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## **Secondary movement in Romania: the asylum-migration nexus**

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## Introduction

In recent years, the increasingly restrictive policies in the areas of asylum and migration, particularly in the European region, have resulted in a blurring of boundaries between these two traditionally distinct categories of movements.<sup>1</sup> As the number of legal pathways open to migrants decreases and asylum policy becomes increasingly restrictive, those in need of international protection often resort to irregular means of movement, while attempts are made to use the asylum procedure as a means of regularizing non-forced migration. This cross-over, often referred to as the asylum-migration nexus has caused concern amongst those in the field of refugee protection, particularly that states may be failing to identify and assist those in need of protection in the context of broader migration policy.

The need to address this has been recognized for some time within UNHCR, which responded to the changing nature of asylum and migration through the Convention Plus initiative, in efforts to ensure that current interpretation of the Geneva Convention continues to meet the needs of today's refugees. This initiative is a multilateral effort to commit to improving efforts in refugee protection through three priority areas: resettlement as a durable solution, targeting of development assistance and establishing responsibilities of States in the event of *irregular secondary movements*.

The phenomenon of irregular secondary movement (ISM) can be seen as a primary example of the asylum-migration nexus and has been the subject of much controversy. It exemplifies the tension between the desire of the state to protect its national interest in combating illegal migration and the need to ensure that the international community provides adequate protection to those in need. ISM has been defined as “the phenomenon of refugees, whether they have been formally identified as such or not (asylum-seekers), who move on in an irregular manner from countries in which they have already found protection, in order to seek asylum or permanent resettlement elsewhere”<sup>2</sup>.

On the basis of the Convention Plus initiative, in order to address this phenomenon, a Core Group on Addressing Irregular Secondary Movements of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers was established in March 2004. The Core Group have called for an increase in research on this topic in order to develop strategies in addressing ISM. This

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<sup>2</sup> ExCom Conclusion No. 58 (XL) of 1989: The Problem of Refugees and Asylum Seekers who Move in an Irregular Manner from a Country in which they have already found Protection. Paragraph (a). It is worth noting that it took 3 years to negotiate this definition, which is still not agreed upon by all.

proposal was further echoed in the 2006 10-Point Plan of Action regarding Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration, which calls for data collection and analysis, including information related to motivations for movement, modes of transport and transit routes.<sup>3</sup> It is proposed that the findings of such research can be used to assist States in ensuring refugee protection needs are recognized and appropriately addressed in situations of mixed migration.

As a result of this call for research, the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies was commissioned to conduct a study into secondary movement of Somali refugees across eight countries. The study, “the Path of Somali Refugees into Exile” explores the trajectories and strategies used to reach destination countries and the motivations for secondary movement<sup>4</sup>. Findings showed that lack of protection and lack of opportunities for self-reliance were key motivations for secondary movement, whilst both smugglers and social networks played significant roles in influencing the route and destination country.

Although these findings are of great interest in addressing secondary movement, there is still a need for further research to be conducted across a wider range of countries and target populations. In particular, there has been little research on secondary movement in the context of the European Union and its recent enlargement. The move towards tighter controls on migration through common asylum and migration policy, coupled with the economic disparity between new and old member states increases the likelihood of secondary movement occurring within the EU space.

This has created concerns over responsibility and burden sharing in the EU space with regard to asylum-seekers, and led to the creation of the Dublin II Regulation, establishing responsibility for protection with the member state in which the asylum-seeker first transited or sought a form of protection<sup>5</sup>. As a member state forming part of the Eastern Border of the EU, Romania therefore finds itself in a role of increased responsibility regarding asylum-seekers.

However, fulfilling this responsibility can prove difficult as, despite acceding to the EU in 2007, Romania is still seen as a country of transit for many asylum applicants. This is partly due to its geographical location on both the south-north and east-west migration routes. It is in precisely such transit zones that the distinction between the categories of refugee and migrant become increasingly difficult<sup>6</sup>.

Despite claiming protection in Romania, many asylum-seekers do not see Romania as their country of destination and therefore inevitably move on again either before or after a decision has been made regarding their status. Given Romania’s obligations under the Dublin II Regulation and increasing emphasis on burden sharing in the EU,

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<sup>3</sup> See “Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration: A 10-Point Plan of Action”, Revision 1, January 2007. Point 2: Data Collection and Analysis and Point 8: Addressing Secondary Movements.

<sup>4</sup> Moret, J., Baglioni, S. & Efionayi-Marer, D. 2006. *The Path of Somali Refugees into Exile. A Comparative Analysis of Secondary Movements and Policy Responses*. Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> For full outline of criteria for establishing responsibility please see: Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the member state responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the member states by a third-country national OJ L 050 (25 February 2003) (Dublin II).

<sup>6</sup> Papadopoulou A. (2005). *Exploring the asylum-migration nexus: A case study of transit migrants in Europe*. Global Migration Perspectives. No.23, Jan. 2005.

there is a need for steps to be taken in addressing this phenomenon of secondary movement. The aim of the current study is therefore to investigate the extent to which secondary movement of asylum-seekers and refugees from Romania may be occurring and the factors that influence this movement.

A number of factors were chosen, based upon results from previous research suggesting that they may be influential elements in migration choice of persons seeking a form of protection. Factors such as opportunities for self-reliance and protection, the role of smugglers and social networks (in particular the role of the family) have all been shown as influential in the decision-making of persons seeking protection<sup>7</sup>.

Factors chosen were defined as either “push factors”, potentially increasing the desire to leave Romania, or “pull factors”, potentially increasing the desire to come to another country. For example, it is expected that trans-national social networks will act as “pull factors” by channelling individuals to relocate to destination countries in which family or friends are present<sup>8</sup>. The influence of such networks has been well-documented in the past, forming the basis of social network theory, suggesting that trans-national social spaces exist which provide social capital and therefore assist individuals to move, trade and exchange information and financial resources<sup>9</sup>. Attractive images can be created, with certain expectations regarding protection or employment opportunities, of destination countries based upon exchange of information provided through social networks thus influencing the person to migrate<sup>10</sup>.

Based on the theory of rational choice, it is proposed that the individual will consider the aforementioned factors and make a decision, through assessment of perceived risks, costs and benefits, regarding the best migration option in the circumstances. A crucial element here is the “perceived” costs and benefits, as the decision will be made regardless of the accuracy of these perceptions. Thus for example, unrealistic expectations about a destination country will still influence the likelihood of secondary movement, despite being inaccurate.

## Methodology

In considering the most appropriate approach for the purposes of the study, it was decided that the methods used should be primarily qualitative, with a quantitative element. As the aim is to investigate factors that influence decision-making in secondary movement, it is important to collect in-depth information about the

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<sup>7</sup>Moret, J. (2006). *Supra Note 1*. Robinson, V. & Segrott, J. (2002). *Understanding the decision-making of asylum seekers*. Home Office Research Study 243.

<sup>8</sup> Massey et al. (1993). *Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal*. Population and Development Review, 19 (3): 431-466. Al-Ali, N., R. Black, and K. Koser 2001 Refugees and transnationalism: the experience of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27(4): 615- 634.

<sup>9</sup> Palloni, A., Massey, D., Ceballos, M. (2001). *Social Capital and International Migration: A Test Using Information on Family Networks* American Journal of Sociology. Mar 2001. Vol. 106 (5): 1262-1298.

<sup>10</sup> Horst, C. (2006). *Connected lives: Somalis in Minneapolis, family responsibilities and the migration dreams of relatives*. New Issues in Refugee Research. Research Paper No. 124.

individual's migration history, living conditions and perception of potential countries of destination. Therefore a purely quantitative, survey-style approach would provide insufficient detail. However, a quantitative element was included, in order to draw preliminary conclusions on tendencies towards secondary migration, which can then be used in conjunction with the qualitative analysis as the basis for a future larger-scale statistical study.

It was decided that triangulation of sources would be used in the current study, for the purposes of widening data collection, and improving credibility by examining the consistency of findings. A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with three different groups chosen as sources of information; asylum-seekers and refugees, key informants from the refugee community and professionals working in the field of asylum.

Data collection methods were established during a number of consultations with researchers based at an independent research institute and the University of Bucharest<sup>11</sup>. This process ensured that interviews did not contain any biased stimuli for obtaining potentially inaccurate results. All interviews were semi-structured, and consisted of nine sections, based on factors shown by previous research to be influential in migration choice in relation to persons seeking a form of protection, including the role of agents and the various "push" and "pull" factors. A mixture of open and closed-ended questions was used for the purposes of providing both qualitative, in-depth information and standardized information. Each interview lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.

Interviewers were given standardized interview methods and trained in conducting interviews with persons in need of protection. Regular meetings were held throughout the data collection process to encourage feedback and to ensure consistency in interview techniques. A total of five interviewers were involved in data collection, representing three different nationalities, amongst which the languages of English, Romanian and Arabic were spoken to native level thereby minimizing the need for interpreters. However, when the need arose, interpreters were provided, using either existing NGO-contracted interpreters or on a voluntary basis from the refugee community. With the exception of the research co-coordinator, all interviewers were individuals unknown to the refugee community or those working in the refugee field. This allowed for a level of impartiality and neutrality whilst conducting research.

Interviews with professionals working in the field of asylum were conducted at their work premises, whilst interviews with asylum-seekers and refugees were conducted either on the premises of UNHCR partner organizations or in Stolnicul Accommodation Centre. Partner organizations provided a separate room on their premises for interviews and in Stolnicul Accommodation Centre a private room was also made available by service providers.

At the start of each interview, the purpose of the research was given, along with an assurance of anonymity and confidentiality before obtaining informed consent. Respondents were also given the option of not answering any given question and stopping the interview at any point. Care was taken to emphasize the fact that the

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<sup>11</sup> Mr. Sorin Cace, Researcher, Institute for Quality of Life Research (ICCV), Bucharest. Ms. Smaranda Witec, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest.

answers given would not in any way affect the individual's asylum claim or the assistance to which they are normally entitled. Due to trust issues, and concerns over anonymity, it was decided that interviews should not be recorded but instead notes were taken by interviewers. The interviews were then transcribed into a database previously constructed on the basis of the themes to be investigated.

### **Sampling methods**

A stratified sample was taken, based on the criteria of legal status (for the purposes of comparison between asylum-seekers and refugees), accommodation location (as the type of accommodation – state-supported or private - can be taken as an indicator of the level of integration) and length of time in Romania. Although no pre-selected categories were established for purposeful selection on the basis of country of origin, attempts were made to ensure that a diverse representation of countries was present. In addition to stratified sampling, snowballing techniques were used in order to reach a wider section of the population. The sample was limited to individuals currently living in Bucharest, due to practical reasons and limited resources.

Whilst efforts were made to ensure that a wide variety of different characteristics were present in the sample, some nationalities were not represented and therefore the research does not claim to be statistically representative. However, as the purposes of this study are not to extrapolate and produce generalized conclusions, but rather to investigate a number of information-rich cases, statistical representativeness is not considered to be vital. In addition, no statistical tests requiring such representativeness were carried out during data analysis.

A total of 52 interviews were conducted during the data collection phase, consisting of seven professionals working in the field, three representatives of the refugee community and 42 asylum-seekers and refugees.

### **Sample characteristics**

The age range of the sample of asylum-seekers and refugees was between 17 and 61 (mean 36), with the majority (67 per cent) between 20 and 40. In terms of legal status, a cross-section was obtained, focusing on asylum-seekers (18) and refugees (20) but also including those with subsidiary protection (2) and tolerated status (2). The sample represented four main types of residence, varying from those with a higher degree of self-sufficiency (privately rented housing) to those dependent on support from the state (Stolnicul Accommodation Centre) a non-governmental organization (NGO) shelter or family and friends, the distribution of which can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Number of interviews by place of residence.

Privately rented	14
Stolnicul Accommodation Centre	17
NGO shelter	8
Family/friend	3

A wide variety of countries of origin were represented, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 2. Number of interviews by country of origin.

Angola	1
Armenia	1
Bangladesh	2
Congo	2
Ethiopia	1
Guinea	1
Iran	4
Iraq	14
Lebanon	1
Malawi	1
Moldova	1
Nigeria	1
Pakistan	1
Palestine	2
Somalia	4
Sudan	1
Turkey	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>

As can be seen, the most highly represented countries were Iraq, Somalia, Turkey and Iran, which is reflective of the current proportions amongst asylum applicants in Romania. There was also a wide variety of different lengths of time spent in Romania, the shortest being one month, up to 17 years, as can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. Number of interviews by length of time in Romania

< 6 months	7
6 months - 1 year	4
1 - 2 years	4
3 - 5 years	7
6 - 10 years	12
> 10years	10

Some potential issues with sample characteristics arose due to the methods through which the population was contacted (primarily through UNHCR partner organizations and Stolnicul Accommodation Centre) that may result in a response rate bias. However, given resource limitations of the research, alternative sampling methods could not be used. As a result of the fact that more males than females visit organizations and are housed in the accommodation centre, there were significantly more males than females interviewed (22 males, 12 females). The sample may also reflect a portion of the population that is less integrated, given that many were already in contact with an organization seeking assistance. However, there were a significant



number of interviewees that were staying in privately rented housing, suggesting a certain level of self-sufficiency.

### **Secondary movement: decision-making factors**

The main aim of the research was to investigate the occurrence of and reasons for secondary movement from Romania of asylum-seekers and refugees. The process of data analysis therefore followed the structure of the interviews and the factors expected to influence the nature of and desire for secondary movement. Firstly, the respondents' stated intentions for movement were examined, along with the reasons given for this. Secondly, the manner in which people arrived in Romania, including the migration route itself and the role of agents was analysed. Finally, the various "pull" and "push" factors and their potential influence over secondary movement were also examined.

### **Secondary movement intentions**

A total of 23 out of 42 respondents (55 per cent) stated that they intended to move from Romania, whilst seven respondents stated that they had already previously attempted to leave Romania at some point during the asylum procedure. The reasons given for this desire to leave Romania can be categorized into the following themes, in order of importance:

- poor living conditions (including lack of perceived opportunities for employment and education) (14);
- networks (desire to reside with community or family in other country) (10);
- lack of secure legal status (8);
- culture (desire to move to a country with a similar culture) (2).

The intention to move was slightly higher amongst asylum-seekers (61 per cent) than refugees (50 per cent). Responses given would suggest that this reflects the different psychological state of the asylum-seeker due to their unresolved legal status. However, the fact that a significant number of refugees also expressed an intention to move suggests that there are additional factors other than the uncertainty of the asylum procedure influencing the likelihood of secondary movement (e.g. integration conditions for refugees and pull factors). This was also reflected in the interviews with professionals working with refugees, who stated that they are often approached by refugees for information and advice regarding secondary movement.

### **Migration routes and the role of agents**

It is expected that the manner in which the person arrived in Romania and their migration plans will affect their likelihood of staying in Romania. If Romania was not the intended destination, the person may wish to continue moving until they reach this

destination, particularly if there is a large discrepancy between Romania and the individual's expectations of the destination in mind.

Regarding migration intentions in the country of origin, less than half (19/42) had sufficient time and resources to plan their move from their country of origin. Only seven of those interviewed had chosen Romania as their destination before leaving. Of those who had chosen Romania, six stated that this was because their family was already here and they had obtained a visa, whilst one had initially come for educational purposes and claimed asylum some time after arriving in the country. For six of the respondents there was no chosen destination when leaving, whilst 28 had planned to go to a country in Western Europe. The most popular country destinations were Sweden (6), the Netherlands (5), Germany (5), Belgium and the UK (3).

Of those who had originally planned to come to Romania, three stated that they intended to leave, whilst 13/29 that had other destinations in mind intended to stay in Romania. Thus there were a significant number of respondents that felt they could settle in Romania despite the previous intention to move elsewhere and vice versa.

It is therefore difficult to draw a conclusion about the effect of original destination intentions on the desire to move on from Romania. This is perhaps due to the fact that there were large variations in the extent to which migration plans had been precisely formulated, with some respondents definitely intent on a particular country, whilst others expressed some flexibility or a more general destination goal of "Europe". It is also clear from the in-depth interviews that there are many other factors involved, other than original destination intentions, that are considerably more influential on the desire to move.

Regarding the role of agents in the movement process, 17 of those interviewed had used an agent in a manner that could be classified as smuggling<sup>12</sup>, and of those, eight were assisted in the country of origin and six were assisted on route (all of these were in Turkey). Those who paid a smuggler in their country of origin were often deceived about their destination, expecting to arrive in a Western European country and instead finding themselves in Romania, Moldova or Turkey. One respondent had paid \$3000 by selling the family's belongings and had expected to arrive in the Netherlands, while another respondent had spent six weeks in the storage hold of a ship before arriving in Romania.

### **Pull factors: perception of destination**

From the above-mentioned results, it is clear that individuals will go to extraordinary lengths to reach particular countries. It was therefore of interest to investigate the reasons for choosing destination countries, in order to establish possible motivations for secondary movement.

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<sup>12</sup> Classification made based on the definition in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Article 3 (a) 'Smuggling of migrants' shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.

The perception of these destination countries (in particular Western Europe) plays a large role in choosing to move there. When asked what the reason was for choosing a particular destination country, the following motivations were given:

- Networks (the presence of friends, family or a community in the country) (16);
- Better living conditions (better perceived opportunities for refugees) (9);
- Safety/democracy (8);
- Ease of entry/accessibility (2).

There was an overwhelming belief amongst respondents that Western European countries provide more opportunities, better living conditions and better treatment of refugees. Although some perceptions expressed were possibly accurate, there were also several misconceptions, such as the belief that refugees receive 800 Euros per month in the Netherlands in social welfare. Other opinions such as “you can earn in a day there what you earn in a month here” and “Canada is a free country where your wishes can come true” were also expressed. The majority of the perceptions expressed about destination countries were vague impressions of conditions, showing that respondents were generally not well-informed regarding the facts of social welfare or asylum policy.

One respondent recounted the disappointment caused by the unrealistic expectations he had gathered from his country of origin, stating “the things that I was told about Europe are totally different from reality”. It would appear that many individuals hold these perceptions of Western Europe, which act as strong pull factors for secondary migration. Perceptions and opinions regarding countries of destination are fluid and open to change throughout the migration process, as some are formed in the country of origin, whilst others are formed or corrected (often amongst the refugee community) while staying in Romania.

#### **Pull factors: social networks:**

As shown by the reasons given for destination choice, the presence of social networks in other countries is a very strong factor in making this decision. It is therefore expected that the presence or absence of social networks will affect an individual’s likelihood of secondary migration from Romania. Previous research suggests that this factor is particularly strong amongst certain communities<sup>13</sup>.

The most common locations of social networks amongst respondents were Germany (9), the Netherlands (7), Sweden (6), France (4), Norway (3), USA (3), UK (2) and Canada (2). Of those who expressed the intention to move, 70 per cent named a chosen destination country in which they had social networks (all of which were family), suggesting that family in particular plays a strong role in influencing the decision to move and the country of destination.

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<sup>13</sup> Moret et al (2006) *Supra note 3*. Horst, C. (2006) *Supra note 9*.

Trans-national networks often play a role in forming perceptions of destination countries, be they accurate or not, such as the belief that refugees receive better treatment in particular countries. This can occur either through direct exchange of information, or through receiving material assistance, which serves to consolidate the belief that living conditions are superior. Previous research has shown that trans-national networks often assist in both these ways<sup>14</sup>. For this reason, respondents were asked about the extent to which they give and receive assistance from social networks.

None of the respondents was in a position to provide assistance to friends and family in other countries although all expressed the desire to be able to do so. Many expressed the belief that, were they based in another country, they would be able to send money home and therefore increase their chances of family reunification. Of those interviewed, 26 per cent were currently receiving financial assistance from social networks in other countries. The countries that help is most frequently received from are France (4) and Germany (4), followed by Sweden (2) and the Netherlands (2).

Of particular interest in this regard is the Iraqi community, who often have social networks present in Sweden. There was a general awareness amongst Iraqi respondents of the presence of an Iraqi community in Sweden. Almost all Iraqis who expressed a desire to move chose Sweden as a destination, citing the presence of a community and the perception that Iraqi refugees are well received as reasons for this. As statistics show that this perception is indeed quite accurate<sup>15</sup>, such social networks may be valuable sources of information in decisions related to secondary movement.

### **Push factors: expectations of Romania**

It was originally hypothesized that if a discrepancy exists between respondent expectations of Romania and the conditions in which they find themselves, this could act as a push factor for secondary migration. However, as was previously discussed the majority of asylum seekers did not intend coming to Romania. Therefore, it is not surprising that almost all respondents stated that they had little or no previous knowledge of Romania. The most common knowledge expressed was of a social nature, gained from family or friends. Out of the seven that had planned to come to Romania, three stated that they knew nothing significant before coming (only that their family was present).

Despite this lack of knowledge, respondents were still asked if they had had any expectations regarding conditions in Romania, in relation to employment, social benefits, receiving protection and entry. Almost all respondents had not had any expectations regarding conditions in Romania before arriving.

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<sup>14</sup> Al-Ali.N. et al (2001) Refugees and transnationalism: the experience of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27(4): 615- 634. Spittel, M (1998) Testing Network Theory through an Analysis of Migration from Mexico to the United States. Center for Demography and Ecology Working Paper No. 99-01.

<sup>15</sup> Sweden was the top destination for Iraqis in industrialized countries in 2006, with some 9,000 applications, followed by the Netherlands (2,800), Germany (2,100) and Greece (1,400). UNHCR Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries, 2006. Iraqis received a 91 per cent overall protection rate in Sweden in 2006, in comparison to, for example, 12 per cent in the UK and 25 per cent in the Netherlands. UNHCR, Refugees no. 146, Issue 2, 2007.

With regard to expectations for entry into Romania, 14 respondents had expected to enter easily, while 19 had no expectations and nine had expected difficulties. It is worth noting that whilst respondents often had no expectations regarding ease of entry, many claimed that they had indeed experienced difficulties at the border, with incidents involving bribery relatively common. This would suggest a need for further research and investigation into this matter.

Despite the lack of expectations regarding Romania specifically, many respondents expressed a level of expectation with regard to “Europe” in general. There was overall consensus that a decent standard of living could be expected in Europe and that Romania should reflect this.

### **Push factors: conditions in Romania**

The standard of living that respondents enjoy, affected by both reception conditions for asylum-seekers and integration conditions for refugees is expected to be a significant factor in the likelihood of staying in Romania. This expectation can be drawn from the fact that poor living conditions were the number one reason for wanting to leave Romania, whilst better living conditions was the second most common reason for choosing a destination country.

Whilst a good standard of living will act as a motivation to stay in Romania, a poor standard of living can act as a push factor to leave Romania in two ways: firstly if the individual is unable to sustain themselves and therefore feels it is impossible to obtain an adequate standard of living in order to settle in Romania and secondly if the standard is significantly below what they feel they may obtain if they relocated to another country.

In order to discover how asylum-seekers and refugees view their standard of living, a number of factors affecting lifestyle were investigated during interviews. These included employment, language, accommodation, community, safety and discrimination. In addition, perceived future opportunities in Romania as regards integration and legal status were also examined as influential factors.

When respondents were asked to rate their standard of living on a scale of one to ten, the average rating was 3.4. The main reasons given for this were cost of living, poor salaries, lack of job opportunities (for refugees) and lack of legal status and adequate means of support (for asylum seekers). An in-depth investigation of these reasons is important in order to uncover the factors influencing secondary movement.

Employment: A total of 13/42 respondents were employed at the time of interview, of whom six were with a legal contract, necessary to ensure important social rights such as health insurance. Of all those employed, only one person stated that they felt their salary was sufficient to obtain a decent standard of living. The majority of employed respondents were refugees, with only 3/18 asylum-seekers having a job. Although asylum-seekers are, under the law<sup>16</sup>, prohibited from working in Romania,

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<sup>16</sup> Only once an asylum-seeker has been in the procedure for over 12 months does he/she have the right to work: Asylum Law No. 122/2006.

all of those interviewed stated that the monthly allowance of 108 RON (approx. 33 Euro) was insufficient to support them, leading many to seek an additional income.

Although it is clear why, given their legal status, asylum-seekers may have difficulties seeking employment, it remains to be established why the number of refugees and persons with subsidiary protection in employment was low. Only nine out of 22 were employed, with three respondents giving alternative reasons for not working (pensioner, housewife and student), thus leaving a total of nine unemployed persons (41 per cent). When asked, the main reason given was lack of language abilities, although difficulties in getting qualifications recognized and discrimination by potential employers were also given as reasons.

These opinions were reflected by professionals working with refugees, who stated that, while they may have the legal right to work, they were still faced with significant obstacles to obtaining employment. In particular, refugees are often not well prepared for the workplace in Romania, not only in terms of language but also regarding cultural differences. The legal requirements, including the process of having qualifications recognized, prove difficult and many refugees resort to working on the black market, where there are fewer opportunities for skilled workers. This issue is particularly significant when considering the link between possession of a legal contract and entitlement to health care through payment of health insurance.

Language: The importance of possessing language abilities is illustrated by the fact that only respondents with an advanced level of Romanian had jobs with contracts. This supports the respondents' claims that language is a significant barrier to the labour market.

For the purposes of investigating the role of language abilities, only those who had been in Romania for one year or longer were considered, of whom 17 were at an advanced level, seven at an intermediate level and six spoke little or no Romanian. Of particular concern are those who have been in Romania for a considerable length of time and yet still do not speak any Romanian. For example, there were a number of respondents with a form of protection, who had been in Romania for between six and 12 years with limited knowledge of the Romanian language, showing their lack of integration.

Of those who spoke Romanian, it was found that half of the respondents had learned the language through attending lessons (10 had taken lessons from NGOs, two from the integration programme of the National Office for Refugees) and half had learned without attending lessons, informally or through the community. When asked why so few had attended lessons, respondents stated that lessons often did not cater to individual needs/levels and were not available in the language of the individual.

Accommodation: A total of 17 respondents were accommodated in Stolnicul Accommodation Centre, whilst 14 were in rented accommodation, eight in an NGO shelter and three dependent on the goodwill of family or friends. Although in general residents of the Stolnicul Accommodation Centre were grateful for the accommodation provided, a number of concerns were expressed regarding the restrictive opening hours, the manner in which the regulations are enforced by security staff, the lack of cleanliness, the occasional unwanted presence of the media and the lack of social activities in the centre. However, individuals staying in rented

accommodation also expressed difficulties, including high rents and discriminating attitudes from landlords towards refugees. Several incidents were recorded, both by refugees and professionals in the refugee community of discrimination on the part of landlords when renting to refugees.

Discrimination: It would appear that the above-mentioned example of discrimination is not an isolated case amongst asylum-seekers and refugees in Romania, as half of all respondents stated that they felt discriminated against. However, it is important to note that only one of these cases referred to discrimination of a racial nature in society. All other respondents stated that they view Romania as a tolerant society in which they do not feel discriminated against by Romanian people in general. Discrimination was, however, reported in the form of unfair treatment on the part of employers, landlords, local authorities and health services.

Safety: A total of 64 per cent of respondents stated that they felt safe in Romania. It is worth noting that the majority of those who didn't feel safe were asylum-seekers or persons with tolerated status that expressed a fear of being returned to their country of origin. Also of interest is the fact that many refugees who currently felt safe recounted periods of anxiety over their safety whilst they were in the status determination process, which led them to consider leaving the country. Indeed, some respondents recounted incidents in which this anxiety had driven them to an (unsuccessful) attempt to leave. This is supported by the fact that the majority of asylum-seekers interviewed cited lack of secure legal status as a primary motivation for moving.

Community: It is proposed that the presence of a community from the individual's country of origin may serve to improve their living conditions in Romania and therefore reduce their likelihood of secondary movement. The extent to which respondents are supported by such a community was therefore investigated. Results show that 48% of respondents stated that there was a community present that they were aware of and in contact with from their country of origin. However, presence of this community alone does not necessarily improve the individual's living conditions. Some respondents stated that the community from their country of origin are of a different ethnicity and therefore do not support them. It would seem that community support is often received on the basis of a mixture of different elements such as ethnicity and religion, rather than simply nationality.

Expectations of future in Romania: Many of the results above show that there is a level of discontent amongst respondents with their current standard of living. It is therefore important to investigate whether respondents feel that opportunities exist to improve their situation in the future. In response to the question, "do you see yourself integrating in Romania?" only 31% of respondents answered positively. However, on closer investigation, 48% of those who could not see themselves integrating stated that this was due to their unresolved legal status, whilst 35% gave lack of employment and 14% gave language as the reason. Most respondents associated in some measure their chances of integrating with their employment conditions. Therefore, if these obstacles were removed, almost all respondents see the potential to integrate into Romanian society in the future. The issue of legal status cannot be underestimated, as 89% of asylum-seekers stated that they believed their lifestyle would significantly improve if they received a form of protection.

## Conclusion

One of the most important findings of the study is the high number of respondents (over half) who stated that they intend to move on from Romania. However, this clearly does not mean that secondary movement of asylum-seekers from Romania will occur in over 50 per cent of cases, as the majority of respondents stated that they also lacked the necessary resources. Although the intention to move was present in many cases, the occurrence of secondary movement is likely to be significantly lower than this. Nevertheless, the findings regarding the intentions for secondary migration are significant and it is therefore important that the factors influencing this desire are examined.

The results of the research show that the majority of respondents were not in full control of their destination, as agents, in particular smugglers, are commonly an influential factor in the migration route taken by asylum-seekers arriving in Romania. This is reflected in the relatively small number who had originally envisaged Romania as their destination. Despite the expectation that a previous desire to move to a Western European country would increase the likelihood of secondary migration, the findings suggest that this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, many of those who previously intended to migrate to a Western European country were happy to settle in Romania and expressed no desire to move again.

It would seem that initial migration intentions are not always fixed, clear plans, but rather are flexible depending on the reception and integration conditions of the host country. This is supported by previous studies showing that many refugees intend to arrive in “Europe”<sup>17</sup>, without having a particular country in mind. Just as some refugees will settle in a country other than the intended destination, likewise there are a number of studies documenting the occurrence of “accidental” transit migration, where refugees who had no previous intention of secondary movement do so for various reasons<sup>18</sup>.

It has been suggested that this shift into transit by the refugee occurs due to “a combination of structural and individual factors, such as the policy framework of the receiving country and the role of social/family networks in directing the movement of migrants”.<sup>19</sup> The results of this study also suggest that these factors are more important than original migration plans in determining the likelihood of secondary movement.

In examining respondents’ desire to move, influential factors were split into two categories; pull and push factors. Whilst asylum-seekers and refugees provided similar motivations regarding pull factors, such as perceptions of destination countries and social networks, a slightly different type of response was evident in relation to push factors in each group.

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<sup>17</sup> Morrison, J. (1998) *The Cost of Survival: the trafficking of refugees to the UK*, The Refugee Council, London.

<sup>18</sup> The following studies document spontaneous or “accidental” transit migration for economic reasons. IOM. (1993). *Transit migration in Romania: Annex to the IOM study: Profiles and motives of potential migrants in Romania*. Geneva: IOM. IOM. (1995). *Irregular Migration in Central Europe: the Case of Afghan Asylum Seekers in Hungary*. Geneva: IOM.

<sup>19</sup> Papadopoulou A. (2005). *Supra Note 5*. p4.



In relation to pull factors, as predicted, it was found that social networks, in particular the presence of family, play a strong role in influencing decision-making regarding secondary movement and country of destination. Findings provide support for social network theory<sup>20</sup>, suggesting that trans-national social spaces exist, which provide social capital to asylum-seekers and refugees in Romania by way of both information and financial resources. This is confirmed by the fact that countries from which respondents receive financial support, namely, Sweden, Germany, France and the Netherlands, are also top destination countries. Regarding information flow amongst such networks, findings showed a clear tendency amongst asylum-seekers and refugees in Romania towards having high expectations of Western European countries as better host countries, which are not always based on quality, factual information.

However, of particular interest here is the presence of a social network amongst Iraqi refugees with friends or family in Sweden. The information available to these refugees appeared to be of higher quality, allowing Iraqi respondents to make a better assessment regarding the relative risk of secondary migration. The reason for this may be that, unlike most other nationalities, Iraqis represent a group for which there are significant differences between European member states as regards recognition rates<sup>21</sup>.

As previously stated, the push factors affecting secondary movement were slightly different for asylum-seekers and refugees. Although poor living conditions was a factor that influenced both groups, lack of legal status or protection issues was the primary motive for asylum-seekers to move. Unlike in many transit countries, the protection issue is not related to a lack of access to the asylum procedure, but rather to uncertainty over the outcome of the procedure. Results showed that asylum-seekers felt that their living conditions could improve if they were granted a form of protection, but they were not confident they would be given such protection.

Many respondents stated that at the time of making the asylum claim they were more confident regarding the asylum procedure but as time went on they become more uncertain, with a high proportion stating that they felt unsafe and feared they would be returned to their country of origin. Thus it is probable that secondary movement is more likely to take place towards the end of the asylum procedure, after a rejection, during the appeal stage. This is supported by the statements of those who attempted to leave Romania, which were mostly in the later stages of the asylum procedure.

Despite the primary importance of legal status to asylum-seekers, it is clear that reception conditions in Romania also play a crucial role in the decision to stay or leave. The current asylum law states that asylum-seekers have the right to “the necessary assistance for subsistence if one does not have the necessary material means at their disposal”<sup>22</sup>. This is in keeping with UNHCR’s definition of what constitutes “effective protection” in a host country, namely that “the person has access to means of subsistence sufficient to maintain an adequate standard of living”<sup>23</sup>. In considering

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<sup>20</sup> Previous studies show that the most important factor influencing the country of destination for asylum is the presence of friends, relatives or compatriots in the country” Böcker, A & Havinga, T. (1999) *Country of asylum by choice or by chance: asylum seekers in Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK*, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 25 (1), 43-61.

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialised Countries*, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Asylum Law No. 122/2006. Article 17 (1) (j).

<sup>23</sup> See *Summary Conclusions on the concept of “effective protection” in the context of secondary y*

the quality of support provided to asylum-seekers in Romania, it is important to note that the monthly amount awarded is, at the time of writing, more than the amount given in social benefits to unemployed Romanian nationals<sup>24</sup>. However, it should also be noted that asylum-seekers are in a situation of increased vulnerability, without any means of additional support (e.g. family) that many Romanians have at their disposal.

A crucial element here is the fact that all asylum-seekers interviewed considered the subsistence allowance of 108 RON (approximately 33 Euro) to be insufficient for survival. When considering the likelihood for secondary movement, it is this *perception* of the assistance that, according to the theory of rational choice, will influence the asylum-seeker to leave Romania. More specifically, the perception of this assistance in relation to what is offered in other European countries (whether based on factual information or not) is particularly influential, as most consider this to be significantly more.

Results showed that this perception of better conditions was also a significant factor influencing refugees' decisions regarding secondary movement, as poor living conditions were the most common reason for desire to migrate. When examining this factor, it is also useful to consider the UNHCR definition of "effective protection" in relation to durable solutions for refugees. It is recognized that effective protection includes "a genuine prospect of an accessible durable solution in or from the asylum country". In addition, it is recommended that steps be taken "to enable the progressive achievement of self-reliance"<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, results show that opportunity for self-reliance is precisely what refugees are looking for in a host country, and the perceived lack of this opportunity in Romania is what motivates many to move on.

In summary, the tendency toward secondary migration can be seen as a strategy on the part of both asylum-seekers and refugees to live a full, dignified and self-sufficient life. The following table summarizes the various factors that are highly linked to the individual's ability to obtain self-sufficiency and therefore the likelihood of secondary movement:

Although the relative importance that is placed on each of the above-mentioned factors varies according to each individual case (i.e. individual or cultural differences in the role of the family and social support), it is clear that the three sections are highly influential in secondary movement in general. According to rational choice theory, the individual will take the above-mentioned factors into consideration and make a cost-benefit analysis resulting in a decision to stay or leave Romania.

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*movements of refugees and asylum-seekers*, Lisbon Expert Roundtable, 9 and 10 December 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Methodological Norms for the implementation of the Asylum Law, Article 55:(1) The asylum seeker shall benefit, upon request, from food within the limit of 3 RON/person/day, accommodation within the limit of 1,8 RON/person/day and other expenses, within the limit of 0,6 RON/person/day in accordance with the conditions set out in Article 17 (1) (j) of the law. Thus, the amount given to asylum-seekers in government accommodation totals 108 RON/pers/month (in a month with 30 days). Whilst Law No. 416/2001 on minimum income, amended in January 2007: stated that the minimum income for unemployed Romanian nationals (who have no other income) is 96 RON/pers/month.

<sup>25</sup> See statement by Ms. Erika Feller, Director, Department of International Protection, at the fifty-fifth session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, 7 October 2004.

Table 4. Factors influencing secondary movement from Romania

<b>Living Conditions</b>	<b>Protection</b>	<b>Social Support</b>
Current living conditions	Current legal status	Presence of network in other countries
Perception of lifestyle and opportunities for self-reliance in Romania	Perception of asylum policy in Romania	Resources of network (ability to assist)
Perception of lifestyle and opportunities for self-reliance in other countries (in comparison with Romania)	Perception of asylum policy in other countries	Positive contact with network (willingness to assist)

As the perception of Romania in relation to other countries plays a large role in this decision, it is perhaps useful to draw a comparison with Romanian's perceptions of opportunities both at home and abroad, to examine the extent to which the desire to migrate is a broader phenomenon. Indeed, recent opinion polls have shown that many young Romanians hold similar opinions to those of refugees with regard to opportunities in Romania. For example, research shows that only 3.5 per cent of young Romanians are content with the labour market and the possibilities in their country for finding a job, whilst 38 per cent of young Romanians believe that their salary does not allow them a decent standard of living<sup>26</sup>. The results of this are that 63 per cent of young people state that they intend to leave Romania, primarily in search of employment opportunities. It is perhaps not surprising then, that a third country national, with no cultural or familial links to Romania would also express this desire.

It is also interesting to note that results indicated that refugees who had stayed for longer in Romania expressed similar migration-related views to that of Romanian nationals, such as the desire to work abroad temporarily and then return to and settle in Romania. However, regarding both Romanians and refugees alike, it should be kept in mind that, despite the high percentage expressing a desire to move, the likelihood of migration actually occurring is affected by both the availability of financial resources and the proximity of the desired destination country.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the results of the research, which highlight the factors found to be influential in secondary movement, a number of recommendations can be made for actions that may reduce the likelihood of secondary movement occurring from Romania. In particular, regarding standards of living, the rate of unemployment is high amongst refugees, when considered in comparison to Romanians<sup>27</sup>. The main reasons given for

<sup>26</sup> Situatia Tineretului si Asteptarile Sale: Diagnoza 2006. Sondaj de opinie realizat de ANZIT prin Directia de Studii si Cercetari pentru Probleme de Tineret, Decembrie, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Results of the current study showed only 9/22 refugees were employed, whilst others studies have shown employment rate to be slightly higher at 65 per cent: See Annual Report on the status of aliens granted a form of protection in Romania, National Refugee Office, 2006. The official rate of

this were lack of preparation for the Romanian workplace (including language abilities and cultural adaptation), difficulties in getting qualifications recognized and discrimination by potential employers. These issues could potentially be addressed through changes made to the refugee integration programme in Romania, such as better quality, longer-lasting language training and cultural adaptation programmes and the inclusion of job preparation and vocational skills training.

Another measure that could serve to improve the living conditions of refugees in Romania would be to increase public awareness activities that combat discrimination. Many refugees claimed that, whilst they see Romania as a tolerant society, discrimination often acts as a barrier not only to employment but also in access to housing and social/health services. In addition, training sessions tailored to the needs of local authorities and social services that are responsible for the assistance of refugees would be useful in improving refugees' experience of living in Romania. Regarding asylum-seekers' desires towards secondary migration, this could be reduced to some extent by improving the conditions of reception, such as material, psychological and social support offered throughout the asylum process.

The likelihood of an individual undertaking a risky and illegal migration strategy could also be reduced by the provision of timely and quality information regarding legislation and policy. For example, informing asylum-seekers of the Dublin Regulation may act as a deterrent to high-risk strategies. Likewise, providing information to refugees regarding their legal rights to travel within the EU may encourage the type of legal, temporary, circular migration strategies similar to those undertaken by Romanians.

### **Limitations and future research**

The current study was subject to certain resource limitations, which may have affected the results through various response biases. These include the size of the sample and the method of accessing the target group through NGOs/ONR, which may have caused a bias towards those still in need of assistance and therefore less independent. In addition, although steps were taken to combat the problems arising from the issue of trust, the possibility that individuals withheld information regarding migration intentions due to lack of trust cannot be excluded.

This study can be considered as a preliminary analysis of the issue of secondary migration in Romania, which has provided the background for future investigation. In particular, more conclusive results on the phenomenon could be obtained from a second, larger-scale, quantitative study, covering a wider geographical area. A number of issues were highlighted in the current study that merit further, in-depth investigation. These include the effects of the Dublin II procedure, asylum-seekers experiences of the border procedure in Romania and the nature of the Iraqi diaspora, which could be further explored through a multi-national survey.

The results of the current research have implications for Romania's role as an EU member state and the concept of "burden sharing" within the EU. For example, the

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unemployment for Romanians was 7,2 per cent in 2006 (obtained from Romanian National Institute for Statistics).

finding that the psychological state produced by the uncertainty during the asylum procedure increases likelihood of secondary migration would appear to support the use of resettlement programmes, which reduce this anxiety-inducing waiting period. This can be seen as an encouragement for the recent steps taken in Romanian legislation to allow for Romania to act as a resettlement country. However, concerted efforts in the continued improvement of the integration of refugees would still be recommended for a resettlement programme in Romania. In addition, the promotion of such a programme should not be undertaken at the expense of those making “spontaneous” asylum claims on Romanian territory.

In conclusion, Romania currently faces a significant challenge, in balancing the obligations of a new EU member state to combat illegal forms of migration with the need to respect the rights of those in need of international protection. However, the results of the current study would suggest that these two goals are not fundamentally at odds, but rather that upholding the rights to which those in need of protection are entitled is, in reality, the best tool for addressing the phenomenon of secondary migration.



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