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## **CARIM EAST – CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Co-financed by the European Union

### ***Circular Migration in Eastern Partnership Countries An overview***

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CARIM-East Research Report 2012/30



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**CARIM-East**  
**Creating an Observatory of Migration East of Europe**

**Research Report**  
**CARIM-East RR 2012/30**

**Circular Migration in Eastern Partnership Countries**  
**An overview**

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## **CARIM-East – Creating an Observatory East of Europe**

This project which is co-financed by the European Union is the first migration observatory focused on the Eastern Neighbourhood of the European Union and covers all countries of the Eastern Partnership initiative (Belarus, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) and Russian Federation.

The project's two main themes are:

- (1) migration from the region to the European Union (EU) focusing in particular on countries of emigration and transit on the EU's eastern border; and
- (2) intraregional migration in the post-Soviet space.

The project started on 1 April 2011 as a joint initiative of the European University Institute (EUI), Florence, Italy (the lead institution), and the Centre of Migration Research (CMR) at the University of Warsaw, Poland (the partner institution).

CARIM researchers undertake comprehensive and policy-oriented analyses of very diverse aspects of human mobility and related labour market developments east of the EU and discuss their likely impacts on the fast evolving socio-economic fabric of the six Eastern Partners and Russia, as well as that of the European Union.

In particular, CARIM-East:

- builds a broad network of national experts from the region representing all principal disciplines focused on human migration, labour mobility and national development issues (e.g. demography, law, economics, sociology, political science).
- develops a comprehensive database to monitor migration stocks and flows in the region, relevant legislative developments and national policy initiatives;
- undertakes, jointly with researchers from the region, systematic and *ad hoc* studies of emerging migration issues at regional and national levels.
- provides opportunities for scholars from the region to participate in workshops organized by the EUI and CMR, including academic exchange opportunities for PhD candidates;
- provides forums for national and international experts to interact with policymakers and other stakeholders in the countries concerned.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: <http://www.carim-east.eu/>

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## Key points

1. The Labour Force Surveys in the region do not systematically cover the circular migration cycle (except in the Republic of Moldova) and thus the reliable data sources on this type of migration are scarce. Moreover, there seems to be only a limited link to the data sources of countries of destination.
2. More people from EaP circulate between CIS countries than between EU and EaP. This should not come as a surprise, as in the region there is a form of freedom of movement/freedom of circulation, with no visa requirements for up to 3 months (and in some cases beyond).
3. Circulation to the EU is relatively limited, mostly due to visa restrictions. As the costs of entry are higher and the risk of non-circulation upon return is higher, migrants prefer to overstay and to avoid circulation. This does not concern a special case of bordering countries, e.g. Poland-Belarus or Hungary-Ukraine, where specific regulations (e.g. Local Border Traffic) facilitate circular movement across EU borders.
4. Most movement in the region can be defined as spontaneous circulation. The only noted case of regulated circular migration programs was between Portugal and Ukraine and, more recently, between Republic of Moldova and Italy.
5. A new important destination for circular migration from several EaP countries is Turkey, in part due to its relatively liberal entry and work regime.
6. National legal regimes in EaP do not favour the legal circular migration of workers: the visa-free regime within the CIS is not accompanied by complex work or residence permit solutions.
7. Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine do not allow dual citizenship for their nationals. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Republic of Moldova do not forbid dual citizenship for their nationals
8. There are some innovative policy frameworks targeting diaspora and migrant communities abroad (especially in Armenia and Republic of Moldova). Other countries have only been developing policy solutions (Georgia, Azerbaijan) or have limited policy interest in the matter (Belarus, Ukraine).

## **Key recommendations**

- A new approach to statistical cooperation is needed. Both EU and EaP countries would benefit from specific efforts bridging the results of their respective Labour Force Surveys and making sense of the circular mobility captured by this source at both ends of migration. Possible gaps and inconsistencies, if identified, could be further examined by focused surveys.
- The potential link between spontaneous circular migration and development in the region should be clarified on the basis of systematic data collection and by placing migration research in a broader socio-economic field of studies. This would in turn enable policy makers to make the link in policy frameworks.
- The myth that circular migration should be systematically state regulated is just that, a myth. In the last 20 years of migration from and to EaP countries we have had spontaneous circular migration. Therefore, instead of trying to change the character of these already established patterns, the EU and EaP policy-makers should embark on punctuated policy adjustments in many sectors (visa, education, financial, business, agriculture etc.) that would produce more legal circular mobility with a greater impact on development.
- Partner countries (EU, EaP) should introduce legislation to allow for longer absences without the risk of losing residence status; this would clearly further facilitate circular migration.
- Legislation and practice facilitating dual citizenship or permanent residence should be encouraged in EaP countries, to strengthen the links between migration and development.
- Temporary migrants should be granted the possibility of visa free circulation in all EaP countries.
- Preferential treatment of former residence permit holders should be encouraged in all partner countries (EU, EaP).
- Policy-makers should raise awareness of mechanisms for circular migration (both state and non-state regulated) in EaP countries among the local authorities, the business sector, civil society: this would foster local dialogue and “closer to home” solutions.
- For many migrants travel costs determine the frequency of their visits home. Thus, from a logistical point of view, circular migration is likely to evolve among countries with shared borders or with those where travel expenses are cheaper. Thus, policy-makers should especially foster business-sector collaborations among those EaP and EU member-states that create business climate and infrastructure that can in turn boost flexible and competitive prices for travel and transportation, to attract migrant flows and circulation.

## Introduction

This paper is based on twenty-one short explanatory notes from CARIM East network members, covering the demographic, legal and socio-political aspects of circular migration in the region. The information gathered in this concise form was further enriched by the twenty-one research papers on the impact of labour migration on countries of origin and destination prepared in the framework of the CARIM East project.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Definition

Circular migration, as an objective of migration policy-making, was constructed at the international level. It was then imposed on national and local governments, the academic community and civic society. As happens usually with such top-down approaches, circular migration was not clearly defined at its conception (as it was not a concept based on solid empirical research). It was thus vulnerable to interpretations by policy actors. This has been especially the case in the EU. Its sense evolved over time and it was contested both by EU researchers and practitioners (see e.g. Fargues 2008, Triandafyllidou 2010, Wickramasekara 2011). These find it difficult to understand how circular migration is different from concepts well grounded in migration studies, such as temporary migration, pendular migration, seasonal migration and incomplete migration (cfr. Stark and Bloom 1985, Galor and Stark 1990, Okólski 1997, Jaźwińska and Okólski 2001). The debate is ongoing (Newland 2009), but it seems that this time the dominant policy discourse has prevailed, pushing EU scholars into a corner. The way out is acknowledgement that circular migration/mobility is a wide concept covering all forms of multiple movements across borders (organized or spontaneous) for varying time spans, with some positive effects on development.

However, as policy needs to be based on accurate problem definition and as it needs to be supported by vigorous scientific research, a stronger focus was given to defining the concept. As the 2011 EMN study shows, at least in the EU, the confusion of the initial years seems to have been replaced by a consensus that:

1. temporary migration excludes circularity,
2. circular migration can be organized through governmental programs,
3. circular migration happens spontaneously and can be incentivized by targeted policies,
4. circular migration should, by definition, have a positive impact on development and bring positive results to all parties concerned.

However, it must be underlined that the main finding of the EMN report was the lack of a solid common understanding of the concept.

Unfortunately, the fuzziness of the concept at the EU level negatively influences the clarity of policy debates with its partners. Contributions to the debate from Eastern Partnership academic and governmental circles only reinforce this stance. Circular migration is not a recognized notion among migration researchers in the region, nor is it to be found in policy frameworks. There is no definition of it and little understanding of how it differs from other, well researched forms of temporary or seasonal movements. When giving a definition of circular migration, authors either follow the IOM definition (Ganta 2012), the GMFD definition (Rumyantsev 2012), the EU definition (Chobanyan 2012), the MPI definition (Bobrova and Shakhotska 2012) or they propose their own (Iontsev and

---

<sup>1</sup> The explanatory notes are available in Russian and English at <http://www.carim-east.eu/publications/explanatory-notes/> The research papers are systematically published in Russian and English at <http://www.carim-east.eu/publications/research-reports/impact-of-labour-migration-on-countries-of-origin-and-destination/>



Ivakhnyuk 2012). In many cases the concept is perceived as being somewhat artificial adding little to research (Badurashvili 2012). Sometimes it is even seen as a “buzz word” imposed by the EU on partners (Iontsev and Ivakhnyuk 2012). It seems that all the debates among EU migration scholars and experts have been exported and that the concept of circular migration remains a fuzzy concept surrounded with the same uncertainty and hesitation in the EaP.

Considering the lack of one definition, the reading of contributions gives us three broad defining points for circular migration as understood by EaP scholars and experts:

1. circular migration is a temporary repetitive movement for work across borders,
2. circular migration is a tool for migration and development (the “triple win situation”),
3. circular migration is a top-down regulated phenomenon, governed by laws, policies and international agreements.

## **2. Circular migration of EaP nationals: the numbers**

### **2.1 Data sources**

Lack of a single definition and, what is worse, limited empirical understanding of what circular migration is, impedes measurement. Circular migration of a country’s nationals can – so far – only be captured by targeted surveys which use a longitudinal or a retrospective approach: e.g. a specially devoted segment of LFS. What is more, there are hardly any recent surveys covering this topic in the region. The numbers can either come from administrative sources (incomplete) or estimates based on specific one-off small-scale surveys. Because the data gathered in the region concerns temporary labour migration, circular equals temporary when the subject leaves the country of origin for work more than one time.

**Tab. 1. Data sources and measurement of circular migration in EaP countries**

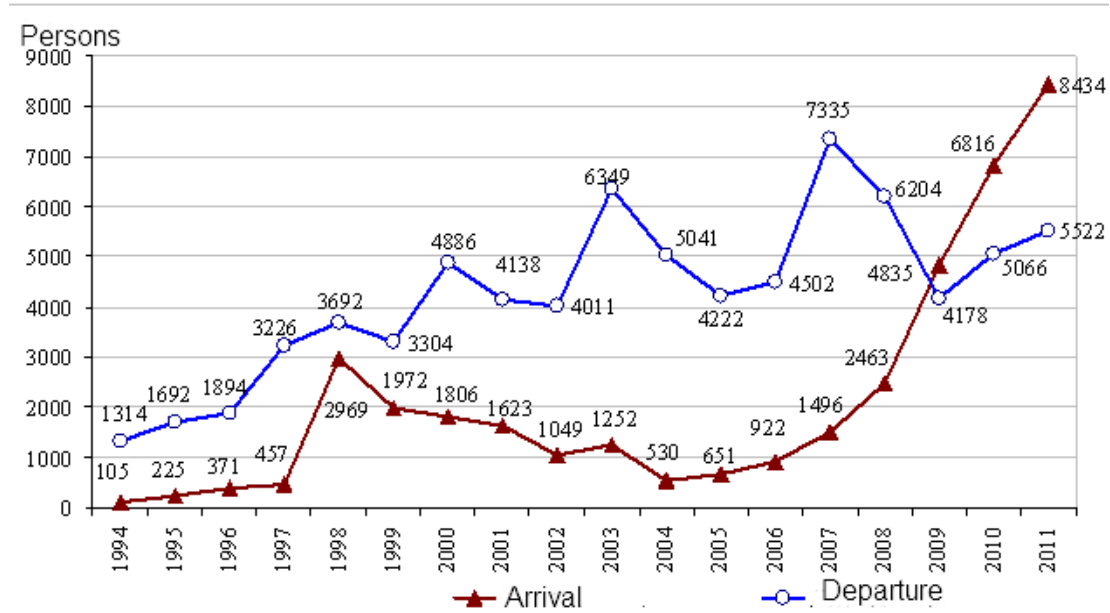
Country	LFS	Migration survey (estimations)	Administrative sources	
			At origin	At destination
Armenia		2007 survey National Statistics Service of Armenia, UNFPA		Data on temporary work and/or residence permit issued to foreigners: e.g. the Russian Federation and the EU MS.
Azerbaijan	na	na	na	
Belarus			Registration of workers leaving to travel abroad/ consular data on visa issuance to BY citizens	
Georgia		2008 Survey “Development on the Move: Measuring and Optimising Migration’s Economic and Social Impacts” (a joint project of the Global Development Network, and the Institute for Public Policy Research)		
Republic of Moldova	quarterly			
Ukraine		2008 Modular Population Survey on Labour Migration Issues (State Statistics Service of Ukraine in cooperation with the Ukrainian Centre for Social Reforms, the Open Ukraine Foundation, IOM, and the World Bank)		

Source: Carim East Country Explanatory Notes on Circular Migration, [www.carim-east.eu](http://www.carim-east.eu)

The methods of measurement as listed above have important flaws.

Administrative sources do not capture the mobility of a country’s own nationals. Thus they cannot be entirely trusted. An example below illustrates the data of Belorussian administrative statistics: the numbers are significantly lower than estimates of outward migration based on consular records. So, in 2011, almost 300,000 Belarusian citizens obtained a visa to enter one single EU state, Poland and 20% of them got a long term national visa.

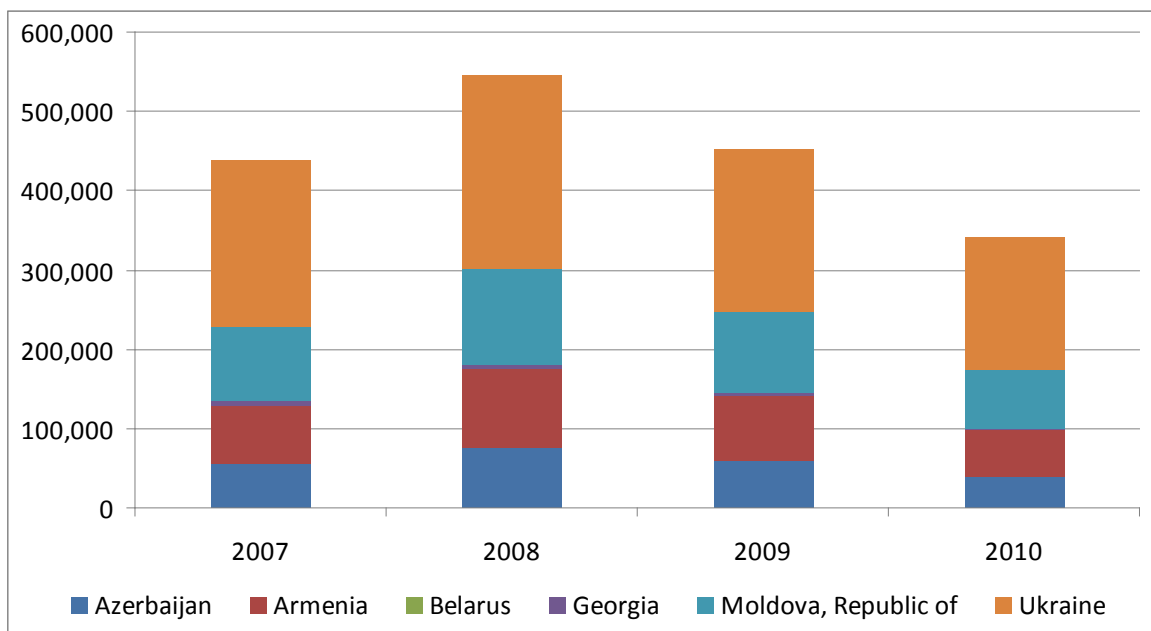
**Fig. 1. Administrative data on flows of labour migrants in Belarus**



Source: Bobrova and Shakhotska 2012, Carim East Country Explanatory Notes on Circular Migration, [www.carim-east.eu](http://www.carim-east.eu)

Administrative data do not capture migrants at destination either. For example, Belarusians do not need a work permit to work in the Russian Federation, and thus they are absent from the statistics. Also, it is often the case that in the semi-open borders regime (as is the case in the EU and CIS) circular migrants workers do not apply for work permits, especially if performing seasonal or temporary work and thus they are lost to administrative statistics. The chart below for the Russian Federation illustrates these two drawbacks. Migrants from Belarus do not appear, and the number of permits issued to Moldovans is below estimations based e.g. on the Moldovan Labour Force Survey.

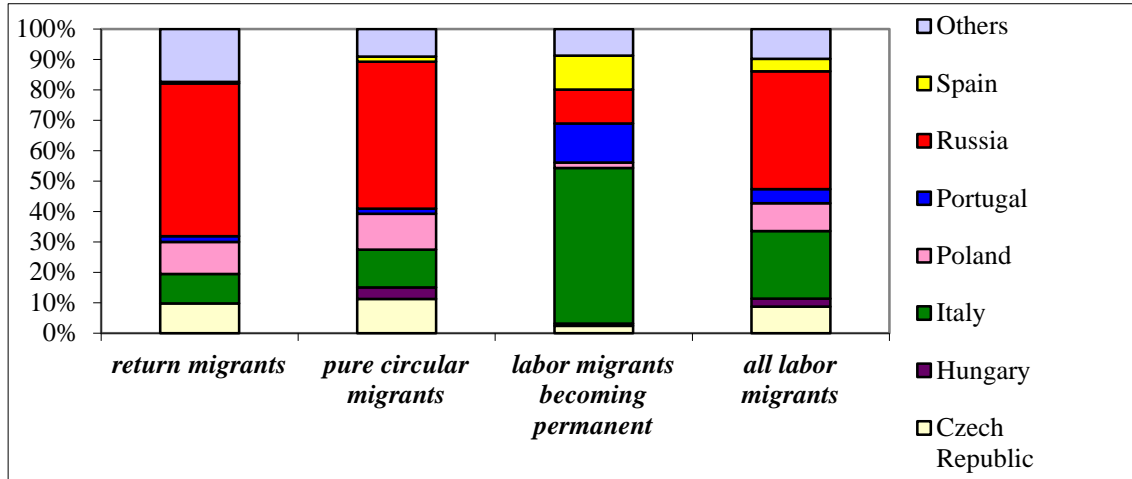
**Fig. 2. Temporary work permits issued to EaP nationals in the Russian Federation**



Source: Carim East database, [www.carim-east.eu](http://www.carim-east.eu)

The only information on migration in most EaP countries is to be found in surveys. They usually collect a wealth of information that allows for some basic analysis of the phenomenon. However, they tend to be one-off undertakings where it is impossible to collect longitudinal data and where retrospective methods are usually missing. Moreover, they are sometimes implemented by international donors and thus their methodology differs, ruling out any possibility for comparison in time and space. An example of such a survey is the 2008 survey carried out by the Ukrainian State Statistics Service in cooperation with the Ukrainian Centre for Social Reforms, the Open Ukraine Foundation, IOM, and the World Bank).

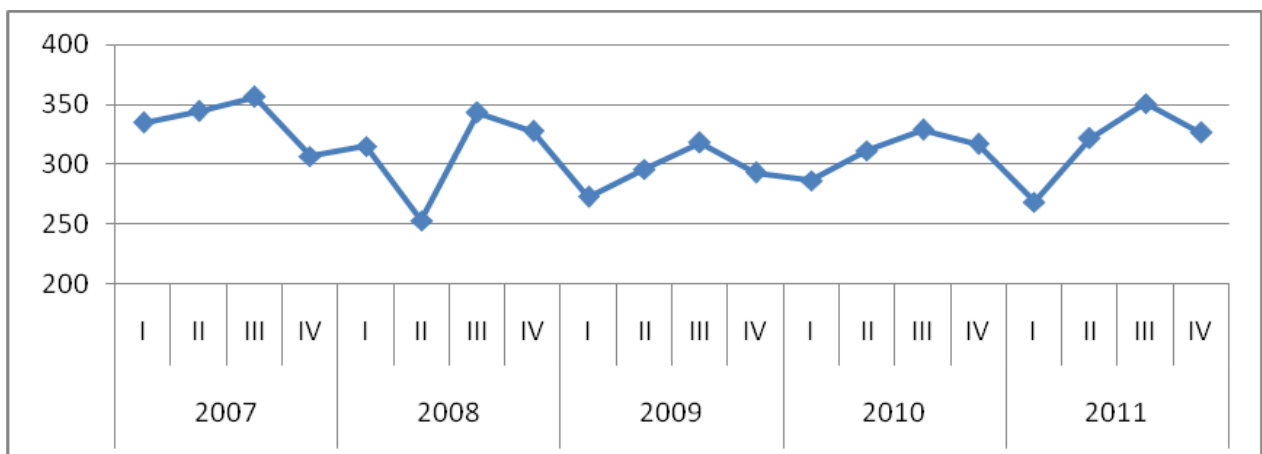
**Fig. 3. Ukrainian labour migrants in the main recipient countries by type of migration, 2008**



Source: Poznyak 2012b, Carim East Country Explanatory Notes on Circular Migration, [www.carim-east.eu](http://www.carim-east.eu)

The most valuable data are gathered by Labour Force Surveys. Currently only Republic of Moldova has a special segment in its survey dedicated to migration. LFS being longitudinal, collected data are a reliable source of knowledge about migration trends in the country and can even give an idea about emigration. The figure 4 below illustrates how LFS data can reproduce Moldovan mobility patterns by clearly indicating a seasonal trend in migration behaviour, as they capture the emigration-return-remigration cycle

**Fig. 4. Stock of Moldovan active population (aged 15-64) living abroad by quarter (in thousand), 2007-2011**



Source: Ganta 2012, Carim East Country Explanatory Notes on Circular Migration, [www.carim-east.eu](http://www.carim-east.eu)

Whatever the flaws of the data we work with in the region, there are few important points to be made about circular mobility in EaP countries based on the information we have.

## 2.2 What is the profile of circular migrants from the region?

The table below shows in a snapshot the main characteristics of circular migrants from the region.

**Tab. 2. Characteristics of circular migrants from EaP**

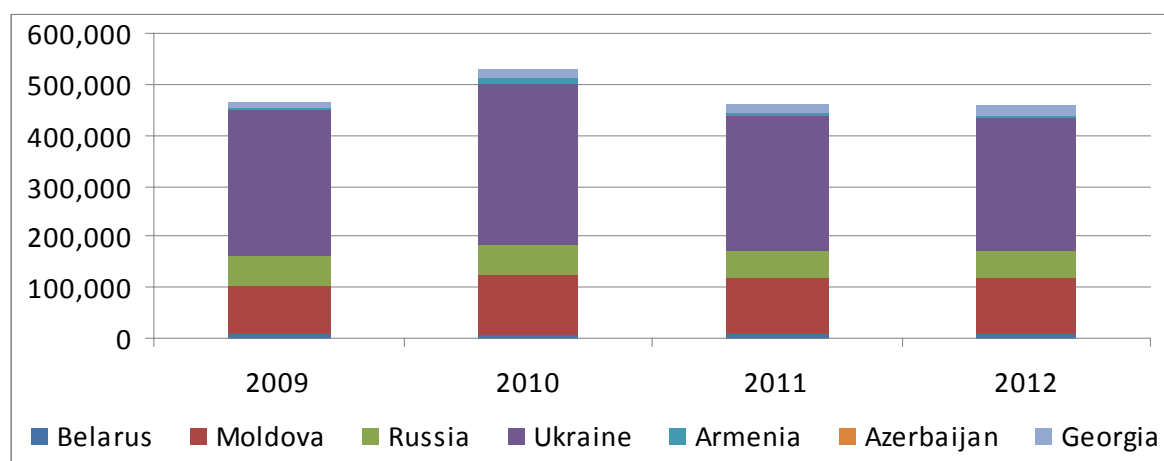
Country	Length of stay abroad	Sex/age	Education	Main destinations
<b>Armenia</b>	average period of stay in the latest emigration act – approximately 2 years.	75% of Armenian circular migrants are 20-49 years old. Two thirds of circular migrants are men, and two thirds are married.	Less than 5%: elementary and below; 75% secondary; 20% tertiary and beyond.	75-80% Russia, 10% EU.
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	No data	No data	No data	No data
<b>Belarus</b>	Migrants registered under category (RTD) have duration of stay abroad equal to 3 months or less. This accounts for over 95% of temporary departures.	no data, but among RTD circular migrants, 30% of researchers are in the 50-59 age-group	Around 40% among those who depart are qualified workers and professionals, followed by service sector and low-qualified workers.	Russia (50%); in the EU - Poland, Lithuania and Germany.
<b>Georgia</b>	Average length of stay abroad: more than 3 years, distributed as: 32% less than one year; 18% from 1 to 2 years; 10% from 2 to 3 years; 18% from 3 to 4 years; 22% more than 4 years	Sex: 61.5% males – 38.5% females; Age: 56.5% between 25 and 45 – 32.7% between 45 and 65 – 9.7% up to 24 – 1.2% above 65	No detailed info on circular migrants	Russia (57.3%); Western Europe (16.1%); Turkey (9.2%)
<b>Republic of Moldova</b>	In 2010, 13% of migrant workers returned after 3 months, 19% - after 9 months and 17% after 12 months, and the rest after “more than 1 year”.	A circular migrant is more likely to be young (mean age = 35 ), male (66%), and married (66%).	45% of circular migrants have secondary vocational education, 39% secondary and 14% have higher education.	Russia (63%); in the EU – Italy (15%).
<b>Ukraine</b>	Average length of stay abroad: 7 months. It largely differs according to destination country. 1-3 months is a typical stay in the Russian Federation. 2-3 short trips up to half a year prevail in those EU countries neighbouring Ukraine. Trips to Southern Europe usually last longer than 1 year.	The share of women among circular migrants is 31.6%. Ukrainian migrants’ gender profile differs by region of destination: while women represent the majority of emigration flows to the EU, they are only a minor part of emigration directed to Russia. 44.2% of circular migrants are younger than 35.	Average number of years spent in education equals 11.8, and the share of persons having complete higher education – 13.5%.	Russia (50%), , Italy (10%), Poland (10%), Czech Republic (10%).

Source: Carim East Country Explanatory Notes on Circular Migration, [www.carim-east.eu](http://www.carim-east.eu)

Thus a circular migrant from an EaP countries is usually a man in his most productive years (24-49) and with secondary education. He stays abroad for different periods of time, depending on country of origin and destination. Most importantly that man would not choose the EU as his primary destination for circular mobility. He would go to Russia, where the stay would be typically shorter (if for seasonal work).

From the data on temporary work permits to the EU, we can see how many legally registered temporary migrants are there. But we cannot really say much about their other socio-economic characteristics.

**Fig 4. Permits issued to migrant workers in the EU**



Source: Carim East database, [www.carim-east.eu](http://www.carim-east.eu)

As illustrated in the graph above, a temporary migrant from EaP countries legally employed in the EU is usually from Ukraine or Republic of Moldova and rarely from any of the three South Caucasus countries. Specific studies tell us that women from Moldova and Ukraine dominate the labour migrant flows to be employed in domestic sector in countries like Italy, Poland or the Czech Republic. Men usually work in construction or agriculture (cfr. Weiner et al. 2012, Poznyak 2012, Kupets 2012). Most importantly, in the EU these migrants work below their skill level (cfr. ETF 2008 a and 2008b).

### 3. Factors influencing circular migration

Circular migration can occur spontaneously or in the form of specific programs. There has been only one example of a fully-regulated programme in the region, between Ukraine and Portugal, stopped after first phase because of the economic crisis in the eurozone, (Ivashchenko 2012). However, spontaneous circular migration seems to be flourishing. Importantly, it is more circular within the region than between the region and the EU. Below we examine the main actors facilitating or hindering circular labour migration from EaP countries.

#### 3.1 Legal framework

Spontaneous circular migration is shaped by the existing legal framework that can influence the mobility of human capital across borders. We identified three main areas that play a decisive role in this respect: freedom of movement and international cooperation on temporary migration; citizenship; and recognition of qualifications.

### *Freedom of movement: visa and residence regimes*

All EaP countries, except for Georgia, belong to the CIS. The regional cooperation on mobility is structured through a net of bilateral and multilateral agreements that provide for a visa-free regime (of up to three months and beyond) as regards entry and transit for CIS nationals. In addition, in 1994 the relevant parties signed in Moscow an “Agreement on cooperation in the fields of labour migration and the social protection of labour migrants” and all EaP countries (except for Georgia) ratified it.<sup>2</sup> Several states subsequently went for bilateral agreements based on this agreement (see Tab. 4 below). Their relevance for circular migration is linked to the fact that the parties mutually recognize diplomas, as well as documents validating work experience and qualifications.

Another level of legal solutions has been achieved within the Eurasian Community by the Agreement on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers and the Members of their Families between Belarus, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. In this framework, Belarusian nationals enjoy full freedom of movement to the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, comparable with the EU Freedom of Movement.

The existing visa solutions in the CIS provide a great incentive for people to engage in circular movement, especially when combined with unequal economic development. However, on a more practical note, the CIS agreements in place do not make it easier for migrant workers to obtain legal residency or work permits hence the phenomenon of “working tourists”.

Georgia is an interesting case in the region. The Law on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons<sup>3</sup> stipulates an extremely liberal entry and labour market access policy, having no or only limited visa requirements and extended entry visa validity periods (up to 360 days).

All EaP countries have a relatively similar approach to the circular mobility of foreigners as regards provisions on residence permits. While holders of permanent or temporary residence permits have generally the right to multiple visa-free entry/exit during the validity period of their permits, long-term absences of residence permit holders are usually not tolerated. Similarly, there is no preferential treatment of former work or residence permit holders, so for each new admission the standard procedure is applied.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.carim-east.eu/1299/agreement-on-cooperation-in-the-field-of-labour-migration-and-social-protection-for-migrant-workers/>

<sup>3</sup> Adopted on 27 December 2005 (Last amended on 25 May 2012). „Sakartvelos Sakanonmdeblo Matsne“, 3, 16/01/2006.

**Tab. 3. Freedom of circulation for residence permit holders**

<i>EaP countries</i>	<i>Visa-free entry/exit of residence permit holders</i>	<i>Long-term absences</i>	<i>Preferential treatment of former work and/or residence permit holders</i>
<b>Armenia</b>	Yes	Up to <u>6 months and longer</u> (if informing authorities) only for holders of permanent residence permits	No
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	Yes	Up to <u>6 months</u> for immigrants (i.e. permanent residents)	No N.B. In order to re-apply for a work permit, former work permit holders have to spend at least one year outside AZ.
<b>Belarus</b>	Only for permanent residence permit holders	Up to <u>183 days</u> only for permanent residence permit holders	No
<b>Georgia</b>	Yes	No explicit provisions. N.B. The cessation of labor activities or other relations for which residence permits have been granted can lead to the termination of the term of (temporary or permanent) stay in Georgia.	No
<b>Republic of Moldova</b>	Yes	<u>12 consecutive months</u> only for permanent residence permit holders. No sanctions for long-absences for temporary residence permit holders, which can be granted for up to 5 years.	No
<b>Ukraine</b>	Yes	No specific provisions. N.B. The cessation of labor activities or other relations for which temporary residence permits have been granted leads to the termination of “lawful residence” in Ukraine.	No, except for “migration risk countries”. <sup>4</sup>

Source: Carim East Country Explanatory Notes on Circular Migration, [www.carim-east.eu](http://www.carim-east.eu)

<sup>4</sup> Since 2011, Ukrainian legislation no longer entails an explicit provision on this rule. However, in practice, it continues to have a positive impact on new visa applications for those persons concerned.



It is important to note here the role of Russia as the main destination country in the region: the instruments facilitating inflows are not supported by instruments facilitating the legal status of migrant workers in the low-skill segment of economy. Highly-skilled migrants from the region have a clear advantage, as under current legislation they can relatively easily obtain a work permit for up to 3 years, which is further renewable.

As regards the circular mobility of diaspora members to the countries of origin, it is clearly facilitated by a series of legal mechanisms. There is the visa-free regime of the CIS and liberal approach of Georgia. But there are also provisions in most EaP countries, providing for temporary or permanent residence status for former citizens, e.g. in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, and other diaspora members, e.g. “Foreign Ukrainians”.

As regards cooperation with the EU on the de facto facilitation of circular mobility, the only practical tool was the Local Border Traffic as well as bilateral labour agreements between Ukraine and Portugal, and Republic of Moldova and Italy. Other solutions remain clearly national, for example, facilitated access to the Polish labour market for the nationals of Ukraine, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Armenia.

As regards facilitation in the EU, for the moment Germany seems to be the only MS that allows long-term resident nationals of the EaP countries, which have signed Mobility Partnerships to enjoy extended stays abroad without losing their residence rights.

A number of EaP countries have some form of an agreement on the portability of social rights with a number of EU Member States.

**Tab. 4. Bilateral agreements on portability of social rights in EaP (including two major destination areas: RF and EU).**

	AR	AZ	BY	GE	MD	UA	RF	EU
AR			X	X		X	X	
AZ						X		
BY	X				X	X	X	
GE	X					X		
MD			X			X		7
UA	X	X	X	X	X			8
RF	X		X					
EU								

Source: Carim East Country Explanatory Notes on Circular Migration, [www.carim-east.eu](http://www.carim-east.eu)

### *Citizenship*

Dual citizenship is one of the main avenues facilitating circular migration. After all, it is an instrument allowing for inclusion of a circular migrant in the socio-economic tissue of two countries. Belarus and Ukraine do not allow dual citizenship for their nationals. For the moment, embryonic solutions have been introduced in Georgia, where the decision to allow for dual citizenship is discretionary, but apparently easily obtainable. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Republic of Moldova do not forbid the dual citizenship of their nationals.

In practice, citizens of EaP countries do not inform their countries of origin about the acquisition of foreign citizenship (especially if it is not required by the country of new citizenship). Thus they can have two passports.

### *Recognition of qualifications*

The recognition of qualifications is not particularly transparent in the region. Armenia does not have provisions in its legislation. Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine provide for an administrative equivalence procedure, though one that is rather heavy and bureaucratic. It is worth noting that the Republic of Moldova has embarked on a complex process of building its capacities to recognize foreign qualifications on different skill levels. Currently, indeed, Republic of Moldova has the most advanced legal framework to address this issue.

### **3.2 Policy framework of circular migration**

The effects of circular migration on EaP countries are different and thus require different policy responses. There are, however, two common denominators: rapid aging in the region (except in Azerbaijan) and considerable outflows of young people. These two elements have had an important impact on the development prospects of the region.

Circular migration as a tool of migration and development has been met with most interest in Armenia and the Republic of Moldova, where the outflow of nationals has been recognized as a major challenge to development. The governments of these countries are very keen on moving forward with various forms of circular migration hoping for “the triple win” situation. For the moment, cooperation has been initiated under the Mobility Partnership framework, but the actual increase in circular mobility is relatively limited. Only in the case of Poland can we observe a significant increase in Moldovan circular migrant workers.

Belarus is primarily affected by its open door policy with the Russian Federation as well as a stable outflow of highly-skilled migrants searching for more economic and political freedoms in the EU and in North America. In this case, brain drain has been identified as the main challenge, while other groups of emigrants have been largely omitted in policy considerations. At the same time, Belarus is developing an active immigration policy targeting highly-skilled migrants; however this policy does not focus on circularity, but on permanent immigration to counteract rapid ageing and to support economic development over the mid- to long-term.

Ukraine is the most populated EaP country in the region. It is thus the main donor of migrant labour force both in the region and in the EU for all skill levels. At the same time it has no policy targeting emigration, nor does it work towards creating a positive context for a win-win-win situation to occur. The *laissez-faire* policy framework can be interpreted as being liberal, giving more freedom to individuals. However, since there are apparently many obstacles for emigrants in employing their financial and human capital for the development of the home country, it can also be understood as representing the indifference of policy makers to the plight of their own citizens. Ukraine, like Belarus, could also benefit from an active immigration policy, which for the moment is not being considered in these two countries.

Georgia is the only country in the region openly advocating and practicing mobility, both emigration and immigration. It has the most liberal labour market policy in Europe and hopes to establish a thriving economy based on competitiveness and limited state support. This libertarian approach has some weaknesses, not least that it is applied in a world of growing interdependencies. The ultraliberal philosophy underpinning Georgia’s approach to migration and the labour market is in a stark contrast with more regulatory culture of its partners, both in the CIS and the EU. Hence there is an organic difficulty in establishing bilateral or multilateral legal tools for cooperation.

The policy framework of circular migration in Azerbaijan is basically inexistent. The focus is on one group of emigrants alone, providing limited provisions supporting the circularity of students and researchers. This policy may encourage brain circulation and brain-gain. However the socio-political context encourages the permanent emigration of the highly skilled. Mid- and low-skilled Azerbaijani

migrants circulate without any tangible support and their positive impact on the development of their country is not considered at the policy level.

**Tab. 5. Matrix of policy frameworks addressing circular migration**

	<b>EU framework: Mobility Partnerships</b>	<b>Active national diaspora policies</b>	<b>Limited policy framework targeting emigration</b>	<b>Limited policy framework targeting immigration</b>
Important outward circular migration as share of population	Armenia Georgia Republic of Moldova	Armenia Republic of Moldova		Belarus Georgia
Real numbers of circular emigrants high, but not as share of population		Ukraine	Belarus	
Outward circular migration concerns mainly the skilled strata of society			Azerbaijan Belarus	

Source: Carim East Country Explanatory Notes on Circular Migration, [www.carim-east.eu](http://www.carim-east.eu)

In all countries the relations between migration, and especially circular migration, and economic development is not necessarily clear. The concept of development has not been translated into the everyday reality of the region. Therefore, the link to the mobility of nationals is rarely put forward or translated into concrete policy initiatives. Only the Republic of Moldova has had several initiatives that help it bring the two dimensions closer. But still the final assessment of their success is disputable.

For many EaP migrants travel costs determine the frequency of their visits home (Weinar et al 2012, Ivashchenko 2012b). Thus, from a logistical point of view, circular migration is likely to evolve among countries that share borders or with those EU member states where travel expenses are cheaper. Thus, policy-makers should especially foster business-sector collaborations and bilateral relations in migration policies among those EaP and EU member-states that have flexible and competitive prices for travel and transportation. In this way they can hope to attract migrant flows and whip up back and forth circulation.

To promote circular migration, policy-makers and authorities in the EU and EaP countries continue to put emphasis on visa-regimes as “one of the factors preventing the migrants from coming back home” (Mosneaga 2012:7). However, research with migrants suggests that labour migrants who work temporarily abroad are rarely aware of migration policies and the legal framework of their home country (Themis 2011-2012 project cited in Ivashchchnko 2012). Instead, “[w]hen people leave, indeed, in most cases they do so for social and economic reasons, *but when they decide whether to return back home ..., the societal factors (development and efficiency of democratic principles, standards of living and quality of life, ecological, social and welfare conditions, etc.) have a priority*” (emphasis added, see Mosneaga 2012: 7). Thus, circular migration should not be linked to merely instrumental measures, such as visa-regimes. Rather, they should be conceived by migration policy-makers as a component within a larger policy framework on the social and political development of EaP countries.

## 4. Conclusions

The trouble in defining the scope of circular migration derive from the fact that it is hard to measure and our knowledge of it in the region is based on a variety of non-comparable sources. The current knowledge in most EaP countries is based on small-scale one-off surveys, as well as on estimates and informed guesses. The well-developed statistical capacity existing in most countries is not put to use. The political decision to strengthen the knowledge base is needed to assess the character and the impact of this phenomenon and to build appropriate policies that would put circular migration to a better use for development.

The legal framework is also quite patchy. The possibility for freedom of movement within the CIS has not been pushed to achieve open space in terms of legal mobility; instead it has stopped at the in-between stage, comparable to the transitory period of EU-10. This situation favours spontaneous circular migration (facility of return and re-emigration) but also irregular employment and related human-rights violations. Circular migration in relation to the EU is much more problematic: current visa and work permit regulations impede legal circular mobility – save for a few specific national solutions – and encourage overstaying. Comparison of temporary migration from Ukraine and Republic of Moldova to Russia and the EU show that migrants going to the EU go for longer periods, circulate less, and are thus prone to double irregularity (stay and work); those going to Russia circulate more, usually in the legal timeframe, but engage in irregular employment.

Currently, there is public perception (among experts and policy-makers) in the EaP region that circular migration should be regulated at the governmental level. The idea that spontaneous circular movement (temporary or seasonal) is in fact circular migration, has not taken root. Moreover, in many EaP countries the current debate on circular migration is targeted at “temporariness rather than the status of migration” (Ivashchenko 2012). This context makes the idea of circular migration somewhat artificial and sometimes misplaced. After all, wellbeing and a win-win situation for the migrant is related primarily to his or her legal status. Legality is the origin of all fruitful contributions for mobile citizens. In the current thinking, the emphasis is put on the mechanics of mobility (visa regime, return) and the focus diverges from other factors that steer the decisions towards an emigration-return-re-emigration cycle. The low-key political debate brings to the front only one, linear relation between a migrant, the authorities of the country of origin and destination. Other crucial actors like businesses, educational institutions, civil society, which are part of any country’s national fabric and which shape the reality in which circular migration cycle takes place, are rarely a part of the debate.

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