

BULGARIA EXODUS

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April 2015, it has been 8 years since the famous financial collapse of known Lehman Brothers. 8 years of the collapse of the financial markets. 8 years since the devastating tsunami that has affected all countries in the seafront: Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece. Under this motto, Italy has implemented a series of reforms to "austerity" that have seen protagonists the education the public health, the job and the pensions.

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In Italy in the last few years there has been much talk of "austerity" and the need to implement reforms and cuts necessary for the economic recovery of the Bel Paese.

This "austerity" has brought the country to disastrous consequences. In recent years there has been an exodus, not only for young people looking for work, but also of entire families, small investors and retirees looking for a place to live with their small allowance, that in Italy does not would allow to live. The decision to leave the "Bel Paese" is sometimes almost forced: whether it be retirees whether it be of those who have meagre savings.

The European country, where in recent years are "emigrating" many Italians, is Bulgaria.

Bulgaria is a member of the EU and the cost of living is low. The local currency is the Leva is anchored in the last decade in a stable exchange rate, and it is a few hours from Italy

Some of the people we met, living in Varna town on the Black Sea, other retirees have chosen to live in smaller villages and other living there for twenty years. Each of these people has a past and a different story, seem to be looking for a late revenge, they came away from their land to recreate a dignified life.

Angela 60 Years Old, Odorovtsi

Odorovtsi is a village located in the Montana province, Northwest of Bulgaria at the foot of the Balkan mountains and only a few kilometres from the Danube.

Angela is originally from Milan, she has been living in this village of few inhabitants for about 10 years. She arrived here when she was 51 years old, alone, and with her life savings she bought a small house and a piece of land. "I needed this: there is a moment in which a door opens up, and that happens once in a lifetime. I had savings, about 48 thousand euros, my brother had been living in Bulgaria for 4 years, and when I saw this place I decided it was "my place" in the world. When I arrived here, I realized that we need a few essential things: water, fire, friendly animals, you don't need anything else".

Angela, before arriving in Bulgaria, has worked as a freelance illustrator for Italian publishers, during 12 intense years she drew covers and inserts for many newspapers and magazines. Then, one of the many reforms on work was approved: continuous employees (forse è meglio: temporary workers?) were assimilated to regular employees, so the publishing house from one day to the next asked her to sign a sheet of paper, where, unknowingly, she would make her 12 years working non-existent for retirement purposes.

With the crisis in the publishing industry and the diminished production, Angela tucked in her sleeves, changed jobs and started to work in the insurance field, working twelve years more and paying her contributions personally, until the Agency for which she worked was merged with other agencies: "When I went to the Inps to figure out at what age I would have been able to retire they told me that I had only a few contributions, then I realized that the only pension I would receive is the minimum social security pension of 480 euros.

"Then with my savings I arrived in this paradise. I arranged up a bit the house, enough to be able to live in it, just throwing a mattress on the ground to sleep and have a shelter (although I slept in the barn during the summer). I devoted to animals and nature, because I remembered that the nature needs time to grow. I quickly realized that the nature could feed me with its fruits, but I had to take care of the gardens and animals. The contact with animals and nature is very strong, here nature is quite wild. "

"I have been here for 8 years, alone: my son has been here a year to help me but here everything is a matter of survival. A few years ago after repairing the house, I ran out of money and I knew the poverty. The worst thing isn't the lack of money to buy eggs or gasoline, the worst thing is that the mind closes, does not see any plan for the future. Your mind is so frightened that it doesn't see anymore. It is an experience that everyone should do, the winner is always the strongest. " About a year and a half ago, Angela and her son Simon, have restored one of the houses they had bought, turning it into a wonderful cottage for tourists. They have a web page and now accommodate young people from all Europe, people who want to work and have a different life experience. In the next months they will open the structure to tourists, for the people to know a place that she defines a magic one.

























Pietro 71 Years Old, Sofia

Pietro, who comes from Casalecchio di Reno, has been living in Sofia for 7 years. He is married to a Bulgarian woman but he is a lonely man; he has no contacts with other Italian retired people in Bulgaria, he lives his life, he does not speak Bulgarian but he makes himself understood: "I do not speak, do not write it, I'm old."

He spends most of his time at home in the mountains, in a small village: "The majority of Italians moved to Bulgaria not to live like kings, but for reasons of dignity. It is the European country where the cost of living is lower, and where you can make a decent living, that's why many retirees come here."













Mariateresa 65 years old and Domenico 67 years old, Varna

Maria Teresa and Dominic are a couple of Italian pensioners, they live in Varna, by the Black Sea, since December 2014.

"Three years ago we came on holiday in Bulgaria for the first time, we drove through this wonderful country, and we realized it was a place where we would have liked to live." Domenico tells us about their experience and their choice to come and live in Varna. "In December 2014 we returned, this time for good, it was not an easy choice, we are not teen agers, we have a child, a 10-year-old niece, anyway we thought it could be a different life experience."

The couple, from the province of Latina, soon after this decision has contacted Claudio Chiffi, President of Fondazione Italian Pensioners in Bulgaria. They contacted Mr. Claudio three months before leaving, and when they arrived in Varna, after 3 days in the hotel, they found an apartment "Claudio and his wife were really helpful. Even when I was unwell, they helped us, provided all the documentation and were very close to us."

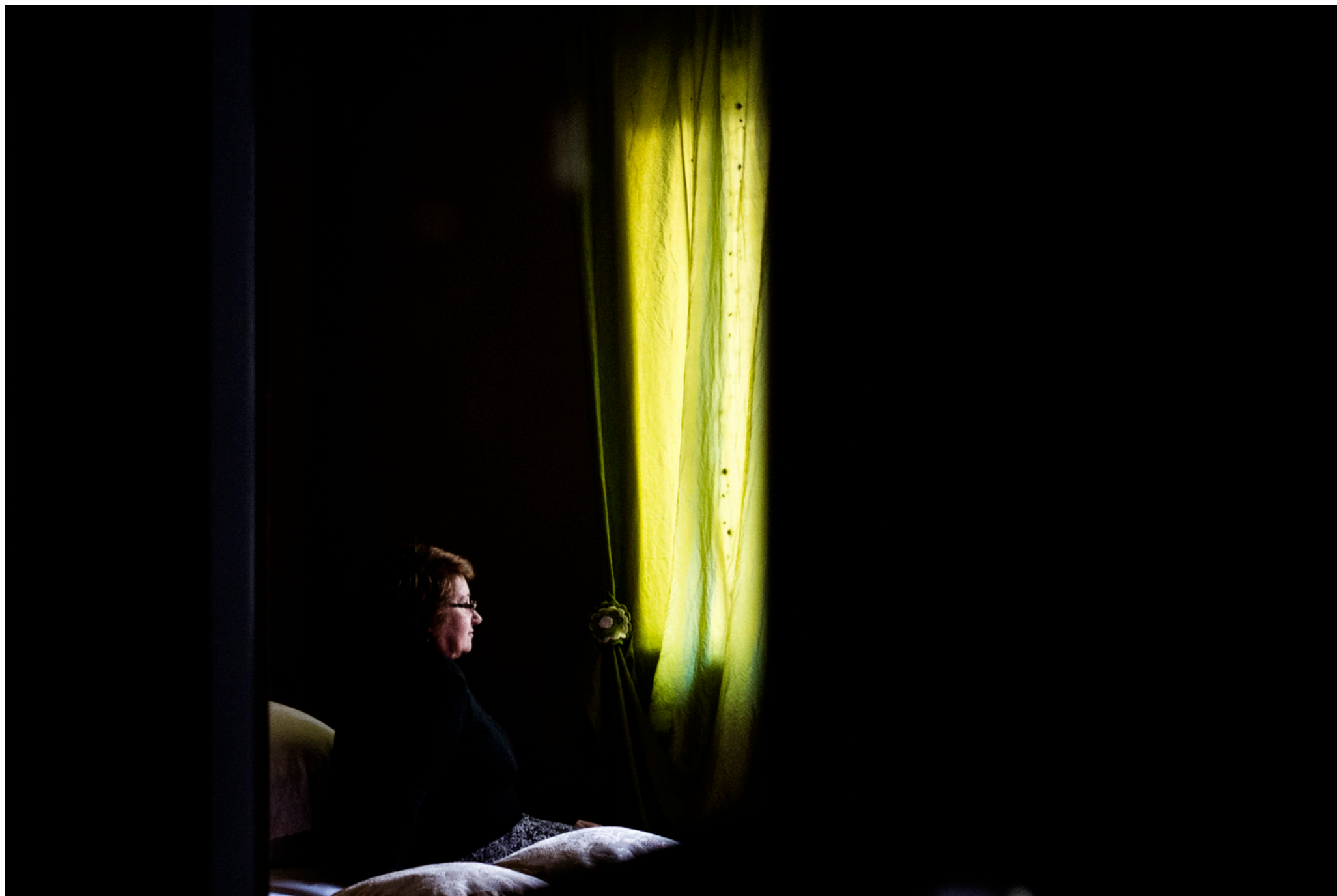
Before leaving they made a program: they had considered all the difficulties: language, customs, the way of life. "It has been difficult, but we are happy with our choice of life, it is consonant to our retirement pension. Here the bureaucracy is slim and when we had a health problem, right after we arrived, we were well attended, both economically and medically. The civic sense they have here in Varna does not exist in Italy.













Roberto 70 years old - Varna

He lives in the Centre of Varna, on the Black Sea.

Roberto is originally from Milan; he was a businessman and CEO of a company of opinion polls. Since 6 months he lives in Bulgaria.

The company, of which he was a trader, was placed under investigation, during "Mani Pulite" in 1992-1994.

After several investigations, although they were declared innocent, they lost 90 per cent of their sales. The company closed after just a few months.

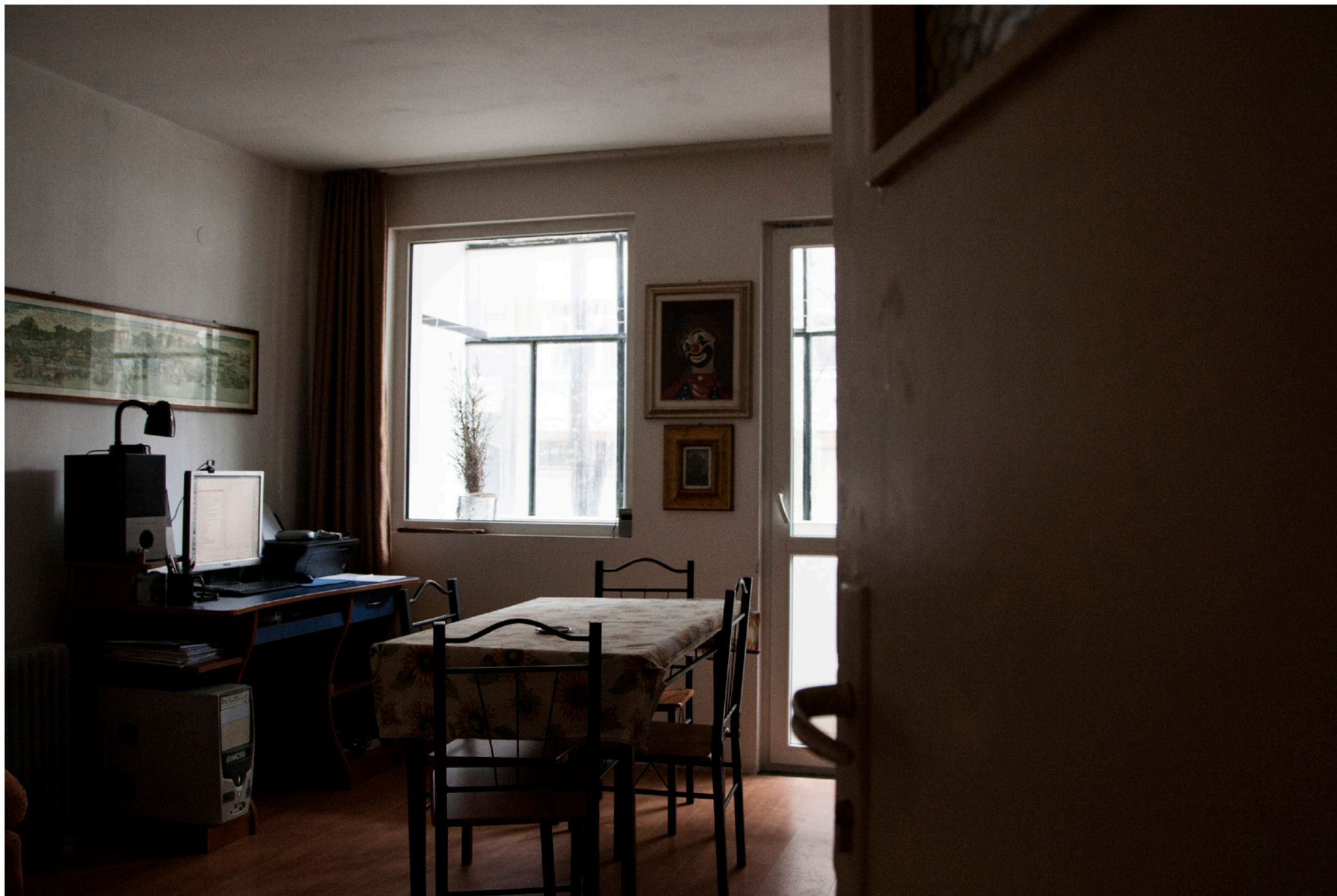
"I'm living my third life here in Bulgaria: my first life of lust, lived until 50 years, has been a brilliant life, with a good career and a lot of money, I was a businessman and I gave work to 200 families. From 1994 to 2014, I lived my second life; I lived doing what I could. After the closure of the company, I was without fee and without a job. I asked for help to those who I considered friends, but nobody has proved helpful. Unfortunately, nobody helped me, I realized that they were just hundreds of working relationships.

At 66 years of age, has had a pension of 1,020 Euros. Roberto while working in company as a contractor had not paid any contribution to INPS, however, he had been in the military in the academy for 10 years. After realizing that with his pension, he could not afford to live in Milan, he moved to the province of Pavia.

"After two years in Broni, to 68 years, I realized I could not live in Italy. I wanted a good life with dignity. I had not had great experiences abroad, and I did not know the countries of Eastern Europe, but I knew I needed to leave Italy. I was undecided between three countries, South America, Tunisia and Bulgaria. After several arguments, I decided that Bulgaria is my choice."

On September 14, 2014, Roberto has definitively left Italy. "I live here with 700 euro, very well and with dignity. "Since I arrived in Bulgaria, this country surprises me constantly. Italy now is a country only for the rich.















Claudio 65 years - Varna

Claudio Antonio Chiffi, lives in Varna, is married to a Bulgarian woman, Jasmine and has a child of 7 years.

Claudio is originally from Nardó, Lecce and he is the president of the Italian Foundation in Bulgaria, that deals with welcome families and Italian pensioners who decide to move to Bulgaria. In the last year has become a real reference point.

"Now there are many Italian families that in the last 3 years were transferred to Bulgaria, currently we about 10 per month in Varna but the phenomenon is growing. I receive dozens of emails per day for information from all over Italy. The countries of southern Europe are collapsing, the austerity is making several victims, the political class has indebted our country and has led to many citizens to suffer from hunger, many families, including pensioners can not get to the end of month. So you need to "migrate" in other countries where the cost of living is low and where they can live with dignity, and Bulgaria is."

He tells us that the local currency, the Leva is anchored past ten years on a stable exchange rate, and Varna is a wonderful city and offers a very high quality of life. That is why he created the Foundation that at present assists approximately thirty families at Varna. It is not an easy choice to leave everything and move, for this reason he decided to create the Foundation and provide assistance to the community of Italians retirees.













Pierluigi 70 anni, Oryakovo

Pierluigi, is originally from Nuoro, lives in Bulgaria since 1990. His company is one of the oldest foreign businesses in Bulgaria. He owned a printing screen-printing in Siena, during the nineties, he decided to move all in Bulgaria.

He lives in the town of Oryahovo, a port city in northwestern Bulgaria, hilly country on the right bank of the Danube.

His house is located in an old building that he acquired many years ago, rebuilt and renovated with the intent to create a hotel and in the meantime he used it as storage for all of its materials trading with Italy. It has a small office in this department store where he residues of materials traded: ceramic tile, furniture, chairs, armchairs, textiles, old trunks and wooden material in wrought iron.

“Contact with Bulgaria, it was thanks to a group of friends that involved me in a documentary film on the Etruscans, a Bulgarian co-production; The film was then interrupted for the involvement of the Bulgarians in the attack to the Pope. When it started the pollution problem, I decided to close the company in Italy and bring it in Bulgaria. When I opened the company here at Oryahovo, I gave it into the hands of the guys Bulgarians, who unfortunately they were not able to make it strong commercially and internationally. The activity did not work, so I started my own business of export of recycled materials. I bought these materials from demolition, from old schools and abandoned houses here in Bulgaria, reselling it to private persons who possessed houses in Tuscany and Sardinia. ”

After failing with his first company, he undertook two other activities. Both were unsuccessful.

Now he is 70 years old, he lives alone, has bought a house in the centre of Oryakovo, but does not have the money to renovate it, he should soon receive a social pension from the Italian state.

“My ignoble isolation in the center of Europe, has of the persons responsible easily identifiable. Oryakovo is the focus of an initiative that may change the destiny: the third bridge over the Danube. The chances that this creates more damages than benefits they are quite strong. ”











