

Bulgaria

The 2011 census data confirmed that Bulgaria has been a net emigration country since 1992. Over the twenty-year period, emigration represented a 6% loss in the total population, and a 10% loss considering only the active population. High emigration levels were accompanied by natural decrease, related to low fertility rates, which contributed a further 12% to total population loss in the same period.

Declared immigration remains low, with 3 500 registered immigrants in 2010, a slight increase over 2009 (3 300). The stock of foreign permanent residents was about 37 000, or 0.5% of the population.

In 2010, only 300 new work permits were issued to foreigners by the National Employment Service, compared with 700 in 2009 and 1 450 in the peak year of 2008. Most permits are issued to workers involved in projects by foreign contractors, mainly in construction, and 80% of permits were granted to Turkish nationals. Work permit issuance remained low in the first half of 2011.

The number of foreign students, in contrast, continued to increase in 2010. Almost 5 900 new resident permits for the purpose of study were issued, 62% to Turkish nationals.

The number of asylum seekers has decreased significantly in recent years, from the record high of almost 2 900 applications in 2002. In 2010, asylum applications grew by 20% compared with 2009, to around 1 000. The principal nationalities of asylum seekers in Bulgaria are Afghanistan, Iraq, Armenia, the Former Yugoslav Republics and Iran.

Figures on declared emigration show an increase from 19 000 in 2009 to 27 700 in 2010. However, actual outflows are considered to be much greater, based on immigration statistics of the main destination countries. Spain, the most important destination country in recent years, recorded 10 400 Bulgarians entering in 2010, 7% more than in 2009. Outflows of Bulgarian citizens from Spain also increased in 2010, to 7 600 from almost 5 000 in the previous year (+52%). The number of Bulgarians in Spain increased by 14 500 in 2010, and a further 13 000 in 2011. There are no consistent data for Greece, the second main destination of Bulgarian immigrants in recent years, but it seems that the stock increased less in 2010 than in previous years.

Out of the 15 bilateral employment agreements signed since 1991, only three were operating in 2010, respectively with France, Germany and Switzerland. The total number of mediated employment contracts was 1 000, 10% less than in 2009. Most of those contracts are with Germany.

Emigration is mainly of short-term nature. According to the 2011 census, 73% of all Bulgarians who emigrated in the period 2001-11 resided abroad less than five years. Despite the worsening economic situation in Bulgaria, return migration increased in 2010. According to official statistics there were about 23 800 return migrants in 2010 compared with fewer than 15 300 in 2008, although net migration of Bulgarians remained negative.

In July 2011, the Bulgarian government adopted a new National Migration, Asylum and Integration Strategy for the period 2011-20. The new strategy aims primarily at the full implementation of the Schengen *acquis*, so that Bulgaria may accede to the Schengen area. Another objective of the strategy is the introduction of labour migration policies in response to demographic and economic needs of the country. Priorities under the new strategy are effective prevention of illegal migration, better regulation of legal immigration, and encouraging return of highly skilled Bulgarian migrants. Highly skilled workers become the main target group of migration policy.

The new strategy also includes a new focus on migrant integration, with integration measures for legally resident foreigners. Among the initiatives already implemented in 2010-11 is the establishment of information centres in the three largest cities to provide support measures to newly arrived foreigners.

The main amendments to the regulation of the entry and stay of foreigners in Bulgaria in the period 2010-11 were related to the transposition of the EU Blue Card and long-term residents' directives, as well as measures to comply with the Schengen visa code. Repatriation rules were also tightened. For the first time, the entry and stay of long-term residents for the purpose of study was regulated under specific provisions.

Procedural changes in application for citizenship were introduced in 2011 to avoid abuse of the system for ethnic Bulgarians. A draft law abolishing dual nationality was introduced in Parliament, but failed to pass.

In 2011 Bulgaria signed readmission agreements with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Moldova. Readmission agreements with Georgia, the Russian Federation and Serbia are under negotiation.

For further information:

www.nsi.bg/Index_e.htm

www.aref.government.bg


www.government.bg/cgi-bin/e-cms/vis/vis.pl?s=001&p=0136&g

Recent trends in migrants' flows and stocks

BULGARIA

Migration flows (foreigners) <i>National definition</i>	2000	2005	2009	2010	Average		Level ('000)
					2001-05	2006-10	2010
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>							
Inflows	0.5	2.0	2.9	..	1.5	..	..
Outflows	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Migration inflows (foreigners) by type	Thousands			% distribution			
<i>Permit based statistics (standardised)</i>	2009	2010	2009	2010			
Work	..	..	..	..
Family (incl. accompanying family)	..	..	..	..
Humanitarian	..	..	..	..
Free movements	..	..	..	..
Others	..	..	..	..
Total	..	..	..	..
Temporary migration	2005	2009	2010	Average			
<i>Thousands</i>							
International students	2.1	..	..	2.7			
Trainees	..	..	..	..
Working holiday makers	..	..	..	..
Seasonal workers	..	..	..	..
Intra-company transfers	..	..	..	..
Other temporary workers	0.6	0.7	0.3	0.9			
Inflows of asylum seekers	2000	2005	2009	2010	Average		Level
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>							
	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	1 025
Components of population growth	2000	2005	2009	2010	Average		Level ('000)
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>							
Total	-5.1	-5.5	-5.6	-7.8	-10.9	-5.6	-59
Natural increase	-5.1	-5.5	-3.6	-4.6	-5.6	-4.5	-35
Net migration	0.0	0.0	-2.1	-3.2	-5.3	-1.1	-24
Stocks of immigrants	2000	2005	2009	2010	Average		Level ('000)
<i>Percentage of the total population</i>							
Foreign-born population	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Foreign population	..	..	..	0.5	..	..	37
Naturalisations	2000	2005	2009	2010	Average		Level
<i>Percentage of the foreign population</i>							
	..	..	..	..	..	..	14 979
Labour market outcomes	2000	2005	2009	2010	Average		
<i>Employment/population ratio</i>							
Native-born men	..	..	66.9	63.0	..	65.4	
Foreign-born men	..	..	54.6	52.2	..	57.7	
Native-born women	..	..	58.4	56.4	..	57.3	
Foreign-born women	..	..	50.6	47.5	..	54.3	
<i>Unemployment rate</i>							
Native-born men	..	..	7.1	11.0	..	7.8	
Foreign-born men	..	..	7.9	0.0	..	9.1	
Native-born women	..	..	6.6	9.5	..	7.7	
Foreign-born women	..	..	11.0	0.0	..	9.5	
Macroeconomic indicators	2000	2005	2009	2010	Average		Level
<i>Annual growth in %</i>							
Real GDP	5.4	6.4	-5.5	0.1	5.5	2.7	
GDP/capita (level in USD)	4.3	6.9	-4.9	0.9	6.6	3.2	12 668
Employment (level in thousands)	..	2.4	-3.1	-6.1	1.3	0.4	3 010
<i>Percentage of the labour force</i>							
Unemployment	16.4	10.1	6.8	10.2	14.7	7.7	

Notes and sources are at the end of the part.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932616049>