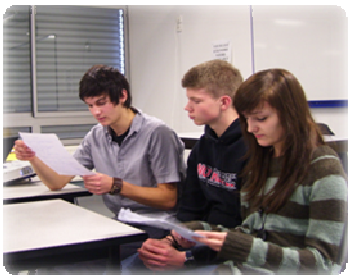
Immigrants; Past and Present; Towards a Better Integration?

2008 -2010

Author: Ioan Țiplea
Project coordinator: Mariana Hudrea
Students: Xanta Lukacsovits, Andrada Les
Translator: Simona Dicu
Romania

I. Preliminary consideration



Man is not only a 'social being', 'biological', 'reasoning', 'creative', but also 'metaphysical' or 'symbolic'. He is not only a '*homo sapiens*', a '*homo faber*', a '*homo ludens*' or a '*homo values*', but also a '*homo mobilis*', a being who moves from one place to another, who changes its position and condition within the society. Consequently, mobility represents a natural characteristic of the human being which should not be neglected at all. It expresses itself individually or within a group, according to two co-ordinates:

a) Horizontally- groups or people move from one place to another

b) Vertically- through the changes that may take place in the social hierarchy or from a professional point of view

Man has always moved from one place to another, from one community or culture to another, whether constrained by the given circumstances or freely. Horizontal mobility i.e. man's travelling to different places, has often turned into migration.

In history, migration has engaged not only isolated individuals, but mainly groups (ethnic, religious), people (Jews, Greeks, Italians) or races (Asian, African). Different forms of migration were and are still the same today: nomadism, moving of flocks, mass expulsion, deportation, exile, the refuge due to natural calamities or humanitarian refuge due to political or religious reasons. The migration phenomenon, in the above mentioned aspects, has represented a constant in the history of humanity, affecting all the regions of the globe. Its consequences, the legacy left in history, represent the multicultural communities which are now present all over the world.

Modernity, the Industrial Revolution and modern transport, has brought about the accentuation of the migratory phenomenon, which increased in intensity and volume, from one country to another and according to different events in history.

After World War II, in the European states belonging to the former Communist Bloc during the Cold War, both immigration and emigration have drastically diminished, due to the new policy imposed by the Kremlin.

After the radical political transformation that took place in Central and Eastern European countries in the last decade of the 20th century, the migration wave has accelerated due to the opening of the borders for all the citizens coming from these countries. After 1989, Europe has witnessed a real exodus, sometimes legal, but most often illegal, from the Eastern countries to the Western ones.

In the first decade of the 21st century, many Eastern European countries have become members of the European Union. As a result, the mirage of the rich West has animated the increasing volume and intensity of a new migration wave. At the same time, in the last 20 years, these countries have also turned into attractive destinations for migration waves coming from the Far East (China), the Near East (Pakistan, Afghanistan) or Central Africa (Nigeria, Somalia, etc.), but their impact is, at least at the moment, very little.

Having direct consequences, which were not always positive, the explosion of the migration phenomenon in the last two decades, has generated many real concerns and preoccupation for the citizens of Western Europe, searching solutions, making new laws and projects focused on this issue.

II The main objectives of the project. The Participants.

One of these international projects, part of the Comenius Program, is *Immigrants Past and Present; Towards a Better Integration?* There are partners (students and teachers) from six different countries.

1. Lycée du Granier, La Ravoire Cedex, France- Coordinating Institution
2. Georg Büchner-Gymnasium, Seelze, Germany
3. Polo Europeo della Conoscenza – Istituto Comprensivo Fumane "Lorenzi B." Fumane (Verona), Italy
4. Liceum Ogólnokształcące in Tarnów, Poland
5. Mihai Eminescu National College, Baia Mare, Romania
6. Bursa Polis Koleji / Bursa Police College, Bursa, Turkey

The representatives of the six partner institutions have focused on the following objectives:

1) Knowing and better understanding the complexity, dimensions and consequences of the migration phenomenon.
2) Anticipating its dimension and evolution, as accurately as possible- relying on serious studies, using the questionnaire as means of investigation.
3) Measuring and evaluating, as accurately as possible, the attitude and perception that the young people from these six countries have towards foreigners, in general and towards immigrants, in particular.
4) Promoting the values that a multicultural education implies (acceptance, tolerance, cooperation and respect towards any form of expression of diversity: ethnic, racial, linguistic, cultural, religious, etc.)
5) Encouraging the young generation to become responsible in connection with the necessity of an authentic knowledge of multicultural diversity.

Bearing these objectives in mind, on the first project reunion, organized by the coordinating institution, the partners (students and teachers) from the six countries, have debated and conceived a unique questionnaire, which contained 16 questions in connection to the project main theme and which was to be given to the students from the schools involved in this project.

III. Methodology of investigation: Processed results

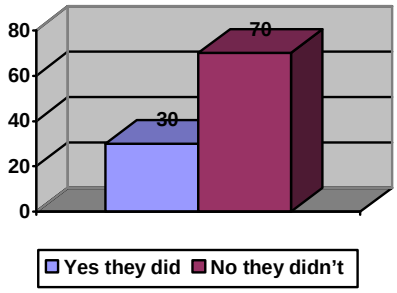
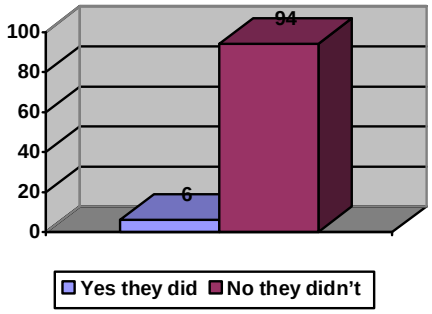
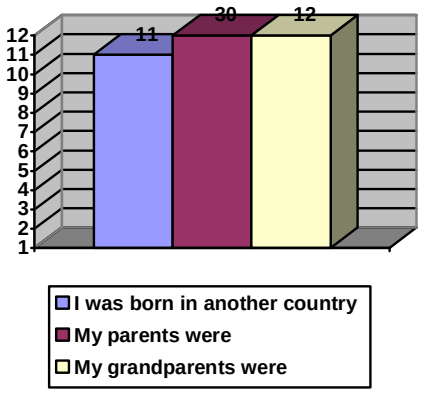
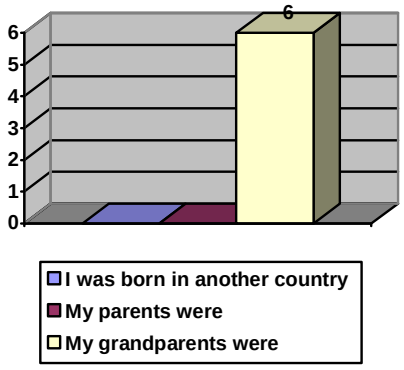
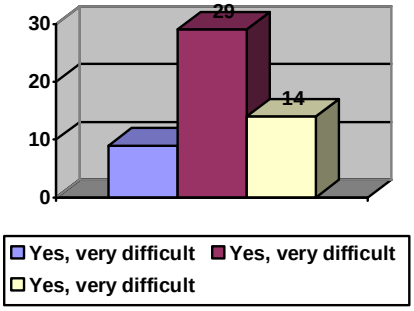
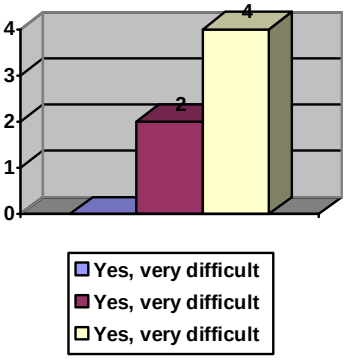
It is widely known or one can guess, even without necessarily being an expert in sociology, that any questionnaire measures and evaluates preferences, attitudes and opinions. However, opinions are convictions and therefore certitudes. They continuously change, being influenced by a multitude of factors such as: the collective mentality, the cultural background, the public opinion, the manipulative force of the mass media, the level of understanding of the respondents, the degree of seriousness and the affective state.

Taking these things into consideration, as we have previously agreed with our partners, we have administered the questionnaire at random to 100 pupils from National College 'Mihai Eminescu', a sample selected out of 850 pupils.

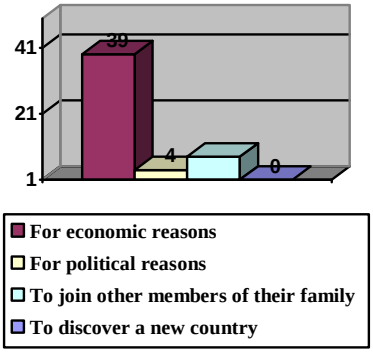
After processing the data, the results were surprising, indicating things that did not correspond to what we have already known. For example, one of these results indicated that 30% of the respondents knew they or their parents/grandparents came from immigrant families. This situation was incompatible, impossible to admit because it completely contradicted the statistics we have in our school.

As a result, we have decided to administer the questionnaire once again, and after processing the data, we obtained very different results in comparison to the first administration. Consequently, we consider it important to present the data comparatively. To simplify facts, we have noted the results obtained after the first administration of the questionnaire with A and the

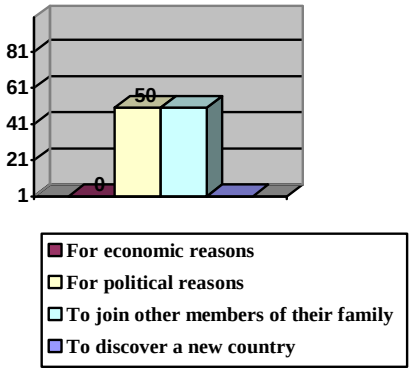
results obtained after the second administration with B.

A	B
1. **Did any members of your family arrive as immigrants in your adopted country?**	
Yes they did-30 % No they didn't-70 % 	Yes they did-6% No they didn't-94% 
2. If yes, who in your family wos born elsewhere and emigrated?	
I was born in another country - 11% My parents were – 30% My grandparents were -12% 	I was born in another country - 0% My parents were – 0% My grandparents were -6% 
3. Did they find it difficult to integrate in their adopted country?	
Yes, very difficult - 9% Yes, but only at the beginning – 29% c -14% 	Yes, very difficult - 0% Yes, but only at the beginning – 2% No, not all -4% 
4. Why did they immigrated in the first place?	

For economic reasons -39%
For political reasons -4%
To join other members of their family -8%
To discover a new country -0%

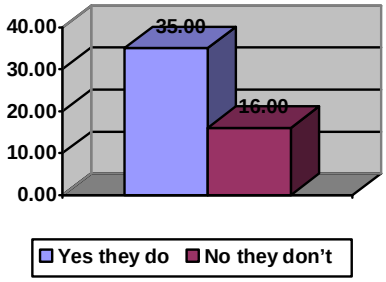


For economic reasons -0%
For political reasons -50%
To join other members of their family -50%
To discover a new country -0%

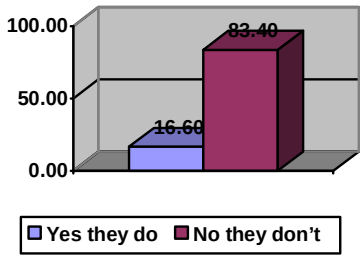


5. Do they intend at some later time to return and spend the rest of their life in their country of birth?

Yes they do - 35%
No they don't %

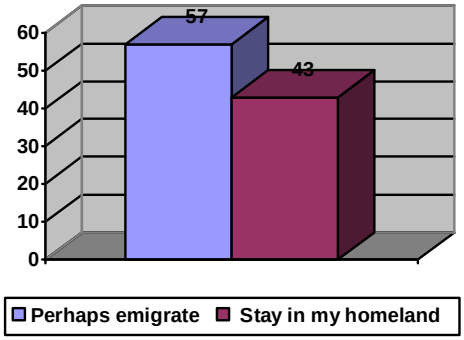


Yes they do - 16.6%
No they don't -83.4%

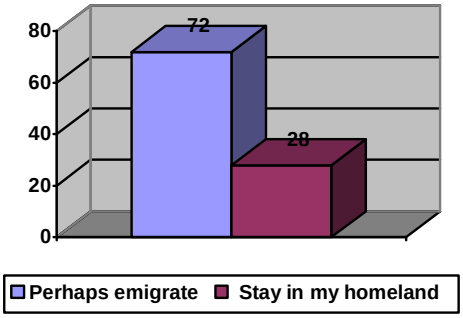


6. Would you envisage immigrating to another country or will you spend the rest of your life in your homeland?

Perhaps emigrate (go straight to question 8) 57%
Stay in my homeland (don't answer question 8)-43%

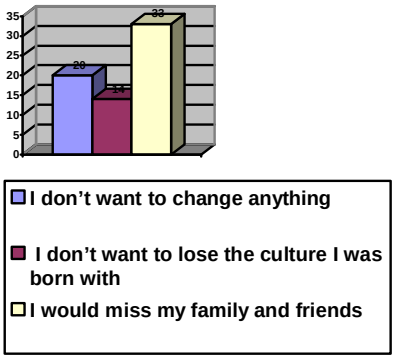


Perhaps emigrate (go straight to question 8) 72%
Stay in my homeland (don't answer question 8)-28%

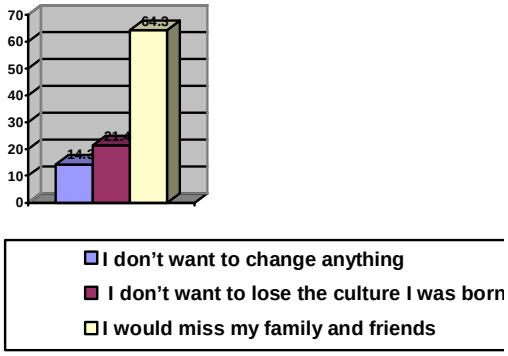


7. If you don't want to emigrate, why not?

I don’t want to change anything -20%
I don’t want to lose the culture I was born with -14%
I would miss my family and friends -33%

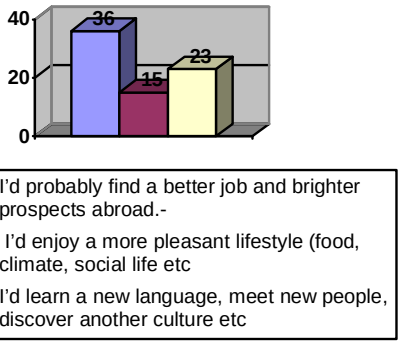


I don’t want to change anything -14.3%
I don’t want to lose the culture I was born with -21.4%
I would miss my family and friends -64.3%

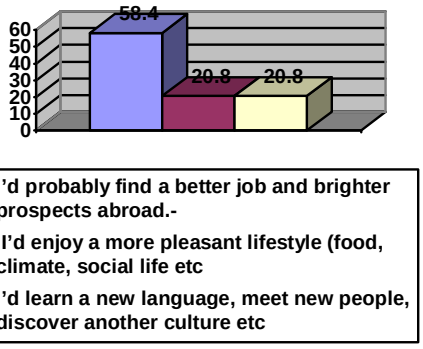


8. If you envisage one day emigrating, what would your reasons be?

I’d probably find a better job and brighter prospects abroad.-36%
I’d enjoy a more pleasant lifestyle (food, climate, social life etc 15%
I’d learn a new language, meet new people, discover another culture etc.-23%

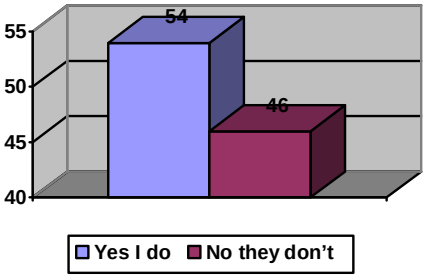


I’d probably find a better job and brighter prospects abroad.-58.4%
I’d enjoy a more pleasant lifestyle (food, climate, social life etc 20.8%
I’d learn a new language, meet new people, discover another culture etc.-20.8%

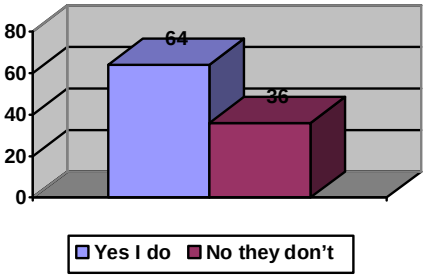


9. Do you believe a multicultural society where immigrants retain their original culture, traditions and language is desirable?

Yes I do –54%
No I don’t -46%



Yes I do –64%
No I don’t -36%

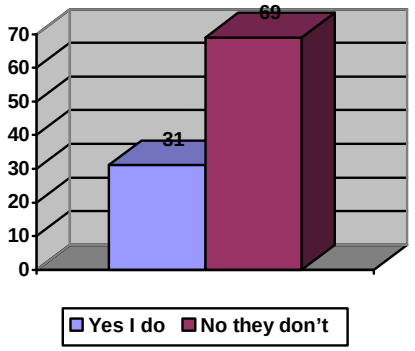


10. Do you think there are too many foreigners in your country?

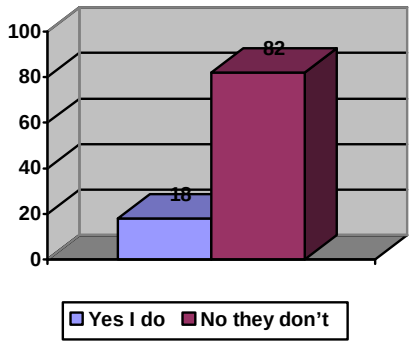
Yes I do – 31%

Yes I do – 18%

No I don't -69%

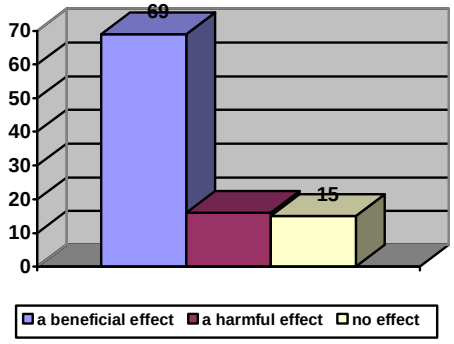


No I don't -82%

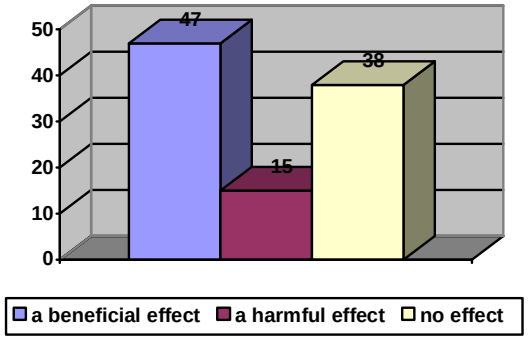


11. Generally speaking, has immigration had a harmful or a beneficial effect on your country?

a beneficial effect -69%
a harmful effect 16%
no effect -15%

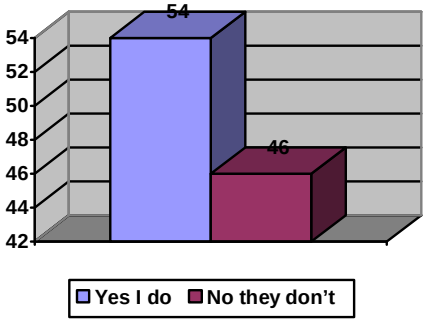


a beneficial effect -47%
a harmful effect - 15%
no effect -38%

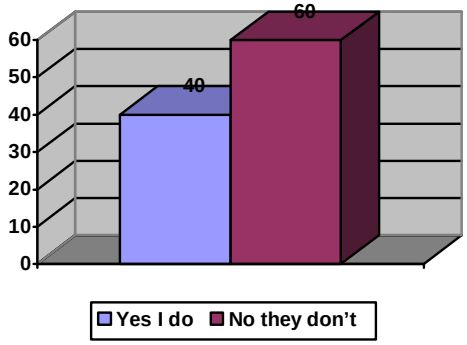


12. Do ethnic minorities suffer from racism or discrimination in your country?

Yes I do - 54%
No I don't - 46%



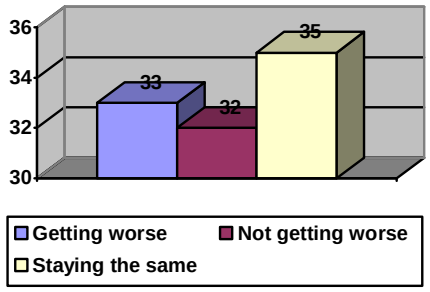
Yes I do - 40%
No I don't - 60%

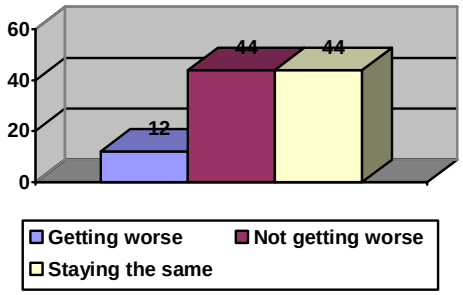


13. Are these problems getting worse for immigrants in your country?

Getting worse - 33%
Not getting worse - 32%
Staying the same -35%

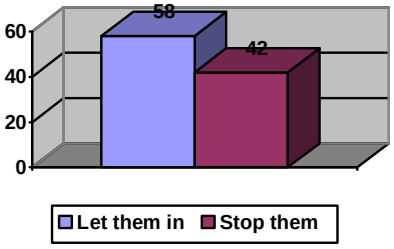
Getting worse - 12%
Not getting worse - 44%
Staying the same -44%



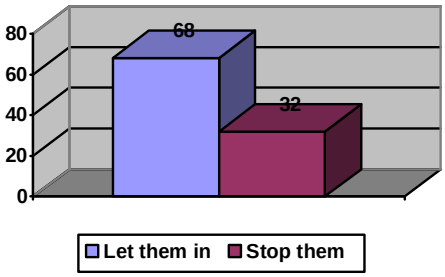


14. If you had the opportunity, would you let more immigrants into your country or would you stop them?

Let them in -58%
Stop them -42%

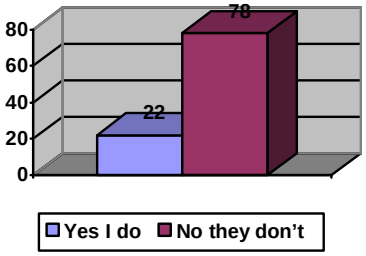


Let them in -68%
Stop them -32%

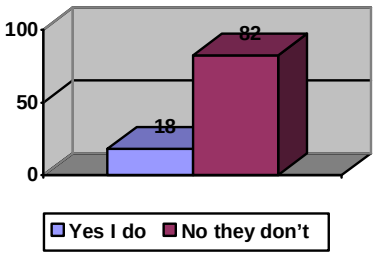


15. Are there any special programmers in your country to facilitate the integration of immigrants?

Yes I do -22%
No I don't -78%



Yes I do -18%
No I don't -82%



IV. Interpreting the results of the questionnaire

A. After the first administration of the questionnaire

After the centralization of the data we could draw the following contradictory and surprising conclusions:

1. From a sample of 100 subjects, 30% of the respondents are immigrants;

2. If we sum up the responses from question 2, we find out that 53% of the subjects are they themselves 11%, or their parents 30% or their grandparents 12% immigrants

Comparing the results of the first two questions, we are in a paradoxical situation that can be described as follows:

– We may consider the answer to the first question as being true and then only 30% of the respondents have a direct or indirect connection to the immigrants; or

– We may consider the answer to the second question as being true and then more than half the population from the sample 53% has a direct or indirect connection to the migration phenomenon.

The two interpretations are incompatible. Moreover, if we absurdly admit the data as being correct, the reality in our College can contradict the questionnaire.

3. Almost half 46% of the subjects manifest a slightly intolerant attitude towards immigrants, considering that a 'multicultural society in which emigrants can preserve their own culture, language and tradition' is not wanted;

4. About one third of the respondents 31% have an ethnocentric (nationalist) attitude, expressing the opinion that 'there are too many foreigners in Romania';

5. Although from questions 3 and 4 we can observe the ethnocentric attitude towards immigrants as being dominant, 54% of the respondents consider that 'ethnic minorities suffer because of racism and discrimination.

Taking into consideration the incoherence and the contradictory answers, both in the interpretation of the results and in contrasting them to the present reality, we have agreed that the results obtained are irrelevant. The paradoxical situations generated by the pupils' answers may have at least two causes:

a) The questionnaire was administered in English and we can suppose that some formulations may have not been clearly understood by the subjects;

b) The respondents may have indifferently treated this study, and thus answered superficially.

As a result, we agreed to administer the questionnaire once again on the same sample of students.

B. After the second administration of the questionnaire

Taking into consideration the possible causes that led to the errors in the first administration of the questionnaire, we decided to translate the questions into Romanian. Having done that, we administered the questionnaire once again and the results, this time relevant are the ones presented in column B. Therefore we can draw the following conclusions:

1. Only 6% of the respondents have an indirect connection with the immigrants;

2. The 6% can also be considered natives, because their grandparents have emigrated, and they represent the 2nd generation in the family, born and educated in this country and therefore it is improper to consider them immigrant children;

3. Our institution does not confront itself with the phenomenon of immigration, because there are no immigrant students in our school, all pupils being Romanian. We can also mention that in Baia Mare and in our country, in general, there are very few immigrants. On the other hand, there is a great number of emigrants from Romania all over the world.

4. Almost ¾, i.e. 72% of the respondents say they consider immigrating and only ¼ want to remain in their home country forever;

5. The main reason why 28% do not want to emigrate is affective (they would miss their family and friends) and then cultural;

6. For those who consider immigration as an alternative, the reason is economic and professional 58% and then cultural 41,6% (a new lifestyle, discovering a new culture)

7. Almost 2/3 of the respondents 64%, manifest tolerance towards immigrants, admitting that a 'multicultural society in which immigrants preserve their own language, culture and tradition' is necessary;

8. 82% of the students questioned, consider that the number of immigrants in Romania is not very big.

9. Although the phenomenon of immigration is almost nonexistent, surprisingly almost half 47% of the pupils questioned consider that immigration had a positive effect in our country.

10. The Romania is a multicultural society where the majority population has been living together with the ethnic minorities for centuries (Hungarians, Gypsies, Germans, Bulgarians, Russians, Ukrainians, Polish, Turkish, Serbians, Jews, Armenians, etc.)Being aware of this reality, 60% of the students consider that the minorities living in Romania do not suffer because of racism or discrimination. However, 40% believe that ethnic minorities are persecuted and consequently suffer because of discrimination.

11. For 12% of the subjects, the problems that immigrants have to confront with are worsening, whereas for 88%, they remain unchanged.

12. Having the direct or indirect experience of immigration (there is at least one immigrant in every Romania family), almost 2/3 of the respondents are open towards the idea of immigration, admitting that if given the chance, they would consider emigration.

In conclusion, one can admit that, at least at present:

a) In our institution and in our country as well, the phenomenon of immigration is almost absent.

b) Most of the students in our school are tolerant towards foreigners in general, and towards immigrants, in particular, a defining attitude of the Romanian people, as well