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# **At the forefront of the Syrian refugee crisis: understanding the Bulgarian response**

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## **Declaration**

I, Hristina Iskrenova Shishkova, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the Bulgarian key decisions in its response to the Syrian refugee crisis as a border country of the European Union (EU). The theoretical objective of this study is to explain the Bulgarian engagement in pro-social behaviour and cooperation with other EU member states through the logics of action of consequentialism and appropriateness in response to the refugee crisis. It also evaluates the process of socialization within the EU states and its main microprocesses that influence Bulgaria to cooperate with the other EU states. The empirical objective shows that solidarity is not the only factor according to which Bulgaria respond to the refugee crisis and reveals how Bulgaria deals with the challenges that the refugee crisis imposes to the country - a Balkan, former socialist and one of the poorest EU countries, situated on the periphery of the EU. The empirical data is based on semi-structured, e-mail interviews and one group interview of the experts from the State agency for refugees with the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Ambassador in Norway and Iceland and individuals that have positions in refugee services in Bulgaria. In addition to the empirical data, I have reviewed literature on the meaning and the main events of the Syrian refugee crisis, definitions of the refugee crisis, the significance of the periphery EU countries on the periphery, the EU Commission's key decisions of 2015 and 2016 and the power of the social influence. Thus, due to conformity and social influence pressures, Bulgaria which has only a ten-year EU membership choose to response appropriately to the refugee crisis by adopting a rule-guided behaviour. The country also followed the EU norms and regulations by not resigning from its interests within the EU.

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## 1.Introduction

The Syrian refugee crisis from 2013 is a major event of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2014, more than 200,000 refugees and migrants fled to secure their lives across the Mediterranean Sea. Stuffed into overcrowded, unsafe boats, thousands found their dead in the waters of the Mediterranean. Furthermore, just in April 2015 more than 1,300 people drowned. (Berry et al., 2015). Figures from the UNHCR (2015), revealed that in the first half of 2015 137,000 refugees and migrants attempted to enter the EU, a rise of 83% on the same period in 2014. According to Chausovsky (2016), more than 1 million migrants, mainly escaping from war zones in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, came to Europe in 2015. This crisis crossed the threshold of Europe. Thus, the influx of refugees has become an increasingly prominent political issue in many European countries over recent years. The increasing numbers of economic and political migrants arriving in Europe further complicates the situation. The EU has been struggling all this time showing the inability to cope with the crisis and a lack of coherent policy amongst the EU Member States is ongoing. In addition, a range of attitudes towards migration can be found among the European countries' societies, and overall public perceptions have been negative (Berry et al., 2015). Thus, this led to the development of the crisis within the EU.

At the forefront of the crisis in Europe, there are the refugee routes which are concentrated in Southern Europe and the Balkans (BBC,2014). A sharp rise in people using the Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece have been detected. This includes refugees fleeing the wars in Syria and Iraq. Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, the number of refugees in Turkey has achieved 2 million. As the UNHCR (2015) notes, this has placed enormous pressure on the country's infrastructure and economy and made it increasingly difficult for refugees to find a job, and to benefit from common goods and education. Therefore, meeting the decay in conditions in Turkey, increasing numbers of refugees use the "services" of smugglers to enter across the Aegean to Greece in order to reach the paths to Western Europe (Berry et al., 2015).

This caused pressure to the EU border countries and Hungary for instance, built a fence along its border with Serbia and Croatia (Gutteridge, 2016). Bulgaria made no exception, and erected a fence on the border with Turkey (Berry et al., 2015). The border between Greece and Macedonia has been closed and in the latter, they deployed armored vehicles against migrants (BBC, 2015). Another issue in the region, according to Holehouse (2015) is that several Balkan and Eastern-European countries, such as Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia rebelled against the EU solution to the crisis. It is based on European schemes for relocation and resettlement that distribute a mandatory quota-scheme of refugees for each of the EU countries.

However, the recent research has tended to focus on the reactions of the big Member States such as Germany, which were willing to accept 800 000 refugees and migrants and Italy which is

one of the hot spots of the crisis (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016; Orstrand 2015; Blinder, 2015; Fargues and Fandrich, 2012). Greece and Hungary have also evoked interests being hot points of the crisis since substantial amounts of refugees and migrants arrive at their territories. However, much less attention has been paid to the reaction of the Balkan states, for instance Bulgaria which sits on the outer edge of the EU.

According to Chausovsky (2016), Bulgaria appears to be ready to become an important actor in the refugee crisis. Since 2013, Bulgaria has observed an influx of refugees that cross the Bulgarian-Turkish border. This border cut-off is getting attention for a reason: the EU-Turkey deal largely intercepts the Greece-Macedonia route, so refugees have been seeking new routes, or reactivating old ones which also include Bulgaria (Nicolov, 2015). Therefore, greater refugee movements could appear through Romania and Bulgaria if migrant routes change. Also, Prime Minister Boyko Borisov announced that he is against Bulgaria to become the new alternative route for refugees, and planned to cooperate with the Balkan states, including Macedonia, Serbia and Albania to ensure the border control by holding joint land and air security operations (Nicolov, 2015). Thus, Bulgaria is becoming increasingly important border country of the EU that plays a crucial role in the EU response to the refugee crisis.

Bulgaria's main goal is to maintain good relations with the EU and to be a solid partner that follow the norms of the EU and the EU resettlements of the refugees. However, at the same time Bulgaria have a tight budget and the Bulgarian immigration authorities are badly underfunded and are understaffed, the abovementioned Bulgarian goals are crucial to maintain the national security. Thus, as a small state, Bulgaria tries to minimize the costs of conducting foreign policy by initiating more joint actions and by targeting multiple-actor fora (Neumann and Carvalho, 2015).

As the poorest country of the EU and as the fear, the solidarity to a certain extent and often the hostility toward immigrants that prevail among the Bulgarian society, as well as her neighborhood to Turkey, put Bulgaria in a predicament. There, the country has an interest both to follow the EU norms as an EU member-state and seek to ensure its good relations with Turkey because of the EU-Turkey agreement not to disrupt. At the same time, it strives to cooperate and to act jointly with its neighbor countries. Thus, how Bulgaria seeks to balance and manage these conflicting pressures and interests is the central topic of this thesis.

Two main research questions (RQ's) derive from the this:

**RQ1:** How did Bulgaria respond to the refugee crisis between 2013-2016?

**RQ2:** Why did Bulgaria choose to follow the EU norms in its response to the refugee crisis?

To answer to these questions and to underline the strategically important role of Bulgaria as an external EU border country, it is important to consider its relations with the EU who is a central player in the refugee crisis. Rather than just towing the line of the big actors, the crisis present

opportunities for small states on the periphery of the EU such as Bulgaria to build good relations and gain favours from their bigger neighbours. However, it should be not taken for granted that Bulgaria follows the EU norms. The country could have easily go along with the former allies from the Visegrad group of states who opposed the EU decisions to take in refugees.

Also, of theoretical interest is to explain how Bulgaria as a state on the periphery of the EU conducts foreign policy in crisis in institutionalized settings. More importantly, as an EU member-state, Bulgaria decided to uphold a certain behaviour and norms within the EU institutions. However, it is not necessarily that this is because they have internalized the norms. Therefore, in my Master thesis, I will use the concepts of the logics of consequentialism and appropriateness, socialization and social influence to explain the different reasons of keeping Bulgaria pro-social in their response to the refugee crisis (see chapter 3).

Lastly, I would argue that it is of empirical interest to answer to the main RQ's because Bulgaria is in a region at the forefront of the crisis, one that has had a turbulent recent history. The methodology I am using to answer to the RQ's adopts qualitative design and includes semi-structured, e-mail and group interviews of employees and experts of the State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria, legal clerks, diplomats and anonymized participants. The next section of conceptual framework explains some core concepts that need to be understood in terms of the meaning of the refugee crisis.

## **1.2 Outline**

This thesis is organized in seven chapters. The following chapter 2 discusses several authors' works on the Syrian refugee crisis, some key characteristics and definitions, its normative discussions, the EU states' controversial response to the refugee crisis and the role of the periphery countries at the crisis. In chapter 3, I present a theoretical discussion based on the three logics of social action that a state may act upon and reveal why do states follow norms, explaining this with the process of socialisation and its microprocesses. Chapter 4 addresses the process of my data collection. I explain why I chose a qualitative research design, the techniques I used to obtain data and reliability and validity issues. Chapter 5 addresses the background of the Syrian refugee crisis and reveals the numbers of refugees entered Europe between 2011 and 2016. It also shows and explains the similar Bulgarian statistics of the refugees coming to Europe. It starts with some key EU decisions on the EU response to the refugee crisis and continues to the answer of the first RQ how did Bulgaria respond to the refugee crisis by outlining the respective key Bulgarian decisions that relate to the EU's ones. Further, this chapter leads to the Analysis chapter of this Master thesis. Chapter 6 answers to the second RQ why did Bulgaria support a common European solution to the crisis by following the EU norms. I justify my answer with the use of the logics of appropriateness and the logic of consequentialism. The logics explain the Bulgarian behaviour of cooperation with

the other EU Member States. Thereafter, I justify my explanation of the Bulgarian response through the power of the social influence which is one of the main socialization microprocesses. According to it, the countries engage in a pro-social behaviour because they want to avoid punishments and opprobrium by fellow group-members. In my conclusion, in chapter 7, I evaluate my analysis and provide answers to my research questions. I also reflect on what further research is needed.

## **2. Literature review**

This literature review summarizes several authors' insights on specific areas of the Syrian refugee crisis. There are several reasons for reviewing the literature on the Syrian refugee crisis. First, I wanted to explore what is already out there on the topic and eventually find gaps in the existing literature. This would establish a base for further research. Descriptions and definitions give an overview of the Syrian refugee crisis but do not explain it. The conceptual and the normative discussions might be a base for a theoretical explanation but do not explain the crisis itself. Second, an overview of the specific points that authors take on the role of the different core EU countries is of crucial importance for my research. The border countries of the EU and specifically Bulgaria cooperate with these core EU countries and their response to the refugee crisis shapes directly and indirectly the Bulgarian response to the crisis. Finally, this section includes review of the EU periphery countries since their response to the Syria refugee crisis has been understudied. Its section is structured by the chronological order and it contains the following: descriptions and definitions of the Syrian refugee crisis, conceptual/normative discussions, the EU's response to the refugee crisis and the periphery countries' role in the Syrian refugee crisis. By focusing the attention on these key areas, I am attempting to answer the following specific question:

- 1) Why the EU struggled to find a solution to the refugee crisis?
- 2) To what extent do the host countries perceive the refugees and the migrants positively or negatively?
- 3) Do the host countries share responsibility or do they share a burden?
- 4) What is the role of the periphery EU countries in the Syrian refugee crisis?

### **2.2 Description and definitions of the Syrian refugee crisis.**

This section addresses the tries to precipitates the definition of the Syrian refugee crisis by taking into account variety of literature opinions. Many of the authors use the term "Refugee crisis" in their work. However, there is a discrepancy in its contextual use. Furthermore, the economic, social and political impact on the host countries is the main research subject of analysts such as Holmes and Castaneda (2016), Orstrand (2015), Mayer and Chuman (2014), Moraga (2015), Carrera et al. (2015). Interestingly, they use a statistical approach to introduce the refugee crisis. They are focusing on the number of refugees and migrants that have entered Europe between 2011

and 2016. Those analysts also emphasize that neighbor countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt have been overwhelmed by millions of Syrian refugees and the conditions that these countries provide to them are poor and insufficient. At the same time, they establish a negative correlation between the number of refugees and the impact on the economic, social and political systems infrastructure and the stability of the host countries. Thus, they portray the Syrian refugee crisis as a significant negative event which threatens the host- countries welfare systems and the safety of their citizens. This is important for my analysis because it serves as a stepping stone for further analyses of the Bulgarian experience in the context of the refugee crisis.

Holmes and Castaneda (2016) define the refugee crisis as a series of complex events that occur both in Europe and in the Middle East. In their analyses they describe how boats of refugees are forced to go back, refugee camps are set on fire, politicians are violently attacked for supporting refugees. They paint an image of the Syrian refugees where they are connected to terrorist attacks in Europe and are a security threat for the countries where those refugees have settled. Additionally, the authors accentuate not only on the dimension of the crisis in terms of refugee numbers but also put in perspective the political significance, emphasizing the role of the several of the EU politicians, such as Angela Merkel and Victor Orban. They also overview the main events of the refugee crisis which is an important feature of its definition such as the numbers of refugees fleeing to Europe.

Om the other hand, Maric, Hercigonja, Abdli & Manu, D (2015), focus on other aspects of the crisis and not just refugee numbers and political actions. They emphasize the fact that the crisis actually involves human beings. Abdli has been working at the actual conflict zone and has experienced firsthand the data that is presented. In addition, Maric and Hercigonja have a refugee background. Thus, their arguments are stronger than the previous authors since they have a real experience with the topic, and thus are deeply involved in the refugee struggles. At the same time, this might lead to an increased bias, which can translate into lack of depth of their analysis. In such situation there is always an increased risk of overlooking important details and events. Furthermore, they argue that the participants on a political level often forget about this crisis is about people, not only numbers. Further, they emphasize the importance of the refugees as individuals. Thus, they contribute to the definition of the refugee crisis adding that the crisis encompasses people who are suffering and need protection and shelter. Abdli (2015) emphasized that the help the refugees receive at a local level is an important aid, but she also challenges those who oppose to accept more refugees in their host countries. She asks how refugees will have the chance to build a life locally since the war ruined the infrastructure, schools and parts of the country. She asks how this financial help would lead to the establishment of long-term opportunities for the refugees. At the same time, she ignores the fact that many of the refugees seek to reach and settle in Western Europe countries and do not have any desire to be resettled in the poor EU peripheral countries (Anderson, 2015)

such as Bulgaria. Thus, we should ask the important question of why many of them attempt to escape the given possibility of settling in peaceful peripheral countries and prefer to risk the trip to the EU rich countries. After all the refugees are fleeing areas of war where every day is an existential and literal struggle to stay alive.

In my thesis, I do not to define the Syrian refugee crisis, but rather outline the problems with the definitions that are given by the authors of the literature reviewed. The definitions also give important details about events of the refugee crisis. Thus, three main patterns could be seen in the abovementioned authors' definitions. The first one is that the refugee crisis is a disaster of a big size that threatens the EU's countries' peace and welfare. The second one is that several politicians have the responsibility of exacerbating the crisis by sending controversial messages and prompting refugees to come to Europe for a good life. The third pattern reveals that the crisis is not only about statistics, but also about human beings that suffer and need help.

The different definitions provide the reader with an overview of what this crisis is about and present the perception of it among state leaders, host countries and citizens. Some of the concerning questions that can be derived are: How do external border countries of the EU and more specifically Bulgaria and the Bulgarian politicians define the refugee crisis?, How these definitions affect the country's response to the refugee crisis? Does the country act according to the principle of solidarity and the human rights norms?, Does the country act according to the international refugee norms that are underlined in the Convention of the Refugees?, or does Bulgaria only perceive the refugees and the migrants as numbers and a threat to its national security?

## **2.2 Conceptual/normative discussions of the Syrian refugees**

This section describes what the different perceptions of the refugees and the migrants are among the EU countries. Moraga (2015), Carrera et al. (2015), Fargues and Fandrich (2012), Orstrand (2015) and Zetter and Ruaudel (2014), categorize the refugees and the migrants as “the deserving refugee” and the “undeserving migrant”. The “deserving refugee” deserves protection, shelter and resettlement in the host country while the “undeserving migrant” doesn't because he or she is coming to Europe because of economic incentives and do not flee a war conflict. Thus, the authors are pointing out the main challenges the host countries are facing: who of the thousands that are coming to Europe really need protection. The “deserving refugee” portrays a vulnerability and innocence (Betts, 2015). A vulnerability implies “deserving” refugee status or refugee status. Thus, vulnerability and innocence create an image that deepens the hierarchy between those receiving services and entry and those that give them such (Betts, 2015). Therefore, according to him, this hierarchy prompts the mentality of “us” vs the “other”. Innocence designs the relationships between the “us” and the “others” as saviours and victims. Saving innocent victims (refugees) often pledges absolution to the saviours (Betts, 2015). This absolution excludes the thought that we might be

responsible for creating the conditions that the refugees and migrants flee from- poverty, climate change and war. Thus, the effects of “innocence” has contrasting sentiments on refugees and migrants (Betts, 2015).

The contrast between the ‘deserving refugee’ and the ‘underserving migrant’ additionally creates a burden- responsibility dilemma for the host-country societies. They point out that the burden-responsibility dilemma has been an agenda of the EU international community since 2013. The abovementioned authors, excluding Betts (2015) compare the refugees to a burden which the host countries need to deal with. They claim that the influx of refugees bears an immense economic, social and cultural pressure to the host- countries and in the different EU countries, there is a lack of desire, a capacity, or both to deal with them.

On the other hand, Betts (2017), claims that refugees are not necessarily a cost to the receiving countries. They might contribute to the economy of the host country and become a socioeconomic benefit (Trines, 2017). He states that some authors normatively assume that refugees impose a cost. But according to him, this is an empirical question, and the assumptions could be challenged. He argues that with the right policies (e.g. Uganda and its ‘Self-Reliance Strategy’), refugees can contribute to national development and benefit host countries. Thus, he presents another point of view that do not necessarily illustrate the refugees and the migrants as a burden.

Mayer and Chuman (2014) on the other hand, shift the definition of the refugees as a “burden” with another definition, i.e.- “responsibility”. They argue that the host countries need to share the responsibility towards the refugees and the migrants. Moreover, Rahimic (2015) argues that some of the EU states are responsible for establishing the current system where refugees and migrants are lured to the dangerous Mediterranean route in the hope of better lives. He points out that by misleading the refugees with spurious promises for relocation, resettlement and jobs, these country-leaders boosted their desire to take the path to the good life in Europe. Then, if they created this refugee crisis, they need to take the responsibility to find a solution to it.

Furthermore, Betts (2015) argues that the definitions given to the refugees today are outdated. He states that it no longer implies the post-Second World War definition of people that flee from persecution. Today he argues, people are crossing borders not only because of war and fear of persecution but also because of the environmental changes, the food deficiency and a state fragility. Thus, the new definitions do not coincide with the framework of the refugees given in the Refugee Convention (Betts, 2015). Still, the Refugee convention remains a guiding source of norms (Betts, 2015). Thus, Betts’s definition gives additional criteria based on which one can distinguish between refugees and migrants when all the reasons for them leaving their own countries are taken into account. I agree with this definition, but I would also add that there is a distinction between the refugees and the migrants. This assumption is based on the situation they are in, the rules and the order according to which they receive resettlement as well as jobs and social benefits.

To summarise, the refugees' have been defined as a burden, as threat, as the 'others', as a responsibility and as possible contributors to increasing of benefits and goods for the host countries. These definitions also portray how the EU countries' and its citizens perceive the refugees and the migrants that are coming to the EU. These perceptions are important because they generate actions among the EU countries. These actions translate to response to the refugee crisis.

### **2.3 The EU countries response to the crisis.**

This section summarizes how the EU has dealt with the crisis. The reaction to the Syrian crisis of EU countries such as Germany, UK and Hungary as well as the USA and Turkey are the main topic for analyses of many authors. This includes Fargues & Fandrich (2012), Ostrand, N. (2015) Mayer & Chuman, (2014), Moraga & Rapoport (2015), Carrera, Blockmans, Gros & Guild (2015) Holmes & Castaneda, (2016), Zetter, & Ruaudel, (2014), Awad (2014), Streeck, (2016), Kirişçi (2014) and Bal (2016).

As Öniş, & Kutlay, (2016) argues, several EU countries adopted an anti-refugee stance. Slovakia decided to accept only "a few hundred refugees and only Christians," Hungary decided to "build a fence along its borders with Serbia" (Kia-Keating et al., 2015) and Poland's newly elected conservative government, is linking refugee issue with tragic Paris attacks. They decided not to receive any migrants as part of the EU's refugee resettlement program and justified their decision with "the situation had changed [after Paris attacks]" (Newton 2015). The German Chancellor, Merkel, who adopted a relatively more liberal stance toward refugees, an approach more compatible with EU norms and values, becomes increasingly isolated at home and in Europe (Smale 2016). Temporary border checks have also been introduced in Slovenia, Austria, Germany, Denmark and Sweden. Donald Tusk, the European Council president, even claimed that in case the EU does not address the problem, "it would result in the collapse of Schengen zone" (Euronews, 2016).

Thus, the discrepancy of how the EU states reacted to the refugee crisis uncovers the inability of the EU to find a common European solution to the crisis. Despite that the Members States of the European Union share common tools and have common norms and mechanism to deal with the Syrian refugee crisis, they could not reach a common decision on how to use them. Even worse, they disagree on a level that it treats the existence of the EU as a whole. As Rahimic (2015) states, the way the European Union is dealing with the crisis shows serious shortcomings in EU governance: each member state enforces diverse migration policies, in order to protect itself.

According to Öniş, & Kutlay (2016), there are two consequences deriving from weak EU performance in tackling refugee crisis. Domestically, it created a disappointment among recent members. As Krastev (2015) states many Eastern Europeans expected that the joining of the EU would lead to their further prosperity (cited in Öniş & Kutlay, 2016). The Eastern Europeans, according to him, were not promised refugees but tourists.

Externally, the interest-based policies on the refugee crisis disrupted the image of the EU as the promoter of human rights (Öniş & Kutlay, 2016). According to them, it is believed that European leaders did not shoulder the burden but rather built a “fortress Europe” which exacerbated the refugee crisis. Furthermore, the increasing of the migration and refugee flows has prompted EU states to adopt three responses (Holmes and Castaneda, 2016). One has been to strengthen the EU internal and external borders as to prevent refugees and migrants to reach Northern and Eastern Europe. This is what the Visegrad four- the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia demanded.

On the other hand, EU countries like Sweden and Germany have welcomed the refugees and promised them shelter. But the other EU countries sharply criticized the German’s hospitality (Holmes and Castaneda, 2016). It has been claimed that Germany did a humane act to accept more than 800 000 refugees and behaved responsibly according to the principle of humanity. Conversely, Streeck (2016) argues that the German interests that are presented as humanitarian responsibilities beyond political choice are just intention of cost-calculated benefits. He affirms that the reason Germany have welcomed the refugees is that Germany needs work force in its labor market of around 500 000 people yearly and this is why giving asylum to so many refugees is commode to masque this reason with a humanitarian help.

Awad (2014) illustrates the third response to the refugee crisis, declaring that states’ national interest is the only remaining determinant of policy in the countries of the EU. Awad (2014) defines these interests to the EU states as preserving their territories and economic opportunities for their citizens and chosen groups of refugees and migrants. This thesis builds on the Awad’s argument that international cooperation becomes a means to protect the national interest of the host countries, but also investigates what are the reasons of Bulgaria to engage in cooperation with the other EU countries and to adopt pro-social behavior.

To summarize, the authors evaluating the EU response to the refugee crisis emphasize that the crisis splits the EU, and this is the reason for the inadequacy of their response to the refugee crisis. This division also outlines the incentives of the Member States to behave in the ways they did. Each country experienced different social pressure and formed a coalition within the EU according to common interests. The Visegrad group demanded border-closing because they wanted to strengthen the national security, Germany and Sweden promoted human rights and values in their reaction and ‘did the right thing’. Furthermore, states like Bulgaria, Greece and Italy which stands at the forefront of the refugee crisis decided to behave appropriately, basing their actions on norms but also to benefit from their position in terms of interests.

The abovementioned authors forget one important feature of the EU countries response to the refugee crisis. They do not outline the relationship between the EU institutions and the EU countries in their response to the refugee crisis. Therefore, the next section focuses on this issue.

## 2.4 Periphery countries

Scholars such as Öniş & Kutlay (2016), Kirişçi (2016) and Bal (2016) conceptualize the relationship between the EU Member States and those between the EU institutions and the EU members. They emphasize that the EU institutions treated the EU states as a core and periphery. For instance, according to Streeck (2016) when Hungary tried to resist the intentions and to protect their border, it was accused that with its actions, the country does not contribute to the common humanitarian responsibility. Hungary, Croatia and the south-eastern EU countries have been thrown to the periphery by Germany and the EU and the EU Commission, by not giving them the opportunity to take an active position toward the Syrian refugee crisis. Öniş & Kutlay (2016) supported Streeck's claim and state that this provoked a growing sense of insecurity and embodied critical political implications within the EU.

Furthermore, Kirişçi (2014), argues that partly located in Southern Europe, Turkey is not an exception from being treated as a periphery from the big EU member States. In the past, with many fewer resources, it was capable of developing a comprehensive and well-structured policy toward refugees that enter its territory (Kirişçi, 2014). Today Turkey can accept thousands of refugees and provide them with satisfying living conditions. Kirişçi (2014), states that, around 750.000 of the refugees that were resettled in Turkey, both economic migrants and asylum seekers, have in 2015 passed through Turkey to reach Europe. Being not stopped, this number can increase substantially and very quickly. Despite that, it is treated as a state of the periphery that has not the right to raise a voice.

The exacerbation of the refugee crisis in 2015 made the EU realize that Turkey has main role in finding a solution to the refugee crisis. As a result, on 14 December 2015 the EU Turkey Summit, opened for negotiation the Visa Liberalization Chapter 17 (Economic and Monetary Policy) and the EU-Turkey Agreement on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation (eu.eur-lex.europea.eu, 2014). The agreement would take effect in 2016 as part of the EU engagement of finding solution to the refugee crisis (Bal, 2016).

After Turkey's submission to it, France has decided to deny the opening of the Viza Liberalization chapter. This witnessed clearly that the official letters of the EU Presidency, as well as the unanimous decisions of the EU, can easily be negated by one single country (Bal, 2016). On Turkey's side, this has had the effect of decreasing confidence in the EU, strengthening the belief that the EU is not a trustworthy partner that does not hold its promises. Even if the opening of Chapter 17 to negotiations has been a step forward, yet, it is not enough to overcome the EU's long-standing credibility problem in Turkey (Bal, 2016).

Bulgaria, for instance, is in a similar position as Turkey. Turkey is not an EU country but is its southern neighbor. Bulgaria is a country on the outer edge of the EU and bears a big pressure to

secure the external EU border and to control the refugee stream. However, the country is still not a Schengen member despite that the joining of Schengen underlies in its treaty of accession to the EU from 2007 (schengeninfo.com, 2017).

In conclusion, the periphery EU countries, are more likely to be neglected and not given voice, despite that they have equal right to participate in the EU decisions (Öniş & Kutlay, 2016; Kirişci, 2016; Bal, 2016). This concerns especially countries at the outer edge of the EU that bears the biggest pressure of the refugee stream such as Greece and Bulgaria, as well as Turkey.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This literature review's aim was to summarize the authors' insights on the Syrian refugee crisis. It reviewed the response of the EU states to the refugee crisis, the significance of the EU periphery states of and the definitions of the refugee crisis and the refugees that authors give them. It also exposed their normative discussions. In consequence, this literature review established a base for further research. Thus, this thesis builds on Awad's (2014) argument that international cooperation becomes a means to protect the national interest of the host countries. However, the normative discussions of this literature review are not sufficient to explain why states behave in the ways they did when responding to the refugee crisis. Hence, a detailed theoretical framework is needed. The theoretical framework distinguishes concepts and is an analytical tool for organizing ideas which has several contexts and variations. It captures processes, events and people in an easy way to remember and apply (Marshall and Rosman, 2014). Thus, the next chapter discusses the reasons for states' behaviour based on interests, norms and social pressure.

## **3.Theoretical section**

This section explains theoretically the reasons why states follow norms. In particular, it discusses the three logics of social action of Risse (2000) and states' pro- social behavior, socialization, and social pressure of Johnston (2001) to explain why states may follow norms. It is widely known that theory is important for understanding any empirical case. Still, some would ask why? According to Dunne et al. (2010), it is insufficient that we only ask for answers world political actors about their actions, why they do this and that, and what they predict as results of these actions in future. Possibly, many of them do not entirely reveal all of their motivations when tackle, for instance, climate change, or in this case, the refugee crisis. Therefore, it is difficult to obtain the real reasons for actions and decisions of international actors only by asking them. It is widely known that the world is not so simple that individuals could fully recognize the reasons for why they are behaving in certain ways. Moreover, multiple international agents may not realize how 'their thought and policy are already shaped by particular ideological or moral commitments, thus excluding from view other ways of coming at global interactions and problems' (Dunne et al.,

2010, p.3). Therefore, one might need to discover the wider context of the reasons actors have for their behavior, even those that actors are not aware of.

People are often insecure about the reasons of their actions and sometimes act according to what is publicly acceptable and fashionable (Dunne et al.2010). Thus, in the social world people cannot just base their accounts of individuals entirely on the causes for their actions. Furthermore, the social world consists of ‘powerful economic, political social, gendered racial, linguistic, and moral structures’ (Dunne et al.2010, p.3). Thus, it might be easy to describe why international agents act in certain ways, but this is not an explanation itself. And, an explanation of an action requires us to participate in the realm of theory (Dunne et al., 2010). Theories explain why and how events take place and offer a wide range of reasons for international agents’ actions. In fact, the different theories assume the international actors’ behavior differently. Since the Bulgarian leaders have proclaimed that their response is based on the pursue for a common European solution to the refugee crisis, I am exploring then the reasons why a state follows the EU norms and the power of the social influence in this process. Also, as noted in chapter 2, the explanation of the events of the Syrian refugee crisis has tended to be lacking explicit reference to theory, while the response of the border countries of the EU has been understudied in general. So, I begin with the three logics of social action that explains the logic of consequentialism and the logic of appropriateness. Then, I proceed further with an explanation of the reasons why do social influence is important to make states to follow norms. An explanation of the dissimilar reasons of states’ behavior in a given situation is useful because, as discussed in chapter 2, the EU countries responded differently to the Syrian refugee crisis, motivated by various incentives and were subjected to different social pressures.

### **3.1. The three logics of social action (Risse 2000)**

Risse (2000) emphasizes that it is crucial to distinguish between the two metatheoretical approaches that outline the different logics of social action with the different rationalities concerning the goals of action. Each logic of action is an ideal type that rarely occurs solely in a real situation (Risse, 2000). As Risse (2000) suggests, the game actors play, combines several modes of social interaction, and the difference among metatheoretical orientations should not be overstated. Risse (2000) emphasizes that rational choice illustrates the logic of consequentialism, while on the other hand, social constructivism embodies both norm-guided and deliberative behavior. He presents the real social world behaviour by situating it in the intermediate spaces between the corners of the triangle in Figure 1 and argues that one single meta-theoretical orientation most likely would not capture it. Often, the focus is on the way a logic of action accounts for observable practices and which logic predominates in a given situation (Risse, 2000). In the Syrian refugee crisis, the Hungary states requested the EU to close its borders. Consequently,

the logic of action which prevails among actors' rational behaviour in this situation is the logic of consequentialism because they are interested to ensure their national security by denying entrance of refugees.

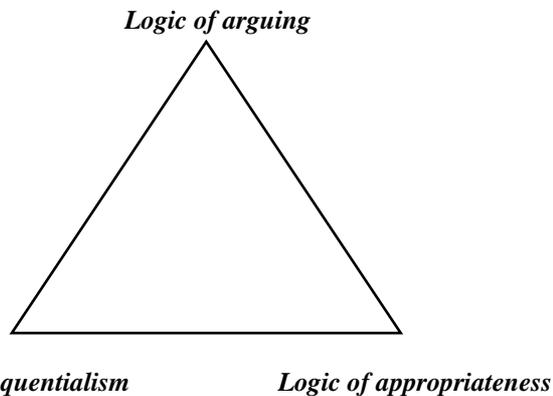


FIGURE 1. Three Logics of Social Action (Risse, 2000, p.4)

According to Risse (2000), March and Olson (1989), argue that in the "logic of consequentialism" or the rational choice, agents have fixed interests and preferences when they interact with other agents. Rational choice treats agents' strategic interactions and strategic behaviour because of their given identities and interests and tries to realize, maximize or optimize one's own interests and preferences. Furthermore, Risse (2000) affirms that this is possible only if agents engage in cooperative behaviour where they are expected to collaborate and coordinate with other actors with the purpose of acquiring their interests. Thus, rational choice approaches analyze those modes of action and interaction of rationality, explicitly as an instrumental one which is guided by an evaluation of an action's outcome (Risse, 2000). The logic of consequentialism produce behaviour based on the thought of interests, costs and benefits and assume that other actors are acting in the same way as well (March and Olson, 1998). Thus, Germany's response to the refugee crisis might be considered as a product of behaviour based on interests, cost and benefits. The country would accept almost one million refugees and will spend additional money to integrate them but will also benefit from their presence. The country has planned to involve them in their labour market and to help ease skills gap in Germany (reuters.com, 2015).

The constitutive and regulative rules distinguish conceptually the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness. According to March and Olson (1989), the subjects of constructivism are regulated by a logic of appropriateness. It focuses on the way norms constrain and produces legitimate behaviour.

According to Wendt (1992), norms are 'socially shared ideas- collective expectations about proper behaviour for a given identity or social knowledge about cause-and-effect relationships. They do not only regulate behaviour but also constitute the identity of actors' (Cited in Risse, 2000,

p. 253). In some cases, according to Katzenstein (1996), norms serve as rules that define the actor's identity, thus possessing "constitutive effects" that define the actions which will cause relevant others to distinguish a particular identity. In other cases, norms intervene as standards that specify the imposition of an already established identity. In such instances, norms regulate the effects that specify standards of appropriate behaviour. Thus, the logic of appropriateness highlights the fact that actors follow the norms in order not to outstep from a legitimate behaviour (March and Olson, 1998). Moreover, principled and causal beliefs can transform the utility functions of actors, affect cost-calculated benefit goals, and influence the strategic interactions of actors (Risse, 2000).

According to Risse (2000), the rationality of the "logic of appropriateness" implies rule-guided behaviour. Actors are expected to follow rules that associate particular identities to particular situations. As Risse (2000) emphasizes, the rule-guided behaviour differs from the instrumentally rational behaviour. In the rule-guided behaviour, actors try to "do the right thing" rather than to maximize or optimize their given preferences. Normative rationality encompasses constitutive effects of social norms and institutions, because these rules do not only regulate behaviour but also, have causal effects and define social identities. Good people do X - this is the meaning of the "value added" in norms. These norms are bound up with the values of this community (Barnett, 2015).

Norms need to be translated into the specific domestic context of the state. Thus, they become internalized (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). Internalization of norms is a process of socialization. Then, the actors are not just learning the norms, but are beginning to take them for granted (Risse, 2000). These norms will remain stable upon change because they are connected to actors' obligations to their identities and interests, not simply because of cost-calculated benefits (Wendt, 1992). For instance, human rights norms define a "civilized state" in the modern world. Thus, states that are civilized do not violate the human right norms because they have taken them for granted and do not outstep from legitimate behaviour. Thus, constructivism emphasizes that collective norms and understandings form actors' social identities (Risse, 2000). Thus, human rights norms become one of the main features of democratic state identities.

Furthermore, internalization implies that norms and values are not only hard to change because they are taken for granted, but that the benefits of behaviour are calculated in abstract of social terms rather than concrete consequential terms. An example of that is presented in the model of social behaviour based on appropriateness: "Why should one do X? - Because ..., or because X is the right thing to do..., or because X is consistent with my social category or identity." (Johnston, 2001, p. 495). However, according to him, there can be different degrees of internalization, since not all actors experience the same social pressures, neither are their identifications the same when they enter a situation. For instance, at the Syrian refugee crisis, the member-states of the EU perceived the situation differently and respectively acted differently when facing it even if they as

the member-states of a society group held a common set of norms. Thus, even that there is some socialization values, norms and behaviour that they should follow, since they are Member States of the EU, the social pressure and the different degrees divided them in their response to the refugee crisis.

March and Olson also talk about rule-guided behaviour but assume that actors evaluate the situation in which they act consciously and eventually apply the appropriate norm, or choose among conflicting rules (Risse, 2000). Thus, there might occur a contest between the logics of action and this can be captured by the statement "good people do X" and "what does 'good' mean in this situation?" (Risse, 2011, p.7). According to him, the actors might ask themselves what is the right thing to do in a given situation and which norm to apply. They argue. Therefore, social constructivism comprises not only the logic of appropriateness but also a "logic of truth-seeking or arguing" or the logic of arguing. Risse (2000) states that when actors argue about the truth, they seek to figure out in a collective communication whether their beliefs about the world and the rightness of cause-and-effect relationships or whether norms of rule-guided behaviour could apply under given circumstances. Risse (2000) emphasizes that arguing incorporates that actors try to challenge the validity claims in any causal or normative statement and to communicate their understanding of a given situation. At the same time, they justify the principles and norms that guide their action. Thus, they are no longer fixed but subject to discursive challenges.

Regarding the Syrian refugee crisis, the EU requested states to act according to the logic of appropriateness which entails following the norms and rule-guided behaviour. This includes respect for the refugee law, the human right norms and the refugee regime complex. Thus, the EU states that respected this request committed to the norm of nonrefoulement<sup>1</sup> and the sets of obligations of asylum<sup>2</sup> and burden-sharing<sup>3</sup> (Betts, 2015). The Visegrad states challenged the asylum and the burden-sharing norm by demanding the EU to close its external borders. Also, they refused to accept refugees according to the EU burden-sharing norm (see chapter 2). Thus, these norms in this particular situation were no longer fixed but discursively challenged.

### **3.2. Socialization and pro-social behaviour**

The previous section discussed the logics of action-those of consequentialism and those of appropriateness. As Risse (2000) emphasized, none of each occurs in pure form in real life. Johnston (2001), supports this claim and suggests that three types of pro-social behaviour exist.

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<sup>1</sup> That is the obligation not to return persons to a state, in which their life or freedom is threatened because of religion, nationality, race, affiliated to a particular social group or political opinion, or exposed to the threat of torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment (Betts, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Asylum is the obligation that states have toward refugees who enter their territory which they provide a refuge (Betts, 2015)

<sup>3</sup> Burden-sharing which oblige the states to support financially the refugees in the territory of other states or resettle them in their own territory (Betts, 2015)

According to Johnston (2001) the first one is the pro-social behaviour based on its “appropriateness” and it is the ideal one. Furthermore, the second one is based on its material positive or negative consequences. Thus, if the hallmark of socialization is the internalization of pro-social values, and if at the other end of the spectrum is the cost-calculated benefit’s behaviour, thus there occurs a third type pro-social behaviour which is ‘produced by neither process’ (Johnson, 2001, p.495). This ‘neither process’ might be a combination of the former and the latter or a process, influenced by exogenous and endogenous (dis)incentives (Johnston, 2001). There might be a third type ‘neither process’, influenced by the socialization microprocesses.

Furthermore, Johnston (2001) stresses that constructivists emphasize the power of norms in IR but, do not explain the microprocesses of an actor’s exposition and enactment of the pro-social behaviour. According to him, it is important that those who work with the concept should be able to distinguish the socialization’s microprocesses and to test for their effects. Therefore, he emphasizes, it is crucial to be precise about at least two microprocesses of conformity to norms that might offer the reasons of cooperation between actors.

To explain the microprocesses, a clarification of the process of socialization is needed. Socialization according to Johnston plays a crucial role in the formation and change of preferences, national identity formation, the creation, diffusion of, and compliance with international norms, and the effects of international institutions. According to him, political socialization is the process where actors learn to accept the norms, values, and behaviours that the ongoing system practice. Furthermore, IR theorists have accounted socialization as to processes resulting in the internalization of norms so that the actor take them for granted. Thus, they internalize values, roles, and understandings held by a group that constitutes the society of which the actor becomes a member.

### **3.3 Persuasion**

For Johnstone, socialization includes two major microprocesses: persuasion and social influence. Persuasion implies changing the minds of others, of deliberating, cajoling, or shaming them to accept, and internalize, facts, arguments and causal understandings about particular issues and norms. The goal of persuasion is often the socialization of others to accept an axiomatic understanding of world politics and to arrive at “common knowledge” about them. More importantly, they have to realize the reasons of their interaction, the legitimate value of their interaction and who are legitimate players. Moreover, the actors deliberate to agree about the relevant features of a social situation and then give reasons why a certain behavior has to be avoided. Thus, they behave further according to the previously elaborated justified interpretation of a behaviour. However, fewer constructivists have claimed that persuasion can make states to follow norms because this perspective does not necessarily take into account power relations.

However, Johnston argues that persuasion is a communicative action, but it might become also something more normatively coercive which involve shaming or opprobrium. Thus, a following of a norm would not be a result of norm internalizing for actors but rather of actor's fear of public criticism. According to Johnston, constructivists do not explain how actors convince other actors to arrive at a common knowledge about mutual interpretation of social facts. Moreover, what are the social or material conditions for a successful communicative action? The conditions according to him demand a prior trust, honesty, empathy and power equality. Even if the EU member- states are members of an international community that share common values and mechanisms, one would not observe such a high degree of trust and honesty among them when they communicate. The Syrian refugee crisis is an excellent example of this. Despite that identification between member-states might lead to positive effect which could cause that the interpretations and the arguments of the other will be internalized approved as valid, there is also one more important effect. This effect is the effect of social influence.

### **3.4 Social influence**

Social influence encompasses several sub-processes such as opprobrium, backpatting, social liking, status maximization where pro-norm behaviour is rewarded by the group an actor identifies with. The rewards come as social and psychological markers. Thus, according to Nemeth (1987), a sign for a successful social influence is when the real or the supposed group pressure have turned into an actor's conformity with the position that is advocated by the group (cited in Johnston, 2001). The difference between social influence and persuasion according to Festinger (1962), (cited in Johnston, 2001) is that persuasion involves a public conformity with private acceptance while social influence entails public conformity without private acceptance. Authoritative persuasion, the one that convinces, also called "mediated informational influence" is exemplified with "I thought the answer was X . . . but everybody else said Y, so it really must be Y".' (Johnston, 2001, p.499). On the other hand, social influence according to Johnston (2001) come in the shape of "mediated normative influence" which is presented in the phrase: "I believe the answer is X, but others said Y, and I don't want to rock the boat, so I'll say Y" (Johnston, 2001, p. 499). Thus, this distinguishes social influence from persuasion: social influence implies normative influence over actors, while persuasion implies informational influence.

Furthermore, an actor identifies and participates in particular, valued by him groups, which provide the social rewards and punishments, and consequently influence an actor's behaviour (Johnston, 2001). Thus, influence is the most relevant to IR theory microprocess because of an actor's desire to gain prestige, honour or to diffuse reputation or image. Furthermore, the fear of sanctions or a loss of status, humiliation and shaming make an actor to engage in a pro-norm behaviour (Johnston, 2001). Thus, according to Johnston (2001) if social influence influences

actors, then it will have several effects where the most important of which is if actor still acquires deliberative position, this would put the actor in a distinct minority, without access to cooperating audience or reference group (Johnston, 2001). Thus, an actor commits to pro-social behaviour when the other option of noncommitment will lead to actor's isolation. In conclusion, social rewards and punishments, according to Johnston are a cheap to create and an interesting kind of inducement to overcome collective inaction that implies a great deal of value.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This theoretical chapter outlined presented the different logic of actions that an actor might take in a given situation. Thus, the notion of the logic of consequentialism assumes that an actor realizes, optimizes and maximizes own preferences and interests while cooperating with other actors. In the terms of the Syrian refugee crisis, Bulgaria as an external border country at the outer edge of the EU has several material and social interests that could be materialized only through cooperation with the other EU actors. At the same time, the country also behaves according to the logic of appropriateness which implies that an actor 'do the right thing', guided by norms and rules. As a country, that is an EU Member State, Bulgaria has two reasonable choices-to follow the EU norms of asylum and burden-sharing, which is the right thing to do or to discursively challenge and deviate from pro-social behaviour, as other EU Members States did. However, the states do not always choose to act by what is the appropriate thing to do. Especially 'novices', such as Bulgaria which have been and EU Member States only for ten years and did not fully 'mirror' the EU identity yet. Therefore, in a given situation, a state might act due to conformity and social pressure and fear of loss of reputation. Bulgaria has a fragile reputation within the EU and it could not permit a decreasing of the trust in the country by deviating from pro-social behaviour. The detailed discussion on these issues is in chapter 6.

The next chapter outlines the conducting process of my research on the Bulgarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis and reveals why I chose a qualitative research design and the techniques I used to obtain data for my empirical analysis.

## **4. Qualitative Research Design. Research strategy, Interviews and Reliability**

This section addresses the methodology of my research. It will first address the advantages of the qualitative research and reveal why I chose a qualitative approach. Second, it will introduce the sampling techniques that I used to obtain the data for my research. I will discuss data collected from two semi-structured interviews, four e-mail interviews and one group interview. The section will argue the advantages and the disadvantages of these techniques and will give an overview of the criteria for assessing the reliability and the ethics in my research. It will also explain the process

of triangulation between my primary sources like respondents' views on the topic and my secondary sources which include scholarly articles, web pages and extracts from speeches of Bulgarian politicians about the Bulgarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Last, this section will evaluate the biases in my research and how I overcome them.

#### **4.1. The selection of qualitative research design**

In my master thesis, I adopt a qualitative research approach because it interprets events through the eyes of the people that the qualitative researchers interact with in their investigation. Thus, I intend to analyse the different views on the Bulgarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis and the challenges the country face when responding to it, based on the participants answers I gathered from my research interviews.

I choose a qualitative research because little qualitative research is obtained on the topic of my research, which focuses on EU border countries and their response to the Syrian refugee crisis. According to Bryman (2015), the qualitative research strategy emphasizes words and not quantification in the data collection and analysis. Moreover, it is broadly inductive, interpretive, and constructionist even if qualitative researchers do not always subscribe to all the three features at the same time. Comparing quantitative research and qualitative research, in quantitative research strategy, Bryman (2015) states, it is given an importance of codification of the research process, while there is a less codification in the qualitative research. Furthermore, in qualitative research there is the relationship between theory and research that is viewed inductively, where the former is generated out of the latter. An interpretive epistemological feature of the qualitative research is that, the social world is being understood through the eyes its participants. In contrast, the quantitative research adopts a natural scientific model. Furthermore, the qualitative research strategy's constructionist ontological position implies that individuals interact with each other. Thus, they produce outcomes of social properties, rather than phenomena 'out there' in quantitative research strategy and therefore, separate from the involved people in its construction. In sum, in the qualitative research strategy, there is fewer numbers and more words.

Therefore, I elected a qualitative research strategy because I wanted to explore and comprehend the views and the experiences of individuals who have positions in the Bulgarian services and facilities for refugees. Most importantly, I am interested in their understandings of the Bulgarian interests, behaviour, response and challenges to the Syrian refugee crisis, described in their own words and deploying their frame of reference. In addition, a quantitative approach would have contributed with a wider sample, but then I would not have been able to acquire the views of my participants of the topic which was my initial plan and is more suitable for my research.

#### **4.2 Sampling frame. Purposive sample**

I employ purposive sampling where the researcher does not sample research participants randomly (Newman and Robson, 2014). The goal of a purposive sampling methodology is to sample cases/participants strategically, so that those sampled are relevant to the posed research questions (RQs) (Bryman, 2012). Since my RQs are concerned with the Bulgarian behaviour, response to the refugee crisis, and interests, I aim to establish a relationship with experts and employees related to the services that deal with refugees in Bulgaria and with Bulgarian external policy officials. Furthermore, Bryman (2012) suggests that sample members should differ from each other in terms of key characteristics relevant to the research question in order to achieve more accurate and complete sampling results. That is why I strive to ensure that such variety exists in my sample. Therefore, my selected sample does not include only people, directly related to the Syrian refugee crisis in Bulgaria but also people that are enrolled in other Bulgarian state systems such as the Police, the Ministry of the regional development and the Bulgarian embassies.

Despite that they later participate indirectly in the process of dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis, they were selected because they possess a broad knowledge of the Bulgarian response to the refugee crises and are relevant to the research questions. In addition, they met a set of criteria such as being a body of executive power with special competence in their fields, expert knowledge on the Bulgarian external and internal policy, and could provide answers to the RQs in my study.

#### **4.3 More than one sampling technique**

As outlined in Teddlie (2007), purposive sampling often involves more than one sampling approach. In my investigation, I used more than one technique, namely, the snowballing approach, which was preceded by generic purposive sampling. According to Bryman (2015), this is quite common in qualitative research, and it entails the sampling of initial participants to broaden out the scope of the research through a snowballing method. Thus, in my research on the role of Bulgaria in the Syrian refugee crisis I initially sampled employees from the State agency refugees with the Council of Ministers. These were individuals who have key roles in the agency, responsible for refugees and migrants in Bulgaria, like senior and junior experts and the chairman of the Agency. Thus, I employed generic purposive sampling. According to Bryman (2015), the generic purposive sampling may be applied in a sequential manner where sampling is an evolving process. The researcher starts with an initial sample and adds gradually to the sample as appropriate for the research questions. It also may be employed in a fixed manner - the RQs guide the sampling approach, and the sample is established (fixed) at the outset of the research. The criteria for selecting individuals (or cases) may be assembled a priori and do not evolve as the research progresses which is the case in my research. Thus, the criteria for selecting of participants are set at the beginning of the research and are designed to answer the research questions.

Furthermore, my initial sample that provided the basis for the participants in my research was generated by searching for experts who work in institutions that deal with refugees, external policy officials or individuals that are connected directly or indirectly with the Syrian refugee crisis in Bulgaria. Thus, two criteria were established from the outset on a priori basis-having a practical experience and specific knowledge of this topic and being an expert on Bulgarian foreign policy. Then I used the snowballing technique, in which according to Bryman (2015) the sampled participants suggest other participants who have the characteristics or the experience, relevant to the research. These participants then suggest others and so on. Thus, I was able to secure from my informants, details of others whom it would be useful to contact and consult. Therefore, according to Bryman (2012), the technique permits to capitalize on and to reveal simultaneously the connectedness of individuals in networks.

As a result of the snowballing method, people like legal clerks, experts from the Ministry of the regional development, the Bulgarian Embassy in Oslo and other individuals from different organizations were also identified, and most of them participated in the research. Furthermore, I collected data from an initial group of 4 interviewees who had been selected because of their importance for the research. Thereafter, snowballing method took over to broaden out the scope of the research, with nine individuals being interviewed. In total, twelve individuals were interviewed. Thus, individuals were initially selected because they occupied a position relevant to the investigation, and this primary generic sample was then used to suggest further relevant participants to widen the research.

The traditional method of ‘snowballing’ allowed me to approach one individual from the network dealing with the refugee crisis, leading to the next, which led to approaching individuals that work in Bulgarian institutions and thus I began to detect a string of clues that took me from one important pattern to the next. Thus, I reached a diversity of respondents in my research which would point out any common core of the experience of participants better than a homogeneous sample would (Bryman, 2015).

#### **4.4 Semi-structured face-to-face interviews**

During my travel to Bulgaria, I had the opportunity to communicate with people that are relevant to my research and by following the snowballing technique I was introduced to other potential participants. Thus, I met and performed face-to-face interviews with several of my participants. The face-to-face interaction is one way to gain access to useful data where the researcher establishes personal contact with individuals who have experience and knowledge of the topic. Opdenakker (2006) argues that the face-to-face interview’s advantage is that the researcher could evaluate the ‘social cues’ such as body language and intonation of the voice. Face-to-face interviews thus establish a connection with respondents. According to him the social cues implies

additional information of the interviewee's verbal answer. For instance, the researcher might observe confusion, discomfort provoked by certain questions or interest and attention to other questions. Thus, body language, voice and face expression play a crucial role in shaping and guiding the interview (Opdenakker, 2006).

Furthermore, according to Bryman (2015), in qualitative research, a prominence is given to a broadness of the initial research ideas' and interviewees' own views. The focus of the qualitative interviewing is from the interviewee's perspective on a certain topic. Since the qualitative interview is flexible and responds to the direction in which the interviewee takes it, it permits the interviewee to identify what is relevant and important. Thus, the interviewee emphasizes and adjusts issues that emerge in the process of interviewing. To get a more in-depth understanding of my questions, I carried out two personal semi-structured interviews and one semi-structured group interview. Through the semi-structured interviews, the qualitative researcher gathers focused and rich textual data that describes the personal experiences of the participants (Berg and Lune, 2012). Starting with probing questions I continued with a list of questions that cover several topics that are part of my interview guide. I avoided leading questions or questions with strong positive and negative meaning in order to avoid bias response. According to Bryman (2015), an interviewer should ask open-ended questions rather than close-ended questions that lead the interviewee to answer with simply 'yes' and 'no'. In addition, all the questions from the guide-interview will be posed to the interviewees, and a similar wording will be employed among them. However, it is not necessary that the questions should follow the way outlined in the schedule and questions that are not included might arise when the interviewees say things (Bryman, 2015). Thus, the interview process is flexible.

Semi-structured interviews according to Opdenakker (2006) could be recorded with the permission of the interviewee or taken notes of, as well as both at the same time. According to him, the advantage of an interview to be recorded is that it is more accurate than just writing notes. However, all of my interviews are "notes only" due to the desire of the participants. To minimize inaccuracy, I paid extra attention to what was said by the interviewees and asked them to repeat several times what they have said. On the other hand, there is a risk that during the tape recording the researcher forgets to take notes. Taking notes is important because the researcher checks if the interviewees have answered all the questions. It is also important in case of recording device malfunction or the researcher forgets to push the button of the recorder (Opdenakker, 2006).

The semi-structured interview might be costly if the interviewees are geographically distant from the researcher for example, but it is still relatively easier compared to other types of research tools. Also, at the end of the interview, the researcher might ask the interviewee for further remarks of relevance to the topic. This can uncover a whole new area of information (Opdenakker, 2006).

Interviewees were asked to talk about main topics such as Bulgaria's response as an external EU border country in the Syrian refugee crisis, the dialogue between the EU institutions and the Bulgarian government, the perception of the Bulgarian society of the Syrian refugees/migrants in Bulgaria. The Schengen security system and the Dublin regulations were also discussed in these semi-structured interviews. The interviews allowed me to pursue topics of interest to the participants such as the administrative procedures that refugees and migrants experience when they cross an EU border country and their literacy and habits. Furthermore, they emphasized the criminal issues within the Syrian refugee crisis, the smugglers' role in the Syrian refugee crisis, and the cooperation mechanisms between the refugees and migrants in their path to Western Europe.

As said before, I started the investigation with a reasonably clear focus on the Bulgarian response to the refugee crisis, rather than a very broad vision of the Syrian refugee crisis. Thus, I addressed the more specific issues such as the challenges that Bulgaria faces in terms of it, the EU-Turkey Readmission and the Dublin III regulation and their impact on the border countries of the EU. Also, the interviews were focused on the behaviour that Bulgaria adopts in order to pursue its main interest to join Schengen.

#### **4.5 Asynchronous methods. E-mail interviews**

As my second instrument of communication-based research method, I used e-mail interviews. According to Hesse-Biber and Griffin (2013), this is an asynchronous method because it is not performed in real time and thus there is no immediate response from the participant. Therefore, answers are provided by the respondent possibly days or even weeks later. According to Bryman (2015), the e-mail interview has some advantages: to contact respondents by email is a relatively quick and economical way of contacting many possible participants simultaneously. Thus, very large groups can be sampled. In my case- more than I could envisage in a face-to-face context, because of the time constraints. Thus, I could contact all the members of the State agency for refugees with the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria due to their denial to perform a face-to-face discussion. The e-mail interview also allowed me to contact people working at the Bulgarian legal system and the Ministry of the regional development which otherwise I could not be able to interact with. Thus, this is a diversified and relatively large group of participants although many scholars suggest that large groups could cause research management problems (Bryman, 2015). One problem with the asynchronous method of the e-mail interview is that participants are not available online twenty-four hours a day and this can cause a lack of continuous availability (Bryman, 2015). Emails may be sent and responded to without any ability of the researcher to intervene or participate if offensive messages were being sent by no means or if the discussions were being shifted to a completely different line of thought. Moreover, offline interviewers are less able to have an impact on whether the interview is successful or not because they are more remote. Furthermore, e-mail interviews in asynchronous mode may go on for several days or weeks and thus some

participants might drop out of the study or decrease their response rates, unlike the face-to-face interaction. This is the likely reason why one of my participants dropped out from my research, even after frequent reminders were sent. I mitigated this loss of participant by adding more secondary data sources on the impact of the Bulgarian economy that the refugees caused. Another disadvantage is that in non-verbal data, the facial expression or the tone of the voice is lost and this decreases the data quantity and quality (Bryman, 2015).

Despite the abovementioned disadvantages, through e-mail interviews, the researcher and the interviewees establish a good relationship and it is easy for the researcher to ask his or her interviewee's additional questions, which might not be the case with the face-to-face interviews. It was crucial for my research to keep asking my respondents for further answers and to assure them that their answers are helpful, significant and of crucial importance for my research. This is because, as Bryman (2015) emphasizes, Internet interviewing is still an unpopular experience for many people and the likelihood that they would want to continue to participate decreases. A further issue for the online personal interviewer to consider is whether to send all the questions at once or to interview on a question followed by reply basis. There is a problem because the respondents may read all of them in advance and then reply only to those that they feel interested in or to which they feel they can contribute well. I did not have this issue. My participants answered all my questions. An offline interview requires greater commitment and motivation for completing, but replies are often carefully deliberated than with face-to-face interviews (Bryman, 2015). Thus, an e-mail interview produces a 'clean' transcript, but it misses spontaneity. Also, the offline interview is typed while the face-to-face interview is spoken. This implies that online interview produces fewer words while the opposite is true for the face-to-face communication which also has more variation.

As discussed face-to-face interviews there are significant advantages and fewer disadvantages while e-mail interviews have both advantages and disadvantages. However, while it would have been ideal to do only face-to-face interaction, e-mail interviews were still extremely valuable. In my research, I carried out both face-to-face personal and group interviews and e-mail interviews. I did this not because I wanted to try different techniques but because of respondents' demands, needs and requirements. Thus, this gave a greater variety of my methods, and it was exciting to try several techniques while conducting my research.

#### **4.6 Group interview**

The third sampling technique I used in my research was a group-interview. According to Gill et al. (2008), in a group interview, the researcher is interested in the views of the participants, discussing them as members of a group. Thus, the focus of a group interview is on the way people in the group respond and react to each other's statements and on the interaction between the

members of the group while performing the interview. In my group interview, the group members reacted to each other's claims calmly and with respect. They listened to each other and completed each other's statements often.

Furthermore, according to Rabiee (2004), in the group interview, the participants are selected because they are purposive, a sample of a specific population and focused on a given topic. This was the case with my group. Thus, the participants were selected because of their knowledge of a given study area, namely the Syrian refugee crisis and how the Bulgarian authorities overcome their challenges in terms of technical issues. According to Green et al. (2003), the group interview generates data, based on the synergy of the group interaction (Rabiee, 2004). Thus, there are two wide discussions among scholars- if the group members should or should not know each other to feel convenient together and engage in a discussion. Rabiee (2004) claims that self-disclosure for some individuals is natural and comfortable, while for others trust and effort are required. Furthermore, she argues that according to Krueger (1994), solid data can only be produced if individuals in the group are prepared to get involved completely in the discussion, and this requires a homogenous group. This implies that participants should share similar background characteristics: gender, age, ethnicity and social class (Rabiee, 2004). Moreover, in homogenous groups, the participants could relate to each other's comments and would be able to challenge them. Also, the extent of trust within the group members would eventually boost the expression of views (Rabiee, 2004). On the other hand, despite that many researchers would agree with the concept of homogeneity, they recommend that participants should not know each other if the researcher wants to obtain more honest, wider and spontaneous views to be expressed. Rabiee (2004) argues that the interview group members should not-know each other because it also prevents a behaviour related to patterns of leadership in the group. I agree with the latter statement because, in my group interview, the participants knew each other. Thus, one of the members became the leader of the interview. Thereafter, it was often him that responded to my questions and was supported constantly by the other group members. Thus, I was not able to fully explore their views. However, I find the data that I gathered from this group interview reliable since the participants were experts on the topics that were discussed.

#### **4.7 Reliability, ethics and biases**

According to Bryman (2015), reliability and validity are important features in establishing and assessing the quality of the quantitative research. The equal criteria for establishing and assessing quality that provides an alternative to reliability and validity in the qualitative research he argues are trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness implies four other criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman, 2015). Credibility parallels internal validity in quantitative research. The researcher establishes the findings' credibility by

ensuring that research is carried out according to the principles of good practice. Thus, in my research, even if it was carried out outside of Norway, i.e. in Bulgaria, I had to apply to the Norwegian Social Science Service (NSD). I had to obtain permission to carry out my research and comply with the Norwegian law of ethics on research and data which also ensures the informed consent of my participants (Corti et al., 2000). My application was approved before I carried out the interviews. Furthermore, the answers from the experts of the State Agency for refugees were given to me after the official permission from the Ministry of the Internal Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria. In this research, confidentiality is given to almost all the participants according to their desire. Thus, I eliminated all the identifying features of these participants, but since I know their names, a complete anonymity could not be given to them (Corti et al., 2000). Therefore, in the research, I gave my informant's fictive names. These names are Ivan, Georgi, Marin, Victor, Lubina, Aicha and Mustafa. In addition, all my participants expressed a desire not to be recorded. Therefore, I respected their will and only took notes of their answers which are also given confidentiality by keeping them in safety. Furthermore, the researcher acquires credibility by submitting the research's findings to the respondents of the research. Thus, they would confirm that the researcher has correctly or incorrectly understood the meaning of their answers (Bryman, 2015). I used this technique in my research as well as I cross-validated the findings of my research with other participants, additional literature, official web sites like [president.bg](http://president.bg), [mfa.bg](http://mfa.bg), [eur-lex.eu](http://eur-lex.eu) and [europa.eu](http://europa.eu). Those resources contain an archive of information of official statements and documents, EU laws, and history of events as well as other sources like scholarly articles and web pages. Thus, I acquired validation of my research by using the method of triangulation. Triangulation involves using several methods of investigation or sources of data when studying social phenomena, such as multiple observers, methodologies, theoretical perspectives and sources of data (Bryman, 2015).

Furthermore, transferability in qualitative research corresponds to external validity in quantitative research and dependability, parallels reliability. Dependability is important because it establishes the research's merit in terms of the criterion of trustworthiness. The auditing approach of this criterion entails the researcher to ensure that complete records are stored in an accessible manner. This concerns all phases of the research process, namely, formulation of the problem, research participant's selection, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions, and so on (Bryman, 2015). The notes of my respondents' answers and the e-mail interviews are contained in encrypted documents.

The last criterion for a trustworthiness of research is confirmability. It recognizes that complete objectivity of research is impossible since there are not absolute truths about the social world and there can be more than one possible accounts. At the same time, the researcher should demonstrate to have acted in good faith. This means that the researcher should not allow theoretical inclinations and personal values visibly to sway the conduct of which parallels objectivity the

research and the findings attaining from it (Bryman, 2015). Moreover, qualitative interviews are vulnerable to confirmation biases. Informants may present an initiative as more successful than it was in reality, especially if they are involved in it (Bayley and Tilley, 2002). Therefore, I strived to ensure a variety of participants for my research and to expose several points of view, which do not depict only positively or only negatively, reactions, decisions and events related to the topic of this Master thesis. In addition, the biggest bias that might occur in my thesis comes from the fact that I am Bulgarian, and this might affect the impartiality of the research since the topic's main research concern is about Bulgaria. I strived to abstain from the fact that I am speaking about my homeland and being objective as much as possible in the analysis of the research data.

The next chapter overview the background of the Syrian refugee crisis, including number of refugees entering Europe, the external borders of the EU, key EU decisions to cope with the crisis and key Bulgarian decisions in response to the crisis. It is followed by Chapter 6 which addresses the analysis of this research and includes the participants answers of the interviews that were pointed above, as well as the empirics of this research.

## **5. Background of the refugee crisis and the EU response**

This section addresses the challenges Bulgaria faces when responding to the refugee crisis and the Bulgarian government's response to it. The section begins with an outline of the EU's key measures in response to the refugee crisis. Then, it continues with the response and key Bulgarian measures in the escalation and progression of the Syrian refugee crisis.

### **5.1 Key events of the Syrian refugee crisis**

This section clarifies how many refugees and migrants entered Europe since the escalation of the Syrian conflict in order to illuminate the size of the event. The section also elucidates the meaning of the countries at the external border of the EU on its outer edge, that bears the biggest pressure of the influx of the refugees and the migrants.

#### **5.1.1 Syrian refugees**

In March 2011, an estimated 11 million Syrian citizens had fled their homes. In 2016, 13.5 million needed humanitarian help within Syria. Among those escaping the war, the majority have requested refuge in neighbouring countries or within Syria itself (Syrianrefugees.eu, 2016). According to the UNHCR, 4.8 million have fled to Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt. Another 6.6 million within Syria are internally displaced. Meanwhile about one million have sought asylum in Europe. The EU's top host countries are Sweden with 100,000 and Germany, with more than 300,000 cumulated applications (Syrianrefugees.eu, 2016).

### **5.1.2 Migrants within the Syrian refugee crisis**

Migrants within the Syrian refugee crisis are mainly coming from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Africa. The migrants decide to move to improve their lives. This might include finding work, reunion with their family or being involved in education programs. Thus, the decision to leave their countries of origin do not necessarily coincide with the direct threat of death or persecution (UNHCR.org, 2016). Moreover, conversely to the refugees, the migrants could safely return home, and if they decide to do that, they will continue to receive their government's protection (UNHCR.org, 2016).

Thus, since the escalation of the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe in 2013 by, more than one million refugees and migrants have crossed into Europe (BBC, 2016). Specifically, 400 000 Syrians, 200 000 Afghani, 150 000 Iraqi, around 50 000 were from Kosovo, almost 50 000 Albanians and around 50 000 were Pakistani (BBC, 2016). The rest of the refugees and the migrants were from countries such as Eritrea, Nigeria, Iran and Ukraine. In 2015, 2.7 million in total were the estimated immigrants in the EU-28 that come from countries outside the EU. Additionally, 1.9 million persons previously staying in one EU Member State moved to another Member State (ec.europa.eu, 2017). Consequently, the crisis does not include only Syrian refugees but also migrants and people from other non-European countries that seek asylum in Europe. Therefore, both refugees and migrants would be used as appropriate to the event terms.

### **5.1.3 External border countries at the outer edge of the EU**

The external border countries at the outer edge of the EU include the parts of a Schengen Member State's border, which include land borders, lake, river and sea borders, and their airports, lake ports, river ports, sea ports, that are not common borders with another Schengen Member State. In the EU, Ireland and the UK do not participate in the Schengen area, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia are Schengen candidate countries. Iceland, Lichtenstein, Switzerland and Norway are also Schengen members, although they are not EU member-states (derived by EMN from Regulation (EC) No 562/2006 (Schengen Borders Code), (cited in ec.europa.eu).

## **5.2 Key EU decisions in responding to the refugee crisis**

According to German and several other EU state officials, blocking refugees from crossing the borders would be harmful and unrealistic. However, the EU did not accept that statement to be its official migrant and refugee policy. The lack of official EU policy encouraged hundreds of thousand refugees and migrants to influx into the periphery border countries such as Greece and Italy. This created a conflict between the official local state and EU migration policies. Hence,

those countries were forced to focus their efforts and resources on providing and processing asylum applications instead of protecting EU border, denying access (opensocietyfoundations.org, 2016). As a result, the EU adopted an agenda which include two instruments of coping with the crisis-the European schemes for relocation and resettlement and the European Migration Agenda. Bulgaria as a country on the external border of the outer edge of the EU decided to follow both instruments of this agenda.

### **5.2.1 The European schemes for relocation and resettlement**

Relocation means that the EU distributes persons in need of international protection among its Member States. Based on a distribution key, the EU Commission proposed in 2015 to accelerate 'the emergency response system envisaged under Article 78(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union' (ec.europa.eu, 2015, p.19) and established an 'European relocation scheme for asylum seekers who are in clear need of international protection' (ec.europa.eu, 2015, p.19). This distribution key is based on the following elements (ec.europa.eu, 2015):

- a) the size of the population (40%) as it reflects the capacity to absorb a certain number of refugees;
- b) total GDP52 (40%) as it reflects the absolute wealth of a country and is thus indicative of the capacity of an economy to absorb and integrate refugees;
- c) average number of spontaneous asylum applications and the number of resettled refugees per 1 million inhabitants over the period 2010-2014 (10%) as it reflects the efforts made by the Member States in the recent past;
- d) unemployment rate (10%) as an indicator reflecting the capacity to integrate refugees. Actual numbers to be relocated to each Member State will depend on the total number of persons to be relocated and will be included in the legislative proposal. The receiving Member State will be responsible for the examination of the asylum applications by established rules and guarantees (p.19).

For instance, according to the European relocation scheme, the EU Commission would relocate in Germany, which has a population of 82 million, 18.42% of the people who claimed asylum to the EU, while the percentage for Bulgaria, which has a population of 7 million, is 1.25%.

Further, the resettlement implies 'the transfer of individual displaced persons in clear need of international protection, on submission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and in agreement with the country of resettlement, from a third country to a Member State' (ec.europa.eu, 2015, p.19), where the individual displaced persons are recognized and 'granted the right to stay and any other rights comparable to those granted to a beneficiary of international protection' (ec.europa.eu, 2015, p. 19). This resettlement scheme covers all Member States. The Associated States were invited to participate in the scheme. The resettlement places are shared and allocated to each Member State through the same distribution key for the relocation scheme as explained above (ec.europa.eu, 2015). The scheme contains a single European pledge of 20,000

resettlement places mostly in North Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Middle East in the countries which implemented the Regional Development and Protection Programmes (ec.europa.eu). The EU Commission contributed to the scheme by supporting it financially with €50 million in 2015 and 2016. The resettlement prescribed that each Member State remains accountable for individual admission decisions (ec.europa.eu, 2015).

For instance, the resettlement scheme prescribes that Germany would take 15,43% of the people claimed asylum which means 3086 persons per total allocation based on 20 000 resettlement places. Compared to Germany, Bulgaria would take 1.08% or 216 persons per total allocation based on 20 000 resettlement places.

### **5.2.2 The European Migration Agenda**

Additionally, on May 2015, the European Commission adopted the European Migration Agenda, which outlined the EU key priorities in the asylum, border policies, and migration (Carrera et al. (2015)). The Agenda was presented publicly on 13 of May 2015 by the First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, the HR/VP Federica Mogherini and the Commissioner for Migration Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos. The goal of the Agenda was to ensure consistency between the institutions and to be comprehensive for the various internal and external policy strands and instruments at the Union's disposal. The agenda contains six short-term EU policy actions (Carrera et al., 2015):

- 1) A temporary and emergency-driven relocation mechanism for asylum-seekers within the EU for those member states confronting higher influx, based on a new redistribution key-criteria for determining responsibility for assessing asylum applications; and the presentation of a legislative initiative for a permanent system before the end of 2015
- 2) A relocation mechanism for 20,000 refugees from outside the EU, and an extra €50 million budget 2015-16 to support this scheme
- 3) Tripling the capacities and budget of the EU External Border Agency (Frontex) joint border control and surveillance operations in the Mediterranean (called 'Triton' and 'Poseidon')
- 4) Increasing emergency funding to frontline EU member states by €60 million, and setting up a new 'hotspot approach' in which EU home affairs agencies like Frontex, Europol and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) would work on the ground to support 'frontline' member states in identifying, registering and fingerprinting migrants
- 5) Strengthening Europol's joint maritime information operation in the Mediterranean to deal with migrants' smuggling via CEPOL (European Policy College)
- 6) Establishing a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Operation in the Mediterranean to dismantle traffickers' networks and the 'business model' of smugglers, to identify, capture and destroy vessels used by smugglers (p. 4).

These actions were an important first step of cooperation between the EU institutions to solve the refugee crisis. However, they are incomplete and not efficient enough to fully resolve the crisis.

### **5.2.3 The EU-Turkey Readmission**

Further, by 2016, certain transit countries such as Hungary started to close their borders. The situation worsened when several EU countries opposed the decision of the EU to transfer 160 000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy to other EU member-states. Therefore, the EU financed the setting up of hotspots in Greece and Italy where asylum seekers were identified, registered, and fingerprinted. Thereafter, they were redirected either towards asylum or to returning. This mechanism was not successful because the hotspots became overcrowded and lacked the capacity to provide the needed service and assistance, being understaffed and with almost no external oversight (opensocietyfoundations.org, 2016).

The problems that the crisis posed to the EU exacerbated further, and in March 2016 when the EU announced that they made a deal with Turkey. It implied that Turkey would receive the burden of the migratory pressure. In return, Turkey would gain financial support of €3 billion, eventual visa-free travel for Turkish citizens to the EU and speed up the process of EU accession of Turkey. Thus, the refugees and the migrants coming to Europe decreased by almost 97% from October 2015 to the end of 2017 (the European Commission, 2017).

The EU made similar deals of holding refugees on their territory with countries such as Libya, Egypt, Sudan, and Nigeria. However, the idea of a new “Partnership Framework” with third countries in Africa and the Middle East, met substantial criticism of various NGOs for making deals with human rights violator countries.

In conclusion, the EU will continue to implement those deal policies and support refugees in host countries like Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey through funding agencies such as Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and World Food Programme (WFP) (opensocietyfoundations.org, 2016).

### **5.3 Key policy decisions in Bulgaria in responding to the refugee crisis**

Bulgaria is an external border country of the EU and shares a 258km long border with Turkey, which is the main entrance point for the refugees and the migrant entering Bulgaria and the EU (Map. 1). Thus, Bulgaria bears a big responsibility for protecting the European Union’s external border. A substantial number of refugees/migrants has been trying to reach Europe entering Bulgaria via its Bulgarian-Turkish border. An expert from the State agency for refugees with the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria (SAR) clarifies that in the autumn of 2013, when the Syrian conflict escalated tremendously, the border authorities at the Bulgarian border with the Republic of Turkey met a daily average of between 200 and 250 Syrians. According to Vankova et al. (2017), in

2014, more than 10 000 refugees and migrants applied for asylum in Bulgaria. In 2015, this number was down to 9 000 refugees and migrants (epicentre.bg, 2016). The migrants that come in Bulgaria are mainly from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan (epicentre.bg, 2016).

Prime-minister Boyko Borisov emphasized that Bulgaria will cooperate with its neighbour-countries in tackling the refugee crisis and will seek a common European solution to it. He said that the country needs to cooperate with Turkey, Greece and Macedonia, as well as will prove that the country is an important actor in the resolving of the refugee crisis (novinite.com, 2014).

### 5.3.1 Physical border facility

Thus, a physical border facility through the whole length (269km) of the border between Bulgaria and Turkey was built in 2015 with an EU funding. Rather than stopping the reception of potential refugees, this border facility aims to redirect migrants to the areas of the border checkpoints, the SAR expert clarifies. The Republic of Bulgaria has never denied accepting refugees on European territory at any time, he adds.



Map.1 The map indicates the refugee/migrant routes to the EU countries. Bulgaria stands on the Eastern-Mediterranean (Balkan) migrant route with Turkey (businessinsider.com, 2015)

### 5.3.2 The implementation of the 17-points' plan of action between the Balkan states and the significance of the EU-Turkey readmission

On 25 October 2015, the state leaders of Bulgaria, Austria, Croatia, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Germany, Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia and Romania

agreed on a 17-points plan of action, introduced by the EU Commission which was based on exchange of information, limiting secondary moves of refugees, providing support, shelter and rest to refugees, managing the migrants' flow, border managements, tackling smuggling and trafficking, information on the rights and obligations of refugees, monitoring and background (European Commission, 2015). Thus the Western Balkans' states decided to improve their cooperation tackle the refugee crisis (European Commission, 2015).

According to experts from the State agency for refugees with the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria, the EU-Turkey agreement of March 2016 certainly played a key role in regulating refugee flows under the so-called Balkan Corridor. This route starts from Turkey and passes through Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary before it stops in Germany and Austria (see Map.1).

### **5.3.3 The launching of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency**

Furthermore, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency was launched on 6 October 2016. The event happened at the Kapitan Andreevo Border Checkpoint at the Bulgarian border with Turkey. According to Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico, this outcome is a result of the joint commitment and unity of the EU member-states. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency will monitor the EU's external borders and will cooperate with the other EU member states to address and identify any potential security threats to the EU's external borders (consilium.europa.eu, 2016).

Thus, despite that several measures were taken, the challenges in front of the EU and Bulgaria are tremendous. The next section outlines the core challenges in front of Bulgaria in its response to the refugee crisis.

## **6. Analysis**

This section addresses the analysis of this Master thesis. It gives an overview of the challenges that Bulgaria experience when it responds to the refugee crisis. They are important because they required further actions from the Bulgarian government. Thus, this section digs into the underlying reasons of how the Bulgarian government justifies its actions and interests based on the logic of consequentialism and the logic of appropriateness. This section analyses the reasons why Bulgaria do follow the EU norms, from the perspective of the fact that the country has been a member of the EU only for ten years and its identity is still somewhat different form the core EU nations. Shortly, it considers the asylum and the burden-sharing norms entailed in the EU regulations and procedures towards people that seek refuge through the logic of appropriateness. This analysis uses as evidence the answers from the research respondents, and several scholarly articles on the refugee crisis topic and considers extracts from speeches from Bulgarian politicians.

Furthermore, this section explains the process of socialization of Bulgaria within the EU. Thereafter, this section seeks to analyse the Bulgarian support for a common EU solution to the refugee crisis by considering the possible explanations of social influence discussed in chapter 3.

## **6.1 The challenges that the refugee crisis imposes to Bulgaria**

As experts from the State Agency for refugees stated, the Syrian refugee crisis has been the biggest challenge that Bulgaria has faced in recent years. And Bulgaria and the rest of the EU have proved inadequately prepared for it, and events have escalated within days.

### **6.1.1 Burden to the economy**

According to R. Mitreva, the refugees and the migrants do not want to stay in Bulgaria. And Aicha explains: ‘since the country lacks a social system that benefits them’. The Bulgarians consider any that funding allocation for the refugee integration from the otherwise limited Bulgarian budget will be unreasonable. This is the predominant sentiment because people believe there is no point to integrate the refugees in Bulgaria if they leave after a year or two for another richer EU counter parts, Mustafa added.

Furthermore, several surveys have been created to understand how the Bulgarians perceive refugees that are coming to the country. As Kyutchukov (2016) claims, the majority of the Bulgarian population perceive refugees as a burden to the economy of the country and consider them as a threat to the Bulgarian national security. The Bulgarians are sceptical toward refugees mainly because they believe in the impossibility of integration of refugees. This is not only because they fear of foreign religion, ethnicity, and culture, but mostly because they do not see the Bulgarian economy being healthy enough to care for refugees. (Kyutchukov, 2016).

### **6.1.2 Frightening the different culture**

A further challenge is as Ivan added, the Bulgarians’ attitude among the local population toward them is fairly negative. This statement is supported by any other member interviewee. They give some examples for that, claiming that a Syrian refugee family has been denied a settlement and has been expelled from the little town Elin Pelin in Western Bulgaria. Moreover, when the Government attempted to build a refugee camp in Bulgaria, the locals rise against it. This is because the Bulgarians distrust the different lifestyle of the refugees/migrants, Lubina emphasized. They possess different cultures than the Bulgarian one, habits and different religion, which are accompanied by the observance of relevant rules and norms, some of which are unacceptable, incomprehensible and frightening for the Bulgarians, she argued.

Mitreva, on the other hand, states that the Bulgarians have lived and continue to live with diversity of religions and customs in their country, and this is not a problem in itself. What Bulgarians see as a danger is the big masses of refugees and migrants, because the Bulgarians fear of their possible radicalisation. Also, they are moving freely across the Balkan region and the country, and this creates tension, Lubina said. Moreover, she emphasizes, the Bulgarians fears that Germany and Sweden scenarios where migrants and refugees, attempt to impose their culture on the local population and system. Thus, there is a huge mistrust, because the Bulgarians believe that the refugees are not fleeing war and oppression, but are coming to Bulgaria just as economic migrants and they do not possess any legal papers. Thus, their origin and their real purposes for which they have undertaken to leave their native places are not certain.

The low education of many who enter the Bulgarian border also provokes fear, which is a great barrier to being able to join the Bulgarian society. Georgi says that while most of the Syrian and Iraqi migrants have either a good education or some education, most of the migrants from Afghanistan and Pakistan have none and therefore the Bulgarians do not perceive them positively. Lubina also supports this claim. Marin said that the Bulgarians could distinguish Syrian and Iraqi refugees and refugees/migrants from Afganistan and Pakistan. He argued that many of the latter cannot even write and use their fingerprint to sign documents. This imposes several challenges for Bulgarian border authorities.

### **6.1.3 The linguistic barrier at the border checkpoints**

As the Lubina claimed, a challenge is a linguistic barrier that prevents individuals from identifying and distinguishing refugees and asylum seekers from economic migrants. She emphasized that the translators for specific languages are few and the administrative apparatus that deal with them has insufficient material resources. Since the people who crossed the border lack of any documents often, a substantial amount of the refugee and migrant's arrivals in Bulgaria are not identified but only registered. Without an adequate system that treats this issue, the challenge to provide all these people with living conditions that fit their specific household, social and cultural habits, and that these conditions are tailored to the differences between the people themselves increase enormously, Lubina adds. Hence, it is in Bulgaria's interest to receive more resources that could help build an adequate system to deal with the crisis more effectively.

Thus, the challenges that the refugee crisis imposes on the Bulgarian society becomes internal and external challenges to the Bulgarian government. As such, it needs to undertake actions to overcome these challenges. In addition, the Bulgarian Government could not deviate from its interests as a Member State of the EU when undertaking further actions.

## **6.2 The material (dis)incentives and interests of Bulgaria explained by the logic of consequentialism**

Regarding the refugee crisis, Bulgaria faces several fundamental questions related to the country's membership in the EU, one of which is the issue of Schengen membership.

### **6.2.1 The Schengen membership**

Even if the future existence of the single Schengen area is threatened, one of the main external political priority of Bulgaria is to join Schengen (Kuytuchukov, 2016). The good reputation of Bulgaria within the EU would eventually lead to future exchanges, i.e. Schengen membership, (Zhelev and Bird 2016; Kyutchukov, 2016). The participants of my research convincingly point out that the Bulgarian utmost interest is to join Schengen and not only to perform the duties that derive from the agreement underlying in its treaty accession with the EU. They emphasized that the Juncker call for admission of Bulgaria and Romania in Schengen is encouraging for Bulgaria. However, In November 2017, the European Commission informed that the Bulgarian and the Romanian accession to the Schengen area had been postponed (schengeninfo.com). According to it, both Bulgaria and Romania have put substantial efforts to join the Schengen, but they need to commit to more actions. Bulgaria received seventeen instructions which express concern with the existence of a political dependence of the Bulgarian courts, a corruption and a cross-border criminality (schengeninfo.com, 2017).

### **6.2.2. Change of the Dublin III regulation**

Moreover, Bulgaria and the other border Member States of the EU stay united against the Dublin III Regulation. According to several State Agency for refugees' experts, Regulation (EU) 604/2013 (better known as the Dublin III Regulation) is unfair because it contravenes with the fundamental principles of the law. Namely, the principles of proportionality, fairness, good faith, equality in the implementation of obligations, equality of the subjects, as well as clauses of the EU's primary treaties on the principle of solidarity. According to them, the Dublin III Regulation states that if an applicant for international protection "crosses illegally" the external border of the European Union and crossed the border of the first Member State with another Member State, the first EU country he or she has embarked on, must consider his or her application. For instance, if a migrant has entered illegally in Bulgaria and has departed to Germany where he has requested asylum, the regulation stipulates that his request should be considered by the Bulgarian authorities. Given the geographical situation of the EU member- states which are external borders of the EU, as well as the fact that the EU transit routes are mainly concentrated in certain Member States at the front of the EU, it is obvious that, under increased migratory pressure, the burden of examining applications will be imposed mainly on several countries that are on the front

line of the crisis. Furthermore, these states have additional responsibility for border security and hence spend additional money on this activity.

### **6.2.3 Denying the institutionalization of a possible peripheral position in the EU**

Furthermore, the other major strategic issue relevant to the place of Bulgaria in the EU is that the country should deny an institutionalization of a possible peripheral position in the EU (Kyutchukov, 2016). According to (Kyutchukov, 2016), the crisis exposed many contradictory and unresolved matters within the European Union. An institutionalization and configuration of various formats around the Eurozone and Schengen occurred (Kyutchukov, 2016). Thus, Bulgaria is in a disadvantaged position also because of the ongoing EU monitoring mechanism toward the country. This brings the risk of falling into an undesirable situation of a periphery state 'burdened by serious responsibilities for the security and stability of the EU, as an external border thereof, yet constrained in terms of instruments and resources to fully deliver (Kuytchukov, 2016, p.15).

### **6.2.4 Maintaining a good relationship with Turkey**

Another main goal of Bulgaria is to maintain and keep a good relationship with its next-door neighbour Turkey, due to its key role in the Syrian refugee crisis. Mitreva adds that the negotiation between the EU and Turkey about readmission of refugees in the territory of Turkey is of crucial importance for Bulgaria and the EU for decreasing the refugee influx pressure to the Bulgarian-Turkish border. She claims that the Bulgarian leaders strive to establish a trustworthy relationship with Turkish president Erdogan, despite their disapproval of his political actions in Turkey. Marin even used the expression that Turkey twisted the arms of the EU. Ivan pointed out that a potential rupture of this agreement would unleash an avalanche of refugees and Bulgaria is the first country that will experience the serious material and physical consequences of this, if the negotiations break up. Furthermore, it is not always easy for Bulgaria to maintain good relations with Turkey given their historically complicated issues even if nowadays they have become more positive. In addition, according to an expert at the international department of the SAR, despite the fact that both countries are members and partners in NATO, a simple blocking of the Bulgarian-Turkish border in order to deny entrance to refugees would most likely have a significant negative impact on diplomatic ties between Sofia and Ankara. But the eventual closure of the border and a decision to refuse asylum to refugees would not solve the crisis itself, in any case, he adds.

The biggest interest of the Republic of Bulgaria - as a member and external border of the EU - is the conflict in Syria to end as soon as possible and with the most durable and sustainable solution possible, SAR experts argued. The Bulgarian role in resolving future refugee crises (as far as can be assumed that such crises are not present), will be great in the light of the forthcoming Bulgarian EU Council Presidency and the ongoing reform of the Common European Asylum

System (CEAS). For instance, Bulgaria would make efforts to engage more countries to understand the negative impact that the Dublin III regulation has on the border countries of the EU.

### **6.2.5 Material interests**

Additionally, Bulgaria is seeking a common EU solution to the crisis because the country could not afford solely to deal economically with the refugee crisis and its outcomes. The 'Mission report- Bulgaria' (2016), emphasizes that the Bulgarian authorities have received EUR 2 million for integration for the next seven years. However, according to the report, Bulgaria would require around 15 times as much: EUR 30-40 million a year in order to provide sufficient human and logistical resources help for the apparatus that deal with the refugees/migrant pressure. Furthermore, conversely to Bulgaria, Germany, for instance, could care for refugees, while Bulgaria faces significant challenges. Ivan from the group interview supports this, emphasizing that Germany, has the place for even ten million refugees with their 300 billion budget surplus. They also have a functioning apparatus and depending on the flow of refugee/migrants they have up to 30 affiliates that deals with refugees.

Thus, in terms of the Syrian refugee crisis, Bulgaria faces both material and social challenges. The logic of consequentialism explains the Bulgarian behaviour as stimulated by the outlined above material interests and the presented above positive and negative incentives. Accordingly, Bulgaria possesses a set of fixed interests and preferences and seeks to utilize and maximize these given preferences while cooperating with the other EU states and institutions. Thus, Bulgaria interact strategically with them by coordinating its actions when responding to the refugee crisis.

As already discussed in chapter 3, there are two dynamics or logic of social action. Those driven by a logic of prior preferences and anticipated consequences (the logic of consequentialism) and those driven by a sense of identity and logic of appropriateness which also includes deliberative behaviour (the logic of appropriateness and the logic of arguing). The Bulgarian interests are constructed through processes of social interaction with the other EU states (cooperation), in which the country strives to respond to norms and identities (pro-social behaviour) that also define the Bulgarian national interests (the material benefits, the future exchanges). Thus, the Bulgarian response could be explained by both logics of social action- the logic of consequentialism as well as the logic of appropriateness.

### **6.3 The Bulgarian response to the refugee crisis, explained by the logic of appropriateness**

Furthermore, as Risse (2000) emphasized, only one logic of action rarely occurs in the actors' real game. It is not only just instrumental rationality that is keeping Bulgaria pro-social.

Bulgaria might follow the appropriate behaviour because of material incentives as well as because it believes in the norms. Therefore, the interests of Bulgaria in terms of a response to the refugee crisis could be seen through a perspective of multiple logics of actions. Therefore, the next section looks at the normative incentive structure in terms of the EU rules/norms Bulgaria face. Thus, responding according to this structure, Bulgaria desires to have a positive identity: seen as a stable, reliable, and civilized member of the EU.

Barnett (2015) states that the perspective on appropriateness and legitimacy can affect the eventual costs of different actions. The extent of illegitimate actions increases or decreases the potential costs for those who act on their own. Furthermore, the logic of appropriateness focuses on the way norms constrain and produce legitimate behaviour where material factors are not excluded. However, the logic of appropriateness highlights the fact that actors follow the rules in order not to outstep from a legitimate behaviour (March and Olsen, 1998). Furthermore, cooperation between actors, according to Barnett (2015) would focus on how an actor's expected behaviour influence identities and interests. Actors learn to cooperate as at the same time they reconstruct their interests in terms of shared commitments to social norms. Thus, actors with a given identity are embedded in a state of standards of appropriate behaviour which is constrained by norms (Barnett, 2015).

This statement points to the meaning of norms in the social construction. Civilized states are expected to act in certain ways, that is why they do not base their actions on violence and depiction. For instance, human rights activists according to Fierke (2010) remind those actors that the norms of the human rights are connected to their identity, and as a modern, responsible state they should adhere to comply with them (Barnett, 2016). Thus, the closing of borders and denying a zero entrance to refugees is contradicting with the asylum and the burden-sharing norms. That is why, Bulgaria, as a state that identifies itself as a democratic state and an EU member state, prefer to follow these norms and to 'do the right thing', rather than discursively challenge them. According to an expert from the State Agency for refugees with the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria, the Republic of Bulgaria is bound by some European legislative instruments.

### **6.3.1 Legitimate behaviour**

According to the experts from SAR, these legislative instruments are the Dublin Regulation (EU) 604/2013, Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection, Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection) and in practice strictly adheres to its obligations arising from these common European directives in its response to the refugee crisis. Also, SAR's expert states that

from a legal point of view, Bulgaria has ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 New York Protocol, in their entirety (i.e. without their geographical limitation). The preamble to the 1951 Convention related to the status of the refugee affirms that the precondition of the refugee regime is international cooperation and more importantly that countries that have signed it shall protect the refugees (Betts, 2015). And in this sense, by not closing their borders, the Bulgarian authorities have fulfilled the international obligations arising from it and the abovementioned international legal acts.

Furthermore, he argues that under Article 4, paragraph 1 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees, any foreigner, may request the granting of protection in the Republic of Bulgaria by the provisions of this law. Moreover, under Article 4, paragraph 3 of the same law, a foreigner who has entered the Republic of Bulgaria to seek protection or who have received protection cannot be returned to a state where his life or freedom is threatened by race, religion, nationality, accessory of a particular social group or political opinion or is exposed to the threat of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Thus, Bulgaria adheres to a legitimate and rule-based appropriate behaviour in the context of the EU directives.

### **6.3.2 Solidarity – based behaviour**

Furthermore, an expert from SAR reminds that in 2013-2014 an internal armed conflict took place in Syria (according to the conclusion of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 2012, and again UNHCR has characterized the fleeing of Syrian civilians as a refugee stream), and in this respect those who left Syrian territory, at least those who answered to the conditions under which international protection was granted (at that time most of the refugees responded to at least Article 15 (c) of Directive 2011/95 / EC or Article 9 (1) 3 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees (LAR). Closing the border then (assuming it was technically feasible at all) would have had at least two adverse consequences. First, persons fleeing Syria would be forced to look for riskier and more dangerous ways to cross the border to enter the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, and second, this would increase the price that the traffickers would require from the Syrians for the "service" to transfer them into the Bulgarian territory, the SAR expert said. Both consequences would be at the expense of civilians who left their country of origin, due to an internal armed conflict that takes place there. Thus, closing the border is not a solution to a refugee crisis of this magnitude. The profile of most of the refugees arriving at that time - families with small children - was also taken into account. This influenced the decision of Bulgaria not to close the border and to follow the norms of nonrefoulement, asylum and burden- sharing.

This statement reaffirms the words of Kuychukov (2016) who argued that Bulgaria searches for a solidarity-based resolution to the crisis. According to March and Olsen (2011), the relevance of the LoA, do not narrow only to repetitive and routine rule prescriptions but might derive from

history and identity-driven conceptions of appropriateness. Thus, actors look for precedents, for authoritative and key interpretative traditions of rules. This points to the meaning of how do actors proceed according to the past lessons and experience and how they help actors to resolve ambiguities of a given situation. Furthermore, actors might look for what experience is appropriate for a given situation and regarding that what kind of actions, actors should take. Moreover, Mitreva affirms confidently that the Bulgarian government supports a common European decision and burden-sharing because of the solidarity that the country feels with the poor, fleeing from war and oppression people. Obviously, she said, they flee from the disasters in their countries. Mitreva repeated that Bulgaria has always been a helping hand to the displaced people. She emphasized that Bulgaria expressed solidarity with other displaced people many times before and this could be traced to the country's history as well.

She reminds that Bulgaria is one of the few countries that helped the Jews living in Bulgaria during the Second World War not be deported to Germany and hidden them in its territory. She also affirms that Bulgaria helped thousands of Armenian refugees when they were fleeing from Armenia during the period of the Armenian genocide at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, Mitreva adds that Bulgaria is a melting pot, due to the movement of big masses of people that crossed and cross Bulgaria. She argued that in Bulgaria there is a variety of ethnicities, living under the same roof, so it is natural for the Bulgarians to help and to express solidarity with refugees and migrants. In other words, according to March and Olson (2011), actors often search for legitimate models and accounts back to possible answers in own history. Thus, for Bulgaria, the decision to follow a rule-guided behaviour does not only derive from the desire for a single European solution to the refugee crisis, but also from own historical events, experience and identity-driven conceptions of appropriateness.

According to March and Olson (2011), actors rethink who they are, what they are, what the others are, and what they might become in situations of crisis, disorientation, and search for meaning. Also, they consider to which communities they belong, and to which they want to belong. Thus, as a member-state of the EU community based on democratic principles and humanity, Bulgaria prefer not to deviate from these principles.

The Bulgarian politicians often expressed their position in favour of a democratic principle's response to the refugee crisis. For instance, the Bulgarian prime minister, Boyko Borisov emphasized the need for solidarity and responsibility among the EU states toward the refugees. He claimed that their actions should be based on the norm of the human rights which is one of the main democratic principles of the EU. He called for a common approach based on European principles to cope with the refugee crisis (novinite.com, 2015). Furthermore, former president Rosen Plevneliev underlined that the European Union is a family that base their actions on shared EU values and that the EU share a common destiny. As such it possesses a common democratic identity (president.bg,

2015). He says that with inhumane treating of the refugees that includes blockage of borders, tear gas and water cannons against the refugees point that the EU stands against its values, rules and identity.

According to former Vice-President Margarita Popova (cited in Veleva et al., 2015), the Bulgarian response to the refugee crisis is based on the humanity. There are three main principles that Bulgaria maintain in its national position about refugees -humanity, security and solidarity. According to her, Brussels propounds only the dimension of solidarity which is based on how many refugees, Member States will take on their territories. She said that she does not accept such an approach because solidarity has a lot of dimensions. According to her, Bulgaria has to declare a pronounced national position that should be solid, because Bulgaria has something to say. Bulgaria has experience from earlier refugee crises, for instance, with the Yugoslavian refugee crisis and the fact that Bulgaria stands on the periphery of the EU do not make the country less significant. According to her, solidarity could also mean alternatives or good models for integration of refugees. But in any case, security is the most important feature of the EU states, and a good dialogue between the EU institutions and the EU member-states is needed, instead of sanctions (Veleva et al., 2015).

#### **6.4 The power of social influence as an explanation of the refugee crisis**

Most of the mainstream constructivists would talk about socialization to explain why states follow norms. According to Johnston (2001), the socialization is a process by which social interaction encourage the newcomers to approve and support “expected ways of thinking, feeling, and acting” (Johnston, 2001, p.494). Thereafter, Johnston (2001) emphasizes that the novices interact within the organization into organized patterns and thus they are inducted in the sector of the society or the whole society. Thus, socialization creates for agents a membership in a society where the intersubjective understandings of it begin to be taken for granted. Furthermore, according to Johnston (2001), actors who are enrolled in a social interaction rarely stay the same. With the desire to access the EU, Bulgaria stepped into a social interaction with the other EU member- states and the EU institutions. As Johnston (2001) stresses, actor’s persuasion plays a crucial role that secures cooperation by making the actor engage with exogenous positive or negative incentives. Furthermore, an actor’s desire to gain a good reputation also elicits cooperation with other actors. According to Kreps (1992), the actor can engage in norm-conforming, pro-social behaviour in order to ground a trustworthy reputation for future exchanges (cited in Johnston, 2001).

The Visegrad group (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland) diverged from a common appropriate behaviour. Hence, the Visegrad group demanded closing the external borders of the EU and refused to participate in a burden-sharing solution to the crisis, claiming that they will accept only Cristian refugees (Betts, 2015). This concerns Bulgaria because the group of states

insisted Bulgaria to close their border with Macedonia and Greece. Bulgaria adhered to legitimate behaviour and did not close their borders with fellow member-states. This would contradict with the Article 21 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which says that every citizen of the EU has the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, observing the limitations and conditions laid down in the Treaties and the measures adopted to implement them (eur-lex.europa.eu). Presumably, the Visegrad group of states are also party to this article, yet they contradicted it. At the same time, to be a member-state of the EU do not oblige member-states to act according to a common understanding of a response. They are EU member- states, but they refuse to participate in the burden-sharing and challenge the rules, basing their actions on what they consider as appropriate.

Given the example above, as discussed in chapter 3, actors might comply with norms not only because they are internalized but also because state elites fear a public criticism (Johnston, 2001). The risk of such criticism hinders Bulgaria to follow the Visegrad states' behaviour, even if this would be more reasonable since the country cannot care economically for refugees. In addition, both Bulgaria and the Visegrad feel a different degree of social and material pressure. While the Visegrad states are Member States of Schengen, besides Hungary, they are not border countries and do not feel the migratory pressure, neither the material one. Thus, they do not need to prove their reputation in order to gain future exchanges. On the other hand, Bulgaria is both external border country of the EU and bears migratory and financial pressure and is not a Member State of Schengen. Thus, it is disposed of social influence and pressure.

As discussed already in chapter 3, according to Johnston (2001), social influence is a type of microprocess that induce pro-norm behaviour. Thus, social group influence might cause actors to follow norms. According to him when state identifies with a group, this might cause the state to conform to a range of cognitive and social pressures. Such pressures as 'cognitive discomfort associated with perceived divergence from group norms generate strong internal pressures to conform to the group's practice, that is, the trauma to self-esteem from this divergence can motivate an actor to reduce discrepancies through greater conformity (Johnston, 2001, p. 500). Moreover, the social influence group might distribute social rewards and punishments. Rewards include status, psychological well-being, a sense of belonging, and a sense of conformity with the social group which expect a certain behaviour and role from the actor. Punishments might include 'shaming, shunning, exclusion, and demeaning, or dissonance derived from actions inconsistent with role and identity' (Johnston, p. 499). Thus, Bulgaria desire to experience the sense of conformity of acting properly to avoid punishments which will cause negative impact on its otherwise fragile reputation within the EU. Therefore, it adheres to expected of the EU role and elicits pro-norm behaviour when responding to the Syrian refugee crisis.

## 7. Conclusion

The first RQ that this Master thesis addresses was: How did Bulgaria respond to the Syrian refugee crisis? As outlined above, Bulgaria responded to the Syrian refugee crisis through initiating and joining in common cooperative agendas both at the Balkans and within the EU. Some of them include the 17- point plan with its Balkan neighbours that ensure the border security of these countries, the launching of the European Coast and Guard Agency which have the same function and building a physical border facility along its border with Turkey with funding of the EU. Bulgaria also participate in the introduced of the EU Schemes for relocation and resettlement for refugees in the EU which are part of the asylum and burden-sharing norms of the EU. Thus, its response to the Syrian refugee crisis implies coordination and cooperation with fellow Member States and EU institutions.

The second RQ of this Master thesis was: Why did Bulgaria choose to follow the EU norms in its response to the Syrian refugee crisis? Firstly, as outlined at the example of the Visegrad states, it is not mandatory that following the norms is fixed in state's preferences. They might be a subject to a discursive challenge. However, Bulgaria decided to follow the norms because of the solidarity it feels toward the refugees and because this is the right thing to do, thus following the action of the logic of appropriateness. According to the logic of consequentialism, states realize, utilize and maximize their material interests through cooperation with other actors. The Bulgarian interests in terms of the Syrian refugee crisis includes joining of the Schengen, changing of the unfair for the external EU border countries Dublin III regulation and receiving financial support for its additional expenses as an external border country of the outer edge of the EU.

At the same time, according to Johnston (2001), past commitments and actions might cause the others, to perceive an actor as inconsistent or hypocritical, and thus to cause a discomfort in actors who otherwise has acquired a positive self- professed identity. Therefore, the discomfort coming from this, 'leads people whose consistency is challenged to respond to greater conformist behaviour' (Johnston, 2001, p. 500). When an actor is a member of a group, he or she has to fulfil requirements and behave according to them. The actor might participate in group activities, behave loyally and is fully committed to the group. Those behaviours as Johnston (2001) argues are relatively minor, yet could they determine identity from which if an actor diverges, that will lead to discomforting inconsistencies with this identity. Thus, the commitment to the group is reinforced by the persistently repeated identity-conforming behavior of actors. Lastly, a reason why actors or states might adopt pro-social behaviour is an actor's desire 'to maximize status, honor, prestige—diffuse reputation or image—and the desire to avoid a loss of status, shaming, or humiliation and other social sanctions' (Johnston, 2001, p. 500).

As widely known, Bulgaria is often criticized for not making enough efforts against domestic corruption and criminality. Therefore, the country's reputation is fragile. In order to

increase the trust among fellow EU Member States, Bulgaria engaged in pro-social behaviour in responding to the refugee crisis, thus following the human rights and the refugee norms as an civilized and democratic state. Then, Bulgaria conforms to the group' s practice in order to receive social approval by the other group-members which will increase its prestige and honor and will diffuse a bad reputation. Accordingly, also to avoid being perceived as inconsistent and hypocritical, because of past commitments and actions. More importantly, the country desire not to diverge from the identity markers of the group in order to reinforce its commitment to the group. This would lead the country to maximize and utilize interests and status and be perceived as a reliable partner to the other EU countries. This is important, given that Bulgaria seeks access to Schengen, following rules has some instrumental advantages. Bulgaria would also avoid naming and shaming which is strongly undesirable because it would harm the fragile reputation of the country among its fellow EU member- states. According to the SAR, Bulgaria has fulfilled all its commitments under international law in the areas of refugee law, and human rights and the country have never been afraid of sanctions for possible failure to meet European requirements in connection with the refugee crisis.

Thus, for Bulgaria, complying with EU rules and norms when responding to the refugee crisis, adhering to norms and directives about asylum and acquiring a burden- sharing would lead to Bulgaria being perceived as a stable partner. Trust in Bulgaria among other EU members and EU institution would increase which would be the sign of its degree of socialization. Johnston (2001) emphasizes that reputation thus is an instrument and the rewards arrive from the material benefits of exchange in future.

This Master thesis might be a base for a further research on pro-social behaviour in crises, and actors, acting stimulated by different positive and negative incentives. Interest in future challenges of external border countries of the EU deriving from the migrant pressure might be interesting to be explored.

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## Appendix

### Interview guide

The interview guide will be used for interviewing respondents from the State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria, the respondents that have positions in refugee services in Bulgaria and the respondents from the Bulgarian Embassy in Oslo

*Research questions:* How did Bulgaria respond to the refugee crisis between 2013-2016?

Why did Bulgaria choose to follow the EU norms in its response to the refugee crisis?

*Groups of interviewees:* experts; employees, external policy officials

### Interview questions

1. What is the foreign policy position of Bulgaria towards the Syrian refugee crisis as an EU member state and as situated at the outer edge of the EU?
2. What is the reason of Bulgaria to not respond to the Visegrad states' request to close the EU's external borders?
3. Has there been a dialogue between the EU and Bulgaria on the asylum and burden-sharing norms in responding to the refugee crisis?
4. Is Bulgaria afraid of sanctions if the country decides not to follow the EU norms when responding to the refugee crisis?
5. Is there a successful joint dialogue between the Balkan countries about how to deal with the Refugee flow?
6. Do Bulgaria have external and internal policy interests that could be materialized through norm-following behaviour when responding to the refugee crisis?
7. To what extent the Dublin agreement is successful / unsuccessful for Bulgaria?
8. How does Bulgaria perceive the refugees?
9. In what way would a greater number of refugees in Bulgaria might affect its economy, culture and politics?

### Overview of the interviews' participants

Date	Name	Position	Comments
09.10.2017	Mustafa	Position in a refugee service	Semi-structured interview, taking notes
11.10.2017	Aicha	Position in a refugee service	Group interview, taking notes

	Marin Ivan Victor Georgi	Position in a refugee facility Position in a refugee facility Position in a refugee facility Position in a refugee facility	
11.10.2017	anonymous	Expert at the International Department of the State Agency of Refugees with the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria (SAR)	e-mail interview
11.10.2017	anonymous	Expert at the SAR	e-mail interview
11.10.2017	anonymous	Expert at the SAR	e-mail interview
11.10.2017	anonymous	Expert at the SAR	e-mail interview
12.10.2017	Lubina	Legal clerk at the Border Police	e-mail interview
01.11.2017	Roumiana Mitreva	Bulgarian Ambassador in Norway and Iceland	semi-structured interview, taking notes





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