

The needs of the Moldovan diaspora through the prism of Maslow's Hierarchy

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Abstract. *One of the important effects of migration for the entire world is the creation of diasporas abroad. The creation of the Moldovan diaspora represents a relatively new process. This article presents the evolution of the needs of the Moldovan diaspora through the prism of Maslow's hierarchy as well as the ways in which these basic needs along with the self-fulfilment needs can be satisfied. The author also describes the evolution of the needs of the Moldovan diaspora throughout the seven editions of the Congress of the Moldovan Diaspora, the strengths, the aspects requiring improvement and the suggestions that would help the members of the diaspora meet their aspirations and goals.*

Keywords: *diaspora, migrants' needs, countries of origin, development, Maslow's hierarchy, motivation.*

Introduction

The classic term 'diaspora' enters the Romanian language from the French vocabulary and has originally been borrowed from Greek, where it used to refer to all the Hebrew communities dispersed due to the fall of Jerusalem. It was also defined as an ethnic group found outside its country of origin. The word is composed of the prefix '*dia*', meaning "around" and '*spora*' – a word whose Greek meaning is

"scatter". However, the previously presented definition referring to the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem bears a negative sentiment related to the loss of their ancestor's land and desire to retrieve it. In his work "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" published in 1991, William Safran, a political science professor at the University of Colorado, refers to the notions of trauma, exile and nostalgia within the definition of the word "diaspora". He also sets out a list of characteristics of diasporas:

- Dispersal from the "centre" to two or more foreign regions;
- Keeping a "collective memory" of the homeland;
- Partial or total exclusion or marginalisation from the host society;
- Desire to return home;
- Supporting the country of origin;
- Sharing a collective conscience, having reciprocal solidarity. [4]

However, this attempt at presenting a definition for "diaspora" based on the memories of a single diaspora community – the Hebrew one, turned out not to be sufficiently comprehensive. Later, in 1997, James Clifford - a historian at the University of California, Santa Cruz, defined the term "diaspora" using ethnographic approaches, through the prism of the historical variety and the complexity of the socio-economic factors, which often form the basis for the migration processes. In 2012, the International Organization for Migration, in its publication "Comment associer les Diasporas au développement", defines the term "diaspora". According to Professor Gabriel Scheffer (University of Jerusalem): "*Modern diasporas represent ethnic minority groups of migrant origins, residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands.*"[8] Currently, the specialised literature uses the term "diaspora" in the context of defining an ethnic group located outside the country of origin, either temporarily or for an indefinite period of time, or even permanently.

Both recent immigrants, as well as those established for a longer time period in the host countries, have in common their identification with the country of origin and the desire of strengthening their relations with the community of their homeland.

The national Moldovan strategy “Diaspora-2025” defines the term “diaspora” as the totality of Moldovan citizens and of their descendants temporarily or permanently settled outside the country, as well as the communities formed by them. [9] Regardless of the specific motivation one might have for leaving his home country, all factors that determine this decision originate in the desire to meet certain needs, such as improvement of the quality of life of the individual and his family, protection against

environmental degradation, avoidance of political conflicts and natural disasters, opportunities for professional growth etc.

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs

In 1954, the American humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow introduced the concept of the *human hierarchy of needs*. He argued that human beings are motivated by certain unsatisfied needs and that the needs positioned on the lower levels of the “pyramid of needs” must be satisfied before those closer to the top. Although all needs are instinctive, not all are equally strong. The strongest needs were placed at the bottom of the pyramid of needs. Higher the position of a need within the pyramid – the weaker and more specific to the individual it becomes. [11]

Figure1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Source: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>



If we look at Maslow’s theory, which is, perhaps, the simplest theory of human motivation, *motivation* is the basis of human actions and one requires to first satisfy his most basic needs. Analysing the phenomenon of migration in Moldova in the last 20 years, one can apply this theory to justify some citizens’ decision to leave the country, as well as to identify the main needs that determined this

decision. Individuals who did lack the minimal resources for satisfying their *basic needs* usually tend to satisfy them by migrating to areas where these resources are available. This correlation between the citizens’ needs and the level of their availability in different regions of the world is exploited by some companies, organisations and even governments. [2]

The needs of the Moldovan diaspora in the light of the seven Diaspora Congresses

With more than 1 million out of 3.5 million Moldovan citizens residing abroad, according to the data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics on 1st of January 2016, Moldova had to learn on the fly how to design diaspora related policies, as the migration process has been continuously intensifying. The institutional and regulatory cooperation between the host country organisations representing the Moldovan diaspora, despite all the developments since 2000 still cannot be regarded as a framework corresponding to the magnitude of the migration phenomenon. However, by the Government Decision no. 1322 from 29th of December 2000 the main directives for the support of Moldovans residing abroad were adopted, being categorised in four areas: human rights, culture, education and training, social protection [1]. Later, action programs aiming at strengthening the collaboration between the Moldovan diaspora and the national authorities have been periodically added to them. The most important achievement in this respect is the establishment of the practice of organising the Congress of the Moldovan Diaspora. Considering the topics discussed at these congresses, as well as the resolutions drafted by diaspora representatives at the end of each meeting, we can outline an evolution of the needs of the Moldovan diaspora according to Maslow's hierarchy.

The first congress of this kind was held in Chisinau from 7-9 October 2004 with the participation of 250 delegates from 18 countries and had a formal character. Neither the press nor the organisers did not promote the event in the media. Being at an early stage, the congress did not result in the adoption of any important decisions. The second congress was held in Chisinau from 12-14 October 2006 and analysed the program of actions for the support of Moldovans residing abroad for the period of 2006-2009.

In 2007, IOM Moldova, in collaboration with the Kiel Institute for the World Economy conducted the study "Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova".

According to the obtained results, nearly half of the Moldovan emigrants residing in CIS countries and the EU and a third of the emigrants residing in other countries declared the insufficient subsistence means as the main reason for their emigration. Populations that migrate to an area with high living standards, are primarily looking to fulfil their basic needs. Thus, the difficulties encountered in satisfying the basic needs according to Maslow's hierarchy – the need for food, shelter, health assistance and other essential elements for the livelihood of the individual and his family – were the root cause of people emigrating from Moldova [3]. In his studies, Maslow claims that these needs are instinctive and without fulfilling the needs at the lower levels of the pyramid, an individual would not be able to fulfil those positioned on higher levels.

The organisation of the second Congress coincided with the period when the communities of migrants had already taken shape, and, having passed the stage of fulfilling their basic needs, were looking towards fulfilling their needs for personal and family safety. Some of the issues brought up at the second Congress of the Moldovan diaspora were: financial security, job security, the quality of the retirement plan, the need for security from being bullied and for general security that helps achieve peace of mind required for efficiently carrying out everyday activities. The opening of consulates and diplomatic missions in countries where communities of Moldovan emigrants had formed were also discussed.

The third edition of the Congress took place between 12-14 October 2008, there was organised the third edition of the congress dedicated to the anniversary of 650 years from the foundation of the Moldovan state. The issue discussed was the strengthening of relations with the Moldovan diaspora by the creation of a special fund to support Moldovan education and cultural development of the Moldovan diaspora, as well as opening a museum of the Moldovan diaspora. The issues discussed were related to the third category of needs from Maslow's hierarchy: the need of belonging to a group, to a community of social interaction. Once the physiological and security needs had been satisfied, the diaspora brought forward its need

to promote the Moldovan culture and communication among the fellow citizens in the communities of migrants, for which it required more informational support (through the provision of Moldovan periodicals, for example), an affordable telephone network etc. Unlike the representatives of the Diaspora, the natives of countries hosting our migrants, do not follow Maslow's hierarchy in the same way as the migrants, mainly because their physiological and safety needs have often already been ensured. Even satisfying the need of belonging to a social group is not always a problem. They are usually motivated by the desire of self-affirmation, which is usually difficult to achieve in highly developed societies.

From 12-14 October 2010, the fourth Congress of the Moldovan Diaspora took place. This forum brought together 110 Moldovans living in 31 countries and marked a qualitative transformation in the true activity of this platform of dialogue between the Moldovan authorities and the diaspora. It was the first time when the authorities have suggested to create a State Agency for the diaspora and to elaborate mechanisms to increase the involvement of the diaspora in the decision-making processes related to the economic, social, cultural and scientific development of the country. Some of the most important revindications of the forum participants were:

- A.** Including leaders of diaspora organisations in official delegations during the official visits of Moldovans abroad;
- B.** Support for the creation of Moldovan Cultural Centres in cities with a large Moldovan diaspora;
- C.** Promoting effective communication policies aimed at involving of the diaspora in the economic, social and political life of the Republic of Moldova;
- D.** Supporting the Moldovan Diaspora in promoting the European integration of the country and its general welfare.

Thus, the fourth congress raised the issue of increasing the level of self-esteem among the members of the diaspora. The main themes of the congress were: the strengthening of the communities belonging to the Moldovan diaspora in the view of promoting the national interests and a positive image of the Republic of Moldova; the mobilization of diaspora's

associations, of the central public authorities, the international organizations and the civil society of Moldova to jointly contribute to the sustainable development of the country. In the suite of events related to the Congress, book exhibitions, meetings with artists, visits to specific tourist attractions in Moldova and various other cultural events were organised.

At this level of the pyramid, Maslow shows two versions of the need for self-esteem: the "simpler" version represents the need for gaining respect and recognition from others and from the state, the need for gratitude, appreciation, good reputation, dignity and even dominance. The more "evolved" form is related to such feelings as trust, achievement, freedom and independence. The second form of self-esteem is considered superior because once achieved, it is more durable than the first one.

The need for belonging to a social community and the need for high self-esteem were further highlighted in the framework of the fifth Congress of Diaspora, which was held between 11-13 October 2012. The participants came from 50 Diaspora associations in 33 countries. This time, the issues raised were targeting the strengthening of collaboration between diasporas, as well as between diasporas and the Republic of Moldova, the creation of employment and business opportunities in the country, staying in contact with the individuals from the diaspora who were activating in the field of science, strengthening the economic bonds with the diaspora and the implementation of new projects for migrants, including opportunities for young people to study abroad [7]. On the second day of the Congress, the first "visible" results of the programs implemented by Moldova's International Organization for Migration were reviewed, namely the results of the "Pilot Program for Attracting Remittances in Economy" - "PARE 1+1", and of the study "Mapping the Moldovan Diaspora in Russia and four European countries of destination". The series of congress events also included the presentation of the results of the information and awareness campaign "No one is alone on earth" targeted at the Moldovan diaspora in Italy. A workshop was also conducted by the scientists from the Moldovan diaspora, with the title "Migrants and development of highly skilled

research and innovation in Moldova: the need for a structured (strategic) vision”.

The last level of Maslow's hierarchy contains the need for self-accomplishment, a necessity which, Maslow claims, can sometimes be stronger than the most fundamental needs, such as the need for nutrition. The need for self-accomplishment represents the individual's desire to achieve his full potential - the maximum level of self-realization. To satisfy this need, one requires opportunities for continuous self-improvement and creative development of his skills. Self-accomplishment also stands for the feeling of inner balance, integrity and general satisfaction with one's life. Although every individual has the instinctive need for self-realization, Maslow believes that there are very few people actively working towards satisfying this need simply because they have not yet fulfilled the most basic ones.

The Romanian economist Blănculescu Ionel, claims, in one of his interviews, that migration follows a kind of Maslow pyramid, which lists the human needs from the physiological needs to the aspirational ones. He also mentions that the main reason for Romanians emigrating preponderantly to Italy and Spain (countries whose organisational culture is easier to adapt to) is that they have greater ambitions than their state can support them in achieving. For the same reason, the Spanish and the Italians tend to migrate to France and the UK, while the Germans, the French and the British mostly migrate to the United States.

In 1970 Maslow published a revision of his pyramid from 1954, placing the *cognitive needs*, represented by the needs to learn, to understand and to explore, on the top of the new pyramid. The same evolutionary needs characterise the Moldovan communities abroad whose voice is now heard more often. Having established the practice of organising conferences every two years, the diaspora extended its space of influence, starting to regularly express its position on topics of current interest related to Moldova. Organising conferences for the diaspora allowed to promote the success stories of Moldovan emigrants who have come back and managed to launch a business at home. Such conferences allow

migrants to share their experience and useful information to other members of the diaspora. Another fruitful result is the launch of such grants programs as the Diaspora Engagement Hub, which aims to support Moldovans abroad in putting their ideas into practice and to valorise the human capital of the diaspora. The Gala of the Moldovan students, which celebrated the achievements of the exceptional undergraduate and graduate Moldovan students studying abroad is yet another fruitful project implemented, starting with 2013, by the Moldovan government in partnership with various international organizations in the view of supporting the members of the diaspora to achieve their individual potential and contribute to the national development.

In August 2016, the seventh Congress of the Diaspora resulted in the adoption of a resolution containing a number of claims made by the Diaspora, related to Moldova's political instability. It targets specific topics related not just to the interests of the Moldovans abroad, but also to the interests of all citizens of Moldova:

1. Publication of the results of the 2014 census;
2. Provision of the freedom of the press in Moldova;
3. Use of the financial resources allocated to the diaspora in an equitable manner, regardless of the political affiliation of individuals and communities.
4. Assurance of equality and equity between the diaspora associations;
5. Efficient organisation of the Congresses of the Moldovan Diaspora.

Reviewing the hierarchy needs, Maslow claims that, while the needs that the individual strives to satisfy move towards the top of the pyramid, some of them persist, namely those at the bottom of the pyramid – the physiological and safety needs. Without their satisfaction, fulfilling more 'evolved' needs become virtually impossible. While the individual might not pay much attention to them when they are satisfied, a complete neglect of these needs leads to a deep feeling of discomfort. [10] One may easily notice how the needs of the Moldovan diaspora have evolved from the first Congress, the diaspora

organisations reaching a level of maturity. At the same time, one can identify the persistence of several issues in the agenda of the Congress, remaining unresolved in the dialogue of diaspora with the national authorities, and namely: the issue of establishing well-functioning consulates and diplomatic missions, the issue of appointing honorary consuls, the issue of regularly distributing publications of interest to the members of the diaspora etc.

Maslow also mentions the important fact that, under stressful conditions, the current needs of an individual might go back to a lower level of the hierarchy. In conditions of war, the need for self-affirmation is sacrificed in front of the concerns related to life safety. In the same way, in the case of a job loss, an individual's priority becomes fulfilling the basic needs related to nutrition, sleep, availability of a shelter etc. In this regard, an interesting example is that of Greece: according to the study "Migration as a security issue", conducted in Bucharest in 2014, due to the economic downturn between 2010-2012, the gross rate of net migration was -4.7 %. The explanation of the transformation of Greece from an economically attractive country into one from which people want to emigrate is that the country has been hit hard by the global economic and financial crisis, experiencing a six-year-long recession. Also, the extremely high public debt put a lot of pressure on the Greek economy. [5]

Conclusions

Having examined the main topics and areas of interest discussed during the seventh Congress of the Moldovan Diaspora through the prism of Maslow's "Pyramid of Needs", we notice an evolution in the needs of the Moldovan Diaspora, with the current ones moving towards the level representing the need for self-realization. The fact that Moldovan citizens have not yet found "fertile ground" for satisfying their individual and community needs at home and choose to fulfil their aspirations in foreign countries does not mean that migration is by itself a lost cause.

The welfare of the society, ultimately, depends on a variety of factors, material wealth

being only one of them. For some individuals, living in a society that is free from such restrictions as preventing the free movement of labour, may be more important than the availability of opportunities of acquiring wealth. For others, the social environment in which they activate matters more than the degree of financial stratification of the society. In other words, *welfare is subjective*; it depends on personal considerations, priorities and preferences and is not always determined by the material conditions.

Nevertheless, there are certain actions that would considerably help the Moldovan diaspora in fulfilling its needs:

- The establishment of functional and reliable communication channels between the diaspora and the Moldovan citizens at home in the view of informing the former about the economic and work opportunities in Moldova.
- Distributing publications in the Romanian language to communicate events in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres to the diaspora and to consolidate the communities of Moldovan emigrants;
- Providing financial support to the already established diaspora associations as well as creating new ones;
- Supporting the involvement of the diaspora in the approval and implementation of policies for the future of Moldova;
- Supporting the activities of the Moldovan embassies and diplomatic missions in the host countries to improve the dialogue with the diaspora;

In conclusion, the diaspora represents a very important human resource for the country of origin. Having already passed the stage of fulfilling its basic needs in the frame of Maslow's pyramid, the Moldovan diaspora is ready to offer to its home country highly-skilled and motivated individuals. Moldova can considerably benefit from the abilities and knowledge these individuals have accumulated abroad by motivating and supporting them in implementing the projects they aspire towards, at home.

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