

CASTLE2 OPENING RESEARCH REPORT

Research on Bangladeshi labour migration and transnational family social protection in Bangladesh, Greece and Romania



Edited by:
Áron Telegdi-Csetri
Mara Birou
Dani Roșca

CASTLE 2

Caring for the Vulnerable

Transnational Social Protection of Bangladeshi Migrants' Families in the EU

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Bangladesh, Greece and Romania

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PART I

Literature Review: State of the Art and Research Gap

Mihaela Hărăguș¹, Iulia-Elena Hossu², Daniela Angi³

1. Introduction

This literature review is part of the desk research for the CASTLE2 project on Bangladeshi labour migrants in Romania and Greece and their transnational families. It follows the understanding that while migration inherently presents significant vulnerabilities for Bangladeshi labour migrants and their transnational families, from high recruitment costs and exploitation in origin countries to fragmented support and administrative hurdles in host states

¹ Sections 1, 2, 3, 6.

² Section 4.

³ Section 5.

like Romania and Greece, it concurrently serves as a crucial avenue for accessing vital resources and protection. At its centre is the concept of hybrid transnational social protection (HTSP), which recognises the active role of migrants and their families in leveraging a dynamic interplay of formal and informal support systems across borders for their well-being.

In this project, HTSP is not only a theoretical lens but a guiding framework for designing and implementing outreach across Bangladesh, Romania and Greece. The research component is intended to identify the actual resource environments that Bangladeshi migrants and their families navigate, and thereby to map where and why gaps in protection arise, whether in state-based services, NGO support, market mechanisms or community networks. This review assembles and organises the existing evidence on which that research design rests.

HTSP is the organising lens of this review, and our aim is threefold. First, we describe the conceptual framework and its elements, and consider how it can be applied to the specific circumstances of Bangladeshi labour migration to Romania and Greece. Second, we review the research on Bangladeshi migrants that bears on vulnerabilities, transnational ties, and sources of support and protection. Third, we describe the destination countries as resource environments for migrants. These three aims correspond to three intersecting bodies of literature: a conceptual core, a population-specific literature, and a context-specific literature, which we searched separately.

Reading these literatures together reveals a productive disjunction. The HTSP framework is mature and has been applied across many migration corridors; the vulnerabilities, trajectories and protection strategies of Bangladeshi migrants are extensively documented; and the welfare regimes of Greece, Romania and the wider Southern European and post-socialist space are well described. Yet these strands rarely meet at the point this project occupies, namely how Bangladeshi migrants and their families actually assemble protection within the particular

resource environments of Romania and Greece. The remainder of the review is organised to make this gap visible. Section 2 sets out the scoping-review methodology and the three-cluster search strategy. Section 3 presents the HTSP framework, its elements and debates, and the version adopted here. Section 4 reviews the literature on Bangladeshi labour migration, from debt-financed recruitment and sponsorship-based precarity to differentiated migration pathways and the situation of families left behind. Section 5 characterises Greece and Romania as destination resource environments against their Southern European and post-socialist welfare-regime backdrop. Section 6 draws the three clusters together and states the research gap from which the project's questions follow.

2. Methodology

Initially, we started the process as a systematic review of existing literature. We obtained rather general migration and transnational family literature (73 valid entries from Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases), with few results directly connected with our topic.

The search key that we used was:

TITLE-ABS-KEY⁴ (Bangladesh* AND (migration OR transnational OR diaspora*) AND (famil* OR "social protection" OR "social security" OR welfare OR remittance* OR kinship*) AND (Europe OR EU OR UK OR Brit* OR Italy OR Germany OR France OR Netherlands OR Sweden OR Norway OR Denmark OR Belgium OR Greece OR Spain OR Portugal OR Cyprus OR Malta OR Romania OR Croatia OR Poland))

⁴ TITLE-ABS-KEY format for Scopus, TS format for Web of Science

We then reframed our approach as a scoping review, better suited for our situation: mapping the breadth and nature of existing evidence on a topic, identifying gaps, clarifying key concepts, and examining how a concept (here, HTSP) has been applied across different populations and contexts.

Rather than one search strategy, we organized the review around concentric/intersecting literatures: conceptual core - HTSP and transnational social protection literature, population-specific but context-different - Bangladeshi labour migration literature, and context-specific but population-different - migration and transnational family literature in Romania/Greece and more broadly CEE and southern Europe.

We have used Claude.ai for assistance with this literature review. For each of the three literatures, we performed Scopus and Web of Science database search, as well as a search with Claude.ai through its associated Gateway (Wiley publications). The searches on Bangladeshi migrants and on Romania/Greece/CEE/Southern Europe as immigration contexts returned a lot of articles unrelated to our focus on HTSP (considered as noise). All sources referred in this review were verified by authors and handled through Zotero.

The search keys and results for each of the three literatures are as follows:

1. *Conceptual core*: HTSP and transnational social protection literature.

TS=("transnational social protection" OR "hybrid transnational social protection" OR "welfare beyond borders" OR "cross-border social protection") AND TS=("migrants" OR "migrant" OR "migration" OR "transnational families" OR "transnational family") AND TS=("resource environment" OR "resource environments" OR "assemblage" OR "third sector" OR "semi-formal" OR "informal protection")

The database search (Scopus and WoS) returned 31 records. Gateway (by Claude.ai) returned 10 (of which 3 overlap with database results, and 9 are unique to Gateway). The total integrated pool is 40 sources.

2. *Population-specific but context-different*: Bangladeshi labour migration literature, covering recruitment costs, exploitation, remittance behaviour, family left-behind dynamics. Even if destination contexts differ than our focus, this corpus gives us the "Bangladeshi migrant" part.

TS=("Bangladesh*" OR "Bangladeshi") AND TS=("labour migration" OR "labor migration" OR "migrant worker*" OR "work migration") AND TS=("social protection" OR "remittance*" OR "recruitment" OR "debt" OR "vulnerability" OR "precarity" OR "kafala" OR "sponsorship system" OR "transnational famil*" OR "left behind")

And a supplementary search:

TS=("Bangladesh*" OR "Bangladeshi") AND TS=("Italy" OR "Europe" OR "irregular migration" OR "undocumented") AND TS=("migration" OR "migrant*")

The database search returned 453 results, from which 42 considered relevant records after title/abstract screening. Total integrated pool: 13 Gateway sources + 42 relevant database records = 55 sources after deduplication.

Of the 453 records retrieved, the majority of noise falls into identifiable categories such as medical/epidemiological literature on migrant health conditions, records on Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (different population), macro-economic remittance studies with no migration process analysis, and intra-regional South Asian migration not involving Bangladeshi labour migrants abroad.

3. *Context-specific but population-different*: Migration and transnational family literature in Romania/Greece and CEE and southern Europe more broadly, likely dominated by intra-EU mobility, return migration, and care work, but useful for understanding the host-country institutional/service landscape, NGO ecosystems, and labour migration regimes these migrants enter.

TS=("Romania*") AND TS=("immigra*" OR "non-EU migrant*" OR "third country national*" OR "foreign worker*" OR "labour migrant*" OR "incoming migrant*" OR "immigrant*") AND TS=("welfare" OR "social protection" OR "integration" OR "labour market" OR "exploitation" OR "work permit" OR "residence permit" OR "receiving country" OR "destination country" OR "host country") AND NOT TS=("Romanian migrant*" OR "Romanian worker*" OR "Romanian emigrant*" OR "Romanian diaspora" OR "Romanians abroad" OR "Romanian community" OR "Romanian women" OR "Romanian care worker*" OR "Romanian nurs*")

TS=("Greece" OR "Greek") AND TS=("immigra*" OR "irregular migrant*" OR "undocumented" OR "labour migrant*" OR "third country national*") AND TS=("welfare" OR "social protection" OR "informal economy" OR "labour market" OR "integration" OR "NGO")

TS=("Central Eastern Europe" OR "post-socialist" OR "CEE") AND TS=("welfare regime" OR "social protection" OR "familialism" OR "defamilialisation") AND TS=("migra*" OR "labour" OR "care")

TS=("Southern Europe" OR "Mediterranean") AND TS=("labour migration governance" OR "irregular migration" OR "informal economy") AND TS=("migrant*" OR "foreign worker*")

The database search returned 645 results, the largest and noisiest of the three, with 40 relevant sources. The majority of the 645 records fall into identifiable noise categories: Albanian

migration to Greece, Romanian emigration to Spain/Italy/UK, Mediterranean border deaths and smuggling, the 2015 refugee crisis and asylum seekers, attitudes toward immigration, and education of immigrant children. These are all exclusions at title/abstract screening and result from the broad geographic terms "Romania" and "Greece" capturing the full range of these countries' migration literatures, which, as anticipated, are predominantly about outmigration and forced displacement rather than TCN labour immigration.

In the following sections, we approach each of the three clusters of literature and present relevant themes.

3. The conceptual framework: hybrid transnational social protection

This project takes as its organising lens the concept of hybrid transnational social protection (HTSP), which understands the protection of migrants and their families not as a service delivered by a single welfare state but as a resource environment assembled by individuals and their kin from multiple providers spread across countries of origin, transit and destination. The framework directs analytical attention to how formal and informal sources of support interact, where they fail, and how migrants themselves work to hold these fragments together. Members of the present research team have previously applied this framework to families with stay-behind children in the Eastern European transnational space (Ducu et al., 2024), and the conceptual apparatus set out below builds directly on that earlier work while reweighting it towards the specific circumstances of Bangladeshi labour migration to Romania and Greece.

3.1. From social protection to transnational social protection

Discussions of social protection have conventionally taken a national frame, concerned with the provisions a welfare state makes available to its own citizens within its own borders. Starting from the principle that individuals should be guaranteed a socially acceptable standard of living irrespective of their market position, the welfare state protects people against risks encountered

across the life course, such as unemployment, illness, old age, and other circumstances that impede participation in paid work. Responsibility for meeting these risks is distributed between the state, the market and the family, and welfare regimes differ in the degree to which they shift that responsibility onto the market (de-commodification) or onto the family (de-familialisation) (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Post-socialist and Southern European regimes, which frame the destination contexts of this study, are characterised by comparatively weak formal provision and a strong reliance on the family as the primary safety net, a configuration that becomes analytically important for migrants who come from strongly familialist origin countries.

Sustained migration and mobility have progressively strained this national frame. As welfare states have contracted under neoliberal governance and post-2008 austerity, and as responsibility has been pushed towards the individual and the family, migration itself has come to function as a form of social protection (Avato et al., 2010; Levitt et al., 2023). For poorer households in particular, working abroad and remitting has become the principal means of meeting basic needs. This is a transnational resilience strategy through which families pool resources across origin and destination to cope with social-reproductive pressures at home (Kilkey & Urzi, 2017). Early scholarship on migrants' social protection nonetheless retained a national and largely formal focus, concentrating on migrants' access to the host state's provisions and on the portability of accrued social-security entitlements, while acknowledging informal networks mainly as a supplement that mattered most for undocumented migrants beyond the reach of formal schemes (Avato et al., 2010).

The transnational social protection (TSP) literature that consolidated during the 2010s broke with this national containment. In the agenda-setting contributions of a 2015 special issue of *Population, Space and Place* and a 2017 special issue of *Oxford Development Studies*, TSP was defined as the policies, programmes, people, organisations and institutions that protect

individuals across borders, organised simultaneously through state regulation, supranational frameworks, civil society and migrants' own significant others (Faist et al., 2015; Levitt et al., 2017). Faist (2015) reframed this as a transnational social question, insisting that cross-border protection is not merely a technical matter of coverage and portability but a structural mechanism through which social inequalities are produced and reproduced across the boundaries of nation-states.

3.2. Resource environments and the foundations of protection

The pivotal analytical move is the concept of the resource environment. Rather than asking what a given state owes a given migrant, it asks what protective resources an individual can actually assemble from all available sources across all the settings in which their life is embedded. Levitt and colleagues (2017) define the resource environment as the combination of protections available from four provider types: the state, the market, the third sector, and personal networks. In the fuller statement of the framework, these become packages of protections from multiple sources in multiple settings across time and place, pieced together by individuals and their family members (Levitt et al., 2023). Crucially, the concept refers to what is *actually* available to a person in their toolkit of care, as opposed to what is theoretically or legally available (Levitt et al., 2023). This distinction anchors this project's concern with the gap between formal entitlement and practical access.

Levitt and collaborators (2023) ground these providers in four logics of rights, each associated with a distinct foundation of protection. The *logic of citizenship* treats social protection as a constitutional right flowing from membership in a nation-state; under conditions of mass mobility, states both downsize their domestic service role and “supersize” their diaspora institutions, so that providers include public administrations at home together with consulates and embassies abroad. The *logic of personhood* treats protection as a human right owed on the

basis of humanity rather than citizenship or residence, upheld by intergovernmental organisations and transnational civil society; in practice, however, instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights tend to be more symbolic than material, translating weakly into protection in people's lives. The *logic of the market* treats protection as a commodity accessed according to ability to pay, delivered by private firms, migrant service providers, or state institutions acting in a market capacity. The *logic of community* treats protection as an entitlement of belonging, provided informally by family, friends, NGOs, and religious organisations in both home and destination settings. The resource environment is formed by pooling across these four foundations simultaneously.

For the present project, the community and market logics carry particular weight. As members of this team have argued in prior work (Ducu et al., 2024), where the citizenship logic excludes third-country nationals from the reciprocal agreements that regulate the portability of benefits, and where the personhood logic remains largely declaratory, the market and community logics become the resources that migrants can realistically activate. Paul (2017) makes the underlying point sharply: states in practice extend social protection on the basis of migrants' work status and market role within regional integration projects such as the European Union, not on the basis of personhood, so that the worker not the human being is the unit that actually attracts protection.

3.3. The formal–informal assemblage and its situated character

A second strand of the literature has reworked the relationship between formal and informal protection. Rather than treating informal support as a residual that steps in only where formal provision is absent, Bilecen and Barglowski (2015) conceptualise the two as entangled in an assemblage of formal and informal welfare, in which actors continually negotiate between state, market and civil-society schemes on the one hand and family and friendship networks on the

other. Bilecen and Sienkiewicz (2015) specify three dimensions of informal protection that illustrate this entanglement: information exchange (about labour markets, legal procedures, health care and education), care relations (help with household tasks, and care during illness or for children and elders), and financial protection (regular or occasional monetary transfers). Boccagni (2017) captures the ambivalence at the heart of this arrangement. Informal, network-based protection is at once the promise and the pitfall of migration-as-social-protection: the very same relationships that enable survival also reproduce the vulnerabilities and obligations that made migration necessary in the first place.

Informal information exchange is decisive, as it is frequently the precondition for accessing formal provision in the destination country at all, a mechanism directly relevant to this project and the concern with why migrants reach, or fail to reach, public service providers.

This assemblage is not statically located within one nation-state; it is dynamic, varying with the degree and form of individuals' engagement in transnational life (Bilecen & Barglowski, 2015; Faist & Bilecen, 2015). It is also situated: the emphasis in the notion of situated transnationalism (Kilkey & Merla, 2014) falls on how institutional contexts in both origin and destination shape the resources that can be assembled. In the present project, Bangladeshi migrants arrive from a strongly familialist welfare context, frequently by way of Gulf states whose sponsorship regimes have shaped their expectations of what protection looks like and where it comes from, before entering Romanian and Greek environments that are themselves familialist and institutionally thin.

The burden of coordinating this complex web of opportunities and constraints falls fully on individuals. The breadth of the resource environment a person can assemble, and their capacity to integrate its parts, is shaped by nation of origin, residence status, the size and strength of their personal network, and by gender, ethnicity, religion, class and education (Levitt et al., 2017).

Formal support may meet some of a migrant's own needs, but migrants remain responsible for the wellbeing of family members at home, coordinating multiple resources so as to maximise the resource environment not only for themselves but for those they have left behind (Serra Mingot & Mazzucato, 2019). Because destination welfare systems rarely recognise migrants as family members with care responsibilities elsewhere (Degavre & Merla, 2016), this transnational obligation is typically discharged through low-paid, insecure and long-houred work.

3.4. Other important aspects in HTSP model

Welfare habitus. Godin (2020) brings into attention the welfare habitus (although discussing intra EU migration): migrants arrive in the host society with a welfare repertoire of their own, shaped by the systems of their origin (and, one may add, transit) countries, which then interact with regimes in destination countries. Jolivet and Pereira (2021) show this habitus to be dynamic rather than fixed, reshaped through the migration experience itself.

For Bangladeshi migrants whose welfare dispositions have been formed successively in Bangladesh and in kafala-governed Gulf labour markets, this corridor perspective (between origin and destination countries' welfare regimes) is essential to understanding how they read, and misread, the resource environments of Romania and Greece.

The gender dimension. Gender is not an add-on to TSP but a primary structuring principle of it. Kofman (2019) argues that women and men access formal systems differently, carry different care burdens, and hold different informal-network profiles, so that the care responsibilities shaping women's protection strategies are constitutive of how transnational protection is organised. Castellani and Martín-Díaz (2019) demonstrates this at the household level, and Bilecen (2019) shows how informal financial mechanisms such as rotating savings and credit

associations operate as gender-specific protection whose membership is structured by ethnicity, class, marital status and migration status.

Since Bangladeshi migration combines a large male labour stream with a growing cohort of women in domestic and care work, a gendered reading of the resource environment is indispensable to this project.

Symbiosis, asymmetry and the limits of protection. Serra Mingot and Mazzucato (2018) proposes a symbiotic model in which migrants and welfare institutions co-produce protection through mutual adjustment, rather than migrants simply accessing or being excluded from a pre-existing system. This is a view congenial to this project's action-research orientation, which treats migrants as active agents rather than passive recipients. Bilecen (2020) foregrounds the asymmetries within transnational arrangements, showing that migrants and non-migrants experience the same protection configuration very differently, with the mobile party typically bearing more cost and holding less control. Ratzmann (2022) documents how, even where entitlement formally exists, bureaucratic and linguistic barriers produce street-level exclusion.

Central to the framework and to our prior application of it (Ducu et al., 2024) is that transnational protection does not eliminate inequality: for some it brings empowerment, for others it deepens vulnerability, depending on the risks they face and the breadth of the resource environment they can activate (Faist, 2017; Faist & Bilecen, 2015; Levitt et al., 2023).

The religious and community provider. Finally, because community and religious organisations feature prominently in the informal protection of South Asian Muslim migrants, the project draws on Levitt's (2022) extension of HTSP to religious institutions and networks, which function across borders as providers of material assistance, advocacy, network facilitation and emotional or spiritual support.

Alongside the wider literature on migrant organisations as protection actors, this directs attention to mosques, diaspora associations and faith-based community networks as potentially decisive nodes in the resource environments of Bangladeshi migrants.

3.5. Empirical applications of the framework

The framework set out above is not merely a theoretical proposition; it has been operationalised across a substantial body of empirical research spanning a wide range of migration corridors. This body of research shows that the resource-environment model can be rendered researchable rather than remaining an abstraction and it supplies a repertoire of research designs against which this project's own methodological choices can be positioned. Additionally, the pattern of where the framework has and has not been applied is itself informative, since that distribution defines the gap this project addresses.

Three findings recur across otherwise disparate studies and together show what the framework is able to reveal.

The first concerns the direction in which protective resources move. Palash and Baby-Collin (2018), applying the four-provider resource-environment model explicitly to Ecuadorian migrants in Europe, corrected a persistent assumption in the remittance literature by showing that support does not flow only from destination to origin. Their concept of reverse economic flows documents origin-country families resourcing migrants abroad, a finding that matters considerably for a population whose migration was debt-financed by kin at home and whose early years in destination may depend on continued origin-country support. Serra Mingot and Mazzucato (2019), studying Sudanese transnational families, extend the same insight to the logic of the move itself, showing that decisions to migrate or to stay are based not on the nation-state and its welfare system per se, but on individuals' and families' needs and on how best to meet them, formally or informally, now and in the future.

The second recurring finding is that formal entitlement and practical protection are structurally decoupled. This means that having a right, in law, secures very little on its own. Castellani (2020) shows this in perhaps its starkest form: Southern European labour migrants in Germany, EU citizens holding full free-movement rights, nonetheless found themselves on the fringes of social protection and developed transnational tactics to compensate. Oso and Martínez-Buján (2022) trace the mechanism through which this decoupling operates, finding that Latin American women in home-care work in Spain are excluded from public benefits precisely because their undeclared employment yields no social-security contributions, which in turn pushes them towards informal transnational protection strategies, particularly in contexts of crisis and social risk. This body of work gives the argument that the gap between what Bangladeshi migrants are formally entitled to in Romania and Greece and what they can actually reach is the phenomenon requiring investigation.

The third finding specifies where migrants turn when the state does not provide. Serra Mingot and González Zepeda (2023), studying African migrants in Mexico as a transit context, show that where the state is largely absent, protection is assembled predominantly from the third sector and informal networks, generating complex infrastructures built on often semi-formal relationships between civil society, state actors and migrants themselves. Barglowski and Bonfert (2022) find that migrant organisations perform three distinguishable protective functions: networking, consulting and familiarizing, that enable members to reach and accumulate resources they could not otherwise access, and that these organisations are far more responsive to individual need than formal institutions. Burmeister-Rudolph (2024) documents the dual role of migrant-led civil-society organisations in the Gulf states, which mediate between low-wage labour migrants and state institutions through informal representation and advocacy on one side and direct service provision on the other.

In terms of methodology, Bilecen, Çatır and Orhon (2015) studied the Turkish–German transnational social space and used a matched-sample multi-sited design, interviewing migrants in Germany alongside their significant others in Turkey, and introduced the notion of stitching to describe how migrants actively maintain origin-country ties in order to keep protective resources reachable. This matched, two-sited design has since become something close to a methodological standard, and it directly informs the multi-country structure of the present project across Bangladesh, Romania and Greece. The dominant approach across the reviewed research is qualitative and multi-sited, combining interviews with migrants and with their significant others in origin countries.

In terms of geographical coverage of migration corridors where the HTSP model has been applied, the distribution is markedly skewed. The corridors studied are predominantly Latin American to Southern Europe, Turkish to Germany, African to Mexico, and intra-European; the destination contexts are overwhelmingly established Western European welfare states or transit countries in the Global South. South Asian migrant populations are almost entirely absent from applications of the framework, as well as post-socialist Central and Eastern European destinations. Our project will add the application of the framework to a context of weak state provision and newly emerging immigration infrastructure, for a Bangladeshi population moving through Romania and Greece.

3.6. The framework adopted for this project

What justifies our use of the HTSP formulation specifically, rather than the assemblage vocabulary with which it substantially converges, is pragmatic and suited to an action-research design: the explicit four-provider structure (state, market, third sector, personal networks) and the four underlying logics of rights and their interaction give the project a clear and operable

matrix for identifying where in a migrant's resource environment protection is present, thin, or absent, and which provider is linked to a given gap.

Operationally, then, this project understands hybrid transnational social protection as the dynamic and unequal assemblage of formal and informal protection – from state, market, bilateral, third-sector, NGO, religious, family, diasporic and community protection that Bangladeshi migrants and their transnational families construct across Bangladesh, Romania and Greece. The research component uses this framework to identify and map the formal and informal social protection, as well as gaps, within migrants' resource environments. It also analyses how different migration pathways (regular employment-based, irregular overstay, and circular or seasonal) reconfigure the structure and reliability of the protection available to them.

4. Bangladeshi labour migration: vulnerabilities, trajectories, and protection

A comprehensive review of the extant literature identified approximately 50 records addressing labour migration with a focus on vulnerabilities and protection, from Bangladesh in various contexts. These were then subjected to a process of analysis and organisation, resulting in the identification of several sections and themes.

4.1. The debt-financed recruitment system and structural vulnerability at origin

The academic literature describes the vulnerability of migrant workers from Bangladesh as being established as early as the recruitment stage, through a system based on debt bondage, private recruitment agencies and inadequate regulation. Rahman (2015) demonstrates that migrants primarily finance their migration through loans and family support. High recruitment fees result in long-term debt, which limits migrants' ability to leave unsatisfactory jobs or seek legal protection.

Further research by Rahman (2012), Deshingkar et al. (2019) and Babbitt et al. (2023) highlights how brokers and complex recruitment chains can drive up costs, create information asymmetries and foster coercive practices such as fraud and document confiscation. Azad (2019) and Joarder & Miller (2014) demonstrate that these mechanisms can constitute human trafficking and debt bondage, even when facilitated by licensed agencies.

At the institutional level, Jipa-Mușat & Piper (2026) argue that outsourcing recruitment to private intermediaries perpetuates exploitation. Drawing on empirical evidence from a 2024 pilot project, the authors examine how temporary labour migration has emerged as a policy response within a broader crisis complex, shaped by political framings, institutional logics, and actor involvement. Recent studies (Sohel et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2024) also highlight the psychological impact of labour migration and its close link with human trafficking. Overall, the literature demonstrates that the debt-based recruitment system creates a structural vulnerability that exposes migrants to exploitation even before they leave their country of origin.

There is a general consensus in the literature that the debt-financed recruitment system is the main source of migrants' structural vulnerability, even in their country of origin. Debt, excessive intermediation, a lack of transparency and the outsourcing of responsibilities to brokers create relationships of dependency that increase the risk of labour exploitation and significantly reduce migrants' ability to exercise their rights in their destination countries. This is evident also in contexts such as Romania and Greece.

4.2. The *kafala* [sponsorship system]: employer-tying, legal precarity, and protection exclusion

The vulnerability of temporary migrant workers from Bangladesh is exacerbated by sponsorship-based migration regimes such as the *kafala* system. These regimes create strong relationships of dependence on the employer, limiting access to social protection and rights.

Ansar (2023) demonstrates that in Gulf states, the *kafala* system restricts mobility, excludes domestic workers from labour legislation and renders their well-being contingent on their employer's will. Migrant women are disproportionately affected, facing multiple forms of vulnerability stemming from their status as migrants, their gender and their occupation.

Heslop and Jeffery (2020) emphasise that *kafala*-type systems generate contractual dependence, limited mobility and social exclusion and shape migratory labour relations among road construction workers from across South Asia in the Maldives archipelago. Khondker (2018) examines the class-based identities and human security of temporary Bangladeshi migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates and highlights that experiences of precariousness are also influenced by class position and processes of identity formation. These vulnerabilities are exacerbated in crisis contexts. Choudhury et al. (2024) based on interviews with female migrant domestic workers, explore their labour conditions, rights violations, and coping strategies in Saudi Arabia and demonstrates the simultaneous elimination of both formal and informal support mechanisms. Sohel et al. (2025) examine the challenges, stressors, and coping strategies of irregular Bangladeshi labour migrants, highlighting how insecurity, exploitation, and limited access to services shape their experiences while identifying the mechanisms they use to cope with these conditions.

4.3. Multiple migration trajectories and pathway differentiation

4.3.1. The Gulf-to-Europe trajectory: class stratification and irregular transition

The migration of Bangladeshis to Europe is often a phased process influenced by experiences of exploitation in Gulf states and the fluid nature of their legal status. Morad & Sacchetto (2020) examines the multiple migration trajectories of first-generation Bangladeshi migrants to Italy, showing how family networks and transnational ties shape both initial and onward

migration. It argues that subsequent relocations are primarily driven by the pursuit of socioeconomic mobility and legal status, while migrant networks provide the resources and support that facilitate these movements. Morad & Della Puppa (2019), Morad et al. (2021) demonstrate that legal status does not guarantee protection or social mobility. Furthermore, Sikder et al. (2025) highlight that the boundary between regular and irregular migration is permeable, with many migrants becoming irregular as a result of visa expiration or deceptive practices by intermediaries. This article looks at how structural constraints, individual aspirations, and capabilities interact in shaping migration decisions.

4.3.2. Bangladesh-to-Italy corpus: the established European destination

The extant literature on Bangladeshi migration to Italy highlights the dynamic and transnational nature of mobility, as well as the role of family networks and legal status in shaping migrants' experiences. Della Puppa's extensive body of work (2014; 2018a; 2018b; 2019; 2022) examines a range of themes, including family reunification, gender transformations, secondary mobility, working conditions, and citizenship stratification, thereby highlighting the complexity of migratory trajectories. Studies conducted in collaboration with Morad (2019; 2021) complement this perspective by analysing transnational links between Italy, the United Kingdom, and Bangladesh.

The seminal works of Knights (1996) and Knights & King (1998) provide the theoretical and methodological foundations for understanding the Bangladeshi diaspora in Italy, explaining migrants' survival strategies and spatial distribution. Recent research (Del Franco, 2021; Morad & Choudhury, 2025) demonstrates that transnational networks facilitate irregular migration, with routes through Libya and Italy frequently resulting in unplanned forms of international protection. A comprehensive review of the extant literature indicates that the migration of

Bangladeshis to Europe is a multifaceted process, influenced by a confluence of social networks, economic opportunities, and legal constraints.

4.3.3. Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Greece as destinations

Recent publications have indicated that Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is emerging as a notable destination for migrants from Bangladesh, in addition to the Southern European countries, where they encounter persistent forms of precariousness and social exclusion. Mucha & Stojanov (2026) demonstrates that countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic function both as destinations and as transit zones within the Schengen Area, providing an analytical framework directly comparable to that of Romania.

In the context of Greece, Kukreja's studies (2021, 2023a, 2023b, 2025) underscore the manner in which racial capitalism, precarious status, and transient labour regimes engender exploitation, health vulnerabilities, and self-exploitation mechanisms among South Asian workers, notably within the agricultural sector. Fouskas's research (2013, 2018) lends further support to this perspective, demonstrating that precarious employment constraints both access to healthcare and the capacity of migrants to organise collectively. Furthermore, Golubić (2024) highlights analogous challenges for South Asian migrants in Croatia, confirming that new destinations in Central and Eastern Europe face comparable issues regarding integration, working conditions, and access to social protection. The extant literature indicates that the increase in migration to this region is indicative of structural patterns of vulnerability and exploitation that have previously been documented in Southern Europe.

4.4. Remittances, left-behind families, and origin-side social protection

International labour migration from Bangladesh exerts a multifaceted influence on the social protection of migrants and their families remaining in their country of origin. This phenomenon

is influenced by factors such as gender, social class, and limited access to formal support mechanisms. As demonstrated by Rahman (2011) and Wu et al. (2024), the experiences of migrants are significantly influenced by gender relations. Specifically, the findings indicate that women remit a greater proportion of their income, yet they encounter patriarchal constraints both prior to and following migration.

As demonstrated in the relevant studies on households of origin (see Gardner & Ahmed, 2009; Romano & Traverso, 2019; Della Puppa & Ambrosini, 2022), the distribution of benefits resulting from migration is found to be inequitable. The extent to which social protection is dependent on family networks, financial remittances, and informal forms of support is significant. As Rashid et al. (2023) emphasises, migrant workers receive inadequate social protection. The discrepancy between formal rights and actual access to them was highlighted by the pandemic.

Research on families left behind in Bangladesh (Rashid, 2013; Kamal, 2022; Nasrin et al., 2026) and on returning female migrants (Sultana et al., 2026) demonstrates that migration creates both opportunities and new forms of vulnerability, influencing power relations, psychological well-being, and reintegration processes. In order to comprehend the necessity for social protection for Bangladeshi migrants, it is imperative to adopt a transnational perspective. This approach encompasses not only the experiences of these migrants in their host countries, but also the ramifications of these experiences on their families and communities.

Recent literature highlights new ways in which migrants adapt to restrictive labour regimes and confirms the existence of significant gaps in research on Bangladeshi migration to Europe. Babar (2024) demonstrates that Pakistani migrants in the Gulf states utilise the "free visa" (Azad visa) system to circumvent the dependency engendered by the *kafala* system. This mechanism is analogous to the informal strategies adopted by Bangladeshi migrants in Romania or Greece.

In a similar vein, Al Riachi & Diab (2025) emphasise that, within the context of Lebanon's *kafala* system, migrants depend on solidarity networks, digital mobilisation, and religious practices as informal forms of protection against vulnerabilities and psychological distress.

A comprehensive review of the extant literature reveals a growing body of research focusing on Bangladeshi migrants in Greece, particularly in the context of agriculture and social protection. However, to date there have been no studies that have been subject to the peer-review process which have analysed the experiences of Bangladeshi migrants in Romania, thus confirming the existence of a significant research gap. Concurrently, studies on Poland, the Czech Republic, and Croatia furnish the initial comparative standards for comprehending Romania as a recent migration destination in Central and Eastern Europe.

5. Destination resource environments: Greece, Romania and the Southern European/CEE context

This section of the review addresses the different positions occupied by Greece and Romania as destination countries in Europe's migration landscape, looking at how these positions shape the resources, constraints and institutional pathways available to migrant workers. While 43 sources were included in the final pool for review, 2 of them have been subsequently left out of the analysis, for reasons of uncertain relevance or problematic access. Overall, Greece is discussed in the literature as an established immigration country embedded in a Southern European welfare regime marked by fragmentation, familism and uneven social protection. Romania, by contrast, appears as a newer immigration context whose institutions were historically shaped more by emigration than by the reception of third-country nationals.

5.1. The Greek residual welfare state and structural exclusion

Literature on Greece consistently shows that labour immigration preceded a coherent framework of social inclusion. In this regard, Lyberaki (2015) discusses how rising demand for

domestic and care labour in 1990s Greece attracted numerous migrant women who, despite becoming essential to the informal welfare arrangements that enabled local women to enter the workforce, remained concentrated in low-paid, precarious employment. Fakiolas (2003) focuses on the successive regularizations in Greece, that reduced but did not eliminate irregularity, because restrictive entry routes, difficulties in renewing permits and continued demand for flexible labour repeatedly pushed migrants between legality and undocumented status. The challenges faced by Greece could be read in line with what Finotelli and Echeverría (2017) identify as a wider Southern European governance issue: reforms in recruitment and control do not produce uniform outcomes because policy effectiveness also depends on labour-market structures, administrative capacity, and implementation.

This pattern seems to be strongly linked to the features of the Greek welfare state. Thus, Marini (2020) describes a fragmented system that entered the financial crisis without an inclusive social safety net, where government spending was primarily concentrated on paying pensions and the wages of public servants. Psimmenos (2017) and Psimmenos and Kassimati (2003) show that migrant access is shaped not only by formal eligibility but also by organizational cultures, administrative routines and officials' understandings of work, deservingness and control. Therefore, welfare institutions appear to operate both as providers and as border-making organizations. Fokas (2013) similarly demonstrates that integration is strongly affected by the nature of local welfare policies, as well as by migrants' everyday experiences with those implementing policy.

The relationship between irregular migration and informal employment is central to this destination environment. In this sense, Maroukis et al. (2011) show how the informal economy and irregular migration reinforce one another in Southern Europe and Central Eastern Europe. Maroukis (2013) links migrant mobility strategies to the familistic welfare regime of Southern

Europe, where households and migrants compensate for weakly enforced rights and limited public support. In a similar vein, Vaxevanoglou (2024) highlights the strong connection between irregular migration and informal labour, approaching the latter as a historically constructed field rather than an insignificant occurrence. Discussing the Greek and the Italian contexts, Triandafyllidou and Ambrosini (2011) note the inconsistency between a lenient attitude in relation to informal labour in practice and the comparatively much more vocal public stance on irregular migration.

The financial crisis intensified existing vulnerabilities. Dimoulas (2014) finds that activation and employment measures remained marginal and insufficient, while Kougias (2018) shows that subsequent improvements in labour-market indicators depended heavily on non-standard rather than stable employment. Furthermore, Karanikolos and Kentikelenis (2016) identify widening inequalities in access to health care, with undocumented migrants among the groups most exposed.

In view of our interest in Bangladeshi workers, Minamide's (2021) contribution is of particular importance. Focusing on Greece as destination country, the author distinguishes between earlier migrants from Bangladesh who obtained residence permits and later arrivals unable to secure stable status. The former increasingly shortened their settlement horizons, while the latter remained suspended in extended uncertainty (Minamide, 2021). The account offered by Triandafyllidou (2018) complements this image by showing how irregular migrants cope with restrictive environments and in doing so, activate various forms of agency. Papadopoulos and Fratsea (2022), focusing on Romanian migrants in Greece, show that mobility decisions and well-being cannot be reduced to income: aspirations, inequalities, multiple belonging and experiences of mobility and immobility also shape whether migrants remain, move or reassess their projects. King and Pratsinakis (2020) provide a wider frame, locating such trajectories

within crisis-era intra-EU mobility, whose promise of freedom coexists with nationalism, insecurity and uneven lived outcomes.

Civil-society organizations and local authorities occupy a prominent place in this fragmented environment. Papadopoulos et al. (2013) describe a heterogeneous but geographically concentrated field of migrant associations and NGOs constrained by uneven resources. Likewise, Bagavos and Kourachanis (2022) show that after 2015 civil-society organizations assumed an expanded role in labor-market integration, but a fragmented financing, weak follow-up and the absence of a coherent public strategy limited their effects. Baglioni et al. (2022) situate Greece within broader European models of co-production between the state and civil society, noting however that Greece is an instance where the public sector has a modest input in the area of migrant labour integration. Blouchoutzi et al. (2023) extend this discussion to public-private cooperation, examining whether wage subsidies and vocational training could improve migrant employability. At the local level, Thessaloniki demonstrates how political initiative, external funding and coalitions can exert positive effects on integration policies (Sabchev, 2021), while Athens's parallel vaccination program for un(der)documented migrants illustrates pragmatic local inclusion during crisis (Ntaliou, 2024). These initiatives reduce immediate exclusion but do not replace stable social rights.

5.2. Romania's transition to an immigration country

Romania presents a different configuration, as it constructs its institutions for labour immigration under conditions of limited prior experience. Radu (2026) describes a networked field in which responsibility for non-EU workers is distributed among immigration offices, labour inspectors, employers, recruiters and transnational staffing agents. Formal rules coexist with improvised practices and uncertain understandings of who is responsible for migrants' welfare.

The available studies focused on Romania indicate that this emergent system is already segmented. Roșca (2022a) finds that third-country nationals who migrate to Romania use both formal qualifications and social ties to obtain work, but weak ties often channel people towards poorly paid secondary employment, with women facing additional difficulties in building useful networks. Moreover, language barriers, non-recognition of qualifications and lack of local experience are identified by Roșca (2022b) as mechanisms of deskilling in call-centre work. Roman, Manafi, Mureșan and Prada (2023) show that integration varies by origin: Moldovan migrants benefit from linguistic and cultural proximity, whereas migrants from Arab countries face longer and more difficult pathways. Roman, Roșca, Cimpoeru, Prada, and Manafi (2023) nevertheless identify education, social relations and urban experience as resources that young migrants themselves associate with integration.

The uneven nature of institutional access stands out as an important aspect. Mareci et al. (2023) show that asylum seekers and people with refugee backgrounds encounter legal, bureaucratic and linguistic barriers in education. In the Romanian context, NGOs appear mainly as mediators around specialized services rather than as the broad substitute infrastructure described in Greece.

Earlier studies of Chinese migration demonstrate that Romania is not entirely without immigration experience: Wundrak (2010) and Mocanu et al. (2019) describe commercial embeddedness, urban concentration and socio-cultural adaptation, yet the extent to which these processes reflected a consolidated national integration regime is doubtful. In this sense, Gregurović and Župarić-Iljić (2018) warn that formal integration-policy indicators may diverge from implementation and should be interpreted in relation to each country's migration history and immigrant population.

5.3. The Southern European/post-socialist welfare regime baseline

To better understand the differences between the two countries compared, we benefit from clarifications from the welfare-regime literature. Thus, Southern European systems transfer substantial welfare responsibility to households and accommodate a mix of fragmented protection and labour-market dualism (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2020). Post-socialist systems developed through different but similarly restrictive trajectories, as explained in the following. Accordingly, Österle (2010, 2011) identifies limited provision beyond family support and social assistance, while Kureková (2013) links weaker welfare systems and unresolved labour-market incongruities to CEE out-migration. Nonetheless, Javornik (2014) and Broka and Toots (2022) caution against treating the region as homogeneous, while Guardiancich and Borgognoni (2025) highlight the effects of Europeanisation, fiscal discipline and market-oriented reform. Emilsson (2026) places both contexts within the wider European labour-migration architecture dominated by employer-led, demand-driven recruitment, supplemented by bilateral agreements, posted work and regularization.

Summing up the comparative assessment of the two host societies of interest, the literature reveals a shared reliance on conditional access but different institutional routes. For Greece, one finds that it combines long experience of migrant labour with deep-rooted informalization, repeated movement between legality and irregularity, austerity-damaged welfare provision and a wide intermediary role for civil society and municipalities. In Romania, a thinner immigration infrastructure co-exists with employer- and recruiter-centred governance, uneven institutional learning and differentiated access to work and services. In both countries, migrants obtain resources through employment, legal status, networks and intermediaries rather than through robust universal inclusion. An important difference lies in how this conditionality emerged: through a mature but segmented Southern European immigration regime in Greece, and through an emergent post-socialist receiving regime in Romania.

6. Synthesis and research gap

Read together, the three bodies of literature reviewed above describe a well-developed conceptual apparatus, a thoroughly studied population, and a pair of increasingly documented destination contexts. Yet they do not meet at the point this project occupies. The conceptual framework of hybrid transnational social protection is mature and has been operationalised across two decades of empirical research; the vulnerabilities, trajectories and protection strategies of Bangladeshi labour migrants are extensively documented; and the welfare regimes and migration-governance structures of Greece, Romania and the wider post-socialist and Southern European space are well described. What is missing is the intersection: an account of how Bangladeshi migrants and their transnational families actually assemble protection within the specific resource environments of Romania and Greece.

A capable framework exists but has never been turned on a South Asian population in a post-socialist, newly-receiving context. A well-understood population has been followed to almost every major destination except the two this project concerns. And two destination environments have been carefully mapped as structures, but not from the standpoint of the migrants assembling protection inside them, and not for this population. The consequence is that the actual resource environments of Bangladeshi migrants and their transnational families across the Bangladesh–Romania/Greece corridor remain unmapped: which providers they reach or cannot reach, where the protection gaps fall across formal and informal sources, and how these configurations differ by migration pathway are all open empirical questions. For Romania the gap is total; for Greece it is narrower but still leaves the protection architecture, as opposed to the fact of precarity. The CASTLE2 project aims to fill this gap.

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PART II

Review of Policies Relevant to Labour Migration from Bangladesh to Greece and Romania

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1. Introduction

The presence of notable labour force shortages within the EU and the ensuing deficits of manpower in numerous economic sectors are consistently documented by the available evidence. A recent report (EURES, 2024) found that, in at least one EU country, approximately 84% of occupations were confronted with personnel deficit. This chronic lack of workforce

⁵ Sections 1,2,6.

⁶ Section 3.

⁷ Section 4.

⁸ Sections 5,6, Annex A.

creates real challenges for the European employers, who find it difficult to cover their staffing needs.

Yet, despite this ongoing workforce deficit, a new Eurobarometer survey (European Commission, 2026) reveals that recruiting third-country nationals (TCNs) remains uncommon among European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Thus, across manufacturing, industry, retail, and services, only 14% of surveyed SMEs reported attempting to hire workers from outside the EU. Another important finding points to the difficulties in recruitment that more than half of these SMEs encountered, particularly in relation to “administrative and immigration procedures” (European Commission, 2026, p. 7). With recruitment difficulties clearly emerging as an EU-wide trend, the study also highlights important cross-national variations that suggest the labour market challenges encountered by member states stay diverse (European Commission, 2026).

Further sources support the idea that, with respect to labour-market strains and corresponding strategies that involve non-EU workers, the European Union accommodates a heterogeneous milieu. For example, a 2024 mapping published by International Centre for Migration Policy Development and European Centre for Development Policy Management (Knoll, 2024) looked at how well the 27 EU countries addressed mounting workforce shortages⁹. The report shows that EU member states experience distinct sectoral labour shortages and urgency to address them, while also illustrating the broad range of national approaches to TCNs seeking work in the EU (Knoll, 2024). Along these lines, the two destination countries addressed in CASTLE2 seemed to have different ways of looking at the relationship between labour migration and

⁹ The cited report notes that the mapping was conducted July 2023-February 2024, therefore not covering subsequent dynamics and developments, legal or political, at EU level or within the member states.

labour shortages. Thus, the cited source recorded for Greece “[N]o shortage list linked to labour migration pathways but bilateral agreements for temporary labour migrants to fill labour shortages exist” (Knoll, 2024, p. 5), while the finding for Romania reads “[S]hortage list of occupations linked to process determining quotas” (Knoll, 2024, p. 6). The report also emphasizes the wide disparity in labour migration strategies among EU member states, noting that most of them operate their own labour pathways beyond the standard EU agreements (Knoll, 2024). On balance, the findings from this mapping are a useful reminder that country-specific strategies and legislation, alongside general EU frameworks, jointly influence how TCNs’ arrival, employment, and residence play out in the region.

An additional perspective regards integration-related aspects, for which the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) report (Yavçan & Gorgerino, 2025) is a valuable resource. The EU-focused policy brief addresses the situation in all EU states, relying on data collected in 2023-2024. It must be reminded that MIPEX captures dimensions of integration concerning all immigrants, both from within EU and TCNs. The average EU score (54) reflects the existence of halfway favourable integration policies, a category where both Greece and Romania are located, in line with their respective overall scores (49-GR, 52-RO) (Yavçan & Gorgerino, 2025, pp.13-14). One of the eight dimensions of the index is labour-market mobility, an area in which the average EU score (55) once more indicates a halfway favourable context, which also applies to Romania (score 46). However, Greece (with 72 points) is located in the cluster of countries with slightly favourable policies, indicating a more beneficial environment in this area of integration (Yavçan & Gorgerino, 2025, pp. 22-23).

2. Aim, scope and methodology of the review

This policy subdivision of the CASTLE2 opening report aims to highlight the key policy frameworks and debates that shape the complex phenomenon of Bangladeshi labour migration to two EU member states: Greece and Romania. Accordingly, this part of the report will cover the relevant policy framework at EU level (that outlines the common directions developed in the specific national labour migration frameworks of the two destination countries of interest) and the three relevant national contexts – Greece, Romania, and Bangladesh – in close connection to the issue of rights and social protection of labour migrants. Specifically, particular attention is given to how labour rights, social protection, family reunification and other relevant areas, including measures meant to protect migrants from discriminatory practices, are reflected in the current frameworks that operate at the levels mentioned above.

When reviewing policies, we maintain a broad perspective that accounts for labour migration legislation, country-level strategies, and the actual implementation process. As explained above, we established from the outset to focus the analysis on themes closely connected to the foundational questions raised in the project: labour rights, social protection, family reunification, as well as other relevant issues, including measures meant to protect migrants from discriminatory practices in the host societies. This approach guided the identification of relevant sources consulted during the documentation process.

We developed the review using a two-folded approach, whereby, on the one hand we mapped the relevant stakeholders with meaningful inputs in the crafting and implementation of labour-migration policies and measures relevant for the project, while on the other hand we sought to identify the most relevant policy tools nested in the 4 levels under discussion (EU, GR, RO, BD), to look for the themes of interest. As a result, the review includes a stakeholder mapping that complements the analysis (Annex A).

This version of the policy report is informed exclusively by the desk research component of CASTLE2. As the process of interview data collection and analysis is still underway, the interview data that will prove relevant to the policy mapping in national contexts (particularly with regard to implementation) will be gradually incorporated in the analysis in later phases of the project. As a result, this version of the review is subject to further updates and additions.

3. Relevant policy tools at EU level

Following the overall logic of the policy review, in this section we focus primarily on how labour rights, social protection, family reunification and other relevant areas, such as protection against discrimination, are covered in the relevant frameworks currently operating at EU level.

A preliminary observation regards the different status of elements identified as important in relation to the labour migration of Bangladeshi nationals to Greece and Romania (as particular national contexts embedded in the EU). The different nature of these elements also means that they are not equally relevant for the specification and/or implementation of rights that third-country nationals arriving to EU for work are entitled to. We develop below on the heterogeneous nature of the EU-level labour migration tools.

Thus, a first category consists of **EU legal instruments**. These are the binding Directives that regulate different forms of labour migration, family migration, residence security and equal treatment. Specifically, these Directives are: [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1233](#) (the 2024 *recast Single Permit Directive*), currently in force, replacing, as of May 2026, the older [Directive 2011/98/EU](#) that previously delimited TCNs' application procedures, permits and sets of attached rights; [Directive 2014/36/EU](#) (the *Seasonal Workers Directive*); [Directive 2003/86/EC](#) (the *Family Reunification Directive*); [Directive 2003/109/EC](#) (the *Long-Term Residents Directive*) and

[Directive \(EU\) 2021/1883](#) (the *EU Blue Card Directive*). These instruments provide the legislative blueprints for member states to transpose them into national legislation that complies with the EU requirements (see the sections on Greece and Romania for national legislation). The Directives listed above are addressed in more detail in the ensuing segment that discusses how our topics of interest are reflected in these legal instruments.

A second category is represented by the **EU policies and governance frameworks**. These do not usually create direct enforceable rights, yet they do shape the broader institutional and political environment that circumscribe the migration process. The EU [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion](#) (European Commission, 2020a) and the [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) (European Commission, 2020b) can be included in this category. These elements are not further analysed in this version of the review.

Co-operation and mobility instruments make up a further category. The [EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership](#) is a meaningful development in this regard. While not being a legal-rights instrument, its significance lies in the pre-departure and recruitment phase, due to its focus on regular labour mobility, skills development, safer migration channels, and reduced dependence on informal recruitment (European Commission, 2025; International Labour Organization, n.d.).

A distinct type of tools refers to **enforcement and implementation**. Relevant in this sense is the activity of the [European Labour Authority](#)¹⁰, the role of which concerns labour mobility enforcement, information provision, cooperation between national authorities, joint inspections, undeclared work, subcontracting, and social security coordination.

¹⁰ <https://www.ela.europa.eu/en>

Last, but not least, the [EU Immigration Portal](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/eu-immigration-portal_en)¹¹ serves as an **information and procedural access tool**. What this platform does is provide practical information on work permits, residence procedures, family reunification and country-specific rules. This is important because access to accurate information is itself a condition of safer migration. For prospective Bangladeshi migrants, reliable information can reduce dependence on brokers, informal advice, or misleading recruitment promises.

Before zooming into how the EU level instruments (particularly the legal ones) accommodate labour migration specific themes, several observations are required on two of the Directives, in relation to the current patterns of Bangladeshi migration to the EU.

Thus, the *EU Blue Card Directive* and the *Long-Term Residents Directive* have a somewhat specific status in that they tend to set apart particular categories of migrants: highly skilled, with good prospects for staying in the host society long enough to apply for a long-term permit. Along these lines, the *EU Blue Card Directive* concerns the mobility of highly skilled workers, setting high thresholds for applicants' educational credentials and the level of salary earned in the host society (Directive (EU) 2021/1883, 2021). The *Long-Term Residents Directive* has its own limiting character, by conditioning the granting of this status, along with other criteria, on five years of continuous presence within an EU state (Directive 2003/109/EC, 2003, Art. 4). A 2022 proposal to recast the Long-Term Residents Directive was meant "to make it easier to acquire EU long-term resident status" (Orav, 2024, p. 3); however, this proposal has not been adopted and, as of June 2026, the [European Parliament Legislative Train](#) lists the file as blocked (European Parliament Legislative Train Schedule, 2026).

¹¹ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/eu-immigration-portal_en

The available Eurostat data shows that out of the 78,096 Blue Cards issued across the EU in 2024, 510 were granted to Bangladeshi applicants, making for roughly 0.7% of the total (Eurostat, 2026a). The statistics collected by Eurostat (2026a) reveal that, for the period 2020-2024, the percentage of total number of decisions to grant the EU Blue Card that concern Bangladeshi citizens remains at similar levels, 0.5% in 2020, 0.6% in 2021, and 0.7% for the rest of the considered years.¹²

This suggests that, for the Bangladesh-EU corridor, the practical relevance of EU migration law lies less, at least for the recent years, in elite high-skilled channels.

Data on the extent to which Bangladeshi migrants in Europe are successfully granted long-term residents' status is, unfortunately, unavailable. Apart from the aggregated level information, according to which “[A]t the end of 2024, long-term residence permits represented almost 50% of all residency rights held by non-EU citizens having their usual residence in the EU” (Eurostat, 2025a), information on the citizenship of those who hold this status is not currently published.

How are the relevant rights reflected in these instruments?

Owing to the wider project’s research concerns, several themes are of particular relevance in this policy review: labour rights, social protection, family reunification and other adjacent topics which are relevant in relation to third country nationals’ labour migration to the EU.

¹² Calculation of percentages based on the online analysis of Eurostat dataset “migr_resbc11” https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_resbc11/default/table?lang=en considered in relation to https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_resbc11_custom_22144415/default/table

An important observation is that *these topics are not concentrated in one single EU instrument*; rather, they are distributed across binding directives, policy strategies and mobility cooperation tools. While the EU-level landscape includes a wider range of legal, policy, informational and monitoring tools (as shown in the previous segment), the analysis below gives greater attention to the *recast Single Permit Directive* from 2024, the *Seasonal Workers Directive* and the *Family Reunification Directive*. We proceed in this manner because these instruments most directly regulate the thematic concerns of this section. Their prominence in the discussion is therefore not intended to suggest that they exhaust the EU governance framework, but rather that they form the most relevant core for the issues examined here.

We start with **labour rights** as mirrored in the *recast Single Permit Directive from 2024*, the centrality of which is given by that it combines residence and work authorization within a single procedure. As previously mentioned, the recast replaced the preceding Directive from 2011. In the remainder of this review, the references to the Single Permit Directive concern the 2024 recast. Thus, Article 1 defines the dual purpose of this directive: it establishes a single application procedure for residence for the purpose or work and it establishes a common set of rights for legally residing non-EU workers, based on equal treatment with nationals. Articles 2 and 3 define the relevant categories, including “third country worker”, “single permit”, and the scope of persons covered by the directive. The next two articles specify the single application procedure (Art. 4), and the competent authority and timeframe for deciding on applications (Art.5). One of the major changes brought by the 2024 recast consists in reducing the duration of applications processing from up to 4 months (Directive 2011/98/EU, 2011, Art. 5(2)) to maximum 90 days (Directive (EU) 2024/1233, Art. 5(2)). What makes these provisions important is the fact that they connect admission, residence and work authorization within one legal architecture.

The 2024 recast also strengthens protection against employer dependency, as best visible in Article 11, which includes provisions relevant to change of employer, periods of unemployment, renewal procedures, and situations involving exploitative working conditions. The same article includes important provisions related to permit holders' short-term periods of unemployment not being automatically a ground for permit withdrawal, specifying the rules and requirements that govern such situations (Directive (EU) 2024/1233, Art. 11(4)).

Article 12 is particularly relevant for labour-rights, addressed in relation to equal treatment. This provision covers terms of employment and working conditions, including “remuneration, dismissal, working hours, leave and holidays and the equal treatment of men and women, as well as health and safety at workplace” (Directive (EU) 2024/1233, 2024, Art. 12(1a)). Article 12 also covers freedom of association, the right to strike and take industrial action, education and vocational training, recognition of qualifications, branches of social security, tax benefits and access to certain goods and services.

The Single Permit Directive is also relevant for enforcement and access to remedies. Thus, Article 13 requires Member States to provide monitoring, assessment, inspections and penalties in relation to employer breaches of equal treatment rules. In Article 14, there are clear references to effective mechanisms allowing third-country workers to lodge complaints directly, through third parties or through competent authorities. Article 16 is important from the perspective of procedural access and information. Thus, member states must make updated information available to the public, “including through sources accessible in relevant third countries”, on admission, residence, application documents, rights, obligations, and procedural safeguards (Directive (EU) 2024/1233, 2024, Art. 16). This is relevant for Bangladesh, because access to reliable information before migration can reduce dependence on informal and exploitative intermediaries.

Labour rights are also present in the *Seasonal Workers Directive*, but in a different and somewhat more limited way. This Directive is designed for temporary and seasonal migration and is relevant mostly for sectors such as agriculture, horticulture and tourism (Directive 2014/36/EU, 2014, Recital 13). According to Eurostat (2025b), in 2024, Bangladesh was the second largest beneficiary of EU seasonal permits, accounting for 19.6% (53,567) of the total number of permits.

The “seasonal worker” is defined in this document as a “third-country national who retains his or her principal place of residence in a third country and stays legally and temporarily in the territory of a Member State to carry out an activity dependent on the passing of the seasons, under one or more fixed-term work contracts concluded directly between that third-country national and the employer established in that Member State” (Directive 2014/36/EU, 2014, Art. 3(b)). Article 5 and Article 6 establish the admission criteria for stays below and above 90 days respectively, including the requirement of a work contract or binding job offer that would be clear about the place and type of work involved, the duration, remuneration, working hours and any other elements that describe the working conditions. These provisions show that this directive regulates labour migration through a fixed-term, sector specific and temporary model.

Article 22 defines rights attached to the seasonal-work authorization, including the right to enter, stay, move within the territory of the issuing member state, and carry out the authorized seasonal activity. Article 23 addresses equal treatment provisions, making this part of the directive particularly relevant for labour rights. It covers employment terms, working conditions, pay, dismissal, working hours, leave, holidays, health and safety, freedom of association, the right to strike and take industrial action, back payments from employers, advice services, education and vocational training, recognition of qualifications, tax benefits, and certain branches of social security. However, this protection is limited by the temporary

character of the status and the possibility for member states to restrict certain elements of equal treatment, including family benefits and unemployment benefits.

The Seasonal Workers Directive is particularly important for understanding vulnerability and employer dependency. Article 14 limits the duration of seasonal work to a maximum period determined by the member states, between 5 and 9 months in any 12-month period. Article 15 allows extension of stay or renewal of authorization, including the possibility of employment with a different employer, but still within the temporary logic of the directive. In the background text of the directive (Directive 2014/36/EU, 2014, Recital 31) a clear connection is made between the possibility to change the employer and reducing the risk of abuse that might occur if workers are tied to a single employer. Article 17 provides for sanctions against employers, including possible compensation for seasonal workers; Article 18 contains procedural safeguards; Article 20 regulates accommodation, including employer-arranged accommodation; Article 24 covers monitoring, assessment and inspections, while Article 25 addresses the complaint mechanisms (workers lodging complaints against their employers). Summing up, the Seasonal Workers Directive contains important safeguards against exploitation, but it also institutionalizes a form of labour migration with limited settlement potential.

The second major theme relevant to CASTLE2 that is reflected in the extant EU-level tools is **social protection**. Across the EU instruments, social protection appears in uneven ways. In the *Single Permit Directive*, social protection is primarily linked to Article 12 on equal treatment. Social security is one of the fields covered, but Article 12 also allows certain limitations. For example, member states may restrict equal treatment in relation to social security for certain categories and may exclude family benefits in specific situations, such as where the worker has been authorized to work for a period not exceeding 6 months, admitted for study, or allowed to

work on the basis of a visa (Directive (EU) 2024/1233, 2024, Art. 12(2b)). The same directive also contains an important provision on the export of the statutory pensions for third country workers moving to a third country, or for survivors residing in a third country, under the same conditions and rates as nationals of the member state concerned (Art. 12 (4)).

In the *Seasonal Workers Directive*, social protection is channelled through Article 23. Thus, seasonal workers are entitled to equal treatment in branches of social security, as defined in Regulation 883/2004, but member states may exclude family benefits and unemployment benefits (Directive 2014/36/EU, 2014, Art.23(1d), (2i)). Articles 5 and 6 of the same directive also require evidence of sickness insurance where such coverage is not provided in connection with the work performed in the member state (Art. 5(1b); Art. 6 (1b)) and require that the seasonal worker will have sufficient resources without recourse to the social assistance system (Art. 5(3); Art. 6(3)). This means that, for seasonal workers, social protection appears both as a limited equal-treatment entitlement and as an admission condition.

The *Family Reunification Directive* embraces a similar approach, through Article 7, which allows member states to require evidence of accommodation, sickness insurance, and stable and regular resources sufficient to maintain the sponsor and family members without recourse to the social assistance system (Directive 2003/86/EC, 2003, Art.7(1)).

The third theme, **family reunification**, is central for understanding how labour migration may become long-term settlement. Just like in the case of social protection, this topic is not equally present across all labour migration pathways. Specifically, it is directly regulated in the *Family Reunification Directive*, as well as in the *EU Blue Card Directive* (where family members are part of the framework and may also be relevant in the context of mobility to a second member state). Furthermore, it is indirectly supported by the *Single Permit Directive* through stable residence and work authorization, supported by the *Long-Term Residents Directive*, because

secure long-term residence stabilizes family life and can support family members' residence and mobility and is almost absent in the *Seasonal Workers Directive*. As discussed earlier, this latter Directive explicitly frames the worker as temporary and circular, since it defines the seasonal worker as someone whose principal residence remains in a third country, and also limits the duration of stay and the any extension of the renewal.

Coming back to the *Family Reunification Directive*, which is the core EU instrument in this area, the first article defines its purpose as determining the conditions for the exercise of the right to family reunification by third-country nationals who reside lawfully in member states (Directive 2003/86/EC, 2003, Art. 1). Article 2 defines the key terms, including “sponsor” and “family reunification”, while Article 3 defines the scope of application. Specifically, under Article 3, there is a reference to the requirement that the sponsor hold a residence permit valid for at least one year and have “reasonable prospects of obtaining the right of permanent residence” (Art. 3(1)). Article 4 defines the family members who must or may be admitted, including spouses and minor children, while Article 5 established rules on submission and examination of applications.

This Directive also shows, quite explicitly, how family life is linked to economic and social conditions. For example, Article 7 allows member states to require normal accommodation, sickness insurance and stable and regular resources, as well as integration measures under national law. Article 8 allows member states to require a period of lawful residence before family members may join the sponsor, normally not exceeding two years, with a possible longer waiting period in specific circumstances. Article 14 is important for labour market integration because it grants family members access, just as the sponsor, to education, employment, self-employment, vocational guidance, training and retraining, while pointing that conditions for family members' employment or self-employment are decided by member states, following the

national law (Directive 2003/86/EC, 2003, Art. 14(1), 14(2)). Article 15 of the same Directive refers to granting autonomous residence permits to spouses, partners and adult children, also making clear that national law is the key source in relation to the conditions and duration of these permits.

Generally, looking at how the issue of family reunification is addressed in the various legal instruments currently in force across the EU, it can be argued that EU law makes family more visible when migrants are treated as potential settled residents, but much less visible when they are treated as temporary labour.

A fourth thematic cluster present in the EU legal instruments concerns **discrimination, equal treatment, and inclusion**. For example, the *Single Permit Directive*'s Recital 48 provides that member states should give effect to the directive without discrimination on grounds including sex, nationality, colour, ethnic or social origin, language, religion etc. (Directive (EU) 2024/1233, 2024, Recital 48). The *Seasonal Workers Directive* contains a similar non-discrimination clause in Recital 8, while in the *Family Reunification Directive* Recital 5 has an equivalent role. All of these clauses are important because they connect migration status to broader EU anti-discrimination norms; however, apart from this normative layer, at practical level, the equal treatment provisions, labour law implementation, complaint mechanisms and national transposition become the key tools that protect migrants from discriminatory practices.

Another cross-cutting topic concerns **recruitment, information and access to legal pathways**. The [EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership](#) is important in this regard, although this has a different status than that of EU Directives. However, without creating enforceable rights in itself, this partnership is significant for the early steps of the migration process, before admission to a specific EU member state through its focus on regular labour mobility, safer migration channels and reduced dependence on informal recruitment routes (European Commission, 2025;

International Labour Organization, n.d.). It also connects closely to Article 16 in the *Single Permit Directive*, which requires information to be made accessible through sources available in relevant third countries (Directive (EU) 2024/1233, 2024, Art. 16) and with Article 11 in the *Seasonal Worker Directive*, which calls for access to information on entry, stay, rights, obligations and complaint procedure for seasonal workers (Directive 2014/36/EU, 2014, Art.11).

Enforcement is a separate but closely related theme. The existence of labour rights does not guarantee effective protection unless workers can access information, complaint mechanisms and inspection systems. As previously discussed in the segment on labour rights, the *Single Permit Directive* addresses these issues through Articles 13 and 14, covering monitoring, inspections, penalties, complaints and legal redress, while similar concerns are included in the *Seasonal Workers Directive*, through Articles 17, 24, and 25, covering sanctions, inspections and complaint mechanisms. The *Family Reunification Directive* also contains redress provisions: Article 17 requires member states to consider the nature and solidity of family relationships, duration of residence, and ties with the country of origin when rejecting or withdrawing residence, while Article 18 provides for the right to mount a legal challenge when an application is rejected, a residence permit is withdrawn or not renewed, or when removal is ordered (Directive 2003/86/EC, 2003, Art. 17, 18). At institutional level, the [European Labour Authority](#) is also relevant here, via its role in making rights effective.

Returning to the key matter examined in this part of the review, that is to how relevant rights are reflected in the EU-level policy instruments, we can conclude that, overall, the EU-level framework does not produce a single model of protection for Bangladeshi migrant workers. It distributes rights unevenly across legal statuses, with stronger protection attached to regular employment, high-skilled mobility and long-term residence, and weaker settlement prospects

attached to temporary seasonal work. For this reason, the practical significance of EU law lies not only in the existence of legal pathways, but in the quality of rights, family possibilities, social protection and enforcement mechanisms attached to each pathway. The ensuing sections will further clarify how the overarching EU framework interacts with the national legislation and policy agendas used by Greece and Romania in addressing the reception and protection of labour migrants from Bangladesh.

4. Labour migration of third country nationals in Greece – overview of legal provisions

4.1. Introduction

This overview covers standard economic migrant pathways and is based on legal provisions from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum¹³ and Ministry of Labour and Social Security¹⁴.

The two main legal documents reviewed here are the **Law 4251/2014** (the Immigration and Social Integration Code) and the **Law 4332/2015** (Amendment of the provisions of the Greek Nationality Code – Amendment of Law 4251/2014 to transpose to Greek law Directive 2011/98/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council “on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third country workers legally residing in a Member State” and Directive 2014/36/EU “on the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals

¹³ <https://migration.gov.gr/en/nomothesia-1-2/nomothesia-ypiresia-nomimis-metanasteysis/>

¹⁴ <https://ypergasias.gov.gr/en/labour-relations/individual-employment-relations/work-for-third-country-nationals-in-greece/>

for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers” and other provisions). In February 2026, a new immigration law has been published: **Law 5275/2026** (“Promotion of legal migration policies, transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1233 on a single application procedure for the issuing to third-country nationals of a single work and residence permit in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers residing legally in a Member State, amendments to the Migration Code and other provisions”). The law introduces significant changes to the requirements, procedures, and characteristics of residence permits in Greece, as well as new types of residency titles.

Since this new law is issued only in 2026, we believe that provisions of the earlier legislation (Laws 4251/2014 and 4332/2015) are relevant for the present project, since the Bangladeshi migrants that we are interviewing as part of the project are already in Greece, based on the provisions of this earlier legislation. So, we construct this overview around it, adding the new provisions from the law in 2026 where it introduces changes.

For Law 4251/2014 and Law 4332/2015 official English translations were available. For the new Law 5275/2026, we rely on the summary provided by PwC Greece¹⁵ and not on the text officially published in the Government Gazette. For other joint ministerial decisions included in this overview, available only in Greek, we used Claude.ai for translation and identification of relevant parts in connection with the project aim: workers’ rights, social protection provisions and family reunification.

¹⁵ https://www.pwc.com/gr/en/Legalflash_NewImmigrationLaw_EN.pdf

4.2. Rights of third-country national workers in Greece

The legal framework governing the rights of third-country national (TCN) workers in Greece is structured around two distinct but interconnected dimensions: the procedural conditions of admission and permit management on one side, and the substantive rights attaching to lawful employment on the other.

The entry of TCN workers is governed by a state-managed admission system established by Articles 11, 12 and 13 of Law 4251/2014. Every two years, a joint ministerial decision sets the maximum number of work permits per occupational category and regional unit, determined on the basis of labour market assessments conducted through consultation with social partners and the public employment service such as Economic and Social Committee, the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED), and the country's Regions. Within this quota, an employer wishing to hire a TCN must submit a formal application — the recalling/summoning procedure (*μετάκληση*) — accompanied by a written employment contract guaranteeing at minimum the statutory unskilled worker's wage. Admission is therefore not a right of the worker but a state-authorized, employer-driven process, with the worker's entry contingent on the prior approval of a specific job with a specific employer. Law 5275/2026 subsequently reduced the minimum duration of such employment contracts from twelve to six months and set a minimum admission age of 18 for dependent employment. The same law introduced additional admission channels, including recruitment through licensed Temporary Employment Agencies and a fast-track procedure for large-scale hiring of up to 500 workers per project under the strategic-investment framework. It also raised the ceiling for supplementary quota increases from 10% to 15% and provided for the automatic extension of each biennial quota decision until its successor is issued.

The same logic applies to seasonal workers under Article 13, whose admission requires a fixed-term contract, proof of accommodation, with health benefits attaching separately on

commencement of employment. A third quota-governed channel operates alongside dependent and seasonal employment: the recruitment of fishermen under Article 14, which follows the same Article 11 admission mechanism but carries its own procedural specifics. Fishermen are admitted through an employer application analogous to the seasonal-work procedure, but their visa may extend to eleven months rather than six, reflecting the operational rhythm of the sector, and they too receive health benefits upon entry and commencement of employment.

Once admitted, the foundational right governing TCN workers' employment conditions is the principle of equal treatment with Greek nationals. For holders of a single combined residence and work permit, Article 21A, introduced by Law 4332/2015 in transposition of EU Directive 2011/98/EU, establishes parity across a comprehensive list of domains: working conditions including pay, working hours, leave and dismissal; the right to strike and join trade unions, including the right to negotiate and conclude collective agreements; access to education and vocational training; recognition of professional qualifications; applicable branches of social security under EU Regulation 883/2004; tax benefits where the worker is fiscally resident in Greece; and access to goods, services and housing procedures. Seasonal workers enjoy an equivalent set of rights under Article 21B, transposing Directive 2014/36/EU, though excluding housing access. A specific addition is of a right to recovery of all outstanding wages owed by employers, a provision targeting the particular vulnerability of seasonal workers to wage theft and contract violations. Both articles also guarantee the portability of statutory pension entitlements upon return to the worker's country of origin, under the same conditions as Greek nationals. The equal-treatment guarantee has since been recast: Law 5275/2026, alongside reaffirming equal treatment with Greek workers, for the first time permits periods of unemployment of between three and six months, depending on the worker's lawful residence and employment record, without automatic loss of status.

The framework also defines the limits of mobility and flexibility within the permit system. Under Article 15, a TCN worker may change employer during the validity of their permit provided the occupational category and insurance fund remain unchanged. After one year, they may work in a different Regional Unit and change occupational speciality. These mobility rules have since been liberalised by Law 5275/2026: a change of employer is now permitted after six months of employment, and earlier still in cases of a breach of labour law, dismissal, or at the worker's own request, a flexibility extended also to seasonal workers. Permit renewal requires fulfilment of tax obligations, a valid health insurance booklet, and completion of the minimum number of insured working days, a condition operationalised by JMDs 51738/2014 and 216611/2022 and set at fifty days per year, with the possibility of redeeming up to 20% of the shortfall through voluntary contributions. The new Law 5275/2026 extended the renewal term for dependent-employment permits from three to five years, set a mandatory 90-day processing deadline for initial and renewal applications (extendable by 30 days), and allowed late renewal up to three months after expiry against a penalty of 100 euro per month of delay.

The employer side of the relationship is governed by Article 28, which prohibits the recruitment of TCNs without valid residence and work authorisation, mandates retention of signed employment contracts for five years, and imposes financial liability for compensation in cases of unlawful revocation of seasonal work visas. Physical working conditions for seasonal workers are further regulated by JMD 41835/2024, which sets binding minimum standards for employer-provided accommodation, backed by the worker's right to complain to the Labour Inspectorate without suffering retaliation.

The protective dimension of the seasonal-work regime extends beyond accommodation standards into the conditions under which authorisation may be refused or withdrawn. Under Article 18(2) of Law 4251/2014, as inserted by Law 4332/2015, the competent authority may

reject or revoke a seasonal-work authorisation where the employer has failed to meet obligations on social security, taxation, or labour rights, or has previously been sanctioned for undeclared or illegal employment. These grounds function as an indirect worker-protection mechanism: by screening out non-compliant employers at the point of authorisation, the law makes the employer's own regulatory record a precondition of access to seasonal labour, rather than leaving the burden of enforcement entirely to after-the-fact inspection.

The sanctions regime for employer non-compliance is correspondingly concrete. Failure to provide accommodation, or provision of accommodation not meeting the prescribed health-and-safety standards, exposes the employer to a fine and a five-year bar on further seasonal-worker applications. More significantly, Article 28 establishes a form of chain liability: where the immediate employer is a subcontractor who has breached obligations to a seasonal worker, the main contractor and any intermediate subcontractor may be held jointly liable for compensation and for outstanding back-payments, unless they can demonstrate that due-diligence obligations were met. This provision is directed at the layered subcontracting structures characteristic of agriculture and similar sectors, where the worker's formal employer is often the least solvent party in the chain; by reaching up the contractual hierarchy, it prevents the fragmentation of responsibility that would otherwise leave exploited seasonal workers without an effective remedy.

4.3. Social protection of third-country nationals in Greece

The Greek legal framework governing the social protection of third-country nationals (TCNs) rests on a foundational principle established by Article 21(2) of Law 4251/2014: TCNs who reside lawfully in Greece are enrolled in the relevant social insurance organisations and enjoy the same insurance rights as Greek nationals. Article 21(3) extends Legislative Decree 57/1973 on social protection, as amended and in force to third-country nationals who legally reside in

Greece. This principle of equal treatment is not a marginal provision but the structural backbone of the entire framework, subsequently elaborated and extended through a series of legislative instruments aligned with EU directives.

The equal treatment principle operates at several levels depending on the TCN's status. For holders of a single combined residence and work permit, Article 21A, introduced by Law 4332/2015 in transposition of Directive 2011/98/EU, specifies the domains in which parity with nationals must be guaranteed: working conditions including pay and dismissal, health and safety at work, social security branches as defined by EU Regulation 883/2004, tax benefits, vocational training, recognition of qualifications, and access to goods and services including housing. Seasonal workers receive an equivalent guarantee under Article 21B, also introduced by Law 4332/2015 and transposing Directive 2014/36/EU, including the right to portable statutory pension entitlements upon return to their country of origin, and excluding housing. The broadest equal treatment protection is reserved for long-term residents — TCNs with at least five years of continuous lawful residence — who enjoy parity with nationals across all sectors of socio-economic life, including social assistance and social protection as defined by national law.

Alongside social-insurance parity, the equal-treatment principle extends into education, a dimension of social protection particularly relevant to the families of TCN workers. Under Article 21 of Law 4251/2014, minor third-country nationals residing in Greece are subject to compulsory education on the same terms as Greek nationals and may be enrolled in public schools even on incomplete documentation where their residence has not yet been regularised, a provision that detaches a child's access to schooling from uncertainties of the parent's permit status. TCN graduates of Greek secondary education, in turn, have access to tertiary education on the same terms as nationals. Read together with the insurance and healthcare guarantees,

these provisions indicate that the social-protection framework, at least on paper, treats the lawfully resident worker not as an isolated economic unit but as a member of a household whose children are integrated into the mainstream education system.

Beneath this equal treatment architecture lies a critical operational mechanism: the minimum insurance threshold governing permit renewal. JMD 51738/2014 and its 2022 successor JMD 216611/2022 establish that a TCN must demonstrate a minimum of fifty insured working days per year — calculated per insurance fund within the unified EFKA system — in order to renew their work residence permit. This threshold creates a structural link between labour market participation, social insurance affiliation, and the maintenance of legal status. Its significance is twofold: it conditions the right to remain on continued economic integration, while the fifty-day minimum, a deliberately low threshold introduced during the financial crisis, functions as a protective floor, ensuring that workers with precarious or interrupted employment are not automatically excluded from lawful residence. This rigidity has been partly softened by Law 5275/2026, which expressly permits periods of unemployment of three to six months without loss of lawful residence, a tolerance that the earlier framework, with its strict insurance-day thresholds, did not provide.

Specific protection is extended to the most vulnerable TCNs outside the standard insurance framework. Victims of human trafficking or migrant smuggling are entitled, during the reflection period under Article 51 of Law 4251/2014, to emergency medical care, appropriate accommodation, psychological support, and legal aid. Those who subsequently obtain a residence permit under Articles 52–54 gain access to the labour market, rehabilitation programmes, and free medical care. For TCNs who cannot access social insurance through employment, JMDs 53821/2014 and 133692/2024 establish minimum requirements for private

health insurance coverage as a condition of permit applications, ensuring a baseline of health protection regardless of insurance status.

Finally, the physical protection of seasonal workers, a category particularly exposed to exploitative conditions, is addressed by JMD 41835/2024, which sets binding minimum health and safety standards for employer-provided accommodation, backed by inspection procedures and administrative penalties.

4.4. Family reunification of third-country nationals in Greece

The legal framework governing family reunification for third-country nationals in Greece is established by Articles 69–77 of Law 4251/2014, which transposes Council Directive 2003/86/EC. The framework is built around the figure of the sponsor, the TCN already lawfully resident in Greece, whose status and resources form the gateway through which family members may enter and reside in the country.

The right to request family reunification arises after two years of lawful residence in Greece, provided the sponsor holds a permit of at least two years' validity with a pathway to permanent residence. The scope of eligible family members is defined narrowly: the spouse, who must be at least 18 years old, and unmarried children under 18, including adopted children, are covered. Adult children, parents of the sponsor, and unmarried partners are not included in the standard reunification pathway, a restriction that reflects the minimum transposition of the Directive without extension of its optional provisions. Law 5275/2026 has since introduced a narrow exception to this exclusion, recognising adult children who lack legal capacity as qualifying family members.

To exercise the right, the sponsor must cumulatively satisfy three material conditions: adequate accommodation for the entire family unit; stable and regular personal income at least equal to

the annual minimum wage, increased by 20% for the spouse and 15% for each additional child; and comprehensive health insurance covering both the sponsor and the reuniting family members. The income threshold must not derive from the social assistance system, a requirement that effectively links the right to family unity to economic self-sufficiency. In cases of polygamy, reunification with a second spouse is explicitly excluded, and reunification of minor children from another union is permitted only where custody has been lawfully assigned to the sponsor.

The procedural architecture governing the application is multi-layered and demanding. The sponsor submits the application to the competent Decentralised Administration, which must seek opinions from both the police authority on public order grounds and the Greek consular authority for verification of the family relationship, including through personal interviews with the family members abroad. Failure to appear at a consular interview renders the application inadmissible. All opinions must be provided within three months, and the entire procedure must be completed within nine months of submission, extendable by a further three months in exceptional circumstances. Supporting documentation, specified in detail by JMD 30825/2014 and its amendments, includes certified and translated family status certificates, accommodation proof, income evidence, and health insurance documentation, requirements that have been identified in practice as a significant administrative burden. In case of translations and certifications further expenses are also provided.

Once admitted, family members receive a residence permit of the same duration as the sponsor's, which is renewed in parallel with it, subject to continued proof of the family relationship and the sponsor's fulfilment of insurance and tax obligations. Family members gain automatic access to the labour market, education, and vocational training. After five years of residence under family reunification, or upon coming of age, family members may apply for an

independent residence permit, which decouples their legal status from the sponsor. An independent permit may also be granted earlier in cases of dissolution of the marriage or domestic violence, a protective provision recognising the particular vulnerability of family members whose legal residence depends entirely on the continuation of the conjugal relationship.

The framework thus presents family reunification as a conditional right rather than an unconditional entitlement: formally grounded in EU law and protective of family unity in principle, but structurally dependent on the sponsor's sustained economic integration, procedurally demanding in practice, and narrowly defined in terms of who qualifies as family.

4.5. Conclusions

Taken together, these instruments reveal a framework that is formally ambitious and explicitly grounded in EU equal treatment standards, yet structurally conditional in its application. Substantive rights, whether in the domain of working conditions, social insurance, or access to services, are broadly scoped on paper, but their exercise depends on a tightly controlled admission system in which the employer rather than the worker is the primary actor. Beyond admission, the continued enjoyment of both labour rights and social protection remains contingent on sustained employment and insurance compliance, since lawful residence itself is tied to permit renewal, which in turn requires meeting minimum working day thresholds. The result is a system in which workers' rights, social protection, and immigration status form a tightly intertwined chain: the loss of employment triggers not only economic precarity but the potential unravelling of legal residence itself, leaving TCN workers – even those temporarily out of work through no fault of their own - exposed to a compound and mutually reinforcing vulnerability that formal equal treatment guarantees alone cannot address. Recent reform suggests some movement on precisely this point: Law 5275/2026 introduces permitted periods

of unemployment and an easier change of employer, tempering, though not dissolving, the tight coupling of employment and residence that has defined the framework to date.

5. The labour-migration policy framework in Romania

5.1. Introduction

Romania has become an increasingly important destination for labour migration from South Asia, including Bangladesh. Between 2021 and 2025, the average number of Bangladeshi nationals holding a valid residence permit in Romania was approximately 5,200 per year (IGI, 2026). According to statistics provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity¹⁶, by April 2026 a total of 6,083 employment contracts had been registered for Bangladeshi nationals. The country's migration governance model is characterised by a predominantly centralised approach, whereby migration is treated as a matter of national interest requiring uniform regulation and coordination at the central government level. At the same time, the implementation of migration policies relies on decentralised administrative mechanisms involving both central government institutions and local authorities.

Within this framework, the Romanian Parliament serves as the primary legislative actor responsible for adopting migration legislation, while the Government exercises regulatory, executive and administrative coordination functions. The primary legislative instrument governing migration in Romania is [Emergency Government Ordinance \(EGO\) No. 194/2002](#) on the Status of Foreigners, which has undergone numerous amendments in response to changing socio-economic conditions and evolving migration patterns. According to Article 1,

¹⁶ Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, data provided upon the authors' request, April 2026.

the Ordinance establishes the legal framework regulating the entry, stay and departure of foreign nationals, their rights and obligations, and the measures governing immigration control, in accordance with Romania's international legal commitments. Another key institutional actor is the General Inspectorate for Immigration (Inspectoratul General pentru Imigrări – IGI), operating under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The IGI is responsible for implementing Romania's policies on migration, asylum and the integration of foreign nationals, as well as enforcing the relevant legislation. It manages the issuance of residence permits and work authorisations, thereby playing a central role in migration management, the administration of legal residence and the authorisation of employment for third-country nationals.

The European Union plays an important role in shaping recent legislative developments concerning the access and integration of foreign nationals into the Romanian labour market. This influence is reflected in the most recent legislative amendment in this area, Emergency Government Ordinance (EGO) No. 32/2026, which expressly refers to relevant EU legislation concerning labour mobility, employment services, skills and qualifications. In particular, the preamble refers to [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/589](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 April 2016 on a European network of employment services ([EURES](#)), workers' access to mobility services and the further integration of labour markets, as well as to [Regulation \(EU\) No. 492/2011](#) on freedom of movement for workers within the Union.

At the local level, initiatives have also been developed to address the growing presence and integration of immigrants in major Romanian cities, particularly Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest. In 2021, the Municipality of Cluj-Napoca, in partnership with the Romanian Peace Institute (PATRIR), launched a [local strategy](#) for the integration of migrants from outside the European Union within the framework of the European Pact for Integration project. The strategy was developed following an extended process of identifying migrants' needs using the Intercultural

City Review methodology and identified two main local priorities: access to education and integration into the labour market. The proposed measures included the establishment of a One-Stop-Shop providing information and integration assistance to newcomers, as well as pilot initiatives such as vocational coaching, peer-to-peer support for learning Romanian and activities promoting diversity. In December, the municipality also launched an Integrated [Action Plan](#) aimed at improving the local integration of non-EU foreign citizens and, in cooperation with civil society and international organisations, established an International Citizens' Council and a one-stop support office for migrants.

In Bucharest, the General Municipality also initiated a [Strategy for the Inclusion of Migrants in the Capital](#), which proposed measures aimed at strengthening migrants' participation in economic, social and public life, improving access to education and public services, supporting language acquisition, facilitating access to information concerning rights and responsibilities, and addressing inequalities and discrimination. However, in August 2025, the Municipality withdrew the strategy from public consultation following the receipt of hundreds of comments and proposals from civil society, citizens and specialised organisations, explaining that these contributions required further analysis before the strategy could be finalised.

To ensure comparability with the other country case studies included in this report, the analysis is structured around four key policy areas shaping the legal status and integration of Bangladeshi nationals in Romania: the general migration governance framework, labour migration and access to the labour market, protection and social integration, and family reunification. For each policy area, the analysis examines the main legislative instruments, the institutional actors responsible for implementation, and the policy measures that directly affect Bangladeshi migrant workers.

5.2. Labour Migration and Access to the Labour Market in Romania

Labour migration governance of TCN in Romania is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity, the National Employment Agency (ANOFM), the Labour Inspectorate, and the General Inspectorate for Immigration (IGI). Together, these institutions are responsible for regulating the admission, employment and supervision of third-country nationals, while ensuring that labour migration policies respond to the needs of the Romanian labour market. Before the reform introduced by EGO No. 32/2026, the legal framework governing the access of foreign nationals to the Romanian labour market was based primarily on [EGO No. 194/2002](#) on the regime of foreigners and [GO No. 25/2014](#) on the employment and posting of foreign nationals. The Ordinance establishes the legal framework for the employment of non-EU nationals by regulating the issuance of work authorisations, defining the categories of foreign workers eligible for employment (including permanent, seasonal, highly skilled and trainee workers), specifying employers' obligations, and setting out the responsibilities of the General Inspectorate for Immigration. It also regulates residence for employment purposes and provides mechanisms for preventing and sanctioning irregular employment.

Within this framework, access to the labour market was largely structured around the employment authorisation (*aviz de angajare*), defined by GO No. 25/2014 as the official document issued by the General Inspectorate for Immigration certifying an employer's right to employ a foreign national in a specific position. The employment authorisation was issued by the General Inspectorate for Immigration following an application submitted by the employer, which was required to provide the documentation necessary to demonstrate compliance with the applicable legal conditions.

Romania's labour migration policy has increasingly been shaped by persistent labour shortages across several sectors of the economy. Based on labour market assessments prepared by the Ministry of Labour and ANOFM, the Government establishes annual admission quotas for newly admitted third-country workers. These quotas have expanded considerably over the past decade, increasing from approximately 5,000 workers in 2014-2016¹⁷ to 30,000 in 2020. While the initial quota for 2021 was set at 25,000 workers. Owing to persistent labour market demand, the Government supplemented the quota to 50,000 workers in August 2021¹⁸, marking the first mid-year increase of the annual contingency and signalling the growing reliance on third-country labour. In subsequent years, the quota was further increased to 100,000 workers annually between 2022 and 2025, before being adjusted to 90,000 workers for 2026^[10]. This substantial increase illustrates Romania's growing reliance on labour migration as a policy instrument to address structural labour shortages and sustain economic activity in sectors experiencing persistent workforce deficits.

[EGO No. 32/2026](#) substantially restructures this framework by eliminating the employment and posting authorisations and introducing a “single application” (*cerere unică*) for access to employment and temporary residence. Under the new framework, the single application is completed electronically through the [WorkinRomania](#) platform either by a foreign-worker

¹⁷ Government of Romania, Explanatory Memorandum to Government Decision No. 105/24 February 2016 approving the National Immigration Strategy 2015–2018, available at: <https://gov.ro/ro/guvernul/procesul-legislativ/note-de-fundamentare/nota-de-fundamentare-hg-nr-105-24-02-2016&page=2766>

¹⁸ Government Decision No. 836/2021 amending Government Decision No. 1133/2020 on establishing the annual quota of newly admitted foreign workers on the Romanian labour market in 2021, Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, No. 780, 12 August 2021, available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/245302>

placement agency on behalf of the employer and in the name of the foreign worker or, where applicable, by the employer on behalf of the foreign worker employed in Romania. The application is intended to obtain a long-stay visa for employment or to extend the foreign worker's temporary residence right.

EGO No. 32/2026 also responds to several governance challenges identified by the Romanian authorities, including the existence of foreign workers whose residence status had become irregular after the expiry of their residence permits, low retention rates among labour migrants, and the absence of an effective regulatory framework for recruitment agencies operating in third-country labour migration. In response, the Ordinance introduces a temporary mechanism allowing foreign workers who remained in Romania after the expiry of their residence permits, but against whom no return decision had been issued, to regularise their legal status until 31 December 2026. It also establishes a comprehensive authorisation and supervision system for recruitment agencies, including financial guarantees and enhanced compliance requirements, with the objective of improving transparency, strengthening employer accountability and reducing abusive recruitment practices.

This change also introduces placement agencies as formally regulated actors within the labour migration system, alongside employers and public authorities. However, the increased regulation and digitalisation of the recruitment and admission process does not necessarily translate into greater procedural autonomy for migrant workers. The worker remains dependent, to a significant extent, on the employer or placement agency for initiating and managing the single application, while the worker's own role within the platform remains primarily related to accessing information, identifying authorised placement agencies and reporting potential abuses or exploitation.

The transitional provisions introduced by EGO No. 32/2026 also raise concerns regarding potential administrative bottlenecks and the continuity of migrants' legal status. From 8 August 2026, foreign nationals who had previously obtained temporary residence for employment under the legislation applicable before the entry into force of the new ordinance may change employers under the conditions established by EGO No. 194/2002. At the same time, Article 52 establishes a temporary regularisation mechanism for foreign nationals whose employment-related residence rights have expired but against whom no return obligation has been established. Until 31 December 2026, these persons may apply for an extension of their temporary residence for employment without first obtaining a new long-stay employment visa, if they comply with the applicable conditions. They are also required to declare their actual address to the IGI within 60 days of the entry into force of the ordinance. While these transitional provisions provide an important safeguard against the immediate loss of legal status for certain categories of foreign workers, they also illustrate the potential for administrative bottlenecks during the transition to the new system.

5.3. Protection and Social Integration of third-country nationals in Romania

Romania's framework for the protection and social integration of third-country nationals is primarily regulated by [Government Ordinance \(GO\) No. 44/2004](#) on the Social Integration of Foreigners. The Ordinance establishes the legal basis for integration programmes available to beneficiaries of international protection and third-country nationals legally residing in Romania. These programmes include Romanian language courses, cultural orientation, access to education, healthcare, employment services and social assistance, while promoting cooperation between public authorities and civil society organisations to facilitate migrants' social inclusion. Romania's integration policies are further developed through National Immigration Strategies, which define the Government's medium-term priorities in the areas of legal migration, labour

migration, integration and the prevention of irregular migration. The [2015–2018 National Immigration Strategy](#) focused on strengthening institutional cooperation and promoting a coordinated approach to migration management. In addition to improving the management of legal and irregular migration, the strategy recognised the need to support the local integration of beneficiaries of international protection and legally residing third-country nationals through language training, cultural orientation, access to housing, education, healthcare and employment, while encouraging the involvement of local authorities and non-governmental organisations.

The [2021–2024 National Immigration Strategy](#) builds upon this approach by placing greater emphasis on long-term social inclusion and institutional coordination. It promotes the continuation of integration programmes, improved cooperation among public institutions, equal opportunities for third-country nationals, and measures to facilitate access to education and social services. The strategy also introduces mechanisms for monitoring integration outcomes, implementing European integration instruments, and raising public awareness of migration and social inclusion. While the 2021–2024 Strategy strengthened institutional cooperation and expanded integration measures for legally residing third-country nationals, the [2026–2030 Strategy](#) project further builds on this approach by placing greater emphasis on labour migration governance, digitalisation, inter-institutional cooperation and alignment with the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. In addition to facilitating the admission and integration of legally residing third-country nationals, the Strategy project identifies as an expected result the “increasing the efficiency of activities aimed at preventing and combating undeclared work and reducing the risks associated with trafficking in persons among foreign nationals through enhanced cooperation between state institutions”.

The National Immigration Strategy project of 2026–2030 reinforces the decentralisation of migrant integration by recognising the central role of local public authorities, in cooperation with law enforcement agencies, social service providers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations, in the implementation of integration measures. The Strategy promotes a multi-level governance approach in which local stakeholders are expected to facilitate migrants' access to essential public services, including education, healthcare and employment, support asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, implement social inclusion programmes through cross-sectoral partnerships, and ensure coordinated responses to migration-related emergencies (p. 27). Furthermore, the Strategy project identifies international organisations, notably the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as strategic partners in providing humanitarian assistance, safeguarding migrants' fundamental rights, supporting social inclusion and voluntary reintegration programmes, and contributing expert input to the development of migration-related legislation (p. 27).

While the Strategy project sets out an extensive institutional framework and ambitious integration objectives, it does not establish a dedicated financial implementation mechanism or earmark specific budget allocations for individual policy measures. Instead, it envisages that implementation will be financed through a combination of national budget allocations, European Union funding instruments for migration, asylum and integration under the 2021–2027 programming period, cohesion policy funds supporting long-term integration initiatives, and other external financial resources, including grants, donations and sponsorships (p. 41).

Beyond the national legal framework, the [Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund](#) (AMIF) has been the principal financial instrument supporting the development of migrant integration services in Romania. Over time, integration services have increasingly been delivered through

specialised integration centres and non-governmental organisations, complementing the activities of public institutions. AMIF-funded projects have provided a broad range of integration services for legally residing third-country nationals, including material assistance, legal and social counselling, Romanian language training, cultural orientation, access to healthcare and education, employment support, and other measures facilitating long-term social inclusion.

According to the evaluation of the Romanian AMIF National Programme 2014-2020 (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2025), a total of €14.08 million was allocated to the Specific Objective on Legal Migration and Integration, with almost full absorption of the available funds by the end of the programming period. Overall, 62 projects were implemented under this objective by a wide range of institutional and civil society actors, including the General Inspectorate for Immigration (IGI), the Romanian National Council for Refugees (CNRR), the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), AIDRom, ICAR Foundation and other non-governmental organisations. The evaluation highlights that these projects substantially expanded the national integration infrastructure and strengthened cooperation between public authorities and civil society (p. 28).

The programme also exceeded its integration targets by a considerable margin. More than 54,000 third-country nationals benefited from integration measures supported by the Fund, compared with an initial target of 10,950 beneficiaries, while 49 national, regional and local policy frameworks, measures or cooperation mechanisms supporting the integration of third-country nationals were developed with AMIF support, significantly exceeding the initial target of nine (p. 29-30).

Although AMIF has significantly expanded Romania's integration capacity, the project-based nature of its funding also creates structural challenges for the continuity of integration services.

According to the ex-post evaluation, the National Programme 2014-2020 was implemented through 184 projects with an average implementation period of approximately 15 months. Consequently, many integration activities, including Romanian language training, cultural orientation, legal counselling and employment support were delivered through time-limited projects whose continuation depended on successive funding calls rather than on permanent institutional arrangements. The evaluation further highlights that programme implementation was repeatedly affected by external factors, including legislative changes in public procurement, the COVID-19 pandemic and, towards the end of the programming period, the humanitarian consequences of the war in Ukraine, which required substantial reallocations of financial resources. These developments illustrate the challenges of ensuring continuity in integration policies within a project-based funding model.

Integration should be understood as a dynamic and continuous process that unfolds across multiple dimensions over time, rather than as a policy outcome with a clearly defined endpoint. This perspective recognises that newly arrived migrants and those who have resided in the host country for longer periods experience different integration trajectories and face evolving challenges throughout the integration process (Oliver & Gidley, 2015). As integration encompasses interconnected domains, including language acquisition, cultural orientation, access to employment, education, healthcare and social services, it begins upon arrival, or even prior to entry into the host country, and may never be fully completed, as structural and social barriers within the receiving society can persist over time. Despite the significant role played by AMIF-funded projects in supporting migrant integration, the availability of integration services does not necessarily guarantee their effective and equal accessibility. A critical assessment should therefore consider not only the volume of funding and number of beneficiaries, but also the geographical distribution, continuity and practical accessibility of the

services provided. Project-based funding may contribute to geographical and institutional disparities, particularly where services depend heavily on NGOs whose capacity and presence vary across regions as previously presented. Moreover, interruptions between funding cycles may affect the continuity of counselling, language courses, employment support and other integration services, making access dependent on the availability of individual projects rather than on a stable institutional framework.

Another important issue concerns the uneven provision of services across different categories of migrants. While refugees and beneficiaries of international protection may have access to more established integration support mechanisms, labour migrants may encounter more limited or fragmented services, despite facing specific challenges related to employment, housing, language acquisition and access to rights. For third-country workers, including Bangladeshi nationals, the practical accessibility of services is also affected by their working and living conditions. Services offered exclusively during standard working hours may be difficult to access for workers employed in sectors characterised by long or irregular working hours, while the availability of services during evenings and weekends may therefore be particularly important. Similarly, the availability of interpretation and information in Bengali should be considered when assessing whether formal access to information translates into meaningful access for migrant workers.

The effectiveness of integration policies also depends on the degree of coordination between the General Inspectorate for Immigration, local authorities, NGOs, employers and trade unions. Weak coordination may result in fragmented services, duplication of interventions or gaps in the provision of assistance. This issue is particularly relevant for workers accommodated in employer-provided housing, who may be geographically isolated from local services and whose access to information and support may depend substantially on their employer. Consequently,

the capacity of integration policies to reach workers in such accommodation arrangements should be treated as an important indicator of their practical effectiveness.

5.4. Family Reunification in Romania

Romania regulates family reunification through Emergency Government Ordinance (EGO) No. 194/2002 on the Regime of Foreigners, which establishes both the obligation of foreign nationals to notify the immigration authorities of significant changes in their personal status during their stay and the legal conditions governing family reunification. Foreign nationals legally residing in Romania, as well as refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, may apply for long-stay visas for their spouses and unmarried minor children.

Under specific circumstances, family reunification may also extend to dependent parents or adult children unable to support themselves for medical reasons. The legislation further provides more favourable conditions for beneficiaries of international protection, who are exempt from certain requirements relating to accommodation and financial resources.

Applicants seeking family reunification are required to demonstrate adequate accommodation, sufficient financial means to support their family members, and compliance with Romanian legislation concerning marriage and family status. Applications must be processed within three months, after which eligible family members may apply for long-stay visas based on the approval issued by the Romanian immigration authorities.

Administrative data provided upon the authors' request (IGI, 2026) indicate that the Bangladeshi population residing in Romania is composed of men of working age. Across the 2021–2025 period, approximately 98% of Bangladeshi nationals were male, while women represented only around 2% of the total population. Moreover, around 61% belonged to the 18–34 age group, with the remainder consisting predominantly of adults aged 35 years and above. This

demographic profile indicates that Bangladeshi migration to Romania is primarily characterised by the arrival of young male labour migrants, suggesting that, as settlement becomes more permanent, demand for family reunification is likely to increase. This demographic profile indicates that Bangladeshi migration to Romania is currently characterised predominantly by labour migration of single or unaccompanied male workers.

The predominance of young male labour migrants may reflect a staged migration strategy, whereby one family member initially migrates for employment while spouses and children remain in the country of origin. Such migration patterns are commonly associated with labour migration systems and may eventually lead to increased demand for family reunification as migrants achieve greater employment stability and longer periods of residence. As migrant communities become more established and residence periods lengthen, demand for family reunification can reasonably be expected to increase.

However, the current legal requirements may constitute a significant barrier to family reunification for many Bangladeshi workers. Under Article 46 in conjunction with Article 96(9)(c) of Emergency Government Ordinance No. 194/2002, applicants must demonstrate financial resources sufficient to support each family member, in addition to their own maintenance, at a level equivalent to the national gross minimum wage for a period of three months. For many Bangladeshi migrant workers employed in sectors such as construction, manufacturing and delivery services, where wages are often concentrated around the minimum wage, meeting this income threshold may prove challenging. As a result, although family reunification is legally available, the financial eligibility requirements may limit its accessibility in practice for a considerable proportion of labour migrants.

Another important aspect is the fact that family reunification does not automatically grant family members an unrestricted right to work in Romania. To access the labour market, family

members may themselves be required to comply with the applicable legal and administrative requirements for employment. Consequently, family reunification may result in a situation in which the accompanying spouse or other family member obtains a right of residence but does not automatically acquire an independent and immediate right to employment. This may create an additional layer of administrative dependency and may place family members in a similarly demanding position to that faced by the initial labour migrant when accessing the Romanian labour market.

5.5. Conclusions

Overall, the analysis shows that Romania has rapidly expanded its mechanisms for admitting third-country workers in response to labour shortages, but the development of integration and protection mechanisms has not fully kept pace. Workers remain significantly dependent on employers and recruitment intermediaries, while digitalisation may improve administrative efficiency but does not necessarily ensure transparency, procedural autonomy or effective access to remedies for migrants. At the same time, project-based integration services raise concerns regarding continuity, territorial coverage and accessibility, particularly for workers with demanding working schedules. The absence of bilateral social security agreements with Asian countries including Bangladesh also represents an important gap in the protection framework, as it may affect the portability and coordination of social security rights acquired by migrant workers during their employment in Romania. Finally, although family reunification is legally available, financial and administrative requirements may limit its practical accessibility for lower-paid workers and may reinforce the economic dependence of accompanying family members. Taken together, these findings indicate that Romania is moving from an admission-oriented model towards a more comprehensive system of labour migration governance, but further attention is needed to ensure that expanded recruitment and admission

mechanisms are accompanied by effective worker protection, sustainable integration services and realistic pathways to family reunification and longer-term settlement.

6. Governing Labour Migration from Bangladesh

6.1. Introduction

Bangladesh is the eighth-largest country in the world in terms of population, with about 165 million people, and was ranked fifth worldwide by the number of nationals overseas during the period before the COVID-19 pandemic, with an estimated 7.8 million Bangladeshis working abroad in 2018 (Bossavie, 2023). The Bangladeshi diaspora, understood more broadly to include descendants and populations not fully captured by labour-migration records, is larger still, with some estimates revolving between 15 and 27 million persons worldwide. A report on the Bangladeshi Migration Governance Framework, realised in collaboration with IOM, listing official numbers from the Bangladeshi government puts the number of Bangladeshi nationals working abroad at 11 million (Bangladesh Migration Governance Framework 2020). Labour force export has been a feature of the development strategy of the country post-independence, shaping the regime of mobility abroad and the pathways of education and training investment.

Bangladesh's international labour migration has predominantly been temporary and concentrated in low- and semi-skilled occupations (Bossavie, 2023). This has shaped a policy regime concerned with circularity, recruitment control, protection abroad, and more recently by family welfare at home and less but surely not the least with the developmental returns of remittances (Mamun and Nath, 2010; Barai, 2020). Bangladesh has, in effect, structured part of its employment and development policy around the organised outflow of temporary labour (Azad 2023). Overseas work relieves pressure on a labour-abundant economy, with many young people entering the workforce each year, and generates foreign exchange, but it also transfers

substantial risks to workers and their households (Rana et al., 2024). The central policy problem is therefore not simply how to increase departures but how to maximise access and returns while limiting recruitment debt, contractual deception and workplace related abuses, as well as mitigating the social costs of prolonged family separation.

The policy framework has expanded considerably since independence (obtained in 1971). Yet its trajectory is not a linear movement from control to rights. New welfare, equality and protection instruments have been layered onto older administrative practices centred on passports, authorised departure, licensing and clearance. The resulting regime is strongest at the points where the Bangladeshi state retains direct authority, particularly worker registration, recruiter licensing (which retains a central place in the migration management architecture), emigration clearance, welfare financing and return assistance. It is weaker where protection depends on employers, labour inspection, courts and social-security systems in destination countries, where the sending state has little control. This territorial division is the organising tension of this section of policy review.

This section uses qualitative documentary analysis, combining legal-policy interpretation with thematic content analysis. The corpus was selected purposively to cover the principal stages of the migration process and the institutions governing them. Binding legislation was distinguished from strategic policy and from administrative service commitments. Formal recognition of a right was also distinguished from evidence of implementation. A statutory duty to recover wages, for example, is treated as an institutional mandate, not as proof that recovery is routine or timely.

The analysis followed two connected coding axes. The first tracked the migration life cycle which starts with the decision to migrate, followed by recruitment and pre-departure preparation, employment abroad, crisis and complaint handling, return and reintegration. The

second tracked the location of authority share between Bangladesh, the destination state, bilateral bodies or private actors such as recruiters and employers. Within these axes, the documents were coded for recruitment and costs, contracts and wages, information and skills, social protection, family relations, gender and differentiated vulnerability, remedies and institutional accountability. This design draws on Bossavie's argument that interventions at one stage shape outcomes at later stages and that recruitment costs and information failures can intensify vulnerability abroad and constrain reintegration after return (Bossavie, 2023).

Bangla-language laws, rules and policy documents were translated and summarised with ChatGPT 5.6 as an analytical and translation aid. Translation proceeded provision by provision and was cross-checked against available English texts and online newspaper articles in English that covered legislative changes. The policy analysis used Bangla and English texts, many retrieved from governmental sites and repositories, but it has also used ILO reports, World Bank, IOM and UN analysis and peer reviewed articles. When it comes to legislation translated from Bangla, it is important to note that these are working research translations, not certified legal translations. Moreover, in writing the policy analysis, we did not have access to the legal norms of applications, and other types of legislation that revolves around application and implementation, relying mostly on normative and policy analysis documents. And not the least, the translation process is fraught with limitations, as the author of this section does not understand Bangla and had to rely on LLM translation outputs, and other tertiary sources that analyse the legislation in English language outlets.

Table 1. Policies and legislation reviewed

Document group	Principal instruments reviewed
Foundational mobility and emigration control	Bangladesh Passport Order 1973 and Passport Rules 1974; Emigration Ordinance 1982; Emigration and Recruiting Agent Conduct and Licence Rules 2002.
Development, rights and welfare	Bangladesh Overseas Employment Policy 2006; remittance-recognition instruments of 2006 and 2008; Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012; Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013; National Social Security Strategy 2015; Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016.
Implementation and contemporary regulation	Overseas Employment and Migration Management Rules 2017; Wage Earners' Welfare Board Act 2018; Recruiting Agent Classification Rules 2020; Overseas Employment and Migrants (Amendment) Act 2023; Ministry Citizen's Charter 2025; later recruiter and sub-agent rules.
Transnational and bilateral governance	Bilateral and government-to-government arrangements together with the ILO Assessment Guide for Bilateral Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding on Labour Migration (ILO 2018).

6.2. Governing transborder mobility and out-migration

The early post-independence framework was primarily concerned with state authority over international mobility. The Bangladesh Passport Order, 1973 and the Passport Rules, 1974 established passport categories, regulated issuing authorities, established documentary requirements, and laid the basis for the administrative gateway through which overseas work became possible. Mobility was treated as an authorised status rather than as an unqualified individual right (Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration and Passport Branch 1974, August).

This was ensued by the Emigration Ordinance issued in 1982, which created a specialised regime for employment-related departure. It defined emigration, overseas employment, recruiting agents, as well as employment demands and dependants, going to the extent of regulating recruiters and the process of authorised registration and licensed agents abroad (Government of Bangladesh, 1982, secs. 2, 5–14, 18–26). It therefore combined control with an early protective-administrative mandate. Dependants were already included, but mainly as persons attached to the worker’s authorised mobility.

6.3. Labour-export developmentalism and institutional expansion

As overseas employment expanded from the mid-1970s, Bangladesh built a specialised labour-export apparatus (Bossavie, 2023). Bangladesh has established a dedicated ministry to govern the labour export process, which is the Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) which integrated all labour export management agencies that have been established in the past decades. Under the authority of this ministry, there are several state agencies that run the recruitment, labour placement, repatriation and migrant welfare aspects, representing the core of Bangladesh’s labour export architecture (Bossavie, 2023). The Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) was established in 1976, the public recruitment company BOESL in 1984, the Wage Earners’ Welfare Fund in 1990 and a dedicated ministry that encapsulated all agencies in 2001 (Bossavie, 2023). The Overseas Employment Policy of 2006 consolidated this architecture around seven operational fields such as rights protection, labour-market expansion, skills, recruitment, expatriate welfare, formal remittance and investment channels, and reintegration (Government of Bangladesh, 2006, secs. 1–5). This act has also recognised migrants’ children and left-behind wives and families, acknowledging the need of welfare protection and portable benefits for the family of those leaving the country. Nevertheless, its dominant grammar remained developmental. Migrants were to be prepared,

deployed and connected to national employment and foreign-exchange objectives (Gamlen, 2006).

This developmental orientation was reinforced by policies that publicly recognised high remittance senders and offered selected privileges to commercially important non-resident Bangladeshis that could help channel significant amount of capital and investment into the country. Such instruments increased the political visibility of migrants, but also institutionalised a hierarchy based on economic contribution. Welfare and recognition of social rights became partly tied to the capacity to remit, invest and support foreign-exchange reserves (Gamlen 2006). The broader policy field thus combined worker protection with a state strategy of valorising migration through remittances (Mamun and Nath, 2010).

6.4. The rights-and-welfare turn

A more explicit rights turn followed Bangladesh's ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Bangladesh had signed the Convention in 1998, but ratified it only on 24 August 2011, with the Convention entering into force for the country on 1 December of that year (United Nations 2016). This was followed by the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act, 2013 (OEMA) which repealed the 1982 Ordinance and recast overseas employment in the language of safe and fair migration, equality, rights and family welfare. This is the principal law for labour migration in Bangladesh. It explicitly aims to promote safe overseas employment and protect migrant workers' rights. Notably, Article 25 of the Act empowers the government "to conclude [MOUs or] agreements ... with a view to increase opportunities of migration by Bangladeshi citizens" and to "ensure welfare and the rights of migrant workers". These agreements must be based on core protection principles (e.g. migrant workers' safety, dignity, right to information and redress). The Act also sets up 30 expatriate Labour Welfare Wings abroad, requires recruitment

agents to be licensed, and provides limited protections (e.g. non-discrimination in Article 6) for migrants.

In practice OEMA 2013 sought to align Bangladesh's law with the UN Migrant Workers' Convention (ratified by Bangladesh) and ILO standards. The definition of migrant worker within the 2013 law covers persons preparing to migrate, workers abroad and returnees, while "dependant" includes spouses, parents, children, siblings and other financially dependent persons (Government of Bangladesh 2013, preamble and sec. 2). Section 6 prohibits discrimination in selection, deployment, return and service provision. Sections 9–18 regulate recruiter licensing, duties and security deposits, while sections 19–21 govern registration, selection, clearance and government-set migration costs. The Act's strongest labour-protection mechanism is section 22. It requires a written employment contract covering wages, housing, duration, travel and compensation for death or injury, and treats the recruiter as the foreign employer's representative. Recruiter and employer are jointly and severally liable for contractual obligations. Sections 23–25 create labour-welfare wings and authorise bilateral agreements oriented towards rights, safety, dignity, repatriation and family welfare. Sections 26–30 provide information, legal assistance, civil remedies, return support and financial or welfare programmes (Government of Bangladesh, 2013, secs 22, 23-25, 26-30). The statute therefore combines administrative control with private-law liability and public welfare. Its main limitation is territorial, in the end, despite the complex architecture created by the sending state, the most important workplace rights still depend on implementation abroad and depend on implementation outside the control of Bangladeshi national institutions.

Furthermore, the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy, enacted in 2016 widened this legal foundation into a whole-cycle policy. Its six pillars concern safe labour migration, the rights of workers and family members, welfare and services, women's migration,

migration and development, and governance (Government of Bangladesh 2016, paras. 2.1–2.6). The policy calls for standard contracts, occupation-appropriate minimum wages, timely payment, occupational safety and accessible remedies.

It also requires scrutiny of destination-country labour and social-security law before bilateral agreements are negotiated and calls for family registration, education and health support, insurance, maternity protection, legal-aid and repatriation funds, compensation and reintegration. The policy is normatively richer than the 2013 Act, but many provisions remain programmatic and depend on budgets, inter-ministerial coordination and destination-state cooperation. What is important to note is that the accent moves from a development remittances centred language to a rights and welfare provision architecture.

6.5. Welfare consolidation and the regulation of brokerage

The preoccupation for the welfare of Bangladeshi nationals seeking employed has been scaled up with a new piece of legislation that extends the capacity of national authorities to inspect workplaces. The 2017 Management Rules, mostly an operational framework, operationalised parts of this framework through the establishment of electronic databases and registration, clearance, training, complaints and mediation processes. Rules 7–8 give labour-welfare wings a broad mandate to inspect workplaces, recover wages, facilitate access to social-security schemes, support legal claims, arrange safe accommodation, rescue abused workers and pursue alternative employment or repatriation, extending the reach of Bangladeshi national institutions towards the protection of workers (Government of Bangladesh 2017). Rule 8(2)(n) is particularly important because it connects violence and labour exploitation with rescue, medical and legal support and worker freedom of choice. Rules 11–16 regulate clearance, training, mediation and appeals, while Form A records the contract, job description, family and nominee details, insurance, accounts and cost responsibilities (Government of Bangladesh 2017). In

continuation of this, the Wage Earners' Welfare Board Act, 2018 placed migrant assistance on a statutory institutional basis, including legal and medical help, death and injury compensation, repatriation, funeral grants, scholarships and services for women workers and dependants, extending the state's mandate of protection across borders.

Later reforms shifted attention to the recruitment chain. The 2023 amendment created a legal category for registered sub-agents, strengthened administrative sanctions against unlawful recruitment agents and expanded welfare programmes, but also added worker responsibilities to use lawful channels and complete training (Government of Bangladesh, 2023, secs. 3–8). The Overseas Employment and Migrants (Amendment) Act (2023, Act No. 41 of 2023) which brings modifications to the 2013 law made several critical changes. Most importantly, it *legalizes and regulates sub-agents (middlemen)* in recruitment. For the first time the Act defines a “sub-agent” or “representative” as any registered person who collects migrant workers on behalf of a recruitment agent. The law directs the government to create rules for registering and overseeing sub-agents. It also imposes new penalties on agents. For example, a recruiting agent that uses an unregistered sub-agent faces up to one year's imprisonment or a fine, and an unauthorized sub-agent faces similar sanctions. Other enhancements include tougher penalties for fraudulent recruitment, expanded reintegration support, and special protections for female migrants.

In terms of recruiting agents, Bangladesh enacted the Recruiting Agent Rules (2019–2020) which is a suite of rules regulating recruitment agencies. Under OEMA 2013, which remains the underlying legislative framework, agents must be licensed and are subject to performance standards. The Recruiting Agent (License and Code of Conduct) Rules, 2019 require agents to meet stringent criteria (e.g. good character, financial solvency, minimum placement targets) to obtain or renew a license. These rules explicitly mandate a formal code of

conduct where <agents must advertise jobs truthfully, provide counselling to migrants, avoid unethical competition, and not charge illegal fees>. They even forbid agents from promising wages below government-approved rates or arranging fraudulent visas. In parallel, the *Recruiting Agent Classification Rules, 2020* institute a graded performance evaluation in which agencies are ranked by performance and given corresponding privileges or penalties. In essence, Bangladesh's regulatory regime now ties agents' licensing to strict conduct standards and placement quotas (many rules echo international fair-recruitment guidelines).

However, these regulations have not ruled out informal agents entirely. In practice, recruitment often depends on unequal access to information and on brokers whom workers have little capacity to verify. Within this context, Bossavie analyses the role of the locally embedded intermediaries known in Bangladesh as dalals (Bossavie, 2023). These actors are variously described as middlemen, sub-agents or informal recruitment brokers, but they are not independent recruiting agencies in the formal legal sense. They generally work beneath, or in association with, licensed private recruitment agencies and connect those agencies with prospective migrants, particularly in rural areas where official labour-market information remains limited (Bossavie, 2023, 6, 9). The dalal occupies a strategic position because recruitment is organised through both formal institutions and personal networks. Foreign employers transmit job offers to Bangladeshi recruitment agencies, which then depend on agents and sub-agents to identify suitable workers. The dalal travels to villages, circulates information about available jobs, mobilises applicants and collects documents for contracts. The same intermediary may arrange or facilitate interviews, medical examinations, visas, airline tickets, insurance and BMET clearance, and may accompany the prospective migrant through different stages of the departure process. Many are relatives, neighbours, friends or return migrants, and their effectiveness rests partly on their proximity to prospective workers and the trust associated with membership in the local community (Bossavie, 2023, 6, 9, 11). On the

other hand, this reality leaves enough ambiguity and informality embedded in the recruitment process to increase the vulnerability of migrant workers.

6.6. Migration costs

When it comes to recruitment, information about opportunities, costs and access, Bangladesh has set up formal information duties, district offices and pre-departure programmes to enable migrant workers' access to information and contractual transparency and to prevent work abuses. Government ceilings coexist with worker-paid charges that are often set within multi-layered recruitment chains, which Bangladesh has attempted to regulate without being able to entirely rule out informal recruiters and informal under the counter paid fees. Bossavie reports average intermediary costs of about US\$2,000 and total migration costs exceeding US\$4,000 in privately intermediated corridors, frequently financed through borrowing (Bossavie, 2023). The fees which generate high debt are reducing workers' ability to refuse abusive conditions because they must remain employed long enough to recover the initial investment. We see this situation also in the case of Bangladeshis working in Romania. Therefore, whilst the government attempts to regulate and flatten out fees, privately intermediated informal fees continue to put pressure and indebt migrant workers.

6.7. Recruitment, contracts and protection abroad

When it comes to recruitment, Bangladesh has progressively formalised recruitment, but formalisation alone does not resolve fragmented responsibility. On paper, contract regulation is formally well developed. Foreign demand must be verified, employment terms disclosed, the contract registered with authorities and emigration clearance issued on that basis, with documentation transmitted to the relevant Bangladeshi mission (Government of Bangladesh, 2013, sec. 22; Government of Bangladesh 2017, rr. 11–16). The contract is therefore not merely

private, but a device for making a fragmented transnational employment relationship administratively legible (Xiang and Lindquist, 2014). Once employment is located abroad, Bangladesh's protective capacity becomes conditional. Labour attachés and welfare wings from Bangladeshi government or authorized agencies can verify demand, assist with disputes, recover dues, support death-compensation claims and arrange rescue or return. Yet Bossavie (2023) documents recurrent problems of understaffing, centralisation, limited opening hours, distance from workplaces and inadequate language and legal capacity. Complaint systems may exist formally while remaining inaccessible to workers who need rapid compensation to service migration debt. With a very large number of workers abroad, in the number of millions, the Bangladeshi government simply does not have the capacity to assist all workers facing a contract breach, abuse, injuries, retrieve them and compensate them in a timely manner and help with repatriation.

6.8. Bilateral agreements and MoUs

In this respect, one of the instruments created that would mitigate the complexity of situations that could arise are the bilateral agreements. Section 25 of the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act authorises agreements intended to expand employment opportunities, regulate migration, facilitate return and reintegration, and protect migrant workers and their families. The 2016 Policy goes further by requiring scrutiny of destination-country labour and social-security law before negotiations and by calling for monitoring arrangements after signature (Government of Bangladesh, 2013, sec. 25; Government of Bangladesh, 2016a, paras. 2.2.1-2.2.6). In formal terms, bilateral labour agreements are generally more binding, whereas memoranda of understanding are preferred for their flexibility. Their political significance, however, lies less in their designation than in whether they distribute enforceable responsibilities among governments, recruiters and employers (Wickramasekara, 2018). By

2015, Bangladesh reported two principal bilateral labour agreements and nine MoUs. The formal agreements were concluded with Qatar in 1988, followed by an additional protocol in 2008, and with Kuwait in 2000. Successive MoUs were signed with Malaysia in 2003, 2006 and 2012, the Republic of Korea in 2007, the United Arab Emirates in 2007, Oman in 2008, Libya in 2008, Jordan in 2012, the Maldives in 2012 and Iraq in 2013, followed by Greece in 2022. A separate arrangement concerning Bangladeshi domestic workers in Hong Kong was signed with a recruiters' association in 2013, rather than directly with the Hong Kong authorities (Government of Bangladesh, 2016b, Annex III). The scope of bilateral agreements is to create a safe and regulated channel of labour mobility, rights and traceable bilateral obligations, where the sending and the host countries each work to protect and regulate workers 'and employers' rights and obligations within transnational recruiting arrangements.

The clearest contrast is between privately and publicly intermediated corridors. Under the 2007 Korea-Bangladesh MoU, Bangladesh entered the Korean Employment Permit System, in which public agencies manage recruitment, language testing and employer matching. Workers are covered by Korean minimum-wage legislation and grievance procedures, while reliance on informal brokers is substantially reduced. Bossavie estimates migration costs under the programme and within this Korean corridor at approximately US\$900, compared with more than US\$4,000 through privately intermediated routes (Bossavie, 2023). The 2012 Bangladesh-Malaysia G2G MoU similarly sought to remove private intermediaries from plantation recruitment. It reduced recruitment costs, borrowing and interest payments, but remained limited in scale and was subsequently modified through arrangements signed in 2014, 2016 and 2021 that restored a greater role for private agencies. The Malaysian case demonstrates that public intermediation can reduce vulnerability, but that its effects are reversible when recruitment is again organised through concentrated private networks.

Sector-specific agreements have also been used to address workers excluded from general labour-law protection. Bangladesh's 2015 MoU with Saudi Arabia concerned the recruitment of women domestic workers and followed the reopening of a migration corridor that Saudi Arabia had previously restricted. It established agency-based recruitment quotas and included a standard employment contract. In the ILO's rapid assessment, the Saudi instrument performed better than the agreements examined with Iraq and Jordan because it referred more directly to workers' rights and incorporated contractual safeguards. It nevertheless remained incomplete on equal treatment, wage protection, social security, freedom of association, skills recognition and family rights (Wickramasekara, 2018).

The 2022 Greece–Bangladesh Memorandum of Understanding on Migration and Mobility represents a more recent European model. Ratified in Greece through Law 4959/2022, it provides for up to 4,000 Bangladeshi workers annually, initially for temporary agricultural employment, and introduced a regularisation mechanism potentially covering around 15,000 Bangladeshis already living in Greece. At the same time, it links legal labour mobility to identification, return and cooperation against irregular migration. The arrangement therefore expands a regular European pathway but makes market access conditional on temporariness and return, illustrating how labour migration and migration-control objectives are increasingly combined within the same bilateral instrument (Hellenic Republic, 2024; OECD, 2023). The central policy problem is consequently not the absence of bilateral instruments, but their uneven legal and institutional density. The ILO's illustrative assessment awarded only eight of twenty protection indicators to the agreement with Iraq, nine to Jordan and twelve to Saudi Arabia. Common omissions concerned non-discrimination, wage protection, housing, social security, trade-union rights, skills recognition and accessible remedies (Wickramasekara, 2018). Agreements are also frequently unpublished, poorly communicated to workers and employers, and supported by joint committees whose proceedings and outcomes remain opaque.

Bilateralism can therefore secure labour supply more effectively than it secures rights. Closing this gap requires public agreement texts, binding standard contracts, transparent recruitment costs, joint liability across recruitment chains, effective complaints procedures and published evidence of implementation.

Bilateral agreements are therefore indispensable, but their quality varies. Many arrangements have been effective in opening labour markets and increasing flows while remaining weak on enforceable rights, monitoring and transparency. Section 25 of the 2013 Act and paragraphs 2.2.1–2.2.14 of the 2016 Policy provide a rights-based mandate, but the implementation gap persists. The ILO framework on migrant labour recruitment suggests that agreements should specify equal treatment, should transparently set wage payment, specify deductions and overtime, stipulate whether housing is granted and the conditions of occupational safety, passport retention, social security, employer mobility, complaints, return and family contact (ILO, 2018). The Korean bilaterally arranged corridor of migration illustrates how public intermediation, minimum-wage coverage, employer-change mechanisms and destination labour law can produce stronger outcomes. It also shows that protection is not achieved by the origin state acting alone. In other cases, where receiving states are less articulate around enforcement of bilateral agreements, worker rights are significantly undermined.

6.9. Return and reintegration

Temporary migration is organised around return, yet return policy developed later and remains less systematised. Forced or premature return is particularly damaging when recruitment debt has not been repaid. Workers may return without savings, employment or recognition of skills acquired abroad. Bossavie therefore distinguishes voluntary return after planned accumulation from expulsion, dismissal, crisis return or disenchantment. These groups require different interventions. Standard employment services, skills recognition and enterprise support may

assist planned returnees, while forced returnees may first need income support, debt advice, health and psychosocial services, legal assistance and settlement of outstanding claims (Bossavie, 2023).

In this respect, the policy shift towards reintegration is visible in the 2016 Policy, the expanded welfare provisions of the 2023 amendment and subsequent administrative programmes. The critical next step is to connect return registration with employment and social-protection systems. Returnees have often been absent from national registries while abroad and can fall between migration-specific assistance and mainstream services. A durable framework should record employment history, skills, contributions, claims and return circumstances and then provide differentiated referrals (Bossavie, 2023). Reintegration should be measured through livelihood recovery and household stability, not only through the number of training courses or loans delivered.

6.10. Welfare and family protection

Bangladesh has constructed a substantial migrant-welfare architecture, but it remains territorially and institutionally segmented. Origin-country insurance, grants, loans, scholarships and repatriation support are more developed than portable social rights. The 2016 Policy recognises this problem by calling for assessment of destination-country labour and social-security law and for social protection across the migration cycle. Domestic policy can compensate families after injury or death, but it cannot independently ensure employer contributions, workplace prevention or portability.

When it comes to protection of the family and portable rights, the family is visible throughout the framework, but mostly as a dependant, nominee, remittance recipient or welfare beneficiary. This matters because migration risks are distributed through households. The Overseas

Employment and Migrants Act, 2013 gave several of these commitments a statutory basis. Section 18 permits recruiters' security deposits to finance compensation and repatriation. Section 25 authorises bilateral agreements covering return, domestic reintegration and the welfare and rights of workers and their families. Sections 27–29 establish access to legal assistance, civil remedies and consular support for return, while section 30 allows the government to facilitate loans, savings, investment and other welfare programmes for migrants and family members (Government of Bangladesh, 2013, secs. 18 and 25–30). This is a meaningful legal expansion, but it remains weighted towards remedy after harm rather than the continuous portability of rights accumulated abroad.

For those who worked abroad and decide to return or are forced to come back, return remains one of the less systematised stages of Bangladesh's migration regime. As Bossavie argues, voluntary return after the planned accumulation of savings differs fundamentally from dismissal, deportation, crisis return or premature departure following low wages and deception. Planned returnees may require employment matching, recognition of prior learning or enterprise support. Workers returning unexpectedly may first require repatriation assistance, income support, debt counselling, medical and psychosocial services, and help recovering outstanding claims (Bossavie, 2023). These distinctions matter because forced return frequently occurs before migration costs have been recovered. A more coherent return policy should therefore link return registration to mainstream employment, skills and social-protection systems. Bossavie notes that returnees may fall outside ordinary registries precisely because they have been absent from Bangladesh, making it difficult to connect them to appropriate services. A life-cycle record containing employment history, qualifications, contributions, unresolved claims and circumstances of return would permit differentiated referrals rather than a uniform package centred on loans and training (Bossavie 2023, 3). Reintegration should be

assessed through livelihood recovery, debt reduction and household stability, not simply through the number of beneficiaries enrolled in programmes.

Despite setting up legislative norms and extending the institutional mandate towards welfare and protection, family support and reintegration (Government of Bangladesh, 2016, secs. 2.6.2 and 2.6.6–2.6.12), the persisting problem is that recruitment, contracts, insurance, welfare claims, consular cases and return services are not consistently connected. Moreover, the portability of rights of workers abroad is fragmented and not insufficiently institutionalised, leaving workers vulnerable upon return.

When it comes to return after retirement in the destination country, Bangladesh has extended pension inclusion to citizens abroad through the voluntary Probash Scheme, but it has not established the transnational portability of pension rights acquired in the destination countries. Contributions made to destination-country systems remain governed by those systems and are not automatically transferred to, or recognised as contribution periods under, Bangladesh's Universal Pension Scheme. In the absence of bilateral social-security agreements providing for the totalisation of insurance periods and the export of acquired benefits, returnees may retain separate pension records in different countries without being able to combine them to meet minimum eligibility thresholds. The resulting gap is particularly consequential for temporary and circular migrants, whose relatively short periods of employment in individual destination countries may never independently generate a pension entitlement. The Probash Scheme has not bridged this gap, creating instead a parallel scheme where Bangladeshi nationals can contribute to from abroad, as a private, separate pension fund.

6.11. Prevention of human trafficking

Another important legislative framework that is closely linked to migration governance is the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (2012) which is Bangladesh's main anti-trafficking law. It defines human trafficking broadly (including labour and sexual exploitation) and criminalizes it, with severe penalties. Importantly, it frames trafficking prevention as part of safe migration and the scope of the act is to create structures for “prevent[ing] and suppress[ing] human trafficking” and ensuring “the protection of victims of ... human trafficking and their rights, and to ensure safe migration”. The law provides for protective homes and rehabilitation of victims, and for coordination among agencies. In practice, this Act complements the labour migration framework by targeting irregular recruitment and trafficking rings and setting up the mandate of agencies charged with prosecuting human trafficking.

6.12. Conclusions

The Bangladeshi migration framework remains shaped by the temporary, employer-dependent corridors through which most low-skilled workers migrate. The state can authorise departure and discipline recruiters more readily than it can secure wages, workplace safety, employer mobility or social-security portability abroad. This is why the migration life cycle must be treated as an integrated policy field. Information failures and recruitment debt created before departure intensify dependence at destination and weaken return outcomes. Conversely, transparent recruitment, contract continuity and enforceable bilateral protection reduce household risk across the entire cycle, protecting Bangladeshi workers and their families. Bangladesh's central challenge is thus to convert its expanding legal and welfare commitments into protection that remains effective across borders and throughout the migration cycle.

7. Concluding Remarks

Part of the desk-research component of CASTLE2, the present review sought to evaluate the legal and policy frameworks governing labour migration from Bangladesh to Greece and Romania within the broader European Union context.

The EU-level framework for labour migration was found to accommodate a heterogeneous mix of binding legal instruments, governance frameworks, and cooperation tools that do not produce a single, uniform model of protection. Instead, rights related to labour, social protection, and family reunification are distributed unevenly across various directives, creating a tiered system of security for third-country nationals. Ultimately, the practical significance of these EU tools for Bangladeshi workers depends on how these legislative blueprints are transposed and implemented at the national level.

At the time of writing, the 2024 recast Single Permit Directive (Directive (EU) 2024/1233), which member states¹⁹ were supposed to transpose in their legislation by 21 May 2026, has yet to be transposed by 17 EU countries. The European Commission recently decided to send formal notices to Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden “for failing to communicate the complete transposition of Directive 2024/1233” (European Commission. (2026, July 15)). This lagging is indicative of the complex and often non-smooth process of aligning national frameworks to the wider EU framework. Reasons for such delays might be diverse, complex and country-specific.

¹⁹ Except for Denmark and Ireland, who hold opt-out protocols.

Greece and Romania - the host societies analysed in CASTLE2 - both managed to comply in due time with the above transposition requirement.

In Greece, the legal framework for labour migration is characterized by a tension between ambitious equal treatment standards and a structurally conditional application that ties a worker's legal status directly to their employment and insurance records. While Greece has established a robust legal architecture for migrant rights based on EU parity standards, the practical exercise of these rights remains heavily dependent on sustained economic integration and administrative compliance. Recent 2026 reforms suggest a move toward liberalizing these requirements to reduce worker precarity.

Romania's migration governance is currently going through a significant transition from a model focused on temporary labour market needs to one that recognizes migration as a long-term demographic and economic reality. The introduction of Emergency Government Ordinance No. 32/2026 signals a policy evolution toward regularizing the legal status of workers already in the country, reflecting a move beyond simple admission toward stabilizing the existing migrant workforce. For the Bangladeshi community specifically, the transition to long-term settlement remains complex. While family reunification is legally established, the stringent financial eligibility requirements often act as a barrier for workers whose wages are concentrated around the national minimum.

While the frameworks operating in destination countries are crucial for third country nationals, labour migration is also impacted by the rules enacted in the countries of origin. In this regard, the governance of labour migration in Bangladesh has evolved from a post-independence focus on administrative control and authorized departure to a sophisticated framework that integrates national development, migrant welfare, and a rights-based approach. While the state has successfully established a dedicated institutional architecture, the system remains defined by an

organizing tension between the state's authority at home and its limited influence over workplace conditions in destination countries. In the long run, Bangladesh's central challenge is to convert its expanding legal and welfare commitments into protection that remains effective across borders.

A particular form of architecture that emerged are the bilateral agreements negotiated and established between Bangladesh as a sending country, and some of the main destination countries for Bangladeshi migrants, establishing safe and regulated corridors for migration. One of the main channels for bilateral arrangements is the bilateral agreement between South Korea and Bangladesh, Qatar and Bangladesh and the most recent agreement between Greece and Bangladesh. Whilst the institutional fragmentation persists within these channels, the social and economic rights of workers recruited in Bangladesh are more consequentially respected and sanctioned. However, a drawback is that bilateral arrangements do not cover irregular migration and other forms of migration status for Bangladeshi nationals.

Generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT and Claude) were used solely to assist with the translation of legislative and policy documents, language editing, grammar correction, stylistic refinement, and improving the readability of this manuscript. Responsibility for the accuracy, interpretation, and final content of the manuscript rests entirely with the authors.

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PART III

Labour Migration Cooperation Agreements: Bangladesh

Ana Iolanda Coșciug

The analysis in this chapter is structured into three main sections, designed to enable a systematic comparison of labour migration cooperation agreements, with a particular focus on Bangladesh.

1. Bangladesh

This section maps Bangladesh's existing labour migration agreements with EU and non-EU countries, as well as active multilateral frameworks. For each agreement, information is provided on the type of agreement, year of implementation, duration, target groups, main objectives, and official sources. The section also examines potential or emerging agreements, considering labour market needs, workforce shortages, and evolving migration policy priorities.

2. Romania

This section reviews Romania's labour migration agreements and initiatives with non-EU countries, highlighting Romania's growing role as a destination country for migrant workers and the institutional mechanisms developed to facilitate recruitment and protect migrant workers' rights.

3. Greece

This section examines Greece's bilateral labour migration agreements with third countries, including information on the year of signature, implementation period, target groups, and key objectives. It provides an overview of how Greece has expanded legal labour migration pathways to address labour shortages and strengthen the governance of labour mobility.

1. Bangladesh

1.1. Existing agreements at the EU level



Figure 1. Agreements and MoUs between Bangladesh and other States

The reviewed agreements illustrate the growing diversification of migration governance frameworks involving Bangladesh and European or international actors, combining labour migration management, migration control, skills development, and protection-oriented approaches. While the agreements differ in scope and objectives, they collectively reflect a

broader policy shift toward creating legal migration pathways while simultaneously addressing irregular migration, labour shortages, and migrant vulnerabilities.

1.2. Bilateral agreements

1.2.1. Greece (signed in 2022)

The agreement between Greece and Bangladesh represents one of the most comprehensive examples of bilateral labour migration governance in recent years. Through the Memorandum of Understanding on Labour Migration Management, Greece introduced both regularization measures for undocumented Bangladeshi nationals already residing in the country and structured pathways for future seasonal labour migration. The agreement combines labour market needs with migration control objectives by granting temporary residence rights to 15,000 undocumented workers and establishing annual quotas for seasonal employment. Importantly, the framework aligns with EU migration legislation, particularly the Seasonal Workers Directive (2014/36/EU), while also strengthening protection against labour exploitation through lawful residence and regulated employment conditions. The agreement is significant because it addresses long-standing labour market irregularities in sectors heavily dependent on migrant labour, especially agriculture and tourism.

Sources:

[Greece Treaty;](#)

[Bilateral labour agreement between the governments of Greece and Bangladesh](#)

1.2.2. Italy (signed in 2025)

Italy's recent cooperation initiatives with Bangladesh combine migration control with labour mobility and skills development objectives. The Memorandum of Understanding on Migration and Mobility seeks to curb irregular migration and human trafficking while simultaneously facilitating legal migration opportunities. Although the agreement does not define concrete labour sectors or quotas, it establishes institutional mechanisms such as joint working groups and proposes collaboration on technical training, language preparation, and sector-specific skills development. These measures aim to improve the employability of Bangladeshi workers in Italy and other European labour markets. Italy's approach illustrates an increasingly common European model that links labour migration opportunities with cooperation on migration control and prevention of irregular migration.

Sources:

<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/64403/italy-and-bangladesh-strengthen-ties-on-migration-and-labor-cooperation#:~:text=Simplifying%20the%20visa%20process,Italy%20and%20other%20European%20markets>.

<https://www.bssnews.net/news/270265>

<https://www.dikaio.ai/fek/2022/01/14>

1.3. Multilateral agreements

1.3.1. EU (signed in 2021)

At the European Union level, the Talent Partnership initiative reflects a more strategic and skills-oriented approach to migration governance. Rather than focusing exclusively on migration control, the programme aims to align Bangladeshi workers' qualifications with labour market needs across EU Member States. The initiative combines skills recognition, vocational training, mobility schemes, and institutional cooperation. It targets sectors experiencing labour shortages, including healthcare, ICT, engineering, hospitality, agriculture, and construction, while also emphasizing safe and legal migration pathways. The programme integrates principles related to international labour standards, migrant protection, gender equality, and disability inclusion. Through instruments such as the Migration Partnership Facility (MPF), AMIF, and NDICI-Global Europe, the EU promotes a broader model of labour migration governance that links mobility with development, institutional capacity-building, and international cooperation.

Sources:

<https://www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/supporting-talent-partnership-bangladesh#:~:text=The%20Talent%20Partnership%20Project%20aims,Bangladeshi%20migrant%20worker%20%C2%A9%20ILO>

https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-resettlement/talent-partnerships_en

1.3.2. ICMPD (signed in 2025)

The cooperation framework between Bangladesh and ICMPD focuses primarily on institutional capacity-building and migration governance infrastructure. Building on previous initiatives such as Migrant Resource Centres and Integrated Border Management projects, the recently launched Migration Capacity Partnerships (MCP-II) project aims to strengthen the operational capacities of Bangladesh's Immigration Police and migration management institutions. The emphasis is placed on border management, prevention of irregular migration, combatting human trafficking, and improving institutional coordination. This reflects the growing role of international organizations in supporting migration governance through technical assistance, training, and administrative reform rather than through direct labour migration schemes.

Sources:

<https://www.icmpd.org/news/icmpd-and-bangladesh-sign-cooperation-on-border-management-and-migration>

<https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/projects/migration-capacity-partnerships-mcp-phase-ii-mcp-phase-ii>

1.4. Possible agreements at the EU level

1.4.1. Poland

In 2017, Poland and Bangladesh discussed cooperation in the maritime economy sectors, particularly through collaboration between the Port of Gdańsk and the Port of Chittagong. The discussions focused on the migration of skilled workers and sectoral cooperation in maritime industries, with a joint working group proposed to facilitate coordination and implementation.

Sources:

<https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/bangladesh-poland-agree-to-work-on-migration-and-maritime-economy-sectors#:~:text=Bangladesh%20and%20Poland%20have%20agreed,gap%20that%20exists%20in%20Poland.>

1.4.2. Romania

Romania has recently explored alternative mechanisms for issuing visas to Bangladeshi nationals and proposed initiating a bilateral agreement on migration and mobility. Discussions held in 2025 emphasized facilitating legal migration and expanding cooperation in sectors such as agriculture, automotive and rail industries, trade, and investment. The proposal also included Romanian support for Bangladesh's continuation of GSP+ trade facilities within the European Union, indicating that migration cooperation is being linked to broader economic and diplomatic relations.

Sources:

<https://www.bssnews.net/news-flash/262577>

1.4.3. Austria

Austria has also discussed a potential Memorandum of Understanding on migration and mobility with Bangladesh in 2024. The initiative appears to focus primarily on facilitating the legal recruitment of skilled workers, especially in the ICT sector, reflecting Austria's interest in addressing labour shortages through targeted skilled migration channels.

Sources:

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/bangladesh-austria-to-conclude-mou-on-migration-mobility>

1.5. Existing agreement at the non-EU level

1.5.1. UK (signed in 2024)

The United Kingdom's agreement with Bangladesh adopts a more control-oriented migration governance perspective. The agreement primarily seeks to facilitate the return of failed asylum seekers, visa overstayers, and foreign national offenders by simplifying return procedures and reducing administrative barriers. Unlike the Greek or EU frameworks, the UK agreement places less emphasis on labour mobility or migrant integration and instead prioritizes migration enforcement and return efficiency. The agreement reflects broader post-Brexit migration management priorities focused on strengthening border control and accelerating deportation procedures.

Sources:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-bangladesh-sign-agreement-to-tackle-illegal-migration>

1.5.2. UAE (signed in 2018)

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2018 regulating the recruitment and protection of Bangladeshi migrant workers. The agreement outlines the responsibilities and obligations of the governments of both countries, recruitment agencies, employers, and workers. It establishes procedures for recruitment across nineteen occupational categories and includes provisions related to employment contracts and dispute resolution mechanisms. The MoU aims to ensure safe, orderly, and responsible labour

migration, and it is supported by a joint committee composed of officials from both countries responsible for implementation and oversight.

Sources:

<https://www.recruitmentadvisor.org/law/bn/existing-government-government-agreement-protection-migrant-workers>

1.5.3. Saudi Arabia (signed in 2025)

In 2025, Saudi Arabia adopted a labour agreement governing the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers. The agreement establishes a formal regulatory framework for recruitment procedures and aims to protect the rights of both workers and employers. It also seeks to regulate contractual relations between the parties, promoting greater transparency and structure in labour migration processes.

Sources:

<https://www.spa.gov.sa/N2415156>

1.5.4. Qatar (signed in 2024)

Similarly, in 2024, Qatar introduced an agreement to safeguard the rights of Bangladeshi workers. This agreement was developed in the context of increased international scrutiny of labour conditions following the 2022 FIFA World Cup. It strengthens protections for migrant workers by requiring employers to cover travel costs and by mandating the use of standardized, pre-approved employment contracts. These measures are intended to reduce exploitation risks and improve accountability within recruitment and employment practices.

Sources:

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2498606/%7B%7B>

1.5.5. Japan (signed in 2026)

Japan signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in 2026 aimed at strengthening labour mobility and skills cooperation with Bangladesh. The agreement focuses on the recruitment of approximately 100,000 skilled and semi-skilled Bangladeshi professionals over the next five years. These workers are intended to address labour shortages in key sectors of the Japanese economy, including construction, caregiving, agriculture, and information technology. The implementation of the agreement is expected to begin in 2027 and is framed within broader efforts to support structured skill development and managed migration pathways.

Sources:

<https://japan-forward.com/japan-and-bangladesh-converge-interests-in-skill-development-programs/>

1.5.6. South Korea (signed in 2007)

South Korea established a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under its Employment Permit System (EPS) in 2007, creating a formal state-level mechanism for the recruitment of foreign workers, including Bangladeshi nationals. The system was designed to reduce reliance on private recruitment agencies and to mitigate risks of exploitation that were previously associated with intermediary-driven migration processes. Under this framework, Bangladeshi workers are recruited into sectors such as manufacturing, construction, services, and agriculture/fisheries. The EPS aims to ensure more regulated, transparent, and government-

supervised labour migration channels while responding to South Korea's demographic shifts and labour shortages.

Sources:

<https://kpmg.com/xx/en/our-insights/gms-flash-alert/2026/flash-alert-2026-080.html#:~:text=Key%20Highlights,recruitment%20and%20address%20demographic%20shifts%3A>

2. Romania

In response to increasing labour shortages and a growing reliance on third-country national workers, Romania has expanded bilateral cooperation with labour-sending countries in Asia through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on labour migration. These agreements aim to facilitate regulated labour mobility, improve recruitment processes, and strengthen the protection of migrant workers' rights.

2.1. Nepal (signed in 2023)

The Romania–Nepal Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 2023, establishes a broad framework for cooperation between the labour ministries of both countries in the areas of labour migration and social protection. Rather than setting detailed recruitment procedures, the agreement focuses on institutional cooperation, information exchange, labour market collaboration, and the promotion of migrant workers' welfare and rights.

Sources:

<https://mmuncii.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/RO-Memorandum-de-Intelegere-Nepal-6-octombrie-2023.pdf>

2.2. Sri Lanka (signed in 2026)

The Romania–Sri Lanka Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 2026, adopts a more operational approach to labour migration management. It seeks to create formal recruitment channels, promote ethical and transparent recruitment practices, strengthen skills recognition, and facilitate the employment of skilled and semi-skilled Sri Lankan workers in sectors experiencing labour shortages in Romania, including construction, manufacturing, hospitality, and services.

Sources:

https://www.cabinetoffice.gov.lk/cab/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16&Itemid=49&lang=en&dID=13706

<https://mmuncii.gov.ro/romania-si-sri-lanka-relatii-bilaterale/>

3. Greece

In recent years, Greece has increasingly relied on bilateral labour migration agreements to address persistent labour shortages, particularly in agriculture and other seasonal sectors. These agreements form part of a broader strategy to facilitate legal migration pathways, ensure an adequate supply of workers, and improve the governance of labour migration.

3.1. Egypt (signed in 2023)

A key example is the bilateral agreement between Greece and Egypt on the employment of seasonal agricultural workers, signed in 2022 and implemented from 2023. The agreement establishes a dedicated mechanism for the annual recruitment of up to 5,000 Egyptian workers for seasonal employment in the agricultural sector. Under the agreement, Egyptian authorities

are responsible for selecting and vetting workers according to criteria established by Greek authorities, while Greek employers can recruit workers from a centralized labour pool. Employment periods range from 90 days to a maximum of nine months per year, reflecting the temporary and seasonal nature of the scheme. The agreement aims to provide a regulated alternative to irregular labour migration while responding to labour shortages in Greek agriculture.

Sources:

https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/GR-2023-3_3874.html

4. Conclusions

The comparative review of labour migration cooperation agreements demonstrates a clear shift in international migration governance from ad hoc recruitment towards more structured, rights-based, and institutionally coordinated labour mobility frameworks. While countries adopt different approaches depending on their labour market needs and migration priorities, most recent agreements increasingly combine legal migration pathways with measures addressing skills development, ethical recruitment, migrant protection, and the prevention of irregular migration and human trafficking.

Bangladesh has emerged as one of the most active labour-sending countries in developing diversified migration partnerships. Its cooperation ranges from comprehensive bilateral agreements, such as those with Greece, Italy, Japan, and Gulf countries, to multilateral initiatives under the European Union Talent Partnerships and ICMPD. These frameworks illustrate a growing emphasis on linking labour mobility with vocational training, skills recognition, institutional capacity-building, and stronger governance of recruitment processes. At the same time, some agreements—particularly with the United Kingdom—remain primarily

focused on migration management and return policies, highlighting the coexistence of labour-oriented and control-oriented approaches within contemporary migration governance.

Romania's experience reflects its transformation from a country of emigration into an increasingly important destination for third-country national workers. The recently concluded Memoranda of Understanding with Nepal and Sri Lanka demonstrate Romania's intention to establish more predictable and transparent recruitment channels while strengthening cooperation with origin countries. Nevertheless, Romania's bilateral framework remains relatively limited compared to other European states, suggesting considerable potential for expanding partnerships with additional labour-sending countries, including Bangladesh. Such agreements could contribute not only to addressing labour shortages but also to improving oversight of recruitment practices and enhancing the protection of migrant workers.

Greece represents one of the most developed examples of bilateral labour migration governance in Southern Europe. Its agreements with Bangladesh and Egypt combine labour market needs with regulated admission procedures, seasonal migration schemes, and measures aimed at reducing irregular employment. By integrating recruitment mechanisms with legal safeguards and institutional cooperation, these agreements provide practical models for balancing economic demands with migrant protection.

Overall, the comparison suggests that effective labour migration agreements increasingly extend beyond regulating worker admissions. Successful frameworks integrate ethical recruitment standards, transparent governance mechanisms, skills development, social protection, and cooperation between origin and destination countries. They also contribute to reducing vulnerabilities associated with irregular migration, labour exploitation, and human trafficking by expanding safe and legal migration opportunities.

For Romania, these international experiences offer valuable lessons for future cooperation with Bangladesh and other labour-sending countries. Future agreements could benefit from incorporating clearer provisions on ethical recruitment, pre-departure orientation, skills recognition, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and institutional cooperation to ensure that labour migration contributes both to addressing workforce shortages and to protecting the rights and well-being of migrant workers throughout the migration cycle.

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PART IV

Transnational Families in Bangladesh, Greece, and Romania: A Preliminary Qualitative Research Report

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This research report is open and partial in nature, reflecting an intermediate stage of the project, as data collection is still ongoing. The analysis is based on the interviews conducted to date with 43 members of transnational families from Romania, Greece, and Bangladesh. Interviews were conducted in Bengali, Romanian, Greek, and English, depending on each participant's preference and linguistic context.

A defining methodological feature of the project is the involvement of 27 co-researchers, recruited from among the members of transnational families in the three participating countries. Their role consisted of providing feedback on the interview guides and research themes, recommending other potential participants, and, in some cases, directly assisting in the conduct of the interviews.

The primary analysis of the qualitative data was conducted with MAXQDA 26.2, using the AI Assist function to analyse the interviews, according to a coding system created by the authors of the report. The current report is a rewritten version of the MAXQDA AI Assist output. The data are presented in a structured manner, organized by country, a methodological choice

intended to facilitate readers' navigation of the report: readers interested in a particular country can thus directly access the corresponding section, without having to go through the entire document.

From an ethical standpoint, data collection was approved by Babeş-Bolyai University, and participant confidentiality was ensured through the complete anonymization of the data, with real names replaced by pseudonyms.

1. Romania

Iulia Elena-Hossu

1.1. Romanian Immigration Bureaucracy: Legislative Frameworks, Structural Inefficiencies, and Legal Access

The bureaucratic processes for migrants in Romania, particularly concerning residence and work permits, family reunification, and citizenship, are fraught with significant challenges. Key issues include extensive delays, unclear and frequently changing rules, language barriers, and high fees. Migrants often face difficulties in obtaining necessary documents, such as temporary residence cards (TRC) and work permits, with processes sometimes taking several months. The lack of a Romanian embassy in Bangladesh further complicates matters, requiring costly and time-consuming travel to India for visa applications. Family reunification is particularly laborious, demanding substantial bank balances and specific housing requirements, often leading to prolonged separation or financial strain. Exploitative practices by recruiters and employers, including contract discrepancies and non-transparent fees, exacerbate these bureaucratic hurdles, highlighting a systemic need for clearer, more accessible, and migrant-friendly policies.

Migrants in Romania face significant bureaucratic hurdles across various aspects of their lives, from obtaining necessary permits to family reunification and navigating employment regulations. These challenges are characterized by delays, unclear rules, language barriers, and substantial financial burdens, often exacerbated by exploitative practices by intermediaries and employers.

1.1.1. Residence and Work Permits

The process of obtaining and renewing residence and work permits in Romania is consistently described as lengthy and complex. Several interviewees highlight delays in receiving their Temporary Residence Card (TRC), with some waiting six months or more. The process for work permits can also take several months, depending on luck. These delays can leave individuals in precarious situations, unable to open bank accounts or work legally. For instance, one interviewee mentioned being jobless for two months while waiting for their work permit, despite the company's assistance.

The need for a TRC card is a recurring theme, with its absence preventing access to essential services like banking.

”This TRC card is handled by the company. That means it has all the power. All power is lies to the company boss. If he wants to fire me, he can fire me after three months. [...] Where will I go? Where will I go? [...] If the law changes, that will be very good for the foreign workers.” (Inesh, man, 30 years)

Changing jobs is particularly difficult due to the reliance on the current employer for a No Objection Certificate (NOC). Without this, migrants are effectively tied to their current company, even if working conditions are unfavorable. If a company cancels a work contract,

individuals have only three months to find a new job and secure a new work permit, or face return or deportation. This system grants significant power to employers, making foreign workers vulnerable to exploitation.

“Because from the first day, everyone who get the TRC card for my company, my boss took their card.” (Sultana, female, 33 years)

The process of renewing TRC cards also requires a bank statement, which is challenging for those living paycheck to paycheck.

1.1.2. Family Reunification

Family reunification is one of the most arduous bureaucratic processes for migrants in Romania. The primary obstacle is the absence of a Romanian embassy in Bangladesh, forcing applicants to travel to India for visa applications. This involves obtaining an Indian visa first, which itself can be costly and difficult, sometimes involving brokers charging exorbitant fees for appointments. The entire process can take seven to eight months and incur significant travel and accommodation expenses. One interviewee recounted a grueling process of multiple trips between Bangladesh, India, and Romania, costing a lot of money.

“First of all, okay, I submit the all of papers. [...] I have to go back Delhi, that's me. India. Bangladesh has no embassy. [...] When I submit my wallpapers, my visa valid is closed near the hand. But Romanian embassy minimum 20, 30 lot of days. [...] Then we back to Bangladesh. And next after mail mailing the Romanian embassy. [...] Then next come back India. Then take passport. Next come back Bangladesh. [...] Go Bangladesh India. Bangladesh. India, Bangladesh, Romania. (Ayan, man, 37 years)

“I took the loan from the bank and we spend [...] to come in Romania, both of us, me and my husband. [...] So it's in €, it's 18,000. €18,000 we spent total. So it's a lot of money. Lots of money.” (Sultana, female, 33 years)

Once in Romania, the requirements for family reunification are stringent and financially demanding. Applicants must demonstrate a substantial bank balance, often cited as 50,000 lei per person, and prove continuous transactions. Housing requirements are also strict, demanding a certain square footage per person, which often necessitates renting larger, more expensive homes. One woman described the immense difficulty of meeting these financial and housing criteria, especially while supporting a family on a single income. The process is so complex that even immigration officers sometimes lack clear information on the required documents for specific nationalities.

“And we need to show our bank account for that person who will become in Romania. And it will be for one year. And it's almost 50,000 lei. It's a big amount for us. It's a very hard for us when we want to bring our family member in Romania. Yeah. I get 3,000 lei per month. So I send her 1,000 for my son and 1,000 my needs. And if I rent a home, so I need to spend 2,000 lei in Romania per month.” (Sita, single mother, 38 years)

Furthermore, the legal status of reunited family members, particularly spouses, is problematic. In Romania, a spouse brought through family reunification must apply separately for a work permit, effectively becoming an employee of another company rather than having an automatic right to work as a dependent. This contrasts with other European countries where spouses can often work more easily. This system makes it challenging for families to maintain financial stability with only one income.

1.1.3. Citizenship and Social Rights

Children born in Romania to non-citizen parents do not automatically receive Romanian citizenship; they are granted the citizenship of their parents. This can lead to administrative complications, such as discrepancies in names on birth certificates issued by Romanian authorities versus those from the parents' home country, causing delays in obtaining necessary documents like TRC cards for children.

Access to social support and healthcare is also impacted by bureaucratic hurdles. Obtaining a TRC card is crucial for accessing medical services, and delays can leave individuals, including children, without necessary care.

“And finally we complete our all papers and submit it online. We got date next the 13th of July. And in this situation we feel lot of problem. [...] When I seek, I cannot go anywhere to the treatment doctor. Because we did not have TRC card.” (Manasi, female, 31 years)

While some employers provide health insurance, the process of accessing medical appointments can be difficult, often requiring navigation through family doctors and company approvals. The lack of readily available information and support from NGOs for migrants is a significant gap.

1.1.4. Language Barriers and Unclear Rules

Language barriers significantly impede migrants' ability to navigate the bureaucratic system and daily life. The absence of a shared language of communication creates significant linguistic barriers. Some public officials, service providers and migrants lack fluency in English, forcing migrants to depend on automated or external translation services. This lack of clear communication contributes to confusion regarding rules and procedures, which are often

perceived as unclear or subject to change. The absence of comprehensive, easily accessible information in multiple languages about legal processes, social services, and cultural norms is a recurring complaint.

“[B]ut in some cases it wasn't clear because how to get the residence permit here. No one did. I didn't get any kind of information about that. And what I need to get that permit. And what is the procedure after finishing the education still now I don't know what I have to do. [...] I don't rely on other people because there are a lot of misconception or misinformation. That's why I just rely on the Google. I just go to the websites but some of the information are not very clear. That's why makes some confusion.” (Fadi, man, 23 years)

1.1.5. Exploitation by Recruiters and Employers

Exploitative practices are prevalent, particularly in the recruitment and employment sectors. Migrants often pay substantial fees to agencies and lawyers in their home countries and in Romania to secure work permits. These fees can range from thousands of euros, placing a heavy financial burden on individuals before they even start working. Some companies are accused of bringing in workers under false pretenses, promising one type of job (e.g., cleaning or construction) but then forcing them into different, often less desirable, roles like food delivery. There are also instances where companies act as brokers, by mediating workers to other businesses and deducting a portion of their salary as a fee.

Contractual discrepancies are common, with actual working hours often exceeding those stipulated in official documents. Employers may also delay salary payments, fail to provide promised benefits like food cards or adequate accommodation, and exert control over workers by withholding essential documents like TRC cards.

“[O]ur manager came after 15 days and they doesn't know what we are eat that time. And they give us single bed for both of us. So we slept without blanket. We slept two persons with one pillow.” (Sultana, female, 33 years)

This creates a climate of fear, as workers are reluctant to complain due to the risk of losing their jobs and, consequently, their legal status in Romania. The power imbalance is significant, with employers often holding the TRC cards, effectively controlling the workers' ability to change jobs or leave the country.

1.2. Between Isolation and Integration: Formal and Informal Support Networks, Dependence, and Remittances Among Migrants in Romania

Bangladeshi migrants in Romania rely on a diverse range of support networks, including family abroad, Bangladeshi communities, Romanian friends and colleagues, employers, and NGOs. Emotional and financial support from family in Bangladesh is a consistent theme, often involving remittances and assistance with complex migration processes. However, migrants frequently face challenges such as isolation, exploitation by employers, and bureaucratic hurdles, particularly concerning family reunification and access to social services. Reciprocity within family structures is evident, with migrants often becoming primary financial providers, while dependence on employers for legal status can lead to precarious working conditions. The absence of a Romanian embassy in Bangladesh significantly complicates visa procedures, forcing reliance on intermediaries and incurring substantial costs.

Bangladeshi migrants in Romania navigate a complex landscape of support systems, ranging from familial ties to formal and informal networks within Romania. The nature of this support varies, encompassing emotional, material, practical, and informational assistance, often

intertwined with challenges of isolation, reciprocity, dependence, and the critical role of remittances.

1.2.1. Family Support from Abroad and Remittances

Emotional and financial support from family members remaining in Bangladesh is a recurring and vital theme. Many migrants maintain daily contact with their families through video calls and messaging apps, sharing updates and offering emotional reassurance, even if they sometimes conceal difficulties to avoid worrying their loved ones.

“So I speak, but I speak once a week, every single week I speak all of my sister, all of my nephew, niece, all of my brother-in-law, all of my brother, all of my sister in law's mother, everybody. Like on my weekend I just call.” (Hema, female, 34 years)

This emotional connection is particularly strong for those with children left behind, leading to significant suffering and longing.

"But we miss them all the time. For my mother, it's very difficult because for the last two years my kids lived with her. She took care of them all the time, so she cries every time she thinks about her grandchildren." (Ayan, man, 37 years)

Financially, migrants often become primary providers for their families in Bangladesh. Remittances are regularly sent to cover living expenses, support siblings' education, and assist with family needs.

“Because I got a job and I’ve got two brothers, a sister, and I’ve got to make ends meet. That’s when I started sending money home. And, you know, I pay the rent, I pay for my own

stuff, and whatever's left, I send to my mum, so she can get by a bit better." (Ila, woman, 29 years)

For some, this financial responsibility is a continuation of existing family roles, while for others, migration elevates their status and decision-making power within the family. The financial burden of migration itself, including tuition fees, flight tickets, and visa processing, is frequently shouldered by families in Bangladesh, sometimes requiring loans or the sale of assets.

"And we pay high taxes and health insurance, a lot of [fees]. So we were just [thinking], 'Oh my God, what do I do right now?' Then we called my father in Bangladesh, 'Please, I need your help.' So they helped us." (Manasi, female, 31 years)

1.2.2. Bangladeshi Networks in Romania

Within Romania, Bangladeshi migrants form informal networks that provide crucial informational and practical support. These networks often emerge from shared experiences, such as navigating bureaucratic processes or seeking employment. Migrants connect through social media groups, personal acquaintances, and even chance encounters, offering advice on everything from job opportunities to navigating daily life. Some individuals, actively volunteer to teach Bangladeshi children and organize activities, creating a sense of community and belonging.

"At that time, I met a lot of Bangladeshi women, men, and kids because I'm currently working as a volunteer. As I told you, I like to work, so I am volunteering as a teacher at an NGO. I teach immigrant kids from Bangladesh and do brain gym and cognitive activities with them. Every week, once a week, they come here, and we enjoy ourselves a lot and spend time together." (Sultana, female, 33 years)

However, the size and cohesion of these communities vary by city. In Cluj, for instance, the Bangladeshi community is relatively small. This makes it harder to find extensive support networks than in larger cities like Bucharest, the capital. Despite this, there is a general sentiment that migrants help each other, particularly with information and practical advice.

1.2.3. Support from Romanian Friends, Colleagues, and Employers

Relationships with Romanian individuals and institutions offer another layer of support, though experiences can be mixed. Many migrants report positive interactions with Romanian people, describing them as friendly, kind, and helpful, especially the younger generation. Instances of unexpected kindness, such as receiving food from strangers or assistance from medical staff, are highlighted.

"So we were walking down the street, and someone came up to us: *'Hello! Hello! Please take this bread.'* We were very surprised: *'Why?' 'If you don't mind, please take it, because there is a lot of food.'* We were so surprised—it was unexpected! *'Please, please.'* Okay, so we took a lot of bread and a lot of food. We appreciated it, and we were truly amazed. It was an unexpected moment, but at that time, we really needed it. We really needed it." (Ayan, man, 37 years)

Employers play a significant, albeit sometimes problematic, role in providing support. Some employers are described as understanding and helpful, assisting with legal procedures, offering flexible work arrangements, or even providing financial aid. However, dependence on employers for work permits and residence cards can create vulnerabilities, leading to exploitation, unfair working conditions, and difficulties in changing jobs. This dependence is exacerbated by the fact that employers often control the renewal of essential documents, giving them considerable power over migrant workers.

1.2.4. NGOs and Religious Groups

Formal support from NGOs and religious groups is also present, though its accessibility and effectiveness can vary. Some migrants have found assistance from organizations like IOM (International Organization for Migration) or NGOs, particularly with legal advice, document preparation, and information dissemination. These organizations can be crucial for navigating complex bureaucratic processes, especially for family reunification.

Religious institutions, such as churches, also offer support, including free Romanian language classes and community activities.

"After I came here, I registered for a language course. [...] I went there for the language course and met some friends who were extremely helpful. They gave me information about everything—like hospitals, what documents I needed to go to the hospital, and what I needed for doctor's appointments. They helped me a lot. Later, when I applied for my husband's visa and got stuck with the immigration process regarding required documents and procedures [...] They helped me a lot." (Amara, woman, 28 years)

However, some migrants note a perceived lack of comprehensive social support specifically tailored for migrants in Romania, especially compared to other European countries.

1.2.5. Isolation and Challenges

Despite existing support networks, isolation remains a significant challenge for many migrants. The absence of family, particularly children, leads to emotional distress and loneliness. Language barriers further exacerbate isolation, making it difficult to communicate with locals and access services.

The complex and often opaque bureaucratic processes for obtaining and renewing documents, especially for family reunification, are a major source of stress and financial strain. The absence of a Romanian embassy in Bangladesh forces migrants to travel to India for visa applications, incurring additional costs and logistical difficulties.

“So you know, there was an issue with the India and Bangladesh for the political issue. So that time Indian visa was so much tough to get. And it's very hard to go Bangladesh to India because we need the visa to go India. So because any Romanian embassy not in Bangladesh, so we have the Dutch embassy, Switzerland, everything. But Romanian is still now not. So we need to go to New Delhi.” (Sultana, woman, 33 years)

This situation is often exploited by agents and brokers, who charge exorbitant fees for appointments and services.

Dependence on employers for legal status can lead to precarious working conditions, including longer hours than contracted, delayed payments, and a lack of freedom to change jobs. Some migrants report experiencing unfair treatment, discrimination, and even modern slavery-like conditions, particularly for those in low-skilled jobs. The lack of clear, accessible information about rights and procedures further disempowers migrants.

Reciprocity within families is evident, as migrants, once established, often support their families back home, sometimes even their extended relatives.

“I support financially one of my sister's family and one of my brother's family. It's like I help all the expenses of their children education. So I bear a lot of money. It's like they are like my children. I just give them a good education what I can bear in Romania.” (Hema, woman, 34 years)

However, this can also create a new form of dependence, where the migrant's income becomes crucial for the family's well-being, adding pressure and responsibility.

1.3. Children, Family Dynamics, and Migration in Romania: Transnational Parenting, Educational Access, and Social Adaptation

For many Bangladeshi migrants in Romania, the parental experience is defined by a complex interplay between educational aspirations for their children, the structural and emotional strains of transnational parenting, and the administrative hurdles of family reunification. Interviews highlighted the difficulties faced by children left behind in Bangladesh, the adaptation process for those born or raised in Romania, and issues related to school access, language barriers, and separation from relatives. The collected material also delves into care arrangements and future family aspirations, highlighting the significant financial and emotional burdens migrants endure to secure a better future for their children. Despite numerous obstacles, the desire for improved educational opportunities and a safer environment for their offspring remains a primary driver for these families.

1.3.1. Children and Migration in Romania

This material illustrates the multifaceted experiences of Bangladeshi migrants and their children in Romania, drawing insights from various personal narratives. The analysis focuses on education as a primary motive for migration, the challenges of transnational parenting, the complexities of reunification, and the adaptation of children born or raised in Romania. It also explores issues related to school access, language barriers, separation from relatives, care arrangements, and future family aspirations.

1.3.2. Education as a Motive for Migration

Education emerges as a significant driver for Bangladeshi migrants choosing Romania. Several interviewees explicitly state that the desire for better educational opportunities for their children was a key factor in their decision to migrate. One father highlights that the developed education system in Europe, particularly Romania, was a primary reason for him and his wife to make the move.

"I am always thinking about my future and my children's future. I already had two boys, and I keep thinking, *'What can I do?'* That's why most Bangladeshi people have a dream to live in Europe—because you can develop a positive mindset here, and because European laws, opportunities, and overall lifestyle are very good." (Ayan, man, 37 years)

Similarly, another family, with 2 children, decided to migrate because they believed the European education system offered a better future for their children compared to Bangladesh.

"I came here for my children—for their education and their lifestyle. I do my job, earn money, and cover the expenses for my children. As a parent, I feel good when I see my children growing up, communicating very well, getting a good education, and finding a job." (Manasi, woman, 31 years)

Another mother also expresses a strong desire for her son to receive a good education in Europe, viewing it as a path to a better life. This emphasis on education underscores a long-term vision for their children's future, even at the cost of immediate family separation.

1.3.3. Children Left in Bangladesh and Transnational Parenting

The decision to leave children behind in Bangladesh is a recurring and emotionally charged theme. Ayan and Sultana, parents of two at that time, initially faced an employer's refusal to allow their children to accompany them, leading to a painful separation. Their two young sons, aged three and six, were left in the care of a grandmother for a year. This period was marked by immense suffering for the parents, who constantly missed their children. They describe the decision as 'horrible,' driven solely by the hope of providing a better future and environment for their children. Sultana recounts the emotional toll of leaving her children, especially her elder son with autism, who she had previously cared for intensively.

“And it was a horrible decision for us because you know, we love very much them. [...] So it was a hard decision for us. So we have to live without our kids. And we are doing this only for my kids. They will get good education, they will get good environment. We are just doing for this, but we are coming without them. So it was just horrible. (Sultana, woman, 33 years)

Other migrants also experience transnational parenting. Sita's 14-year-old son remains in Bangladesh under the care of her sister. She communicates with him daily via WhatsApp and IMO messenger, constantly reassuring him about the prospect of bringing him to Europe for a better life and education. Another woman lived alone with her two children for almost two years after her husband migrated to Romania, describing it as a 'very hard and very lonely feeling'. During this time, her children attended school and various activities, but the emotional void of their father's absence was palpable.

“[I]t was very hard and very lonely feeling. But my children, they went to school, coaching and other activities, classes. So all the day I just doing these things for the children. And it's really so boring life there, because going children every morning we wake up cooking our

lunch, breakfast and dinner. And I go to them school and pick him again go there others activity, classes.” (Manasi, woman, 31 years)

Maintaining emotional connections across borders is crucial. Ayan's children frequently communicate with their grandmother in Bangladesh, who previously cared for them. Sultana's children also maintain daily contact with their grandmother, who tells them stories and interacts with them online. These digital connections, while helpful, cannot fully replace physical presence, leading to feelings of loneliness and longing among the children.

1.4. Reunification: Challenges and Emotional Impact

The process of family reunification in Romania is fraught with bureaucratic, financial, and emotional challenges. Ayan and Sultana's journey to bring their children to Romania took more than a year and involved significant financial strain and complex procedures. They had to travel multiple times to India due to the absence of a Romanian embassy in Bangladesh, incurring substantial costs. Sultana highlights the immense financial burden, noting that they spent approximately 18,000 euros (21 million Bangladeshi Taka) to facilitate their migration and reunification.

The requirements for reunification are particularly stringent. Migrants need to demonstrate substantial bank balances and secure adequate housing, which is often difficult and expensive. Sultana recounts how the local immigration office in small locality made an exception for her due to her pregnancy and mental distress over her children's absence, accepting her application despite her living in a single room, which typically would not meet the housing requirements. This highlights the rigidity of the system and the occasional, yet rare, instances of compassionate flexibility.

The emotional impact of reunification, when it finally occurs, is profound. The mother describes the reunion with her children after 14 months as a moment of overwhelming joy and shyness, particularly for her elder son. The children's excitement upon seeing snow for the first time and meeting their new baby sister further underscores the novelty and emotional intensity of their new life in Romania.

"So after 14 months, my kids saw me and they felt very shy about hugging me. They were thinking, *'Can I hug my mom or not?'* Then they saw their new baby sister—they had been waiting for her for so long. Every day before that, they used to call and say to me, *'Mama, Mama, please can you bring us a baby sister?'*" (Sultana, female, 33 years)

Manasi, another migrant mother, also emphasizes the importance of family togetherness, stating that despite the difficulties, being reunited with her husband and children was paramount.

1.4.1. Children Born or Raised in Romania

Children born in Romania to Bangladeshi migrant parents do not automatically acquire Romanian citizenship. Ayan and Sultana third child, a daughter, was born in Romania but holds Bangladeshi citizenship. This policy contrasts with some other European countries where birthright citizenship is granted.

Raising children in Romania presents unique challenges. Amara, a 28 migrant mother, who gave birth to her second daughter in Romania, describes the experience as traumatic due to being alone and pregnant. She faced language barriers and a lack of family support during her C-section recovery. The process of obtaining a birth certificate and passport for her Romanian-born daughter was complicated by discrepancies in naming conventions between Romania and Bangladesh, taking almost two years to resolve.

1.4.2. School Access, Language, and Adaptation

Access to education for migrant children in Romania can be challenging. For example, Sultana's and Ayan's children are set to start school in September, and Sultana actively sought information from school teachers and secretariats. Manasi expresses her intention to enroll her children in public primary school once their temporary resident cards (TRC) are secured. However, the cost of private kindergartens is a significant barrier for many families, as highlighted by migrants, whose children did not attend kindergarten due to financial constraints.

Language barriers pose a considerable obstacle for children's adaptation. Manasi's children struggle to communicate with others because they do not speak English or Romanian. Sultana's children, despite their exposure to various languages through TV shows, initially resisted learning Romanian, expecting to learn it at school. This underscores the need for structured language support for migrant children.

Children's adaptation to Romanian society varies. Ayan notes that his children enjoy playing with Romanian children in parks. Manasi's children, despite the initial difficulties, have expressed a preference for staying in Romania, enjoying parks and making friends, and refusing to return to Bangladesh. However, there are children, who lived in Bangladesh for longer, who express a desire to return to Bangladesh due to missing friends and family members. This highlights the varying degrees of attachment and adaptation among children depending on their age and prior experiences.

1.4.3. Separation from Relatives and Care Arrangements

The separation from extended family members, particularly grandparents, is a significant emotional aspect of migration. Ayan's mother, who cared for his children for more than a year,

deeply misses her grandchildren, especially the youngest whom she has never met, and expresses a strong desire to see her granddaughter who was born in Romania. But the logistical and financial difficulties of older relatives visiting Romania, particularly the complex visa process through India, make such visits challenging.

Care arrangements for children left behind often involve grandmothers or other female relatives. Ayan's mother took care of his two sons and played a crucial role in caring for his children while Ayan and Sultana were in Romania. Sita's son is cared for by her sister. These arrangements, while providing necessary care, do not alleviate the emotional burden on parents or the longing experienced by children.

1.4.4. Future Family Aspirations

Migrants hold diverse aspirations for their families' future in Romania and beyond. Ayan's primary goal is for his children to receive a good education and have better opportunities, emphasizing their development as good and humane individuals.

"As I told you, we relocated here only for the kids—so they could be admitted to school, get a good education, and have better opportunities for a bright future. That's enough. We don't need more and more money. We don't need extra things. We just need my kids to study here and get a good education." (Ayan, man, 37 years)

His wife, despite her challenging experiences, dreams of her children thriving in Romania and hopes to support 30-40 poor individuals in Bangladesh, viewing her children's success as her ultimate future. Manasi's vision for the future centers on her children's education, lifestyle, and communication skills, believing that their success will bring her happiness.

However, the challenges of raising a family in Romania lead some to question its suitability as a long-term family destination. Hema, who is unmarried, explicitly states that Romania is 'for single, not for family,' citing the difficulties of balancing work and family life, particularly for couples with differing work schedules. She plans to return to Bangladesh after securing her long-term resident permit, desiring to start a family in her home country. Similarly, Tarit, a 28-year-old man, while recommending Romania for job opportunities, expresses a willingness to return to Bangladesh if his satisfaction levels are not met, rather than moving to another country.

"If I like it better here, I will stay. But for me, it's not like I must stay here. If I'm satisfied, I will stay longer, otherwise I will return to Bangladesh. But I don't want to go to another country." (Tarit, man, 28 years)

1.5. Navigating Alterity and Social Integration: Cultural and Socio-Religious Differences Among Migrants in Romania

Cultural differences between Bangladesh and Romania manifest as a profound socio-cultural divide, where disparities in language, religious practice, culinary traditions, and climate directly shape how migrants negotiate daily social interactions and long-term integration. Key themes include challenges in cultural adaptation, workplace dynamics, and the impact of these differences on daily life and future plans. Migrants highlight the significant contrasts in food, climate, and social norms compared to Bangladesh, alongside issues related to language barriers and bureaucratic hurdles. Despite these challenges, many migrants express a desire for a better future in Europe, often driven by aspirations for their children's education and improved living conditions. The analysis draws on personal narratives, revealing both positive experiences of acceptance and negative encounters with discrimination and exploitation.

1.5.1. Cultural and Social Differences

Migrants frequently encounter stark cultural differences, particularly concerning social interactions and family structures. The practice of extended family living together is deeply ingrained in Bangladeshi culture, where multiple generations and extended relatives often live together. This contrasts sharply with the more individualistic family structures often observed in Romania, leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation for those who migrate without their immediate families. The absence of a strong Bangladeshi community in some Romanian cities further exacerbates this isolation, making it difficult to find familiar social support networks. However, some migrants manage to build new social circles, often relying on fellow Bangladeshi migrants or friendly Romanian colleagues.

"But I was lucky because I had a few friends. I worked on a lorry when I first arrived. You need friends—that's what I did straight away. I cooked food and gave it to them; I had to make myself known. Connections—if you've got them, you're useful." (Ila, female, 28 years)

Religious practices also present differences. While both cultures value religious observance, the public expression and availability of religious facilities differ. For instance, Muslim migrants note the presence of mosques in larger cities like Bucharest, facilitating their prayer routines. However, the general societal norms regarding alcohol consumption are a notable contrast, with alcohol being illegal in public spaces in Bangladesh but widely accepted in Romania.

1.5.2. Food and Dietary Adaptation

Food is a significant area of difference and a frequent source of longing for Bangladeshi migrants. The staple diet in Bangladesh heavily features fish and rice, often prepared with a rich

array of spices. In Romania, the availability of these specific ingredients, especially fresh fish and a wide variety of vegetables, is limited or expensive. This necessitates a considerable adaptation in dietary habits, with many resorting to cooking at home to replicate familiar flavours or relying on the few available halal shops. The lack of authentic Bangladeshi cuisine is a common complaint, with some noting that even Indian/Bangladeshi restaurants in Romania adapt their spices to suit local tastes.

1.5.3. Climate and Environmental Adjustment

The climate in Romania presents a considerable change for migrants from Bangladesh, a country characterized by hot, sunny weather and 4 seasons. The cold winters and significant snowfall in Romania are often a novel experience, initially exciting but sometimes leading to feelings of depression due to prolonged darkness and lack of sunlight. Some migrants report health issues like dizziness, attributed to the lack of sunlight, and are advised to take vitamin supplements. Despite the challenges, some appreciate the beauty of the snow and the natural environment of Romania.

1.5.4. Language Barriers and Communication

Language is a fundamental barrier for many Bangladeshi migrants in Romania. While some Romanians, particularly the younger generation, speak English, many do not, especially in official settings or with older individuals. This creates difficulties in daily interactions, accessing services, and navigating bureaucratic processes. Migrants often rely on Google Translate, colleagues, or even their children to communicate. The lack of Romanian language proficiency also limits job opportunities, pushing many into unskilled labor roles. Some initiatives, like free Romanian language classes offered by churches, are appreciated but not always widely known or accessible.

1.5.5. Workplace Encounters and Adaptation

Workplace experiences are varied, ranging from supportive environments to instances of exploitation and discrimination. Some migrants report positive relationships with Romanian colleagues and employers, describing them as friendly and helpful. However, others face significant challenges, including discrepancies between contracted and actual working hours, delayed salary payments, and unfair treatment. Instances of verbal abuse and even physical assault by colleagues have been reported, with management sometimes failing to intervene effectively. The vulnerability of migrant workers is highlighted by cases where employers confiscate passports or exploit their lack of knowledge about labor laws.

“And we need to go outside for shopping because we need to eat. And they take our passport and they say you cannot go outside. That was our memorable days when we came.” (Sultana, woman, 33 years)

The difficulty in changing jobs due to restrictive work permit regulations further traps workers in unfavourable conditions.

1.5.6. Stereotyping, Discrimination, and Acceptance

Experiences with stereotyping and discrimination are present but not universal. Some migrants report feeling generally accepted and even cherished, particularly when accompanied by children. However, others encounter subtle forms of prejudice, such as landlords refusing to rent to Asian people.

“They never give us the home. When they know is Asian or it's a foreigner, they say oh no, we don't like the foreigners. So it's very hard for us because we need a place for sleep, we

need a place for stay. So it is the very harder procedure for the house rent.” (Sultana, female, 33 years)

Instances of overt racism, though rare, have been reported in workplaces, involving derogatory comments about religion. The perception of Romanians varies, with some finding them generally friendly and kind, while others note a difference in mindset between younger and older generations.

1.5.7. Comparisons with Home and Future Aspirations

Migrants often compare their lives in Romania with their experiences in Bangladesh, particularly regarding safety, economic opportunities, and quality of life. Romania is frequently praised for its safety, cleanliness, and peaceful environment, contrasting with concerns about pollution and security in Bangladesh. The aspiration for better education and future prospects for their children is a primary driver for migration, even amidst personal hardships. However, the high cost of living, especially in cities like Cluj and Bucharest, and the challenges of family reunification, often temper these aspirations. Many migrants express a desire to remain in Europe, not necessarily Romania, if better opportunities arise, while others, particularly those with strong family ties, envision returning to Bangladesh once their financial goals are met. The dream of establishing a business in Europe is also a recurring theme, seen as a path to greater financial stability and family well-being.

"I went to Qatar, and I was earning well there, but not enough compared to Europe or Romania. That's why I decided to come to Romania. I managed to get a work permit and came here. I am new, but I think the earnings and opportunities here are pretty good. To answer your exact question about where I see myself in three to five years: to be honest, I

want to get PR—permanent residence—here in Romania. After that, I want to start a business here and, if I get the opportunity, bring my family to Romania." (Inesh, man, 30 years)

1.5.8. Adaptation and Support Systems

Adaptation to Romanian life involves navigating new bureaucratic systems, often described as complex and time-consuming. The lack of a Romanian embassy in Bangladesh forces migrants to undertake costly and arduous journeys to India for visa processing, adding to the financial and emotional burden. Support from NGOs and legal aid organizations is crucial, particularly for family reunification and addressing workplace exploitation. However, awareness of these resources is not always widespread. The emotional toll of separation from family, especially children, is a profound challenge, often mitigated by frequent video calls and the hope of eventual reunification.

"And the most important issue is my youngest child. My mother misses the baby so much—she keeps asking when she will hold him and touch him. I will try my best when I can, but here we need a lot of money because there are four of us. Traveling to Bangladesh costs a lot of euros. My mother is waiting for me [...]" (Ayan, man, 37 years)

1.6. Preliminary Findings and Outlook

The bureaucratic landscape for migrants in Romania is complex and challenging, marked by delays, unclear regulations, language barriers, and financial strain. While some individuals find support through personal networks or sympathetic employers, systemic issues persist, particularly in family reunification and employment practices. The lack of accessible information and robust support mechanisms exacerbates these problems, highlighting a critical need for policy reforms that prioritize clarity, transparency, and the protection of migrant rights.

While Bangladeshi migrants in Romania benefit from various forms of support, they also face significant challenges that highlight the need for more accessible information, streamlined bureaucratic processes, and stronger protections against exploitation. The emotional and financial ties to their families in Bangladesh remain a powerful driving force, shaping their experiences and resilience in a new country.

The experiences of Bangladeshi migrants in Romania reveal a complex interplay of hope, sacrifice, and resilience. Education serves as a powerful motivator for migration, driving parents to endure prolonged separation and significant financial burdens. The process of family reunification is often arduous, marked by bureaucratic hurdles and substantial costs. While children born in Romania do not gain automatic citizenship, their adaptation is a key concern for parents, who navigate challenges related to school access, language acquisition, and social integration. The emotional toll of transnational parenting and separation from extended family is profound, yet digital communication helps maintain vital connections. Ultimately, migrants' future aspirations are deeply intertwined with their children's well-being and educational success, even as they grapple with the realities of a demanding work environment and the high cost of living in Romania. The narratives underscore the critical need for streamlined immigration processes, accessible support systems, and culturally sensitive services to better integrate migrant families into Romanian society.

The experiences of Bangladeshi migrants in Romania reveal a complex interplay of cultural, social, and environmental differences, significantly impacting their adaptation, workplace encounters, and overall well-being. These differences span various aspects, including food, climate, language, and social norms, often leading to challenges in integration and a re-evaluation of their future aspirations.

2. Bangladesh

Iulia Elena-Hossu and Ovidiu Oltean

2.1. Bangladesh Migration Bureaucracy: Legislative Frameworks, Structural Inefficiencies, and Legal Access

This part examines the bureaucratic and legislative challenges faced by migrants and their families, focusing on family reunification, citizenship, public information, embassy access, and the role of intermediaries. It highlights significant obstacles such as delays, high costs, and uncertainty in obtaining legal status and family visas. Strategies employed to navigate these complex systems often involve reliance on informal networks, brokers, and personal connections, sometimes leading to exploitation. The analysis reveals a critical need for clearer policies, better information dissemination, and more accessible formal support systems to protect vulnerable migrants and their families. The impact of these bureaucratic hurdles extends to social and economic rights, affecting integration and overall well-being.

2.1.1. Obstacles and Delays in Formal Processes

Migrants frequently encounter substantial delays and difficulties in formal processes such as obtaining visas, work permits, and citizenship. For instance, one individual's son faced a year-long wait for a student visa to Greece, with the process being described as lengthy and uncertain.

“Yes, on a student visa. Then I said, <Alright, go ahead.> After submitting the documents at Global (a company handling visa applications) nearby, the visa wasn’t coming through. It took a long time, and the visa still hadn’t been granted.” (Imran, father of a Greek expatriate)

Another case highlights a husband's two-year journey to Europe, involving multiple countries and significant suffering, before finally obtaining a card in Portugal. The process of acquiring citizenship in host countries is also fraught with delays; in Portugal, the application period for non-CPLP nationals has been extended from 5 to 10 years, making integration more challenging. This extension creates anxiety and concern among migrants who had hoped for quicker integration and legal stabilization and settlement.

Family reunification is another area severely affected by restrictive policies. Policies typically only permit minor children to join their parents, excluding adult family members, which is a major concern for many migrants. This restriction forces families to remain separated for extended periods, leading to emotional distress and psychological burdens. In Greece, family visas are currently not being issued, forcing individuals to consider alternative, often illegal, routes or to hide family members if they manage to bring them over.

“In Greece, family visas aren’t being issued at the moment. Even those who’ve been here for many years can’t get one. [...] It is possible in Portugal, Italy, Germany, France. Then also in Austria. It’s currently closed in Greece. There’s no prospect of it happening for the time being. If anyone brings them, they have to be hidden. Otherwise, they have to get a visa for Romania or Serbia or Portugal.” (Mizan, young migrant)

2.1.2. Costs and Financial Burdens

The financial cost associated with migration and legal processes is a recurring theme. Migrants often incur substantial debts to cover travel and visa expenses, making them vulnerable to exploitation. One family spent between 20 and 25 lakh rupees (100,000 Indian rupees) to send the husband to Italy, a sum that was initially borrowed.

Another individual paid 23-24 lakh rupees for a work visa to Portugal, necessitating the sale of family land and borrowing from relatives. These high costs mean that a significant portion of remittances is often dedicated to debt repayment, rather than improving living conditions or investing in the future.

Beyond initial migration costs, ongoing expenses for legal documentation, such as extending permits or paying fines, add to the financial strain. One migrant in Greece had to pay 6,000 euros to extend a document, highlighting the continuous financial demands of maintaining legal status. The high cost of living in host countries, particularly for housing, further exacerbates financial difficulties, as low wages often leave little for savings or family support.

“Last month, I had to extend a document here for six months. With this document, the police won’t cause any trouble when I am travelling. I paid the fee for that document. It was about 6000 euros.” (Mizan, young migrant)

2.1.3. Uncertainty and Lack of Public Information

Lack of clear and reliable information contributes significantly to the uncertainty faced by migrants. The embassy, for instance, often lacks crucial details about migrants' working conditions, insurance, and potential hazards, which can have tragic. Migrants themselves often have limited understanding of immigration systems, legal pathways, and available support services, particularly regarding permanent residency or citizenship requirements. This information gap can lead to poor decision-making, such as pursuing illegal routes or falling prey to exploitative intermediaries.

Access to public information about social security services in Bangladesh is also limited for migrant families. Many families are unaware of government cards or pensions they might be

entitled to, or they believe they are ineligible due to their perceived economic status as recipients of remittances. This lack of awareness and proactive outreach from local authorities means that vulnerable families often miss out on potential support. The experience of a Bangladeshi woman who has lost her husband in Qatar is telling. Until today she has not received any form of pension as the widow of a migrant worker.

“It was such a great hardship. There was fighting in Qatar. If someone had brought even a kilogram of rice and said <We have no idea how you’re managing> it would have been like that. It’s been twelve years since my husband died and, to this day no one has even given me a widow’s pension.” (Riya, 50 years, widow)

2.1.4. Role of Recruiters and Intermediaries

Recruiters and intermediaries, often referred to as 'dalals,' play a complex role in the migration process. While some facilitate legal pathways, many exploit migrants due to their desperation and lack of information. One family paid 13 lakh taka to a broker who promised to take the husband to Slovenia but instead routed him through Spain and France, ultimately leaving him in an irregular situation. Another migrant spent 18 lakh taka on a journey to Europe, encountering multiple brokers and false promises, leading to significant debt and legal troubles.

“Q: How much did you have to pay the broker? A: I initially paid the broker 450,000 taka. He then failed to secure the visa, so he took another 250,000 taka for it. After that he said <Pay 50,000 taka this month; we can try for Austria or Germany>. In the end I got caught in Bulgaria.” (Mizan, young migrant)

These intermediaries often maintain control over migrants by discouraging them from networking or seeking information from formal channels. This isolation makes migrants more

susceptible to exploitation, including underpayment, overwork, and abuse. The emergence of 'new dalals' in destination countries, often from within the Bangladeshi community, further complicates matters, as they extract money for services like visa extensions, making the process more costly and less transparent.

2.1.5. Access to Formal and Social Rights

Access to formal rights, such as safe work conditions, fair wages, and healthcare, is often compromised for migrants, especially those in irregular situations. Many migrants are desperate to recoup their travel costs, leading them to accept hazardous jobs with long hours and low pay. The lack of information about their working conditions, including insurance, can result in serious accidents and even fatalities.

Language barriers are a significant impediment to accessing social rights, particularly healthcare. Migrants often struggle to communicate their health issues to doctors, necessitating embassy intervention for translation. This is particularly challenging for women, who may be more isolated within their homes.

Social integration is also hindered by language barriers and a tendency for migrants to 'flock together' within their own communities, limiting interaction with mainstream society. Host country policies often lack sufficient support for cultural adaptation and inclusion, leaving migrants feeling isolated and disrespected. Anti-migrant sentiment and political rhetoric further exacerbate these challenges, creating a hostile environment that impedes integration and fosters disrespect.

2.1.6. Strategies for Navigation

To navigate these complex bureaucratic and legislative landscapes, migrants and their families employ various strategies. Reliance on informal networks, such as friends and relatives already abroad, is a common approach to gather information and secure opportunities. These networks can provide initial support, accommodation, and even job leads.

“After he got there, he'd booked a room from here. He's been joined by a lad from the neighbouring village, another from Comilla, and a third from Chittagong. He's doing very well now. He speaks once a day. He was just on the phone a little while ago.” (Imran, father of a Greek expatriate)

Families often pool resources, selling assets or taking loans from relatives, to finance migration costs. This collective effort underscores the significant financial commitment involved and the reliance on **familial solidarity**. Some individuals, actively seek out legal pathways, investing in language training (IELTS) and formal education to ensure safer and more secure migration routes, even if it means higher initial costs.

Despite the challenges, many migrants maintain a long-term perspective, viewing initial hardships as temporary steps towards a better future. They focus on acquiring legal status, gaining work experience, and eventually sponsoring family members, even if it takes many years. This resilience and strategic planning are crucial for enduring the bureaucratic hurdles and achieving their migration goals. However, the psychological toll of prolonged separation and constant financial pressure remains a significant, often unspoken, burden.

2.2. Between Isolation and Integration: Formal and Informal Support Networks, Dependence, and Remittances Among Migrants from Bangladesh

This material examines the multifaceted support systems available to transnational migrant families, focusing on emotional, material, practical, and informational assistance from various sources in both origin and destination countries. It highlights the critical roles of family, relatives, and co-nationals, often overshadowing formal support from NGOs or government entities. The analysis reveals significant reliance on informal networks for financial aid, childcare, and decision-making, particularly in the absence of male migrants. Contradictions emerge regarding the perceived effectiveness and accessibility of formal support mechanisms, with many families feeling overlooked or ineligible. The report also addresses the emotional and practical burdens placed on left-behind family members, especially women, and the evolving dynamics of family roles and transnational ties.

2.2.1. Support Systems for Transnational Migrant Families

This part analyses the diverse forms of support—emotional, material, practical, and informational—received by transnational migrant families from various sources in both origin (Bangladesh) and destination (European) countries. It explores the roles of family, relatives, friends, co-nationals, NGOs, and communities, alongside themes of transnational ties, changing family roles, reciprocity, dependency, and the absence of support.

2.2.2. Family and Relational Support in Origin Countries

In Bangladesh, families of migrants heavily rely on immediate and extended family networks for various forms of support. Emotional and practical support often falls to female family members, particularly mothers and wives, who assume increased responsibilities in the absence

of male migrants. For instance, a woman whose son is in Italy, manages her household and works in a factory to support her family, as her husband is unwell.

“Yes, my husband can't work. Q: Doesn't your son give you any money? A: No, my son hasn't got a job yet; he's still studying. They cover all his expenses entirely, the government.”
(Hiya, 35 years, caregiver)

Similarly, a widow manages household responsibilities, including overseeing house construction and caring for grandchildren, in the absence of her son and daughters abroad. This shift in roles often leads to an increased workload for women.

Financial support from abroad is primarily channelled through the male migrant, but its management and allocation often involve the left-behind family members. A woman's son sends money for house construction and daily expenses, with her making day-to-day spending decisions while her son guides major ones. In some cases, the wife manages the migrant's bank account and distributes funds to in-laws, highlighting a degree of financial autonomy and trust. However, this autonomy can be accompanied by scrutiny or subtle pressure from in-laws regarding personal spending.

“There are no questions about that. But every now and then they ask, 'What do you do with the money you earn?' I get some from my husband, and I have my own income too. My thinking is, once you're married, there's a responsibility. Whether I work or not, he has to fulfil his responsibilities.” (Yamuna, adult staying in Bangladesh)

Extended family and relatives play a crucial role in providing both financial and practical assistance. Another woman, for example, received financial aid from her niece and brother-in-law to send her son abroad, and her brother pays her rent. This highlights the strong reciprocal

ties within families, where relatives step in during times of need. In other cases, other women rely on their relatives, second cousins, extended family for practical support, such as transportation to the hospital, and her daughters send her monthly expenses.

Emotional support within the family is complex. While migrants maintain daily or weekly contact through video calls and messaging, the physical absence of a parent or spouse can lead to loneliness and emotional strain for those left behind. A girl, whose father lives in Italy, expresses the pain of not having her father present for daily needs and emotional support, despite receiving financial aid. The children of migrants often miss their fathers, and mothers acknowledge the emotional void.

“Being away from one's father is undoubtedly far more painful, because many opportunities are unavailable. With one's father around, everything comes easily. [...] From my food to all my shopping, meeting my own needs and study materials, I have to do everything myself. My father only sends money. I'm the one who buys things, but if he were here, it probably wouldn't be like this. (Aisha, 23 years, migrant father)

Decision-making processes within families adapt to the transnational context. While the migrant often retains ultimate authority on major financial decisions, daily household management and child-rearing responsibilities typically fall to the spouse or parents in the origin country. In some instances, the left-behind spouse gains significant decision-making power, particularly if they are educated and have strong social networks. However, this empowerment can be a double-edged sword, increasing responsibilities and potential for conflict.

2.2.3. Support from Co-nationals, Friends, and Community

In destination countries, co-nationals and friends often form informal support networks, especially for new migrants. These networks provide crucial information, accommodation, and initial job opportunities. For instance, woman's son found initial work through a roommate who had been in Greece for ten years. This informal assistance is particularly vital for irregular migrants or those navigating unfamiliar systems. However, the quality of support from co-nationals can be mixed. While some provide genuine help, others exploit vulnerable migrants, acting as brokers or intermediaries who charge exorbitant fees.

2.2.4. Financial Support and Remittances

Financial remittances from migrant family members abroad constitute a primary and often indispensable form of support for families in Bangladesh. These funds are crucial for daily expenses, education, healthcare, and significant investments like house construction or debt repayment. For instance, a man's son sends money monthly to cover household expenses, and even contributed to his daughters' weddings.

“I handle all these things myself; the son provides the money, he covers the expenses, he pays every month, he covers the household expenses.” (Arif, 65 years ,adult staying in Bangladesh)

Similarly, a woman's son in Kuwait sends money for house construction and daily needs, while her daughter and son-in-law in Italy contribute to the house building and occasionally provide funds for personal expenses or grandchildren's schooling.

“My daughter and son-in-law have provided six lakh rupees towards building the house, and occasionally give some money (for example, 5,000–10,000 rupees) for personal expenses or for my grandchildren's schooling.” (Riya, 50 years, widow)

Another woman's husband in Finland sends money to his bank account, which she manages for her in-laws' expenses, and she also has her own savings. A son, who is in Greece, plans to use his future earnings to pay off debts and contribute to religious charities.

However, the consistency and sufficiency of these remittances can vary. Some families experience delays in receiving money. The amount sent can also decrease once the migrant establishes their own family abroad, as their expenses increase.

“Yes, when my wife was there he used to send a bit more. Now that the family's down there, their expenses have gone up too, haven't they? They pay eighty thousand taka for the house rent there.” Arif, 65 years, adult staying in Bangladesh)

In some cases, the entire income from abroad is consumed by debt repayment, leaving little for other needs.

2.2.5. Changing Family Roles and Women's Empowerment

The absence of male migrants often leads to significant shifts in family dynamics, particularly empowering women in decision-making roles. Women frequently assume primary responsibility for household management, children's education, healthcare, and financial decisions.

“Yes, of course the responsibilities are increasing. I have to juggle work responsibilities, household duties and the responsibility of running two homes. Although I don't do the

cooking, I have to handle the other tasks. Decision-making is a bigger deal than cooking. When it comes to decision-making, from health support to deciding which doctor to see and what needs to be done, I have to handle it all.” (Yamuna, adult staying in Bangladesh)

A widow manages all household responsibilities, including overseeing house construction and her grandchildren's schooling. Another woman, whose husband is in Finland, manages her in-laws' finances and makes most daily decisions, leveraging her education and professional network to navigate complex issues like healthcare. This increased responsibility, while challenging, can also lead to a sense of empowerment and greater freedom in managing household affairs.

However, this empowerment is not always absolute or without its complexities. While some women assert their autonomy in financial matters and decision-making, others manage expenses but still follow directives from their sons abroad regarding major spending. The emotional and practical burden on women can be substantial, as they often have to manage increased workloads and responsibilities without direct male support. A woman whose husband is ill and son is abroad, highlights her struggle to manage the household on her factory income, relying on her brothers for support.

“Yes, by Allah's grace. The room I'm staying in, my brother pays the rent for it. (Hiya, 35 years, caregiver)

2.2.6. Transnational Ties and Reciprocity

Transnational ties are evident in the continuous communication between migrants and their families, primarily through phone calls and video calls. These interactions often revolve around family well-being, financial matters, and daily life updates. Migrants often seek to maintain

cultural and religious values in their children, even in destination countries, reflecting a strong connection to their origin culture.

Reciprocity is a significant aspect of these ties. Migrants often rely on family members in Bangladesh to manage assets, care for elderly parents, and oversee children's education. In return, they provide financial support and sometimes facilitate migration for other family members. The expectation of future support is also a driving force, with migrants often planning to bring their families to destination countries once their status is regularized.

However, reciprocity can also be strained. Some migrants, particularly those who went abroad illegally or face financial difficulties, may struggle to provide consistent support, leading to increased dependency on family members in Bangladesh. The emotional toll of separation is a recurring theme, with family members expressing sadness and longing, especially during special occasions.

2.2.7. Community and Relational Support in Origin Countries

In Bangladesh, informal networks of relatives and community members often serve as crucial support systems. Family members frequently rely on siblings, cousins, and in-laws for practical assistance, emotional support, and even financial aid during crises. For example, man's nephew helped his son migrate to Italy. A woman's brother pays her rent, and her sister's son-in-law facilitated her son's migration. These networks are particularly vital in rural areas where formal support structures are weak.

“Who do you think could help? My husband has a sister, I have no brother, my husband has no brother either, my husband has a sister, I have a sister too. We'd get help from them, wouldn't we? We wouldn't get it from anyone else?” (Sia, adult staying home)

Neighbours and local communities also offer a degree of social cohesion and mutual assistance, especially in times of need. However, this support is often limited to non-financial aid, and there can be a reluctance to provide substantial financial help. Social standing and reputation within the community can influence the type and extent of support received, with families of European migrants sometimes experiencing increased respect.

“People look on us more favourably now than before. It was different when we were in Dubai or Saudi Arabia. Now that we're in Europe, our standing has improved a lot. Neighbours or relatives step in if anyone gets into trouble. My brother-in-law's sons always look after us.”
(Soma, adult staying in Bangladesh)

2.2.8. Absence and Limitations of Formal Support

Formal institutional support from the Bangladeshi government or NGOs is largely absent or inaccessible for many transnational families. Several interviewees reported not receiving any government assistance, such as widow's pensions or family cards, despite being eligible. There is a perception that such benefits are often directed towards those with political connections rather than the truly needy.

“It's only the rich who get it. There are local councillors and chairmen in the area, aren't there? They just give it to their own relatives and friends.” (Anni, mother of the Italian expatriate)

In destination countries, embassies and consulates provide some assistance with visas, passports, and cultural integration. However, they often lack comprehensive information about migrants' working conditions and face challenges in tracking irregular migrants. Language

barriers and a lack of proactive integration policies in host countries further limit access to essential services like healthcare and education.

2.2.9. Dependency and Vulnerabilities

Dependency can manifest in various forms. Families in Bangladesh often become financially dependent on remittances, leading to vulnerability if these funds are inconsistent or cease. Women, while gaining decision-making power, can also become overly burdened with responsibilities.

Migrants themselves face significant vulnerabilities, particularly irregular migrants who are prone to exploitation, underpayment, and abuse due to their precarious status and language barriers. The lack of awareness of their rights and weak networking further exacerbates their vulnerability. The psychological toll of separation, loneliness, and the pressure to succeed can also lead to mental health issues for both migrants and their left-behind families.

“I can't say it exactly. Not being with your family; cooking when you come home from work is very difficult. My perception is that in Bangladesh, even if you have less money, there is peace. I could live with my family. But here, no matter how much money I earn, there is no peace. Cooking when you come home from work; going to the hospital alone when you get sick. Everyone works here. Not everyone will give me time. Sometimes I feel bad.” (Fahim, migrant in Romania)

2.3. Children and Migration

This part analyses the multifaceted impact of migration on children, focusing on education as a motive, the challenges faced by children left behind, and the complexities of transnational parenting. It explores how migration influences schooling, adaptation, and care arrangements,

as well as the hopes and concerns parents harbour for their children's futures. The analysis draws on various personal accounts, highlighting both the perceived benefits and significant emotional and social costs associated with parental absence and relocation. The report also touches upon the experiences of children born abroad and the broader family migration histories that shape these dynamics.

The impact of migration on children is a complex and often contradictory phenomenon, as revealed through various personal accounts. While migration is frequently undertaken with the hope of securing a better future for children, it often entails significant emotional, social, and educational challenges for those left behind or those who relocate with their parents.

2.3.1. Education as a Motive and a Challenge

Education frequently emerges as a primary driver for migration, with parents aspiring for their children to receive better schooling and opportunities abroad. For instance, one interviewee explicitly states that a key motivation for going abroad was to secure their "daughter and son's future" and to ensure their children's education. Similarly, another parent expresses the desire for their children to receive a good education, even enrolling grandchildren in English-medium schools in Bangladesh due to a perceived higher standard and more caring teachers, despite the increased cost. This highlights a transnational parenting strategy where educational aspirations dictate significant financial and logistical decisions. The hope is that such an education will lead to better job prospects, either abroad or within Bangladesh.

However, the pursuit of education abroad is not without its difficulties. One young woman initially went to Italy for schooling but ultimately returned to Bangladesh due to the high costs of an honours degree and her parents' separation. This illustrates how family circumstances and financial burdens can disrupt educational plans. Parents worry about their children losing

cultural and religious values in foreign schooling environments, fearing "westernization". This concern often leads to parents sending their children back to Bangladesh for education, even if the parents remain abroad, creating a peculiar set of circumstances for these "half-educated" children who must adapt to extended family life in Bangladesh.

2.3.2. Children Left Behind and Transnational Parenting

The phenomenon of children being left behind is a recurring theme, leading to complex dynamics in transnational parenting. Many migrants leave their children in the care of relatives in Bangladesh, often with financial support sent from abroad. This arrangement, while providing economic stability, can lead to emotional distress and increased responsibilities for the caregivers. For example, a widow finds herself solely responsible for her grandchildren's upbringing and schooling, alongside overseeing house construction, due to her son and daughter living abroad. She notes that her responsibilities have significantly increased, and she relies on Allah for strength.

Transnational parenting also manifests in the form of remote decision-making and emotional support. Many parents maintain daily contact with their children through video calls and messaging apps, discussing everything from daily routines to health and future plans. Despite the distance, parents often try to remain involved in their children's lives, offering advice and financial assistance for education and other needs.

However, this remote involvement can also lead to feelings of loneliness and a lack of direct parental presence, which children, particularly adolescents, keenly feel. A young girl expresses the pain of not having her father physically present, despite his financial support and emotional availability through phone calls.

“In my final semester my grades were really poor. I was very depressed. I didn't speak to anyone. When I shared it with my father, he understood straight away. From the way I spoke he could tell I was upset. Then he would ring every four or five hours; He would check up on me. He would send voice messages so that I wouldn't stay down. To this day there isn't a single example: I've never asked for or wanted anything, yet my father has given it to me. Whether sooner or later, even after making his utmost effort, he has fulfilled my wishes.”
(Aisha, 23 years, migrant father)

2.3.3. Children Born Abroad and Adaptation

Children born or raised abroad face a unique set of challenges related to cultural adaptation and identity. These children may also experience discrimination in schools due to ethnicity or language barriers, hindering their social integration.

Furthermore, the concept of a "third culture child" is introduced, describing children who are neither fully integrated into their parents' culture nor the host country's culture. This can lead to feelings of being "neither here nor there," impacting their mental development and social integration. The lack of a strong family support system, prevalent in traditional Bangladeshi joint families, is also noted as contributing to psychological issues like autism among expatriate children.

2.3.4. Hopes and Concerns for Children's Futures

Parents consistently express hopes for their children's future, primarily centred on economic stability and educational attainment. Many migrants endure significant hardships, including debt and separation, with the ultimate goal of providing a better life for their offspring. The desire for children to avoid the struggles faced by their parents is a powerful motivator.

“It's for my son's future. I don't want my son, daughter-in-law and daughter to have to suffer the same hardships we did.” (Anni, mother of the Italian expatriate, adult staying in Bangladesh)

However, these hopes are often intertwined with concerns. The long application period for citizenship in host countries, such as Portugal, can delay family reunification and integration, causing anxiety for migrants. The potential for children to become illegal migrants if their parents' status is not regularized is another significant worry. Moreover, the emotional toll of separation, particularly for children, is a constant concern, with parents acknowledging the devastating impact on their children's psychological well-being.

Some parents actively plan their children's migration pathways, emphasizing legal channels and skill development to ensure their success abroad. They believe that learning a trade, such as a chef, and acquiring language skills are crucial for thriving in a foreign country. This proactive approach reflects a deep-seated hope for their children to achieve what they themselves could not.

Conversely, the absence of a father figure can lead to increased workload and emotional pressure on the mother and other family members in Bangladesh. This can result in children missing their father and experiencing emotional gaps that are difficult to fill. The societal pressure on women, particularly regarding marriage and childbearing, can also be a significant concern, especially when a husband is absent or there are fertility issues.

“The pressure [a.n. to have children] was always on me first. It came my way. It was mental pressure, that's it. [...] No, my husband doesn't blame me. He never did, and certainly not now. Because we've had the very best treatment. My husband has actually been diagnosed

with a health issue himself. So there's really no one to blame now.” (Yamuna, adult staying in Bangladesh)

Overall, the narratives reveal a complex interplay of sacrifice, hope, and hardship, where the well-being and future of children remain at the heart of migration decisions, despite the numerous challenges encountered along the way.

2.4. Navigating Alterity and Social Integration: Cultural and Socio-Religious Differences Among Migrants

This part examines the multifaceted differences experienced by transnational families involved in labour migration to Europe, focusing on gender, cultural norms, social perceptions, and environmental factors. It highlights how migration impacts family dynamics, decision-making processes, and the adaptation challenges faced by both migrants and their left-behind families. The analysis reveals significant disparities in social standing, economic opportunities, and access to support systems, often exacerbated by language barriers, cultural insensitivity, and discriminatory practices in host countries. The analysis also explores the psychological toll of separation and the evolving perceptions of gender roles and family responsibilities within these transnational contexts. Ultimately, it underscores the complex interplay of individual agency, societal expectations, and policy frameworks in shaping the migratory experience.

2.5. Differences: Gender, Culture, Social Norms, Environment, Climate, Food, Language, Ethnicity, or Appearance

This part analyses passages describing differences linked to gender, culture, social norms, environment, climate, food, language, ethnicity, or appearance, including adaptation, comparison, discomfort, stereotyping, exclusion, discrimination, privilege, and changing

perceptions. The documents reveal a complex interplay of these factors, significantly impacting both migrants and their left-behind families.

2.5.1. Gender and Shifting Responsibilities

Migration often leads to a significant shift in gender roles and responsibilities within transnational families. Women left behind frequently assume increased burdens, managing household finances, children's education, and daily chores that were previously handled by male family members. For instance, a widow whose son and daughter live abroad manages all household responsibilities, including overseeing house construction and her grandchildren's schooling. Similarly, another woman whose son is abroad and husband is unwell, states:

"I have to work for myself to run my household". [...] You don't see how we manage. You don't see how hard we struggle. It's a real struggle for us. My husband is ill." (Hiya, 35 years, caregiver)

This increased workload is often acknowledged by the women themselves, with one interviewee noting:

"The work will only increase, won't it? Since my husband died, the workload hasn't gone up, has it?" (Sia, adult staying in Bangladesh)

Conversely, some women report an increase in personal freedom and decision-making power in the absence of their husbands. A woman whose husband is in Portugal, expresses that her "freedom now is much better than it used to be" as she no longer faces scrutiny over purchases or financial decisions. Another woman, whose husband is in Finland, highlights her empowerment through education and networking, enabling her to make crucial decisions

regarding family health and finances, a role not solely dependent on her husband's remittances. However, this newfound autonomy can be accompanied by social pressures and the fear of judgment, as one of the interviewees notes:

"My husband isn't with me now. If I go out whenever I please, people will say all sorts of things, whether it's my family or the people around me." (Rimi, adult staying in Bangladesh)

Traditional patriarchal mindsets are also evident, with some husbands maintaining control over financial decisions even from abroad. One interviewee's husband, despite being abroad, still dictates spending, reflecting continued patriarchal influence. The perception of women's roles is deeply ingrained, with one husband stating,

"<What argument do you women have? What would you say?> He used to say that before. Now he says it only occasionally" (Rimi, adult staying in Bangladesh)

This highlights the persistent gender-based differences in decision-making authority and social expectations.

2.5.2. Cultural and Social Norms in Host Countries

Migrants face significant challenges in adapting to the cultural and social norms of host countries, particularly in Europe. Language barriers are a primary impediment to integration, affecting access to healthcare, employment, and social interaction. This leads to social isolation, with migrants tending to "flock together" within their own communities rather than integrating into the broader society.

Cultural differences also extend to family values and upbringing. Parents express anxiety about their children losing cultural and religious values, fearing "westernization." This concern can

lead to restrictive family reunification policies, often not allowing adult family members but only children to join.

Discrimination and anti-migrant sentiment further exacerbate these challenges. Children may face discrimination in schools due to ethnicity or language. Political rhetoric, such as opposition party banners proclaiming "this is not Bangladesh," creates a hostile environment that impedes integration and fosters disrespect. This anti-migrant sentiment contributes to a sense of being "othered" and disrespected, making genuine integration difficult.

2.5.3. Adaptation and Discomfort

Adaptation to new environments and cultures is a recurring theme, often accompanied by discomfort. A woman who lived in Italy for 26 years, returned to Bangladesh because she didn't feel comfortable there, stating:

"I don't feel comfortable there. The girls keep telling me off, saying why am I living alone in Bangladesh. If I were to die, people would say bad things." (Esha, 65 years, adult staying in Bangladesh)

She prefers the familiarity of her home country, even if it means living alone. This highlights a strong preference for cultural familiarity over the perceived benefits of living abroad.

Conversely, some migrants express a positive view of their host countries. A woman's son, who went to Greece, quickly adapted and enjoys his new environment, showing his parents places and friends via video calls. He even notes that there isn't any food in Bangladesh that isn't available there. This suggests that individual experiences of adaptation can vary widely,

influenced by factors such as personal disposition and the specific conditions in the host country.

However, the psychological toll of separation and cultural differences can lead to significant discomfort. A young girl, whose father lives in Italy, expresses the pain of not having her father present, noting:

"Being away from one's father is undoubtedly far more painful, because many opportunities are unavailable. With one's father around, everything comes easily." (Aisha, migrant father, 23 years).

This emotional distance, coupled with societal pressures regarding her parents' divorce and her stepfather, contributes to feelings of depression and insecurity.

2.5.4. Stereotyping, Exclusion, and Discrimination

Stereotyping and discrimination are significant issues faced by Bangladeshi migrants.

In Romania, similar patterns of discrimination are observed. A Bangladeshi migrant reports that Romanian workers receive significantly higher salaries for the same work, and that Bangladeshis are often made to work longer hours without proper compensation.

"We do the same work. However, they pay us less than the Romanians. [...] There is a big difference. I get 80 thousand taka; Romanian workers get 1 lakh 40 thousand to 1 lakh 50 thousand taka. On the contrary, I do more work than them. Everyone makes me work. Everyone calls me to help them. I help them. But I don't get any benefits. They just do their work." (Fahim, migrant in Romania)

He also notes that employers increasingly prefer workers from other non-EU countries due to their greater retention, whereas Bangladeshi personnel tend to treat Romania as a transit point toward other European labour markets. This perception leads to exclusion and limited opportunities for Bangladeshis.

Children of migrants also face discrimination in schools due to their ethnicity or language. This can lead to struggles with social integration and a sense of being marginalized. The anti-migrant sentiment, such as political banners proclaiming "this is not Bangladesh," create a hostile environment and foster disrespect. Such overt displays of xenophobia contribute to a feeling of being unwelcome and disrespected, hindering any genuine attempts at integration.

2.5.5. Changing Perceptions and Privilege

Migration to Europe can significantly alter social perceptions and confer for a degree of privilege, both for the migrants and their left-behind families. A mother whose sons are in Europe, observes that "People look on us more favourably now than before. It was different when we were in Dubai or Saudi Arabia. Now that we're in Europe, our standing has improved a lot." (Soma, adult staying in Bangladesh) This indicates a hierarchical perception of different migrant destinations, with Europe being associated with higher social status.

Another woman also notes:

"There's a big change coming in our economic situation. Another is that there's a change in the neighbours' perception and behaviour. If there are 10 expatriate families around here, 9 of them are from the Middle East; the remaining one is European. Here, there's no majority-minority issue. The minority is always a bit of an exception. In terms of status, we're an exception here too. He had a good job in Qatar. Yet the neighbours thought it was perfectly

normal. Now that he's in Europe, the attitude is different. There's been a change in our status in society. Even if we haven't really changed, we can tell from their interest that they see us differently now.” (Yamuna, adult staying in Bangladesh)

However, this perceived privilege can also lead to exclusion from government support systems. A widow whose son is abroad, laments that she has not received any widow's pension or family card, despite her struggles, because her family is perceived as "prosperous" due to her son's migration. This illustrates a paradoxical situation where the perceived privilege of having a family member abroad can disqualify individuals from much-needed social assistance.

Furthermore, the desire for this elevated status can drive individuals to pursue migration to Europe, even if it means taking on significant debt or facing illegal routes. A woman who sent her son to Greece explicitly states that he refused to stay in Bangladesh due to perceived "filth" and a desire for a better life abroad. This reflects a changing perception of what constitutes a desirable life, heavily influenced by the perceived opportunities and status associated with European migration.

2.5.6. Environmental and Climate Differences

The impact of environmental and climate differences is less explicitly detailed but is touched upon in relation to adaptation and quality of life. Migrants often comment on the weather conditions in their host countries. A migrant in Romania, notes that:

"The sun shines less. It is dark most of the time in winter. It is colder at night. I don't like it."
(Fahim, migrant in Romania)

He contrasts this with Portugal, where the weather is "much like Bangladesh". This highlights how climate can be a factor in a migrant's comfort and preference for a particular location.

A woman's son, in Greece, describes the environment as "pleasant" and enjoys sitting by the seaside when feeling down. He also mentions that it can be "very cold here, and very hot too. It rains in winter" (Mizan, young migrant). These observations suggest that while some aspects of the European climate may be appealing, others, like extreme cold, can be a source of discomfort.

In Bangladesh, some interviewees note changes in local environmental conditions. A woman mentions that her area used to experience floods, but now "various embankments have been built; that's why there are no floods". (Yamuna, adult staying in Bangladesh) However, she also notes that her family is no longer involved in farming, so they don't directly experience the impact of climate change on agriculture. This indicates a disconnect between some families and direct environmental concerns, possibly due to their changing economic activities.

2.5.7. Food and Language as Cultural Markers

Food and language serve as crucial cultural markers, influencing integration and daily life. Language is a significant barrier to integration, affecting everything from healthcare access to social interaction. The difficulty in communicating in other languages can lead to feelings of rudeness and disrespect from locals. This underscores the importance of linguistic adaptation for successful integration.

Regarding food, a son who is in Greece reassures his parents that "There isn't any food in Bangladesh that you can't get there. Everything is available" (Mizan, young migrant). This suggests that access to familiar food can ease the cultural transition for migrants.

Fahim, a migrant in Romania mentions the challenge of cooking after a long day's work, highlighting how the absence of family support impacts daily life and food preparation. This

contrasts with the communal eating habits often found in Bangladesh, where family members share responsibilities. The lack of familiar social structures around food can contribute to feelings of loneliness and discomfort in the host country.

2.5.8. Ethnicity: Discrimination and Preference

Ethnic identity significantly shapes the discrimination and labour market hierarchies experienced by migrants. Employers frequently apply nationality-based preferences, favouring groups with linguistic affinity or lower perceived risk of secondary migration. For example, evidence from Romania reveals hiring priorities that favour domestic workers over third-country nationals, alongside a shift toward Nepalese labour due to concerns over Bangladeshi mobility within the EU. Beyond employment, ethnic prejudice manifests across social institutions - such as ethnic bias against migrant children in schools - and through interpersonal xenophobia in public spaces. These structural barriers directly impair migrants' social integration and economic opportunities.

“Q: *Why do they like Nepalese people? Why don't they like Bangladeshis?* A: Because when Bangladeshis come here, they go to Italy. They think Italy is good. Nobody wants to stay. We are coming, 100 of us. Now we are 20. 80 are gone. Some are staying in other countries illegally. Some have left the country.” (Fahim, migrant in Romania)

2.6. Preliminary Findings and Outlook

Bureaucracy and legislation present significant obstacles for migrants and their families, impacting various aspects of their lives, including family reunification, citizenship, access to public information, and engagement with embassies. These challenges often manifest as delays, high costs, and uncertainty, compelling individuals to devise diverse strategies to navigate institutional complexities.

The bureaucratic and legislative frameworks surrounding migration present formidable challenges for Bangladeshi migrants and their families. These include prohibitive costs, lengthy delays in obtaining legal status and family reunification, and a pervasive lack of transparent information. The reliance on informal networks and intermediaries, while sometimes helpful, often exposes migrants to exploitation and further financial strain. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, including clearer, more accessible information, streamlined legal processes, and robust support systems to protect migrants' rights and facilitate their integration into host societies. Without such reforms, the cycle of vulnerability and hardship is likely to persist, undermining the potential benefits of migration for both individuals and their families.

The support systems for transnational families in Bangladesh are complex and predominantly informal, relying heavily on family and community networks. While financial remittances are vital, they come with evolving family roles, increased responsibilities for women, and potential vulnerabilities. Formal institutional support remains largely inadequate, highlighting a critical gap in addressing the comprehensive needs of these families. Strengthening both formal and informal support mechanisms, alongside proactive integration policies in destination countries, is essential to enhance the well-being and resilience of transnational families.

The analysis reveals that transnational families navigate a complex landscape of differences related to gender, culture, social norms, environment, and ethnicity. These differences manifest in shifting gender roles, challenges in cultural adaptation, experiences of discomfort and discrimination, and evolving social perceptions. While some individuals find empowerment and improved social standing through migration, others face increased burdens, loneliness, and systemic exclusion. The interplay of these factors underscores the need for comprehensive

support systems and policies that address the multifaceted challenges faced by transnational families in their pursuit of a better life.

3. Greece

Ovidiu Oltean

3.1. Bureaucracy and access to rights

The bureaucratic processes for residence and work permits, family reunification, and citizenship in Greece are consistently described as complex, lengthy, and costly for Bangladeshi migrants. Delays in acquiring visas and documents are a pervasive issue, leading to insecurity and limiting travel, with some permits effectively shortened due to prolonged processing times. Informal solutions, such as working without proper documentation or relying on community networks and lawyers, are common responses to these systemic challenges. Access to public information is often inadequate, and embassy services are limited, forcing migrants to navigate a system that frequently requires significant financial outlay for legal assistance and interaction with public authorities. The experiences highlight a system that, despite offering pathways to legal status, remains difficult to access and navigate, particularly for those with limited language skills or financial resources. In order to navigate these barriers and cope with the administrative burden, many Bangladeshi nationals revert to informal solutions and mediators.

3.1.1. Residence and Work Permits

Based on the interviews conducted in Greece, the Bangladeshi nationals and their families interviewed here describe the process of obtaining and maintaining necessary documents for work and residency in Greece as "very difficult". Many Bangladeshis initially work without proper contracts or insurance, which prevents them from obtaining permits. One interviewee

recounts being rejected from regularisation multiple times and having no documents for many years, leading to constant fear of the police or immigration authorities. The process often involves significant financial outlay for lawyers, who play a crucial role in navigating the complex system. Even after securing legal employment, the minimum wage can be a barrier to family reunification, as many workers attempt to bring their families in.

Delays in obtaining papers and visas are a recurring theme. One individual waited eight years to obtain residence documents.

“Yes. It was rejected. I remained without documents for about eight years. I finally obtained residence documents for about eight years. I finally obtained residence documents around 2021.” (GR BD 005: Dewan Siddiqui)

Another one explains from his own experience that while a residence permit is issued for five years, the actual validity is often reduced to three years due to two-year processing delays, forcing continuous renewal applications.

“... It is just that you cannot travel, your documents arrive very late, you wait for two years... and then the worst part is that they issue me a residence permit for five years but, since two years have already passed while I was waiting for it, in reality it is valid for only three years. Then I have to renew it again. I receive the new one another two years later (meaning after another delay) and, in effect, I end up with a permit that is valid for only three years. We pay so much money and go through so much trouble...” (GR BD 008: Hasan Rahman)

These delays also constrain mobility, as Bangladeshi nationals may be reluctant to leave Greece while their residence permit is pending. A valid application certificate does not confer a right to circulate within the Schengen area. Under the ministerial decision applicable in 2026, however,

holders may travel to third countries outside Schengen and re-enter Greece, subject to holding valid travel documents and no intervening rejection or revocation decision. Greek law also allows temporary absences of up to six months per year without affecting residence status, while longer or systematic unjustified absences may jeopardize permit validity or renewal. The system is perceived as having worsened post-COVID-19, with renewal applications taking over a year. The lack of a Greek embassy in Bangladesh further complicates matters, requiring travel to India for visa applications and document processing.

“More than 2 years, from the time my father applied for it and until we came to Greece, also because there is no embassy of Greece in Bangladesh. And also, they have this service, like intermediaries, so they went to our neighbourhood in Dhaka and even to our village of origin and asked questions about us and our family.” (GR BD 002: Muhammad Qadir)

3.1.2. Family Reunification

Family reunification is consistently portrayed as an arduous and expensive process. One interviewee's father attempted to bring his family through the Greek embassy in India, facing significant difficulties and high costs, including a mandatory DNA test due to suspicions of fraud. The process took over two years, partly because there is no Greek embassy in Bangladesh.

“They had not informed us about this, that we had to bring her medical documents from Bangladesh. So, when we went to the embassy, they gave us 7 days to collect all the documents. So, we had to go to hospitals in India and do everything and pay a lot of money to prepare these documents. So, the procedure was very expensive. [...] Yes, because they also said it was a scam. I was the son of my father, and they forced us to take a DNA test, and this is very expensive.” (GR BD 002: Muhammad Qadir)

Another individual, despite having a valid residence permit, struggles to meet the required salary for family reunification. The cost of translations and the difficulty in securing embassy appointments are additional hurdles. Strained by the lack of time due to intensive working hours and scarcity of resources, Bangladeshi nationals are deterred from applying for family reunification.

Even for those who came legally, like one interviewee's mother, visa applications were denied, leading to prolonged separation, despite sustained efforts for reunification. The requirements for family reunification are stringent, demanding proof of income, housing size, and various certificates, some of which are difficult to obtain or legalise.

“I applied immediately after we got married. We got married in December 2022. The bureaucracy was enormous, both in Greece and in Albania. The Greek authorities required a very specific set of documents: the marriage certificate, a family status certificate, proof of my income, information about our home, including its size in square metres, and many other documents. The most important document that I was missing was the family status certificate, which I could obtain only from Albania. However, because I am a third-country national, I could not register my marriage in Albania. They were unable to enter my name into the civil registry.” (GR_BD_006: Farhan, Pos. 135)

The lack of cooperation between the Bangladeshi and Greek or, for that matter, Albanian embassies means migrants often have to rely on lawyers for even simple document-related issues.

“We go to lawyers, of course. The Bangladeshi embassy here does not cooperate with the Greek embassy. For example, we cannot take our documents from our country's embassy to the Greek embassy. There is no such cooperation between them. So, the Bangladeshi

embassy in Greece cannot help us with our documents. That is why we have to go to lawyers, even for document-related matters. Even for very simple issues, we have to go to court. Even for a very small mistake.” (GR_BD_007: Lamisa, Pos. 31)

The process can be so challenging that some individuals opt for alternative routes, such as student visas, to bring family members to Greece.

“No. That would have been too difficult. She first came to Greece with a student visa, enrolled at a university here and, after some time, changed her residence status to that of the spouse of a Greek citizen.” (GR_BD_006: Farhan, Pos. 183)

3.1.3. Citizenship

Obtaining Greek citizenship is also fraught with difficulties. The exams are described as "very hard," requiring extensive study for passing the citizenship exam, which can be particularly challenging for older migrants or those with limited literacy in Greek. One individual, despite being born in Greece and attending Greek schools, faces issues with their birth certificate, which has incorrect name order and an English entry for their father's name, necessitating a court process before they can even apply for citizenship.

“Look, especially now, in order to apply for citizenship, I should have attended a Greek school from kindergarten onwards. But because I only started attending after the fifth grade, that is, in lower and upper secondary school, I can now apply for citizenship because I have completed six years of schooling in Greece, meaning secondary education, and because I was born here. The only issue is that I also have problems with the Registry Office, with my birth certificate. My first name and surname have been recorded in reverse order. That is the

only problem, and it only appears on my birth certificate. All my other documents are correct. So now I have to wait to go to court...” (GR_BD_007: Lamisa, Pos. 15)

This highlights how minor administrative errors can create significant bureaucratic obstacles.

Some migrants, even after many years of legal residence, have not pursued citizenship due to the difficulty of the exams or missed opportunities to apply or meet all the criteria necessary to pass the exam. The requirement for a birth certificate from Bangladesh, with all official stamps and legalizations, is a major hurdle, often involving travel to Bangladesh and navigating multiple offices. The prospect of military service for male citizens is also a deterrent, as it would mean a significant loss of income for those with established careers and families.

3.1.4. Public Information, Embassy Access, Recruiters, and Intermediaries

Access to reliable public information is limited. Migrants often rely on community networks, social media groups, and lawyers for information. NGOs sometimes provide assistance, but often have specific mandates, such as only working with refugees. In terms of access to counsel, the Bangladeshi embassy in Greece is not seen as a reliable source of help for document-related issues, with no cooperation with the Greek embassy.

This forces migrants to seek legal counsel for even minor problems, creating a complicated administrative burden and additional financial costs. They often have to revert to intermediaries, both in Bangladesh as well as in Greece. Recruiters and intermediaries, often referred to as "dalal" (smugglers/brokers), play a significant role in the initial journey to Greece, often providing misleading information about the ease of obtaining jobs and papers. These services are costly, leading to significant debt for migrants. In some cases, intermediaries are involved in the family reunification process, asking intrusive questions about applicants' lives.

One of the respondents recalls how his father had to wait 2 years after applying for family reunification and how the authorities relayed to intermediaries to check their family history and the validity of their claim.

“More than 2 years, from the time my father applied for it and until we came to Greece, also because there is no embassy of Greece in Bangladesh. And also they have this service, like intermediators, so they went to our neighbourhood in Dhaka and even to our village of origin and asked questions about us and our family. In our village they knew the surname, but not us or me, as we had left when I was 6 years old. But they asked a lot of questions about us to other people as well.” (GR_BD_002: Muhammad Qadir, Pos. 27)

3.1.5. Social Rights and Informal Solutions

Despite having rights on paper, access to services like free healthcare is often difficult due to long waiting times for appointments. This leads some to pay for private doctors. Language barriers further complicate access to healthcare and public services, with some medical professionals speaking loudly and slowly in interaction with Bangladeshi service users, assuming a lack of Greek proficiency. The absence of interpreters in hospitals is a critical issue, potentially leading to misdiagnosis or inadequate care, at the same time deterring many service users from pursuing treatment or seeking healthcare assistance.

The daughter of one of the respondents talks about the issue of language barriers.

“In many other European countries there are interpreters in hospitals. This is very dangerous, because if you cannot explain exactly what your health problem is, how are you going to get better? They might even give you the wrong thing (meaning the wrong diagnosis).” (GR_BD_009: Salma, Pos. 66)

In terms of coping mechanisms and usage of mediators, informal solutions do not stop at healthcare. Coping mechanism and receiving help from intermediaries are also prevalent when entering or navigating the labour market. Migrants often work illegally without contracts or insurance, especially in agriculture or early stages of their migration and revert to informal brokers and mitigation solutions to land a job or move to another employer whilst working undocumented.

“The smuggler had told me that he took care of everything and that as soon as I arrive it would be easy to get a job and papers and then a house. It was not true. He spoke in Bangla with me, but he was not from Bangladesh. I cannot say exactly though, he spoke English and Greek and I think Turkish but I’m not sure. There were others with us, and no one knew many things for Greece back then. The smuggler told me it is easier for us than for people from other countries.” (GR_BD_001: Shakibul, Pos. 25)

When arriving in Greece, many end up working in undocumented ways and rely on informal arrangements to find work and a place to live in. One of the respondents explains his migration journey. In this case, we also see how informal solutions put a financial strain on migrants generating a chain of debts that will create one of the significant burdens of the migration journey. In some cases, in the first years abroad, some people work entirely to pay off the debt.

“[Interviewer] How did you leave your hometown? What was the name of your hometown again? [Respondent] Habiganj. From there I went to Dhaka, and from Dhaka I travelled to Istanbul. [Interviewer] So you travelled by plane and then crossed into Greece? [Respondent] No. I stayed in Istanbul for two or three years. I worked there without documents. [Interviewer] What kind of work did you do? [Respondent] In a textile factory. [Interviewer] In the textile industry? Were you sewing clothes? [Respondent] Yes. [Interviewer] Do you

remember approximately how much the whole journey cost? [Respondent] Around 10,000 US dollars. [Interviewer] Did you have that amount of money yourself? [Respondent] No. I borrowed it from friends and went into debt. [Interviewer] Do you remember roughly how many years it took you to repay the debt? [Respondent] About five or six years.”
(GR_BD_005: Dewan Siddiqui, Pos. 34-51)

Often throughout this time, some workers live as undocumented migrants. In the case of the respondent above, the prolonged undocumented status in Turkey and latent racism forced him to leave the country and seek a better alternative.

“[Interviewer] Why didn't you stay in Turkey? You said you lived there for two or three years. [Respondent] Yes, for two or three years. Life there was difficult. The government did not provide residence documents, and because we are dark-skinned, we stood out in society.”
(GR_BD_005: Dewan Siddiqui, Pos. 34-51)

When living abroad, sharing housing with many people is common to manage rent costs. Community members often help each other with housing, finding work, lending money, and even sharing social security numbers for medical access. The hawala system is used for remittances when migrants lack official documents. Some employers, if supportive, can assist with administrative matters. However, exploitation in the workplace, including late salary payments and under-declared social insurance contributions, is a significant problem, impacting residence permit renewals. Migrants often choose to leave exploitative jobs rather than file complaints, fearing repercussions.

The Greek bureaucratic system presents substantial challenges for Bangladeshi migrants, characterized by prolonged delays, high costs, and a lack of transparent information. These systemic issues force migrants to rely heavily on informal networks and legal professionals,

often at great personal and financial costs. While pathways to legal status and citizenship exist, their implementation is often inefficient and burdensome, leading to insecurity and limiting the full realization of social rights. The experiences underscore the need for streamlined, accessible, and transparent administrative processes, as well as improved support services, including language assistance, to ensure equitable treatment and integration for migrant communities in Greece.

3.2. Support, solidarity, transnational ties and remittances

Support for Bangladeshi migrants in Greece manifests in various forms, ranging from crucial family assistance abroad to more localized help from communities, employers, and, to a lesser extent, NGOs and Greek contacts. This support is often a lifeline, addressing material, emotional, practical, and informational needs, while also highlighting issues of isolation, dependency, and solidarity.

3.2.1. Family Support and Remittances

Family, both in Bangladesh and within Greece, forms the bedrock of support for many migrants. Remittances are consistently highlighted as a primary form of material support, often representing the sole income for families back home.

“Now that I am working, I always help my family. Because they do not have anyone else to work.” (GR_BD_003: Kamal, Pos. 27)

Migrants often prioritize sending money, sometimes keeping only enough for their basic expenses. This financial responsibility can be immense, with individuals working for years primarily to repay debts incurred for their journey. The emotional burden of this responsibility

is also significant, with migrants feeling pressure to provide and worrying about their families' well-being. One of the respondents explains this burden:

“I want to bring my family here, but I do not have the required salary. I need to keep having a job, but a job that pays more. I took the exams for the citizenship, but I did not pass, it was very difficult. I cannot apply for the citizenship yet, but I wanted to get the exams out of the way.” (GR_BD_001: Shakibul, Pos. 79)

Emotional support from family abroad is also vital, with wives taking care of relatives in Bangladesh. However, this support can have limits, as seen in instances where family members back home misunderstand the migrant's struggles. For those with family in Greece, such as parents or siblings, the support is more direct and multifaceted. Fathers often facilitate the migration of their children and provide initial employment. Children, especially those born or raised in Greece, often become crucial cultural mediators and practical helpers for their parents, assisting with bureaucracy, translations, and navigating public services. However, this dynamic can also create a form of dependency, where parents rely heavily on their children's language skills and understanding of the Greek system. Conversely, parents provide a stable environment and emotional anchor for their children in Greece.

3.2.2. Bangladeshi Community Networks

The Bangladeshi community in Greece serves as a significant source of practical and informational support. This includes help with finding housing, securing employment, and lending money. For undocumented migrants, the community is often the primary source of information and assistance, especially concerning health issues when formal channels are inaccessible. Older, more established community members, or those with better knowledge of the system, often provide advice and guidance to newcomers.

“Yes, I have my father who knows the system and if you need any advice they can help. There are people who are many years here. There are also many Bangladeshi children who were born in Greece and they go to school here. But culturally, even though they were born here, they stay within their community. They have friends from their schools, but other than that they stay within their communities.” (GR_BD_002: Muhammad Qadir, Pos. 41)

One of the respondents, whose family has been living in Greece for a long time, became a broker for newly arrived co-nationals from Bangladesh.

“[Interviewer] Since you belong to one of the older Bangladeshi families in Greece, do people come to you asking for help or information? [Respondent] Mainly at work. Because I work in restaurants, many of the kitchen porters are from Bangladesh. In fact, most of them are. They do not speak Greek very well, and some of them have only recently arrived. I help them with the managers, for example regarding their documents, their wages or if they have any problems. I explain things to the employers in Greek.” (GR_BD_008: Hasan Rahman, Pos. 161-162)

However, the nature of community support can be complex. While there is solidarity, particularly in practical matters, there can also be internal divisions and a "closed community mentality" as some respondents point out. Some individuals, especially those who grew up in Greece, feel less connected to the traditional community structures.

“Yes, because we grew up with children from other backgrounds. The community of those of us who were born here is actually very small, and we find it quite difficult to connect with our own culture. In general, with our culture and with our country. That is because we have had very different experiences.” (GR_BD_007: Lamisa, Pos. 38)

There are also instances where community members, particularly those with limited education, might spread misinformation or create fear among newcomers. The community's reluctance to speak openly about their experiences, often due to fear of authorities or employers, can also limit the scope of collective support and advocacy. Despite these complexities, the community remains a vital space for cultural preservation and mutual aid, particularly for women who might otherwise be isolated.

3.2.3. Support from Greek Contacts and Employers

Support from Greek individuals and employers is varied. Some migrants report positive experiences with Greek neighbours, who offer practical help with administrative tasks or general assistance. Employers can be a crucial source of support, particularly if they are understanding and willing to assist with legal and administrative matters. One interviewee's father, for example, had an employer who actively advocated for his family's visa application and provided significant practical support, including a company motorcycle that he could ride to work. This highlights the immense impact a supportive employer can have on a migrant's life and legal status. However, this is not universally the case, with many migrants experiencing exploitation, unpaid wages, and lack of social insurance contributions.

Especially those who arrived during the economic crisis in Greece had to go through significant financial adversities.

“Yes, 6–7 years. Because when we came to Greece there was an economic crisis, there was no work and we worked for €2 per hour. In a restaurant where I worked, I learned the job and now I am here (Folegandros) as a cook.” (GR_BD_003: Kamal, Pos. 31)

Another respondent recalls several of his first jobs in Greece, all very labour intense.

“I worked in the fields in Manolada, and I also worked as a dishwasher in restaurant kitchens.” (GR BD 005: Dewan Siddiqui, Pos. 61)

3.2.4. NGOs and Religious Groups

NGOs offer some support, however, their scope of assistance for non-refugee Bangladeshi migrants can be limited, with some NGOs explicitly stating they only work with refugees. This leaves a significant gap for many Bangladeshi migrants who do not fall under refugee status. Religious groups are not explicitly mentioned as a direct source of material or practical support in the provided documents, though religion is noted as a unifying cultural element within the community.

3.3. Isolation and Challenges in Accessing Support

Isolation is a recurring theme, particularly for those without immediate family in Greece or those who struggle with the language. The inability to travel back home due to document issues or financial constraints contributes to this isolation. One of the respondents confesses never going back home once in 13 years.

“[Interviewer] After you obtained your residence documents, did you return to Bangladesh? [Respondent] No, I have never gone back. [Interviewer] Why not? You have not returned to Bangladesh in thirteen years? [Respondent] No, I have never gone back. I have never managed to save enough money. The trip is very expensive.” (GR_BD_005: Dewan Siddiqui, Pos. 84-87)

Women, especially those who do not speak Greek or English, face particular challenges in accessing support and integrating into wider society, often being dependent on their husbands. The lack of interpreters in public services, such as hospitals and police stations, further

exacerbates feelings of helplessness and vulnerability. This linguistic barrier can prevent individuals from effectively communicating their needs or claiming their rights.

One of the respondents explains how these barriers are felt and points out the lack of interpretation services.

“Because they do not know or speak the language. There should be interpretation everywhere, including at the police.” (GR_BD_009: Salma, Pos. 96)

3.3.1. Advice and Informational Support

Informational support is crucial, especially regarding legal procedures and navigating the Greek bureaucracy. Lawyers are frequently cited as key sources of reliable information and practical assistance, particularly for complex document-related issues. Community organizations like KEERFA (Greek NGO) and ANTARSYA (Greek political party) are also mentioned as providing valuable advice and support on rights and procedures. However, the reliability of information can be an issue, with some migrants relying on gossip and rumours. The need for clear, accessible information about the Greek system, including language learning and legal rights, is a significant unmet need.

While Bangladeshi migrants in Greece rely heavily on transnational family networks and internal community solidarity for various forms of support, significant gaps exist in institutional and broader societal assistance. The challenges of legal status, language barriers, and occasional discrimination often push migrants to rely on informal networks, highlighting both the resilience of these networks and the systemic vulnerabilities faced by the community.

3.3.2. Differences Experienced by Bangladeshi Migrants in Greece

Bangladeshi migrants in Greece encounter a range of differences related to gender, culture, religion, food, climate, language, nationality, ethnicity, and appearance, significantly impacting their adaptation, public and workplace encounters, and overall sense of belonging. These differences often manifest as stereotyping, discrimination, and challenges in integration.

3.3.3. Ethnic Discrimination

Discrimination based on ethnicity and appearance is a prominent theme. Several interviewees recount direct experiences of racism from the Greek public. One individual describes being told to "go back to your country" and being looked at angrily in public transport. Another, a woman wearing a headscarf, was confronted with racist remarks and told to return to her country.

“[Interviewer] Have you ever had problems with the Greek police or with Greek people? Has anyone ever treated you badly? [Respondent] Not particularly. A little, because I wear a headscarf. Once, outside my house, a racist man said to me, "Why are you here in Greece? Go back to your country, go back to your country. Why are you here? Why are you wearing a headscarf?" He was a very bad person.” (GR_BD_009: Salma, Pos. 73-74)

The perception of being visibly identifiable due to skin colour makes Bangladeshi individuals targets for police identity checks, similarly to African migrants.

“I have experienced it too. I have been walking down the street when suddenly the police stopped me and asked for my documents. I would ask, "Wait a minute, what do you want?" Once they realised that I spoke fluent Greek, everything changed.” (GR_BD_006: Farhan, Pos. 164-165)

Even those who speak fluent Greek report that police attitudes change only after their language proficiency is demonstrated. The fear of police harassment and arbitrary detention is widespread, leading many to avoid reporting incidents.

Beyond individual encounters, the broader societal perception of migrants is often negative. One interviewee notes that if a migrant makes a mistake, it is generalized to represent the entire country, unlike how Greeks are perceived when individuals commit a wrongdoing. This stereotyping contributes to a sense of exclusion and a feeling that the country has not always treated them fairly despite their contributions. The period of Golden Dawn's activity was particularly difficult, with migrants experiencing physical attacks and police inaction.

One of the respondents recalls these difficult moments when the Golden Dawn entered the parliament and became the third largest political party, with anti-migrant and fascist positions increasingly normalised in the Greek society, until the dismantlement of the Golden Dawn party.

“[Respondent] We have gone through many things in our lives. At one point, we were even forced to leave Greece for a period because of the attacks carried out by Golden Dawn in 2012. [Interviewer] Did you return to Bangladesh? [Respondent] No. We did not go back to Bangladesh. We went to Denmark for a while and applied for asylum there. [Interviewer] Yes, because those were very difficult years. That is why I mentioned earlier that you attended school in central Athens during a particularly hostile period. [Respondent] Yes. I was personally attacked by members of Golden Dawn, although my brother was not. I was with a group of friends, all of us migrants, in a public square. I was still a minor. The police stopped me, and although I had photocopies of my documents with me, I was not carrying the originals because I was afraid of losing them. They detained me and told me they were taking me for an identity check. [Interviewer] So after you had been attacked by members

of Golden Dawn, the police decided to detain you for an identity check? [Respondent] It was at the very beginning of that period, when the attacks were taking place. Fortunately, my brother happened to be passing by on a bus and saw the police stopping me. He got off the bus, asked what had happened, went home to collect my original documents and brought them back. Only then did they release me.” (GR_BD_006: Farhan, Pos. 192-200)

3.3.4. Language Barriers and Cultural Adaptation

Language is a significant barrier to integration and access to services. Many migrants, especially older generations or those who arrived as adults, struggle to learn Greek. This impacts their ability to navigate public services, healthcare, and even daily interactions. The lack of interpreters in hospitals is a critical issue, potentially leading to misdiagnosis or inadequate care. Children who arrive young or are born in Greece often learn Greek quickly, sometimes becoming cultural mediators for their parents. However, even for those fluent in Greek, initial school experiences can be challenging due to language differences and difficulties in forming social circles.

Cultural differences also play a role. The Bangladeshi community is often described as close-knit and sometimes insular, with strong traditional values that can clash with Greek society or even with the aspirations of younger generations. For women, cultural expectations can limit their independence and opportunities for work or social engagement. The pressure to conform to community expectations, particularly regarding social behaviour and marriage, can be stifling for younger individuals who have grown up in Greece.

3.3.5. Gender and Religious Differences

Gender roles and religious practices present distinct differences. For Bangladeshi women, particularly those who adhere to traditional dress like the headscarf, religious identity can lead to discrimination.

The expectation for women to remain at home or work within the family business is prevalent, and those who seek education or independent careers may face criticism from their community. One interviewee's mother, for example, faced negative comments for pursuing a chef's qualification. The interviewee recalls how her mother faced the criticism:

“[Respondent] Yes, yes, yes. She attended a vocational school to obtain a chef's qualification. She finished a short while ago, and she absolutely loved it. But in general, it was also extremely difficult for her because people from our own community criticised her. She received many negative comments. [Interviewer] What kind of comments? Like, "Why are you doing this now?" [Respondent] Yes, yes, yes. They would tell her, "You are a woman. Why are you going to work? What do you need this for?" And things like that. Of course, it upset her, but she did not give up.” (GR_BD_007: Lamisa, Pos. 76-78)

This highlights a tension between traditional cultural norms and the desire for personal growth and independence in the host country. The lack of support for women who are widowed or single mothers within the community can be severe, with some facing harassment and pressure to remarry.

3.3.6. Climate and Environmental Adaptation

Adaptation to Greece's climate and environment also presents minor, though notable, differences. One migrant found Greek winters cold, especially when working in fields, leading

to physical discomfort. Another experienced skin rashes from fig tree sap, indicating a lack of familiarity with local agricultural conditions and a need for protective gear. These instances point to practical challenges in adapting to a new natural environment and working conditions.

3.3.7. Workplace and Public Encounters

Workplace encounters can be mixed. While some migrants find supportive employers, others face exploitation, low wages, and lack of social insurance.

One of the respondents confesses how his employer was a tremendous source of support. He personally called the Greek Embassy in India and argued with them, saying, "I need my employee here in Greece. Do something." In some cases, people who went the extra mile for their employers or their friends were crucial in overcoming bureaucratic barriers and hurdles.

“[Interviewer] I have noticed that if someone is hardworking and happens to have a good employer, which is a matter of luck and certainly not always the case, that employer can sometimes help with administrative matters as well. [Respondent] He helped my father a great deal. For example, my father had an old motorcycle that frequently broke down. His employer provided him with a new company motorcycle, which he was also allowed to use outside work. He supported him in many different ways. Eventually, my father left that job because he found a better one, but they remained in contact. He was an exceptionally good employer.” (GR_BD_006: Farhan, Pos. 63-65)

Discrimination can also occur within the workplace, sometimes from colleagues rather than employers, particularly for women. The inability to speak Greek can make it difficult for newly arrived migrants to advocate for themselves or understand their rights.

Public encounters are often characterized by a sense of being an outsider. Despite living in Greece for many years and speaking the language, migrants can still be told to return to their country. The perception of migrants as a burden on the healthcare system, despite paying taxes, is also reported. However, there are also instances of positive interactions and support from Greek individuals and NGOs.

3.3.8. Sense of Belonging and Comparison

The sense of belonging is complex and often fragmented. Younger generations, born or raised in Greece, may feel a stronger connection to Greece but also struggle with their dual cultural identity. They often act as bridges between their parents' traditional world and Greek society. Some express a desire to leave Greece for better opportunities elsewhere in Europe, feeling that their education and skills are not adequately valued. Older migrants, despite decades in Greece, may still feel like outsiders, particularly due to language barriers and persistent discrimination. The comparison with Bangladesh is often framed by the economic opportunities Greece offers, despite the hardships. However, for those who have spent most of their lives in Greece, returning to Bangladesh is not a viable option, as they no longer feel a strong connection to their country of origin. One of the accounts is particularly telling:

“I have lived in Greece for twenty-two years. I have not even lived that many years in Bangladesh. I went to Bangladesh for one month. My mother and my father are there. It is very nice, but what can I do? I came back to Greece because my children are here.”
(GR_BD_009: Salma, Pos. 86)

The desire for family reunification is a strong motivator, but bureaucratic hurdles and financial constraints make it extremely difficult.

Bangladeshi migrants in Greece navigate a landscape of significant differences, particularly in terms of national identity language, and cultural expectations. While some find acceptance and build lives, many face persistent discrimination and challenges in fully belonging to Greek society. The experiences highlight the need for greater understanding, support, and policy changes to facilitate better integration and address systemic inequalities.

3.3.9. Education as a Motive and Pathway to Integration

Education emerges as a significant motive for migration and a crucial pathway to integration for Bangladeshi families in Greece. One interviewee explicitly states the desire to bring his family to Greece so that his children can attend better schools, particularly for his daughter. This highlights the perceived superior educational opportunities in Greece compared to Bangladesh. For children who arrive at a young age or are born in Greece, schooling plays a pivotal role in their adaptation and language acquisition. Several interviewees, who arrived as children, recount starting Greek school immediately upon arrival, often facing initial language barriers but quickly adapting. The support from teachers and peers was instrumental in their language learning process.

Some of these children educated in Greece remember their struggles but also the support they received.

“Perhaps. I do remember experiencing bullying because of my weight and the colour of my skin. It was not only from Greek children but also from the children of other migrant families. I did not know the language at all and could only speak broken English. I was in the third grade of primary school. However, in the fourth grade, the school principal was an exceptionally kind person. He took me and a girl from Afghanistan aside and gave us individual lessons at school to teach us Greek. It was a wonderful experience. Within a year

I had learned Greek, not perfectly, but well enough to communicate with the other children at school.” (GR_BD_006: Farhan, Pos. 55)

“The school helped, but so did my friends, who were Greek boys and girls. I had a group of friends who corrected every mistake I made in Greek. They were always telling me, "We don't say it like that; we say it like this." That is how I learned to speak the language more correctly.” (GR_BD_007: Lamisa, Pos. 68)

However, when it comes to the path to citizenship for children born or raised in Greece is often tied to their educational trajectory. One individual note that to apply for citizenship, one should have attended a Greek school from kindergarten, and completing six years of schooling (secondary education) is a key criterion. This stresses the importance placed on formal education within the Greek system for integration and legal status. The shift in laws, encouraging parents to enrol children in Greek schools for citizenship purposes, has also led to a decline in attendance at community-run Bengali schools, raising concerns about the preservation of cultural identity and mother tongue.

3.4. Children Left in Bangladesh and Transnational Parenting

The phenomenon of children being left in Bangladesh while parents migrate to Greece is a recurring theme, leading to complex transnational parenting arrangements. Several interviewees describe their wives and children remaining in Bangladesh, with the migrant parent sending remittances and maintaining contact through online video calls.

“[Interviewer] How has your role in the family changed since migration? [Respondent] My wife has to take care of everything. I send money, but she is there and has to do all the tasks. She also takes care of my mother now.” (GR_BD_001: Shakibul, Pos. 9)

This separation often means the migrant parent misses significant family events, such as the illness or death of a close relative, due to lack of proper documentation or travel restrictions.

Transnational parenting involves the migrant parent making crucial decisions for the family from afar, such as home repairs, and providing financial support as the sole income earner. The emotional toll of this separation is evident, with family members, including the migrant's mother and younger children, sometimes crying during video calls. The responsibility of care for children and elderly relatives often falls on the spouse and other family members remaining in Bangladesh.

“I discuss it with my wife for every decision. For example, last month we were discussing changing some tiles because they popped up and if they break, it is dangerous for the children and for my mother and she called me to decide because it was expensive.” (GR_BD_001: Shakibul, Pos. 18)

The desire for family reunification is a primary motivation for many migrants, driving their efforts to secure stable employment and legal status in Greece. However, the process of reunification is consistently described as difficult, expensive, and lengthy, often taking years. Bureaucratic hurdles, such as the lack of a Greek embassy in Bangladesh and the need to travel to India for visa applications, add significant complexity and cost. Some families face additional challenges, such as the need for DNA tests to prove paternity or the translation of medical documents for children with special needs. The delays in residence permit renewals further

complicate travel and reunification efforts, with individuals unable to leave Greece for fear of not being able to return.

Separation from family and relatives is a common consequence of migration. Children often grow up without one parent for extended periods, relying on the remaining parent and other family members for care. In some cases, children are left with grandparents or other relatives in Bangladesh while both parents are in Greece. The emotional impact of this separation is significant, with children missing their absent parent and relatives back home. When a parent in Greece faces difficulties, such as the death of a spouse, the care arrangements for children become even more critical, often relying on extended family members like siblings to provide support. The absence of a parent can also lead to children taking on significant responsibilities, such as acting as cultural mediators and assisting parents with bureaucratic tasks and language translation.

3.5. Future Orientation and Aspirations

The future orientation of children born or raised in Greece often diverges from that of their parents. Many express a desire to leave Greece for other European countries or the United States, driven by perceptions of better economic opportunities, career progression, and less bureaucratic hurdles. They often feel that their education and skills are not adequately valued in Greece. The lengthy and complex process of obtaining Greek citizenship, even for those born in Greece or who have completed their schooling there, contributes to this desire to seek opportunities elsewhere.

“My own goal, and also what my parents always wanted for me, was to move to another country. My parents wanted me to go to the United States, but I am not interested in that. I would prefer another European country, ideally the Netherlands. Before moving, however, I

want to secure a job there. I do not want to relocate first and then start looking for work. That is my main goal. I am doing well in my current job in Greece. It provides everything a family needs, but only that.” (GR_BD_006: Farhan, Pos. 147)

Despite their aspirations to leave, many children maintain a strong connection to their Bangladeshi heritage, often speaking Bengali at home and participating in cultural activities. However, they also navigate cultural tensions, particularly regarding traditional expectations from their community versus their more independent, Westernized upbringing in Greece. Some interviewees express immense pride in their Bangladeshi identity while acknowledging their gratitude to Greece for citizenship. The younger generation often acts as a bridge between their parents' traditional values and the realities of life in Greece, sometimes leading to intergenerational conflicts but also fostering resilience and adaptability.

“Yes, yes, yes. I want to move to another country and start a new chapter in my life. It is not that I have always been surrounded by people from my own country. The problem is that there have been many things I could not do and still cannot do freely. That is because my parents are always thinking about what other people will say. This is very common in our culture. People care a great deal about what others will think [...] For example, I am twenty years old. I might want to come home at midnight, one o'clock or even two o'clock in the morning. I understand my parents' concerns, of course. But, more than anything, they worry about what other people from our community will say. They will say, "She came to Greece and became Greek." (GR_BD_007: Lamisa, Pos. 114-115).

The desire to provide a better future for their own children, often in a country other than Greece, is a recurring motivation.

3.6. Conclusions

The experiences documented here show that Bangladeshi migration to Greece is shaped by a persistent gap between formal rights and their practical accessibility. Residence permits, family reunification and citizenship provide potential routes towards security and inclusion, yet prolonged delays, demanding evidentiary requirements, high legal costs and weak institutional coordination frequently turn these pathways into sources of uncertainty. Administrative obstacles also extend into healthcare, employment and mobility, pushing migrants towards lawyers, brokers and informal community arrangements. These networks provide indispensable support, but their importance also reveals the limited accessibility of formal institutions.

At the same time, the interviews demonstrate that Bangladeshi migrants are not simply passive recipients of exclusion. They sustain families through remittances, develop extensive systems of mutual assistance and act as linguistic and administrative intermediaries for newer arrivals. Their incorporation into Greek society nevertheless remains uneven. Ethnicisation, language barriers, workplace exploitation and restrictive gender expectations intersect with legal insecurity, while even those born or educated in Greece may continue to experience conditional belonging. For younger generations in particular, education strengthens linguistic and social integration but does not necessarily translate into confidence in a future in Greece. Their aspirations to move elsewhere indicate that integration is not secured through residence alone, but depends on credible access to rights, recognition and long-term opportunities.



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Annex A.

Table A. Stakeholders Mapping

Stakeholder	Level / Type	Role	Recent acts / actions	Links
International Labour Organization (ILO)	International organization	Promotes fair recruitment, labour standards, safe migration, and skills governance; provides technical cooperation at the interface of labour markets and migrant protection.	Co-implements the EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership with BMET for 2024-2027, directly linking training and legal migration pathways.	https://www.ilo.org/ https://www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/supporting-talent-partnership-bangladesh
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	International organization	Provides technical assistance on migration governance, integration, safe migration, return, and data systems; supports projects at national and regional levels.	IOM Romania's InterACT project and the EU-funded Prottasha II initiative on reintegration and migration governance in Bangladesh.	https://www.iom.int/ https://romania.iom.int/interact-active-participation-and-integrated-support-migrants-romania-region-1 https://bangladesh.iom.int/
World Bank and other development actors	International / development	Shape migration governance indirectly through analysis of remittances, labour markets, skills, reintegration, and development impacts.	Provide comparative evidence that informs strategy, act as secondary shapers, policy and consultancy providers rather than direct regulators.	https://www.worldbank.org/

Stakeholder	Level / Type	Role	Recent acts / actions	Links
United Nations / Global Compact for Migration	International / UN framework	Provides a global framework for safe, orderly and regular migration across all phases (departure, transit, return, reintegration).	Bangladesh endorsed the GCM and launched a National Action Plan 2026–2030 with IOM and EU support to align migration governance with GCM objectives and SDG 10.7.	https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact
United Nations / OHCHR / Committee on Migrant Workers	International / human rights treaty body	Establishes binding legal standards on migrant workers' rights, including non- discrimination, fair wages, and family unity.	Bangladesh ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (2011).	https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-rights-all-migrant-workers
International Labour Organization (ILO) – Recruitment Standards	International organization / labour standards	Sets international standards on recruitment practices, employment agencies, and migrant worker protections.	Adoption of Convention C181 (1997) and 2019 Fair Recruitment Guidelines; Bangladesh encouraged to align legislation and practices with these standards.	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/fair-recruitment/lang--en/index.htm

Stakeholder	Level / Type	Role	Recent acts / actions	Links
International Labour Organization (ILO) – Fair Recruitment Initiative	International organization / policy initiative	Promotes ethical recruitment models and reduces exploitation and recruitment costs.	Bangladesh participated in pilot programmes (e.g. Qatar corridor), achieving significant reductions in recruitment costs for migrant workers.	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/fair-recruitment/lang--en/index.htm
Colombo Process	Regional / intergovernmental (Asia)	Facilitates cooperation among labour-sending countries on migration governance, worker protection and remittances.	Bangladesh hosted the 2011 Dhaka Ministerial Consultation (“Migration with Dignity”), promoting fair recruitment and migrant protection.	https://www.colomboprocess.org/
Bali Process on People Smuggling and Trafficking	Regional / intergovernmental	Addresses irregular migration, trafficking, and smuggling routes, including those involving Bangladesh.	Bangladesh participates in regional training programmes and cooperation initiatives, including law enforcement capacity-building (e.g. Cox’s Bazar initiatives).	https://www.baliprocess.net/
European Commission (DG HOME, DG EMPL,	EU - supranational	Shapes EU labour migration policy, proposes directives and policy frameworks,	Recent actions: the EU-Bangladesh Partnership and Cooperation	https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/

Stakeholder	Level / Type	Role	Recent acts / actions	Links
DG INTPA and related services)		negotiates cooperation with third countries, funds migration governance projects, and supports legal pathways.	Agreement initialled on 20 April 2026, and support for the EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership (2024-2027).	https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-resettlement/talent-partnerships_en
European Parliament and Council of the European Union	EU - supranational	Adopt binding legislation on legal migration, labour mobility, admission, residence rights, and procedural protections for third-country nationals.	Relevant acts include the revised EU Blue Card framework, the original and recast Single Permit Directive, the Seasonal Workers Directive, and the 2024 Pact on Migration and Asylum package.	https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/
European Labour Authority (ELA)	EU - supranational agency	Supports cooperation among member states on labour mobility, posting, undeclared work, and enforcement issues relevant to third-country nationals and complex subcontracting chains.	The 2025 ELA publication on posting of third-country nationals, recruitment patterns, and enforcement issues.	https://www.ela.europa.eu/
European Migration Network	EU/international - knowledge and monitoring actors	Produce statistical series, analytical reports, and comparative migration	EMN Asylum and Migration Overviews, Eurostat migration	https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn_en

Stakeholder	Level / Type	Role	Recent acts / actions	Links
(EMN), Eurostat, and OECD		evidence used by governments, researchers, and EU institutions to frame policy and assess migration trends.	series, the European Annual Asylum and Migration Report 2025, and OECD International Migration Outlook.	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat https://www.oecd.org/migration/
Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE)	Bangladesh - public/state	Lead Bangladeshi ministry for overseas employment, migrant welfare, regulation of labour migration channels, and oversight of state migration institutions.	Continues to steer overseas employment policy and supervise state agencies responsible for migrant deployment, welfare, and regulation under the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013.	https://probashi.gov.bd/ https://moewoe.gov.bd/
Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET)	Bangladesh - public/state	Registers migrant workers, provides training, certification, and labour migration administration, and is central to skills formation for overseas employment.	BMET is a co-implementing partner in the EU-Bangladesh Talent Partnership (2024-2027), linking Bangladeshi skills development to European labour demand.	https://bmet.gov.bd/

Stakeholder	Level / Type	Role	Recent acts / actions	Links
Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd (BOESL)	Bangladesh - public/state enterprise	Public recruitment agency that channels overseas employment through state-regulated recruitment and helps reduce dependence on unregulated intermediaries.	Remains part of Bangladesh's official overseas employment infrastructure and is relevant where governments seek safer and more transparent migration pathways.	https://www.boesl.gov.bd/
Wage Earners' Welfare Board / Probashi Kallyan Bank	Bangladesh - public/state	Provide welfare services, financial support, insurance-related assistance, and migrant-oriented financial instruments for overseas workers and returnees.	Continue to underpin Bangladesh's migrant welfare architecture, including support mechanisms linked to safe migration and reintegration agendas.	https://www.wewb.gov.bd/ https://www.pkb.gov.bd/
Bangladesh Parliament / Government of Bangladesh	Bangladesh - public/state	Creates and amends the legal framework governing overseas employment, recruitment regulation, and migrant protection.	The Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013 and the earlier Overseas Employment Policy 2006 remains part of the policy background.	https://www.parliament.gov.bd/ https://cabinet.gov.bd/
Bangladesh Embassy in Athens / Bangladeshi diplomatic missions	Bangladesh-Greece transnational/state	Provides identity verification, consular assistance, document support, and operational coordination in the	The Bangladesh embassy in Athens is instrumental in verifying applicants and coordinating	https://athens.mofa.gov.bd/

Stakeholder	Level / Type	Role	Recent acts / actions	Links
		implementation of migration channels for Bangladeshi nationals.	implementation of the bilateral Greece-Bangladesh MoU.	
Licensed private recruitment agencies	Bangladesh, Romania, Greece - private/transnational	Match workers with employers, organise documentation and mobility chains, and can strongly influence costs, debt exposure, and access to jobs.	Their operation remains tightly tied to state regulation: Bangladeshi law and Romanian labour rules prohibit or restrict charging workers for recruitment and placement in the ways highlighted in your notes.	https://probashi.gov.bd/ https://www.inspectiamuncii.ro/
Bangladeshi diaspora networks and informal community brokers	Transnational / community	Support settlement, job matching, housing access, information flows, remittances, and family-linked migration chains, while also sometimes reproducing dependency on informal brokerage.	No single legislative act is attached to them but they remain crucial for understanding how migration is actually organised across Bangladesh, Greece, and Romania.	Links to be added
Foreign ministries and bilateral diplomatic channels	Romania, Greece, Bangladesh - inter-state	Negotiate bilateral arrangements, consular coordination, readmission procedures,	Especially relevant for the Greece-Bangladesh MoU, the EU-Bangladesh PCA	https://www.mae.ro/ https://www.mfa.gr/en/ https://mofa.gov.bd/

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		and broader cooperation frameworks that affect migration governance.	context, and any return/readmission cooperation or diplomatic coordination around migrant status.	
Government of Bangladesh & Government of South Korea	Bilateral / labour migration agreement	Provides a structured labour migration channel with clear cost allocation and recruitment procedures.	2018 MoU includes employer-paid recruitment costs (visa, travel, tests), reflecting ILO fair recruitment standards.	https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/migrant-worker-recruitment-malpractices-persist-bangladesh-government
Government of the United Kingdom & Government of Bangladesh	Bilateral / return agreement	Regulates return and readmission of irregular Bangladeshi migrants.	2024 agreement streamlines removal procedures for irregular migrants, including failed asylum seekers and overstayers.	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-bangladesh-sign-agreement-to-tackle-illegal-migration
Ministry of Migration and Asylum	Greece - public/state	Main Greek authority shaping immigration governance, work and residence pathways, and the implementation of bilateral and EU migration instruments affecting Bangladeshi workers.	Central actor in implementing the 2022 Greece-Bangladesh MoU and subsequent regularisation and residence procedures for Bangladeshi nationals.	https://migration.gov.gr/en/

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Greek Parliament / Hellenic Republic	Greece - public/state	Ratifies bilateral migration instruments and adopts national migration and social integration legislation governing residence, labour access, and status regularisation.	Ratified the 2022 MoU with Bangladesh through Law 4959/2022; Law 5038/2023 and Law 5078/2023 as relevant amendments/support measures.	https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/ https://migration.gov.gr/en/migration-policy/metanastefiki-nomothesia/
Greek Ministry of Labour and Social Security / Labour Inspectorate	Greece - public/state	Oversees labour standards, worker protection, and working conditions for migrant workers, including those recruited under bilateral or national admission channels.	Continues to supervise labour conditions in sectors with high dependence on migrant labour, such as agriculture and construction, which are central to Bangladeshi labour mobility.	https://ypergasias.gov.gr/en/ https://www.hli.gov.gr/
Employers and employers' associations in agriculture, construction, services, logistics and manufacturing	Romania, Greece - private sector	Generate demand for migrant labour, lobby for easier admissions, help shape recruitment channels, and influence the pace of regularisation and quota-setting.	Their importance has grown as both Romania and Greece confront labour shortages and increasingly rely on third-country labour, including Bangladeshi workers.	https://www.ccir.ro/ https://www.sev.org.gr/en/

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Migrant rights NGOs, service providers, and advocacy groups	Romania, Greece, transnational - civil society	Provide information, legal aid, integration support, translation/mediation, advocacy on rights violations, and public pressure for more humane and enforceable migration governance.	Caritas in Romania and organisations such as Generation 2.0 and METAdrasi in Greece act as key support and advocacy stakeholders.	https://caritasromania.ro/ https://g2red.org/ https://metadrasi.org/en/
Trade unions and worker-protection actors	Romania, Greece, EU - labour/civil society	Can monitor labour abuses, represent workers, support complaints, and pressure employers and governments to uphold equal treatment and lawful working conditions.	Remain relevant where labour migration expands into sectors with weak enforcement and high vulnerability to exploitation.	https://www.etuc.org/en https://www.bns.ro/ https://gsee.gr/en/
Romanian Ministry of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity / Government of Romania	Romania - public/state	Sets annual admission contingents for newly admitted foreign workers, frames labour migration policy, and promoted administrative digitalisation for employer access to non-EU labour.	Romania approved a 2026 contingency of 90,000 foreign workers and launched/advanced the Work in Romania digital platform to streamline recruitment and permit processes.	https://mmuncii.gov.ro/ https://workinromania.gov.ro/

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General Inspectorate for Immigration (IGI)	Romania - public/state	Issues employment authorisations, residence permits, and implements the legal regime governing entry, stay, and employment of third-country nationals in Romania.	Continues to enforce the migrants' regime and work-authorisation system under OUG 194/2002 and OG/UG 25/2014; operationally central to employer sponsorship and migrant regularisation procedures.	https://igi.mai.gov.ro/
National Agency for Employment (ANOFM)	Romania - public/state	Provides labour-market data on shortages, vacancy pressures, and occupational demand that inform state decisions on foreign- worker contingents and workforce planning.	Updates shortage occupation lists and labour-market needs.	https://www.anofm.ro/
Labour Inspectorate (Inspectia Muncii)	Romania - public/state	Monitors compliance with labour law, verifies employment contracts and working conditions, and enforces rules against charging workers for mediation and labour placement services.	Continues to supervise employment conditions for foreign workers and circulates guidance on the lawful employment of third-country nationals in Romania.	https://www.inspectiamuncii.ro/

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Romanian Parliament and Government	Romania - public/state	Adopt and amend the legal architecture governing foreigners, labour migration, residence, and work authorisation in Romania.	Relevant recent acts include Legea nr. 53/2025 modifying acts in the field of foreigners, alongside ongoing application of OUG 194/2002 and OUG 25/2014.	https://www.cdep.ro/ https://www.gov.ro/ https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/297068