

## **Pre- and Post-Brexit Experiences of the Bulgarian Working Class Migrants: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches**

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**Abstract :** Bulgarian working class immigrants are increasingly concerned with UK's recent immigration policies in the context of Brexit. The new ID system would exclude many people currently working in Britain and would break the usual immigrant travel patterns. Post-Brexit Britain would aim to repeal seasonal immigrants. Measures for keeping long-term and life-long immigrants have been implemented and migrants that aim to remain in Britain and establish a household there would be more privileged than temporary or seasonal workers. The results of such regulating mechanisms come at the expense of migrants' longings for a 'normal' existence, especially for those coming from Central and Eastern Europe. Based on in-depth interviews with Bulgarian working class immigrants, the study found out that their major concerns following the decision of the UK to leave the EU are related with the freedom to travel, reside and work in the UK. Furthermore, many of the interviewed women are concerned that they could lose some of the EU's fundamental rights, such as maternity and protection of pregnant women from unlawful dismissal. The soar of commodity prices and university fees and the limited access to public services, healthcare and social benefits in the UK, are also subject to discussion in the paper. The most serious problem, according to the interview, is that the attitude towards Bulgarians and other immigrants in the UK is deteriorating. Both traditional and social media in the UK often portray the migrants negatively by claiming that they take British job positions while simultaneously abuse the welfare system. As a result, the Bulgarian migrants often face social exclusion, which might have negative influence on their health and welfare. In this sense, some of the interviewed stress on the fact that the most important changes after Brexit must take place in British society itself. The aim of the proposed study is to provide a better understanding of the Bulgarian migrants' economic, health and sociocultural experience in the context of Brexit. Methodologically, the proposed paper leans on: 1. Analysing ethnographic materials dedicated to the pre- and post-migratory experiences of Bulgarian working class migrants, using SPSS. 2. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with more than 50 Bulgarian working class migrants [N > 50] in the UK, between 18 and 65 years. The communication with the interviewees was possible via Viber/Skype or face-to-face interaction. 3. The analysis is guided by theoretical frameworks. The paper has been developed within the framework of the research projects of the National Scientific Fund of Bulgaria: DCOST 01/25-20.02.2017 supporting COST Action CA16111 'International Ethnic and Immigrant Minorities Survey Data Network'.

**Keywords :** Bulgarian migrants in UK, economic experiences, sociocultural experiences, Brexit

**Conference Title :** ICMDHS 2019 : International Conference on Migration, Development and Human Security

**Conference Location :** London, United Kingdom

**Conference Dates :** January 21-22, 2019