the EU membership supported the increasing of **illegal migration** to Romania: this has become **a transit territory to other Western European countries**.

Between 2007 and 2008, the Romanian Frontier Police registered a 47 % increase of the illegal migrants' number, a 75 % increase of the human trafficking victims (501 in 2008) and a 10 % increase of the general traffic at the most active Romanian (- Hungarian) frontier. The number of *asylum applications* has also regained an ascending trend after 2007, favoured by the implementation of new facilities for migrants.

In this context, the Romanian border with the Republic of Moldova, representing 33 % of the Eastern E.U. border (681 km length) in charge of our country, has remained *the second most active Romanian frontier as regards the*

*number of illegal actions after the Hungarian one*<sup>9</sup>. Moldavians have dominated the Romanian illegal immigration flows until 2009 (reaching 21.15 % of the illegal migrants), when they were replaced by the Turkish citizens (22.87 % of illegal migrants) and followed by the Chinese (21.11 %). The EU membership induced a progressive diversification of the illegal migration's origin, such as: Serbia, North African and Asian countries (Nigeria, Liberia, Sudan, Cameroon, Somalia, Egypt, India, Syria, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Pakistan, Georgia etc).

Despite the decreasing of the illegal Moldavian immigration to Romania, their presence in the detention centres for migrants is still significant<sup>10</sup> (6,91 % in the Otopeni centre and 25,86 % in Arad, in 2008), only exceeded again by the Turkish (17.02 % in Otopeni and 32.76 % in Arad) and Chinese citizens (22.34 % in Otopeni in 2008).

#### 4. Purposes of migration.

The **economic motivation** is the most often mentioned by the immigrants coming to Romania, representing 27 % of the requests for long term permit, in 2006, and continuing to increase afterward. Furthermore, according to the Moldavian national surveys, half of the Moldovan migrants interrogated in 2008<sup>11</sup> mentioned the **incomes and jobs** as their main departure motivations.

The economic growth after 2000 and the shortages in the Romanian labour market represented pull factors for the Moldavian immigrants, as well as for those coming from poor African or Asian countries or from other EU neighbour states (Ukraine and Serbia). The economic purpose is also frequently mentioned by illegal migrants using Romania only as a transit space towards Western European countries, where they expect to find a better life and better jobs. Some of them give up their initial plan and try to find a job in Romania. Moldavians are also pushed abroad by low living standards and salaries<sup>12</sup>.

The Moldavians are less represented in the category of migrants coming to Romania to start a business. Since 1990, these flows are dominated by citizens of Asian and Middle East countries, such as: China (representing 48.35 % of the applications approved in 2006 by the Romanian Agency for Foreign Investments<sup>13</sup>), Turkey (23,51 %) or Iraq (10 %).

Beyond (or together with) the economic motivation, there is the same special reason explaining the importance of the Moldavian migration to Romania: apart

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<sup>9</sup> The EU membership increased the number of illegal trespassing of this frontier *with 67 %, between 2007 and 2008*.

<sup>10</sup> Data provided by ROI.

<sup>11</sup> *Migrația forței de muncă*, studiu al Biroului Național de Statistică, Rep. Moldova, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> In 2008 the medium national 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.

<sup>13</sup> *Imigrația și azilul în România - anul 2006*, București 2007, MAE, Guvernul României.

from the chance of a better life, inside an EU member country (Romania or another one), most of Moldavians feel that they should have the right to free travel and living in Romania, as a **rehabilitation of the historical injustice** committed after 1940, when Bessarabia was roped into the USSR. The sense of belonging to a common historical and cultural heritage is a strong and particular fact explaining the high number of the Moldavians' applications for citizenship.

This is also the reason for the high number of Moldavians coming to **study** in Romania: about 20 % of the long term visa applications in Romania, in 2008, were for studies, reaching about 14 000 Moldavian students in 2010. These flows are supported by the cross-border cultural and education programmes (granting scholarships in Romanian high schools and universities) and the hope for better job opportunities, in Romania or other EU country. Most of them apply for a job in Romania, after finishing the studies. Another important migratory group attracted by Romanian medicine universities, because of their low taxes, reputation and the acceptance of their diplomas in the origin country, is from Middle East (Iraqi, Iranians) and, more recently, from South –Eastern Asia.

Within the Romanian immigration flows, the **family reunification** (representing about 35 % of the declared motivations<sup>14</sup>) is a purpose more frequently quoted by citizens of Asian and Arabian countries. The political motivations are generally mentioned by migrants from countries affected by political and social conflicts (Iraqi, Iranian, Somali, Serbian Afghanistan, Congolese etc) and their weight is expected to increase, because of the EU regulations assigning responsibility for asylum applications to the state where an applicant first entered the EU territory.

## 5. Costs of migration.

The national surveys in Moldova revealed that the average sum paid for the migration procedures was about 900 US dollars/person, in 2008. The least expensive destination was Russia (140 USD), compared to an EU departure, rising up to 2600 - 3600 USD/person (most of it paid to an intermediary facilitating the papers for visa). Or, according to the European statistics, Moldova is one of Europe's poorest countries<sup>15</sup> and therefore the departure costs are usually insured by lawns (about 60 % of the people questioned in 2008), for amounts reaching an average of 1324 USD. All this explains the orientation to Russia, for half of its emigrants (sometimes Russia is seen only as a *first step* for gaining the money necessary to migrate later to the EU states), and/or the application for Romanian citizenship, as two ways to reduce the migration costs.

The two main orientations of the Moldavian migrants are in fact is reflected by the spatial experience of the Moldavian students surveyed in Chisinau,

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<sup>14</sup> Including those marrying a Romanian citizen.

<sup>15</sup> <http://hdrstats.undp.org>, National Statistical Office of the Rep. of Moldova.

in 2009, during the research for a FP7 Programme Project *Eurobroadmap - Visions of Europe in the world*: Fig. 3.

The low spatial experience of the 240 students surveyed, appears to be shaped mostly by the mobility opportunities for studies and the main family migration networks and it is limited mostly to the Russian Federation and USA, followed by the immediate neighborhood - Romania and Ukraine (Groza, O., Stoleriu, O.M., 2010). The second map represents the percentage of students who have visited different countries. This time, the geography seems to be more influenced by tourism destinations (France, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Maghreb, United States, China) as well as by the family migration networks (Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Belgium, Netherlands).

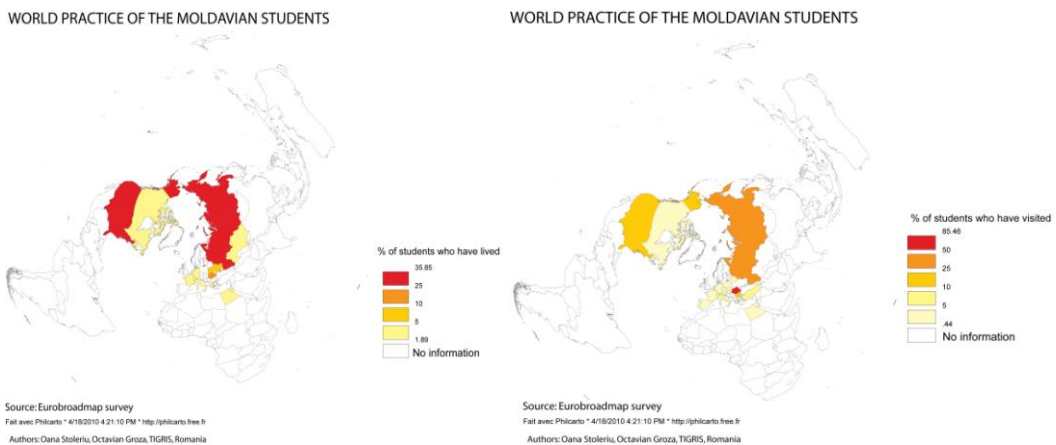


Figure 3. Spatial experience of Moldavian students: a. countries where the students have lived more than 4 months; b. countries they visited before. Source: Eurobroadmap survey, 2009.

## 6. Spatial visions of Romania and the world.

The students surveyed in Chisinau were asked to indicate five countries and cities where they would like to live in the near future and five countries and cities where they would not like to live in (Stoleriu O.M., Groza O., Turcanasu G., 2011). The results illustrated in the two maps below (fig. 4 a,b) indicate the Moldavian students' specific vision of the world countries and cities. There is a general west (attractive) – east (unattractive) and north (best known) – south (less known) perception of the world, where Romania appears to occupy an interesting place.



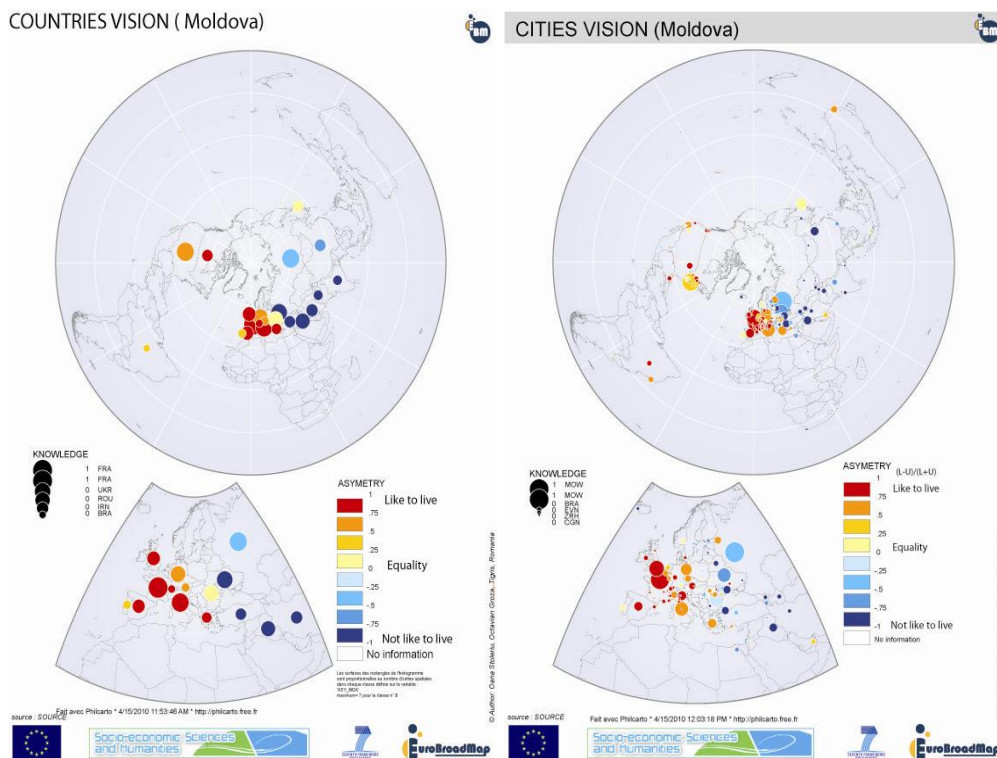


Figure 4. The Moldavians students' perception of the world countries (a) and cities (b). Source: Eurobroadmap survey, Chisinau, 2009.

Romania is one of the best known places (mentioned by 89 students) and mostly positively quoted, in comparison to a general rather negative perception of the Eastern European space and other recent EU member states (Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lituania). Still, it does not reach the attractiveness of the central-western European countries (such as France, Italy or Germany) or of the USA, Canada and Japan. As expected, the countries (and cities) perceived as dangerous or uncomfortable (because of instability, war, historical animosity, social problems) are well known but with a negative appreciation: large part of South-East and East Asia or Africa. The position of Russia and other former soviet states (like Ukraine, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Belarus) is also very interesting: with a lot of quotations, they are included in the category of countries where the students would mostly not like to live in. Overall, the countries in the southern hemisphere are less known and generally, the states have a rather negative perception (excepting Australia and some tourism destinations like Argentina, Brazil or Venezuela).

To a great extent, the degree of knowledge of cities seems to be directly related to the degree of knowledge of the corresponding states, with several exceptions revealed by the asymmetry. As expected, Paris,

Rome, London, New York City and Berlin are very well known as well as the states that they belong to. The same correspondence, only with a negative perception, is indicated for Moscow (present in 59% of the students' answers) and Kiev. Still, there are several cases of significant distinction between the image of the city and that of the state: cities like Odessa, Baghdad, Teheran, Istanbul are less known than the corresponding countries and negatively appreciated. Even for Romania, there are cities mostly negatively perceived, compared to a rather positive image of the country.

Positive perceptions generally correspond to the capitals of some medium or small states (Athens, Brussels, Madrid, Prague, Vienna), to important regional cities from countries associated to welfare (Los Angeles, Chicago, Milan, Sydney, Bern, Monaco, Zurich, Copenhagen, San Francisco), administrative centres (Montréal, Strasbourg) or tourism destinations (Rio de Janeiro, St. Petersburg, Venice, Barcelona, Marseille and Miami). A rather negative image is attached to the cities associated with difficult natural conditions (Reykjavik, Vladivostok), social, economic and political issues (Baku, Bombay, Dushanbe, Tashkent, Tbilisi) or with a certain feeling of *déjà-vu* (transition, blurred economic and political situation – Odessa, Sofia, Warsaw).

In this context, the Romanian cities are generally well known but differently appreciated. Bucharest (quoted by 82 students) and Iasi are the most mentioned, because of their administrative and historical status: capital of Romania and the former capital of historical Moldova. Perceived as direct opponents of Chisinau, the two cities are well known but do not enjoy the students' appreciation. Meanwhile, the cities in Transylvania (Brașov, Cluj, Sibiu) seem to benefit from the higher quality of life associated to the whole region. Positive images are also attached to regional centres in the Romanian Moldova (Botoșani, Galați, Suceava) or Dobruđa (Constanța – a tourism destination). Only Timișoara and Arad, well perceived in Romania, have an atypical position in the general structure of the Moldavian students' answers (possibly also related to the presence of centres for illegal migrants). Overall, the position of the Romanian cities quoted appears to be related to their demographic size (indicating a general preference for medium sized cities, like the case of Moldavian urban centres) or to a positive tourism image (the case of Constanta).

## 7. Migration networks and patterns.

The literature on the migration channels crossing Romania is quite poor, the data being gathered from partial statistics and different reports or press releases of the Romanian Frontier Police (from 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009). According to these, Romania is crossed by two main migration routes: **an Eastern one** (with

origins in Moldova, Ukraine and other former Soviet Union members; but also in East Asia) **and a Southern one** (Middle East and African countries).

In this framework, Romania is targeted or transited by one of the two main Moldovan migration flows illustrated in fig. 5: one oriented towards West, justified by the idyllic image attached to Western Europe (Romania included, only with a less attractive image compared to the central and western European countries), and the other one directed to East, justified by lower migration costs and more migration facilities (migration policy, language etc).

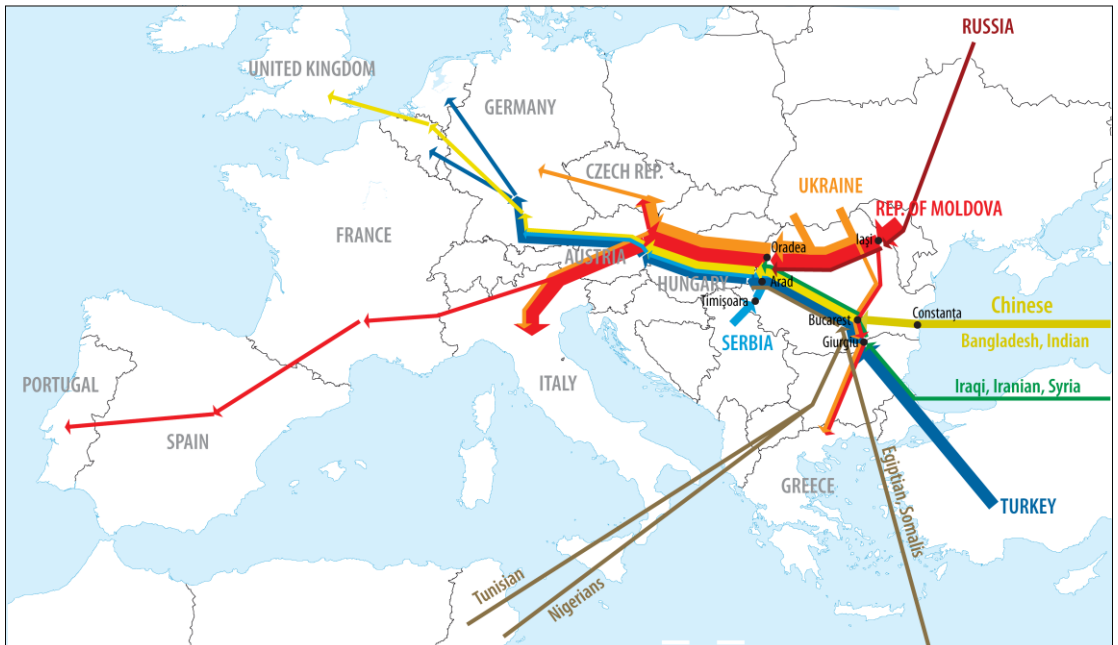


Figure 5. The main migrations routes crossing Romania.

According to the Moldavian national surveys, most of migrants interrogated in 2008<sup>16</sup> (57,4 %) were helped to go abroad (Romania included) by relatives or friends, 23 % left on their own, 13 % through employment firms, 11 % answered to press announcements and 11 % directly contacted the employers. Most of them come from villages and small towns and about 85 % want to earn money and then to come back home.

Once established abroad, the Moldovan migrants tend to consolidate or join existing migration networks that provide information (on labor market, incomes, legal procedures..) to other immigration candidates. The small foreign entrepreneurs in Romania consolidate these networks, by searching partners or employees in their origin country, including members of their family.

<sup>16</sup> *Migrația forței de muncă*, studiu al Biroului Național de Statistică, Rep. Moldova, 2008.

a. About half of the Moldavian migrants in the EU countries (53 %) worked with **legal documents** abroad<sup>17</sup>. Among the legal procedures mentioned, the *application for the Romanian citizenship* was perceived as a very long and difficult process, due to some very restrictive laws (out of 24000 official applications submitted between 2002 and 2005, only 255 were approved). This “forces” some of the immigrants to appeal to alternative methods, such as *the convenience marriage* to a Romanian. Another legal way of getting to Romania is the *study visa* obtained by young Moldavians. They choose Romanian universities because of their *proximity* and *family relationships*: a lot of Romanians with Ukrainian or Moldovan citizenship study in the cities where they have relatives.

b. **patterns of illegal transit migration.** The attraction towards Western Europe determines a lot of Moldavian citizens to practice a "**disguised migration**": they arrive to Romania with a legal tourism or visit visa and they are discovered later at the western frontier, with fake documents or hidden in transport vehicles (as indicated by media and the reports of the Romanian Frontier Police). Since 2007, a new orientation of these flows was registered: a part of the immigrants go south, crossing the Bulgarian frontier, in their way to Greece.

A lot of them appeal to illegal/informal transporters networks, often becoming the victims of **human trafficking**. Inside the European human trafficking networks, *Romania is known as a source country and also an important transit area for the Asian and ex -Soviet Union flows*<sup>18</sup>. According to the Romanian police, the victims of human trafficking are generally women between 18-33 years old, but also unqualified men, all hoping to go abroad in search of a better job and life. They end up exploited for prostitution, mendicancy and work. The *Country Report regarding the observance of the Human rights* for 2004<sup>19</sup> mentioned Romania as a transit area for the human trafficking networks (for prostitution) originated in Moldova, Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union, or in poor Asian and African countries. The destination points of these channels were: Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo), Macedonia, Turkey, Albania, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and United Arab Emirates, Japan and South Korea. The Romanian police registered certain changes in the trafficking patterns, after 2003, making their identification more difficult. More victims are now transferred to Western Europe, instead of former Yugoslavia. **Iasi** and **Timisoara** remain the major Romanian transit points, at the eastern and southwestern frontier. In 2006, a similar report<sup>20</sup> continues to mention Romania as a transit country for the trafficking of young girls and children from Eastern Europe (Moldova, Russia,

<sup>17</sup> *Migrația forței de muncă*, studiu al Biroului Național de Statistică, Rep. Moldova, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.realitatea.net/romania-este-tara-sursa-pentru-traficul-de-femei-si-copii-in-vest\\_527072.html](http://www.realitatea.net/romania-este-tara-sursa-pentru-traficul-de-femei-si-copii-in-vest_527072.html),

*Country reports regarding the observance of the Human rights* for 2004 and 2006.

<sup>19</sup> USA Embassy in Romania - Press release, 28.02.2005.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.antitrafic.ro>

Ukraine) to Italy, Spain, Germany, Greece, Austria and Canada. The Rep. of Moldova also feeds the trafficking of women exploited for prostitution in the main Romanian cities.

## 8. Integration of immigrants in Romania.

The study "*Immigrant in Romania: Perspectives and risks*" (Voicu., Toth, Gug, 2008) enhances the differences between the migrants' expectations and reality as it is. They have to adapt to a new society, a new language, sometimes to the discriminatory attitude of the employers or other residents.

For the Moldavian immigrants interrogated in 2008, the bad work conditions represented only 25 % of the problems they had to face abroad (Romania included), headed by the lack of access to medical services (33 %) and finding a house (27.6%).

A general issue related to the integration within the Romanian labor market is represented by the extra taxes that a foreign worker and his employer have to pay to the Romanian government. Sometimes, finding a job was also very expensive because of the intermediary firms that take high commissions and prices for the documentation and transport, significantly increasing the migration costs and the dues in the departure country. Another complaint of the foreigners working in Romania is the difference between their education level and the qualification of the job<sup>21</sup>.

Moldavians are generally preferred to other categories of imported labor force, as indicated by the Romanian local trade-unions (Voicu., Toth, Gug, 2008).

In regards to the interaction with the Romanian authorities, Moldavians are except from the difficulties of translation (often mentioned by other foreigners). Most of their problems have been related (especially after 2007) to the very long and difficult beaurocratic processes of getting (renewing) a working permit, the study visa and (especially) the Romanian citizenship, partially reduced with the facilitations introduced in 2009. Besides this, frequent complaints of the Moldavian students in Romania mention the insufficient scholarship money and the lack of access to alternative income sources by part time jobs; thus, a lot of them are constrained to get a non declared job and to be more exposed to employers' abuses.

## Conclusions

The Moldavian migration represents a very interesting topic for further future researches and policy, because of its position and effects on the general network of migratory flows targeting the European Union borders. The statistics,

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<sup>21</sup> Annual report of the Romanian Frontier Police, 2008.

surveys and reports mentioned above, as well as the young Moldavians' general perception of Romania and the world, together with the special status granted to Moldavian citizens in the Romanian migration policy, all these indicates towards a future conservation if not an increasing of the international focus on the eastern border of Romania (as an EU and future Schengen border).

On the other side, this migration flows have significant effects on the departure country. This massive emigration (with the women going mainly to Western Europe and men towards ex-soviet countries) already raises many social problems in the Republic of Moldova, like the increasing number of children raised without a mother or father (estimated between 150000 to 270000, in 2007, around 40000 being separated from both parents), changes in the gender relationships inside the Moldovan families.

The economic effect of the Moldavian emigration seems to be also concerning: the estimated amount of money sent by the migrants to their families is very close to the annual budget of the country (more than 1 billion US dollars). In 2008, the Republic of Moldova occupied the 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the world at the weight of the remittances in the GDP (over 38 %<sup>22</sup>), heading other very poor countries like Tonga, Guyana, Haiti or Honduras. According to the national surveys, almost half of the remittances are destined to insure every day life necessities of the families left at home (only 20 % are oriented towards getting a house, for example). All this makes the Moldovan economy extremely vulnerable, in the case of an important decreasing of this money transfer.

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<sup>22</sup> According to the World Bank statistics, Moldova was the second after Tajikistan.

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