

## **Bulgarian Youth and Europe. Multivariate Psycho-cultural Study of the Mobility Attitudes**

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**Received: January 15, 2009**

**Accepted: February 12, 2009**

**Published: March 16, 2009**

**Abstract:** *The objective of this study is to examine the Bulgarian youths' mobility towards Europe. The investigation was carried out with 570 Bulgarian students. The data are presented as a questionnaire consisting of five parts. The first one deals with the motivations and is based on the Reversal Theory – predicting eight motivational states. The second part is based on the 2PAP theoretical model structuring the attitudes around four factors: Push, Pull, Anti Push and Anti Pull. The third one falls back on the Big Five Personality Test measuring five personality dimensions. And the concluding two parts are designed to obtain information about the degree of attraction and the intentions for mobility to the 25 destination countries of the European Union (EU). This has led to the hypothesis that a model of mobility exists based on these three theoretical models, as well as on emotional factors like attraction-repulsion to the country referred to. The hypothesis that was strongly supported by the statistical processing of the data will broaden our understanding of the youth's mobility. The present research is a part of a longitudinal study of the mobility intentions among young people. The investigation is of great interest from an educational, political and social point of view.*

**Keywords:** *Factor analysis, Youth mobility, Motivation, Attitude, Personality, 2PAP, Big V, Reversal theory.*

### **Introduction**

The basis of the new European culture is a result of real interaction between the people. Each young person who decides to spend some time in another EU country contributes to the creation of Europe. Mobility is the essential condition for the transition of this theoretical model to practice [12].

For the Bulgarian young people it is also a symbol of the “*New time*” which followed the change of the political regime in 1989 [14]. After a period of euphoria, a feeling of vacuum and lack of point of reference settled in. The economic crisis falls under this context. Mobility is a major social characteristic of the present day. The student traveller is the “new foreigner”, and utopian citizen of Europe.

The ongoing research is a first step towards a longitudinal study of young people intentions towards the EU and cultural identities determining these attitudes [15]. The results of the factorial analysis confirm our initial hypothesis.

## Method

### *Participants*

Number of the participants 570: high-school students ( $N = 258$ ) and university students ( $N = 319$ ): 383 females and 187 males, aged between 16 and 26. The average age is 20.21 years. 72.5% of the mothers and 59.3% of the fathers of the students have university grade education. All the rest of the parents have completed high-school course.

### *Procedure*

The students have responded to the questionnaire individually or in group during classes at school or courses at the universities. The courses are attended by students from almost all field of study; hence we were able to work with an almost representative subset of the young students in the country. The filling in was not declared to be for a specific length of time, but the the average time was about 45 minutes.

### *Material*

The questionnaire is composed of five parts. In the beginning the participants are filling their personal data: sex, age, education. The first part collects data about the 25 EU member states and measures the degree of attractiveness of specific EU countries [2], for example “I very much like Belgium”. The second presents the possible motivation and intention to mobility after the Reversal Theory model [1] and includes conditional elements, as a possibility to be granted a scholarship, parental opposition, linguistical knowledge, frequent travels [3]. The tirth one investigates the attitude toward Bulgaria and towards the other EU member states, for example “I very much like the Bulgarian culture”, “In some EU countries, the professional perspective is much better than the one in Bulgaria”. It consists of 41 questions, which correspond to the behavioural factors, respectively: Push, Pull, Anti-Push, and Anti-Pull [13]. The fourth part contains questions representing the wish for mobility in each of the 25 EU member state countries, for example “I would work some months in Spain” And the fifth part falls back on the Big Five Personality Test measuring five personality dimensions [11]. The total number of the questions in the questionnaire is 254. The answers are written on an 11 stop scale (from 0 to 10), which extremes are respectively “I disagree completely” and “I agree completely” for the first and the four parts, and “Completely impossible” and “Completely possible” for the fifth part. The answers in the second part can be “Never-Once-Many times”.

The questionnaire is not adapted with the Bulgarian context, aiming to allow for comparison of the results with similar researches, carried out so far in France, Portugal, Spain and Belgium [4]. Only the fourth part, which concerns with the attitudes of the young Bulgarians towards the EU member state countries, is partially changed in terms of that it consists of 13 additional questions, which investigate the culture and the life-style in Bulgaria. For their formulation, we made an e-mail survey, which allowed us to confirm the initial hypotheses. The idea was to question about twenty youths in order to find most closely the typical for the Bulgarian context factors. The so added questions are “I wouldn’t be able to live in a EU members state country, where the people are not hospitable and cordial”, “Bulgarians are talented and tempered”, “The women/men in Bulgaria are very beautiful/handsome”, “The bars in Bulgaria are always full and people there have fun”, “I wouldn’t be able to live for an extended periods of time far from my family”, “I deeply like the Bulgarian music”, “I love the nature (the mountains, the sea, etc.) of Bulgaria”, “I wouldn’t be able to live in EU member state country, where the people are cold and unable to enjoy themselves”, “I like the controversial character, the genuinely, optimism, and the sense of humour of Bulgarians”,

“The Bulgarian history and traditions make me feel proud”, “I would like to raise my children in Bulgaria” These questions show some characteristics of the life in Bulgaria. The results of this mini-test were essential for the composition of the questionnaire and for the support of our hypothesis.

## **Results**

### *Attraction and travel items*

The 25 items were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis on the raw attraction scores. The results representing the attractiveness of these 25 EU member states show three fundamental factors.

The first factor was called “Attraction for the East European”. It heavily loaded the items corresponding to the countries as Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Check republic and Poland.

The second factor was called “Attraction for the West and North European Countries”. It heavily loaded the countries as: Austria, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Finland, Sweden, Nederland and Denmark.

The third factor was called Mediterranean countries. It heavily loaded the items corresponding to the countries as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Malta.

The overall mean values of the answers to the items corresponding to the traveling and the staying in different EU countries appeared like most visited country: England followed by France and Germany.

### *Motivational items*

In many cases the mean agreement degree of the content is high. For instance for the following items: “Thus I will learn other rules for the life”, “This allows me to confront to the decisions which have been taken form me”, “This is a means to acquire a degree diploma, which is recognized abroad”, “This allows me to diversify myself from my classmates/fellow-students”.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the motivational items. A seven-factor solution was chosen, and a varimax rotation was performed.

The first factor is identified as connected “alloic-sympathy” motivational state (Reversal Theory). It heavily loads items as “Thus allows me to know the other European”, “This allows me to know other rules of life”, “and this allows me to live an interesting experience”. The mean value of answers to these items, heavily loaded around this factor is 10.40 ( $a = 0.13$ ). These items reflect the motivations of young people to know the other Europeans, their lifestyle, it is an opening to the world, and mobility is seen as a way of acquaintance with Europe in general. The factor is identified with the motivational state “Sympathy”, which is based at the transactions in the Reversal theory. It is called here “Curiosity, openness to the world” (25% of the total variance).

Factor 2 consists of items such as: “It would make me a model for my friends”, “My teachers will enjoy this”, “It would allow me to be recognized as a leader”, “It would allow me to reach some power in my family”. These items are also related to the transactions with the others, but in the domination and competitive spirit. Mobility is a means of personal

affirmation at a new social scene. This factor is identified with the motivational state “Mastery” and it is called “Leader” (6.74% of the total variance).

The third factor contains the items like: “One of the reasons why I would study or work in another EU country is that that would be the way to acquire a good level of education that will be useful to develop projects for the welfare of people, ... I would like to get a good practical training,... I could follow well structured educational programs, ... that will allow me to get a training that is useful to society.” These items reflect some specific goal to be reached but also a very strong orientation towards others, i.e. the consequences of mobility are conceived in terms of utility towards others. The good practical level of training is an individual goal but also a future advantage for society as well. This motivation represents the motivational state Telic, which corresponds to the first pole of the dimension “Goals and Means”, as well as the state of “Alloic” that defines one of the poles of the dimension “Relations” (3.11% of total variance). Here that factor is called “A Training useful to society”.

Item 64 “One of the reasons for which I would study in another country of the EU is that I have decided to follow the steps of a friend who had already decided to do so”, explains 2.8% of the total variance and it represents factor 4 with a factorial weight of 0.67. It is an orthogonal factor centered on affection and friendly relationships, that is identified to the motivational state of “Alloic” from the Apter Theory and, that is one of the poles of the dimension “Relations”. Mobility here represents a means not to get apart from one’s circle of friends. The importance of the adolescent group is critical at this stage of their development. New things are less scary than the separation with the respective person. This factor is called “Friendly relationships”.

Factor 5 is defined by the following items: “One of the reasons why I would study in another EU country is that I could give a cap to my life the way I want it ... I would like to change my lifestyle, that would allow me to get rid of things I do not like here, I would like to change my life. These items express a certain dissatisfaction of responders regarding their current way of living. The motivation for looking for better life and work conditions in other EU countries has its roots from the motivational state of negativism, one of the poles of the fundamental states based on rules and social norms. It is called here “Change” (2.53% of the total variance).

Factor 6 is based on two elements “One of the reasons why I would study in another EU country is that ... that would be a better to get a scholarship, ... I would like to get a scholarship. The content of these items reflects a motivation focused on a specific goal: to receive a scholarship. For the majority of responders, this is actually the only real possible means for mobility to another EU country due to the bad economic conditions in the country. This is a motivational state Telic and is called “Scholarship” (2.18% of the total variance).

The following elements cover factor 7: “One of the reasons why I would study in another EU country is that would allow me to get a better remunerated job, ... that would allow me to get a job quickly. It is another case when there is a motivation focused on a specific goal: to get a job. The contents of the items leads to a reflection that the future professional activity is being projected in the country of origin. The motivational state is Telic, one of the poles of the fundamental state of “Goals and Means”. Here it will be called: Job opportunities (1.91% of the total variance).

## **Discussion**

The first question, that we posed, is associated with the meaning of the emotional and motivational factors that guide the young Bulgarians, while they take a decision for mobility. The second question is associated with some conditional considerations, which play a role in taking a decision for mobility by the young Bulgarians. The most important among the considerations are the possibility of winning a scholarship, the previous visits, the parental forbid, the ability to speak a foreign language.

Three emotional factors were isolated, two of them being common – the attractiveness of the countries of West and North Europe and for the Mediterranean countries. The motivational Telic factors in this sense express attractiveness towards those West European countries, which offer better prospect and conditions for education [6]. The participants, whose intention for mobility is associated with those countries, are the same who express desire for better chances for professional realization. The negativism factors in this sense explain some in satisfaction of the conditions in Bulgaria. The attraction of the Mediterranean countries reveals a cultural proximity and an entertainment search. This destination of mobility of the young Bulgarians can be observed as a kind of a trade-off between the positive attitude towards Bulgaria and the desire for better life and work conditions. The Mediterranean countries represent those two factors to some extent.

In fact, the motivations of the Bulgarian young people to study and work in the EU countries cannot be regarded as an only expression of the current economic situation. They are initially related to the strong wish to become familiar with other Europeans' way of life [8]. The experience of mobility is a social advantage, viewed at a personal level as a challenge which can lead to a radical discovery of oneself [5]. The study of the phenomenon of the young people's mobility is of a great interest from educational, cultural and social point of view.

## *Limitations*

This research has some important limitations. The first is associated with the way in which the sample is formed. The sample is formed by volunteers, and even though attempts were made to introduce representatives of various social classes, we cannot assert that the sample is representative. The participants are high-school students from Bulgaria; most of them girls, as the majority are in the last year of their high-school education.

Another limitation is in the fact that the analyzed empirical material is associated with the intention of migration, as expressed by the participants themselves. A discrepancy is possible between the intention and the real action. The object of the study is the intention, not the behaviour during mobility itself. It is obvious, that studies, based on observations of the behaviour in the real world have indisputable merits. On the other hand, such researches are adequate for detailed study of the models, comprising of a complicated interaction between the factors. They are much easier to perform, and their results can be used as a basis for a study of the real behavior, harder, and more expensive to perform.

## *Applications*

The results of this study can give guidance on the possibilities to influence the mobility of the young Bulgarians towards a specific EU member state country. One of the possible means to influences the migration is associated with the attractiveness of each of the 25 EU member state countries, i.e. to make the image of a certain country more attractive [16]. Some of the countries have an attractive image for all of the participants, for example Italy and Spain. The



advantages of these countries are associated primarily with culture and entertainment, which make their image strongly positive.

Important role in the formation of a positive image of a country in the minds of the young is played by the teachers, and specifically the economics and history teachers [7]. The history teachers can focus their efforts not only in underlining the cooperation and the bonds between the countries during the centuries, but also in knowing better the educational and cultural cooperation programs, offered in EU. The role of the media should not be neglected also.

Another interesting practical application of the study is to examine in more detail the conditional factors. The obligatory for a graduation internship programs in other EU countries are probably among the most important factors [9]. If they were obligatory in all countries, the degree of mobility would be much higher. We must underline the favourable perspectives of making an internship in EU country, no matter the course or discipline. The ability to speak a foreign language is also an important element [10]. It is necessary to encourage the young that they can get along everywhere in Europe and to increase their general self-confidence.

The availability of friends abroad is also an important element. Since it is more invariable, as compared with the other elements, various solutions should be pursued as for example finding people to which the young can speak when necessary. These groups can establish connections with already organized structures in the universities or with associations of the students coming from a specific country. It is obligatory that a policy of hospitality towards the young were lead throughout Europe.

### **Acknowledgements**

*This study was supporter by the René Descartes University. Thanks are extended to the Sofia University and the South-East University and to the Association of Bulgarian Students in France for their helpful contribution.*

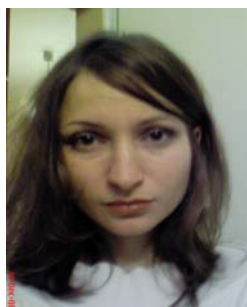
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