



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

Co-financed by the European Union

# ***Return Migration and Reintegration Issues: Armenia***

**Haykanush Chobanyan**

CARIM-East Research Report 2013/03



© 2013. All rights reserved.  
No part of this paper may be distributed, quoted  
or reproduced in any form without permission from  
the CARIM East Project.



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

**Research Report**  
**CARIM-East RR 2013/03**

**Return Migration and Reintegration Issues:**  
**Armenia**

**Haykanush Chobanyan**

© 2013, European University Institute  
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

This text may be downloaded only for personal research purposes. Any additional reproduction for other purposes, whether in hard copies or electronically, requires the consent of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

Requests should be addressed to [carim.east@eui.eu](mailto:carim.east@eui.eu)  
If cited or quoted, reference should be made as follows:

Haykanush Chobanyan, Return Migration and Reintegration Issues: Armenia, CARIM-East RR 2013/03, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute, 2013.

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS PUBLICATION CANNOT IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES BE REGARDED AS THE OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

European University Institute  
Badia Fiesolana  
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)  
Italy

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/>  
<http://www.carim-east.eu/publications/>  
<http://cadmus.eui.eu>

## **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/>

*For more information:*

CARIM-East

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (EUI)

Convento

Via delle Fontanelle 19

50014 San Domenico di Fiesole

Italy

Tel: +39 055 46 85 817

Fax: + 39 055 46 85 770

Email: [carim.east@eui.eu](mailto:carim.east@eui.eu)

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/>

## **Executive Summary**

The present paper explores the phenomenon of return migration and reintegration issues for Armenian citizens returning to their country of origin. It also discusses some aspects (institutional, economic and social), as well as factors (migration projects, human, financial and cultural capital) in the reintegration of returnees in Armenia. Various patterns of reintegration, as well as the institutional framework and Armenia's experience in dealing with returnees are identified and analyzed.

The research focuses on the following issues: Why do migrants return to their country of origin? What is the profile (socio-demographic traits) of return migrants? What challenges do they (and their families) face while successfully reintegrating after their return? What is government policy for their reintegration into society? How effective is government policy and what gaps are there?

Secondary data, i.e. official statistics, findings of studies conducted by different organizations, etc. have been used in the paper. Policy documents concerning return migrants and their reintegration have also been discussed in the context of policy framework. In this article, I incorporate and build on my past research, as well as rely on observations carried out among return migrants and discussions with the same as part of my daily work.

According to surveys, the return to Armenia was mainly affected by "push" factors in host countries rather than "pull" factors in Armenia. Many returnees decided to move back to their country of origin due to worsening living and working conditions abroad, increased xenophobia and/or unacceptability of social values. The reasons for return vary but include: deportation, personal issues (death of a relative, divorce, poor health, etc.), and inability to adapt to the local climate. There are pull factors such as homesickness, and inability or unwillingness to reunite with the family abroad, as well as desire to raise children back in Armenia.

Today in Armenia there are no targeted government programs for the reintegration of returning migrants. In fact, there are specific reintegration projects which are implemented by national, international and non-governmental organizations and which are mainly financed by international organizations and host countries. Government agencies are involved in some of these projects. However, these projects are not sustainable. Systemization in the work of different institutions is still a question, and this affects not only the work of public institutions but also cooperation in appropriate international and non-governmental organizations. These projects and their support packages can be provisionally divided into two categories: "broad" and "narrow". The so-called "narrow" package implies only consultative support and reference for returning migrants (provided mostly by the state agencies and by some NGOs). Apart from consultancy support, the "broad" package includes certain mechanisms for financing income-generating activities (support to starting and existing businesses), requalification training, education of children, medical support, etc. (provided mainly by international and local organizations).

In order to ensure the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants in Armenia, coordinated assistance should be provided for them. Otherwise, we will have a situation when these people re-emigrate from Armenia. In providing support for the reintegration of migrants in Armenia and for addressing the problems encountered by them upon their return to their country of origin, some steps need to be taken into consideration.

One of the major problems faced by return migrants is a lack of information, which turns into an obstacle for return and resettlement. It is important to increase awareness here. This awareness raising must include the legislative framework, employment and private business opportunities in Armenia given the numerous changes in the legal and institutional frameworks that have occurred in their country of origin while they resided abroad. Migrants who have been away from Armenia for a long period face not only employment but also educational (especially language), cultural, social and psychological issues. In the reintegration process language plays an important role. Armenian language classes organized at schools (especially in the regions) for school-age children of returned migrants would facilitate their reintegration into the education system.

## Introduction

Armenia has a long history of migration, and return has always been part of its migration cycle. In early 1990s the “new” Armenian diaspora emerged. Those who left Armenia after the collapse of the USSR – when Armenia became an independent state in 1991 – represent the “new” diaspora. Most of them still have Armenian citizenship. Over the past few years some of them have returned to their native country either voluntarily or under different circumstances.

This paper explores the phenomenon of return migration and issues of reintegration of Armenian citizens returning to their country of origin. It also discusses some aspects (institutional, economic and social), as well as factors (migration projects, human, financial and cultural capital) for the sustained reintegration of returnees in Armenia. Various patterns of reintegration, as well as the institutional framework and Armenia’s experience in dealing with returnees are identified and analyzed.

The research focuses on the following issues. Why do migrants return to their country of origin? What is the profile (socio-demographic traits) of return migrants? What challenges do they (and their families) face while successfully reintegrating? What is the government policy for their reintegration in the society? How effective is policy and what gaps are there?

According to the IOM, “in a broader sense return migration is the movement of a person returning to his or her country of origin or habitual residence usually after spending at least one year in another country” (IOM, 2011, p. 85) In Armenia, based on the objectives of their studies, different authors and researchers propose different definitions of “return migration”. Moreover, this term lacks a definition in official documents (e.g. in legal acts, policy documents, etc.).

In this paper the following definition of a return migrant will be used: a “person who emigrated from the Republic of Armenia after its independence in 1991 and after living abroad for some (short or long) time (legally or illegally) returned (voluntarily or forced) to Armenia with an intention to reside there permanently or temporarily”. In this paper repatriation of “old” diaspora<sup>1</sup> members to Armenia is not regarded as an act of return.

By “voluntary” returnees we mean those who return to their country of origin of their own will, without any intervention from the host country. “Assisted voluntary returnees” are those who do not have any legal right to stay in their host country and who want to return back to their country of origin with the assistance of reintegration programs implemented either by international organizations or by host countries (if any). “Forced” return migrants are those who have been deported or exiled by host country authorities.

The paper starts with a brief overview of available statistical sources on return migration. The paper discusses the incentives for return and the socio-economic profile of returnees. It also focuses on reintegration problems faced by return migrants after their return to Armenia, followed by an analysis of the institutional framework: e.g. the policy framework and various institutions dealing with reintegration issues. Finally, the paper offers some conclusions and proposes measures to be implemented by the government and other stakeholder institutions to facilitate reintegration in terms of employment, social, psychological, educational and cultural adaptation.

As a country of origin, Armenia’s experience can be interesting for the academic community and for policy makers in general as it can help that community understand better the phenomenon of return migration.

---

<sup>1</sup> Many Armenian Diaspora communities emerged mostly in the early twentieth century after the Armenian Genocide and mass deportations of Armenians from the former Ottoman Empire. They have already lived in their host countries as citizens for several generations. In the case of these people, their relation to the diaspora is conditioned by their ethnic Armenian origin.

Secondary data – i.e. official statistics, findings of studies conducted by different organizations, etc. – have been used in the paper. Besides, policy documents concerning return migrants and their reintegration have been discussed in the context of the policy framework. In this article I build on my past research (Chobanyan 2008, Chobanyan 2012a, Chobanyan 2012b), as well as relying on observations of return migrants and discussions with them from my daily work.

## Review of Statistics Sources on Return Migration

It should be noted that return migrants are not registered either at entry ports to Armenia nor inside the country. Hence, there are no reliable statistical data on return flows to Armenia. However, the existing official data and the results of sociological surveys allow us to gain some understanding about return flows to Armenia (Chobanyan, 2012b).

Thus, the sources below can be used in assessing return flows:

- The Census data<sup>2</sup>;
- Immigration and emigration data (Demographic Handbook of Armenia, 2001 p. 114) collected through statistical forms, (the “Migrant’s Statistical Registration Forms”) at the local branches of the Passport and Visa Department of the Armenian Police during the registration/re-registration of their residence status in Armenia<sup>3</sup>;
- International Border Crossings information collected upon registration at the entry and exit of every international passenger<sup>4</sup>;
- Sociological surveys and each individual survey have used its own definitions;
- Statistical data on the voluntary return or deportation of Armenian citizens who apply for return certificate (*laissez-passé*) to Consular Missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia<sup>5</sup>;
- Statistical data on the number of migrants who returned to their country of origin as part of different return assistance programs implemented in Armenia by international, governmental and non-governmental organizations;
- Statistical data on readmission cases provided by foreign countries within the framework of concluded intergovernmental readmission agreements;<sup>6</sup>
- Official statistics from destination countries, and the international databases of Eurostat<sup>7</sup> and the OECD<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> The 2001 census does not include any information on return migration. The most recent census (October, 2011) contained questions about the place of residence and the main reasons for changing residence (questionnaire for 2011 census round, question 13.4.). The results of the 2011 population census will be published in 2013. Available at: <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99465273.pdf>. Accessed 15 October, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> These data are processed by the National Statistical Service of Armenia. However, the method employed does not reflect the real volumes of migration because quite often emigrants are not de-registered before leaving Armenia and re-registered after return.

<sup>4</sup> However, the above data do not include information about the citizenship of passengers, their country of destination or origin, duration of their stay abroad or in Armenia. Thus, the information about international border crossings does not allow us properly to estimate the number of Armenian returnees.

<sup>5</sup> Return certificate is provided on the request of Armenian citizens living abroad (legally or illegally) who do not have valid travel documents (expired or lost passports, etc.) and who want to return to Armenia. Besides, these certificates are issued on the request of the authorities of the destination country to facilitate the return of those Armenian citizens who do not comply with the entry or residence requirements of the destination country and who, to boot, lack a valid passport. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (2011). Return Certificate of RA: <http://www.mfa.am/en/return-certificate/>. Accessed 14 October, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Copies of the readmission agreements signed by the Armenian Government are available at the webpage of the State Migration Service of Armenia. Bilateral Agreements. [http://www.smsmta.am/?menu\\_id=15](http://www.smsmta.am/?menu_id=15). Accessed 14 October, 2012.

While the above-listed sources do not explicitly indicate the return migration flows, they indirectly provide information and allow us to perform certain related estimates.

### Migration in Armenia: Brief Situation Analysis

Before assessing return flows, the situation in Armenia after independence in 1991 should be analyzed with regard to migration as it will allow us to identify the point when return flows started. According to expert estimates, due to a dramatic deterioration in the socio-economic situation in Armenia in the 1990s, the Nagorno-Kharabagh conflict, the 1988 earthquake and other factors, about one million people emigrated from Armenia (UNDP, 2009, p. 51). Two thirds moved to the Russian Federation, while the remaining third was equally distributed among the CIS, EU countries and the US. The existence of a large Armenian Diaspora played a significant role in the United States particularly. Analysis of the migration situation on the previous years is built on three distinct periods. *The first period* (1992-1994) was distinguished by massive emigration, when in only two and a half to three years almost 600 thousand persons left Armenia. *The second period* (1995-2001) had a negative migration balance and a reduction in migration circulation compared to the past years. During this period about 250,000 (circa 8%) of the country's population emigrated from Armenia (UNDP, 2009, p. 42). *The third period* (from 2002 to present) has been characterized by a decrease in negative migration balance and even positive changes for some years (2004-2006), an increase in passenger flows<sup>9</sup> and a number of crossings at land ports of entry. Sociological surveys show that 2002-2007 labour migrants prevailed in terms of outward migration flows from Armenia (94%). During this period the Russian Federation was the main destination country. 96% of labor migrants left for Russia, including 70% who were engaged in the construction sector. The number of migrants working in trade, transport, production or services is very low (OSCE, 2008, p. 10, 11). During 2002-2007 the net emigration was about 150,000 or 5% of the country's population (UNDP, 2009, p. 43).

It should be noted that the migration situation in Armenia changed 2008-2009 due to the global financial and economic crisis. It was affected by several factors, in particular certain changes in various sectors of the economy, as well as a revision of Russian migration policy, the main recipient country of Armenian migrants<sup>10</sup>. As a result, the international passenger flows and the number of persons arriving in and leaving Armenia,<sup>11</sup> as well as remittances<sup>12</sup> from abroad subsequently decreased in 2009. Although the 2009 forecasts on returnees to Armenia did not materialize and no major inflow of returnees was recorded, due to the economic global crisis, the number of temporary labor migrants leaving for Russia dropped significantly (by about half)<sup>13</sup>. However, even during 2008-2009 the main labor migration flows (up to 90%) were towards Russia and the overwhelming majority of migrants were aged 20-54 (80%). The majority of labor migrants were from urban areas (58.3% vs. 53.7% rural labor migrants) in 2009 (ILO, 2010).

(Contd.) \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>7</sup> EUROSTAT (2012). <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home>. Accessed 14 October, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development: <http://www.oecd.org/about/>. Accessed on 14 October, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> State Migration Service of Armenia. Volumes of international border crossings in 2000-2012. [http://www.smsmta.am/?menu\\_id=18](http://www.smsmta.am/?menu_id=18). Accessed 25 October, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> «Сокращенные на 50% квоты на привлечение иностранной рабочей силы в регионах РФ считают завышенными» in Regnum.ru, on 18 February, 2009. Available at: <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1126684.html>. Accessed 4 October, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> State Migration Service of Armenia: Volumes of international border crossings in 2000-2012. [http://www.smsmta.am/?menu\\_id=18](http://www.smsmta.am/?menu_id=18). Accessed 25 October, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> State Migration Service of Armenia. Volume of remittances in 2005-2012. [http://www.smsmta.am/?menu\\_id=52](http://www.smsmta.am/?menu_id=52). Accessed 25 October, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> 'The number of short-term migrates will be reduced and the long-term migrates will come back' in Hayastany Hanrapetutyun, 4 April, 2009. Available at: [http://www.hhpress.am/index.php?sub=hodv&hodv=20090404\\_2&flag=en](http://www.hhpress.am/index.php?sub=hodv&hodv=20090404_2&flag=en), Accessed on 13 October, 2012.

## Incentives for Return

Returnees to Armenia have quite various socio-economic backgrounds and migration experiences. Among returnees are students, labor migrants (high-skilled, low-skilled, seasonal), migrants that moved with the intention of permanent residence, rejected asylum seekers, irregular migrants, retired persons, etc.

The reasons for return can be expressed in “pull” factors of the country of origin and “push” factors of the host country. “Pull” factors include the improvement of the social-economic and political situation in the country of origin, while “push” factors can include difficulties and obstacles for integration that arise in the host country (King, 2000, pp. 13-18).

According to the surveys, during 2002-2007 the return to Armenia was mainly affected by “push” factors in host countries, rather than “pull” factors in Armenia (OSCE, 2008, p. 76-77; UNFPA, 2007, p. 52). Many returnees decided to move back to their country of origin due to their worsening living and working conditions abroad, increased xenophobia and/or unacceptable social values (particularly in Russia). The reasons for return vary: deportation, personal issues (death of a relative, divorce, poor health, etc.), inability to adapt to the local climate. There are pull factors such as homesickness, and inability or unwillingness to reunite with the family abroad, as well as desire to raise children in Armenia. The three most common reasons for any return to Armenia included family reunion (40 percent), expiration of employment contract (12 percent) and low income (8 percent) (ETF, 2012, p. 68).

## Description of Return Flows and Profiles of Return Migrants

Various sociological studies, some commissioned by donor and international organizations, have explored the phenomenon of return migration in Armenia. While each individual survey has used its own definitions for sampling and conceptualizing the return migrant the studies have, nevertheless, helped reveal some insights into the profile of return migrants.

*Return Migration to Armenia in 2002-2008* was conducted by Advanced Social Technologies (AST), an NGO based in Armenia. The survey which was funded by the Organization for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) Yerevan office aimed to contribute to policy-making for return and migration. It also hoped to design policies to facilitate the reintegration of returnees and their migration experience for home country development. The research combined quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The quantitative component of the research represented a nationwide quantitative household survey (including 2,500 households). The Study<sup>14</sup> indicates that from 2002 to 2007 more than 80 percent of migrants returned to Armenia at least once. The return rate is lower among those who left Armenia before 2002: 64 percent of them returned to Armenia in 2002-2007. About 24 percent (or approximately 55,000) of migrants returned to Armenia in 2002-2007 and did not plan to re-emigrate in the near future. According to this study, most migrants returned from the Russian Federation (RF). The authors explain this result by high rates of migration to Russia, relatively low transport costs between Armenia and the RF, lack of visa requirements for the entry of Armenian citizens to Russia. The highest indicator of temporary return was recorded among returnees from Russia (82 percent). But the percentage of return to Armenia for permanent residence among migrants coming from Russia is low compared to all other destination countries (11 percent). The permanent return indicator has been high among people who have migrated to the US (20%). In other destination countries the indicator varies from 14 percent (Europe) to 26 percent (CIS countries, except Ukraine). The return rate is the highest in Kotayk Marz (region) and the lowest in Lori Marz.

---

<sup>14</sup> The group of “returnees” is defined as temporary or permanent migrants leaving Armenia for residence, work or study abroad and returning to Armenia at least once between 2002 and 2007. The term “permanent returnees” refers to those returnees who returned to Armenia and did not plan to leave it in 2008, while the term “temporary returnees” refers to those who intended to leave their country of origin again.

The fact that Yerevan hosts twice as few temporary returnees compared to other Armenian regions can be explained by labor migration activity which is much lower in Yerevan than in smaller towns and villages. With regard to gender distribution, the study shows that around 70 percent of those interviewed return migrants are males and 30 percent are females. According to the study, the average age of return migrants is 35-41 years old. The data on employment of Armenian returnees show that about 60 percent of return migrants were employed in 2008. Among those Armenians who did not migrate, the employment rate was 43 percent. The majority of interviewed return migrants stated that their migration experiences helped them improve their on-the-job skills; develop soft skills thereby increasing their competitiveness on the Armenian labor market.

The *Sample Survey on External and Internal Migration in the Republic of Armenia* funded by UNFPA was conducted by the National Statistical Service and the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues of Armenia from June to November 2007. The purpose of this survey was to evaluate the changes in migration trends during from 2002 to 2007 after social and economic reforms had been carried out in the country. It was also to assess the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of migration flows, the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of migrants and the future migration plans of different groups involved in migration processes. Overall, 2,500 households were selected and interviewed for the survey.

According to the Survey<sup>15</sup> 8.5 percent of household members included in the survey were formerly involved in foreign migration processes. Indeed, 2.6 percent were defined as re-emigrants (i.e. migrants who returned from foreign countries) and 5.7 percent still resided abroad. Most Armenians returned from the Russian Federation (80 percent), 5 percent from European countries, 5 percent from the US and the remaining migrants returned from other countries. Return migrants predominantly belonged to the 20-29 age-group. The sample survey indicates that more males (62 percent) than females (38 percent) returned to Armenia. 70 percent of return migrants were married. Among those who returned from foreign countries the share of individuals with general secondary education was prevalent (41.9 percent), followed by migrants with secondary vocational education (24.8 percent), and then migrants with higher education (21.1 percent).

The study *On the Problems of Reintegration of Migrants Returning to Armenia* (H. Chobanyan, 2012a) is among the first in Armenia: to define the terms of return migration; to analyze the reintegration problems of return migrants; and to propose some specific recommendations pertaining to the issues of employment, social-psychological and educational-cultural reintegration of returnees. The study was conducted as part of the “*Reinforcement of Management of Migratory Flows in Armenia*” Project implemented jointly by the UN Armenian Association and the Armenian office of the People in Need organization.

*Migration Survey on the Relationship between Skills, Migration and Development in Armenia* was conducted in Armenia during 2011-2012 by the European Training Foundation and the Caucasus Research Resource Center-Armenia. It is a nationwide representative survey which encompasses all 11 *marzes* (administrative regions) of Armenia, including urban and rural areas. The survey focuses on two target groups: potential migrants and returning migrants. The sample included 2,630 potential migrants and 1,426 return migrants. However, the survey is not representative for the entire return migrant population of Armenia. The Survey<sup>16</sup> with a focus on return migration revealed that the gender distribution of returned migrants was uneven: 87 percent for males and 13 percent for female. The majority (73 percent) of returned migrants were married. A higher share of returned female migrants

<sup>15</sup> Section 4 of the survey provides information on household members who were in Armenia during the period of the survey but resided in a foreign country for more than three months during 2002-2007.

<sup>16</sup> In the survey a returning migrant is defined as a person who left the surveyed country at the age of 18 or above; worked abroad uninterruptedly for at least three months; returned no later than ten years ago; is present during the fieldwork and available for interview. The survey utilized the snowball sampling method and is not representative of the entire returned migrant population of Armenia. In total, 1400 returned migrants were interviewed.

(45 percent) was single. 72 percent of returned migrants had children. 81 percent of married returned migrants had migrated without their spouses. A significantly higher share of female returned migrants (63 percent) had traveled with their spouses compared to males (14 percent). 63 percent of those who had migrated alone noted that their spouse had stayed in Armenia to take care of their children and/or other dependents. 10 percent of the respondents, meanwhile, referred to financial difficulties associated with a travel together with their spouses. Before their first migration the majority (88 percent) of the returned migrants had at least finished high school or had a university degree. Compared to the national data on education, there are more people with lower-level education (12 percent) among returned migrants than in the population as a whole (around 7 percent). Female returned migrants had higher levels of education than males, with 38 percent of females with a higher education degree compared to 20 percent of males. The average age was 36. The most popular destination for migration was Russia; it was the first destination country for 84 percent of returned migrants. Russia was also the leading destination country for all subsequent migration experiences. Other (first) destination countries include the US (2 percent), Ukraine (2 percent) and Germany (2 percent). Around 1 percent migrated to Turkey, Poland, France and Georgia. Slightly larger number of females emigrated to EU countries and more males moved to Russia and Ukraine.

Another survey was conducted as part of the **Cross-Regional Information System on the Reintegration of Migrants in their Countries of Origin (CRIS)** Project led by the European University Institute (EUI)<sup>17</sup>. It focuses on the social, economic, legal and institutional factors and conditions which shape the patterns of returnees' reintegration in their country of origin and explains why some return migrants contribute to the development back home, while others do not. The survey<sup>18</sup> has cross-regional comparative scope. The field data were collected through a structured questionnaire that enables people to compare different countries and regions. Overall, 349 interviews were conducted during April-May, 2012 by the Advanced Social Technologies NGO in Armenia mainly in Yerevan, Ararat, Kotayk, and to a lesser extent in Lori, Shirak and Gegharkunik regions. Men accounted for 52.7 percent of the whole sample which was comprised of mainly young adults aged between 25 and 34 years old (36 percent). The average age of the interviewees, at the time of their first emigration, was between 15 and 24 years of age. Most interviewees were married before emigration. Most male migrants were single when they emigrated and many of them got married during their migration cycle. The proportion of divorced and widowed women in the sample was tiny but not negligible (respectively, 12 and 11 percent). Seventy-two percent settled in urban areas after their return and almost half of the sample returned to the same place where they resided before emigration (51 percent). More men than women returned to their birthplace. The most important countries of destination were Russia (59 percent), followed by France (16 percent). Almost all interviewees left Armenia legally. Most of them did not need a visa (64 percent) and 3 out of 10 migrants left Armenia with a tourist visa. Economic motivations such as finding a job, looking for higher incomes and better working conditions were the most recurrent factors that interviewees mentioned to explain their desire to emigrate. Importantly, the lack of prospects in Armenia was also an important factor in deciding to emigrate. Additionally, the presence of family members and friends abroad was, by far, the most important reason in choosing specific countries of destination (43 percent).

Seventy-one percent of migrants decided on their own initiative to return to Armenia. 2 out of 10 migrants returned with "return assistance programmes", above all owing to adverse circumstances (72 percent). Homesickness and family links were the main reasons for which interviewees decided to return on their own initiative, whereas the non-renewal of their residence permit, together with

---

<sup>17</sup> Further information about the Project is available on the Return Migration and Development Platform (RDP) <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/research-projects/cris/> and <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/research-projects/cris/survey-on-return-migrants/methodology/>

<sup>18</sup> In the Survey return migrant is defined as any person returning to his/her country of origin, in the course of the last ten years, after having been an international migrant (whether short-term or long-term) in another country. Return may be permanent or temporary. It may be independently decided by the migrant or forced by unexpected/adverse circumstances.

expulsion, were the main reasons mentioned by those who declared having been compelled to go back to Armenia. More than one third of interviewees returned with their partners and/or children. With regards to job sectors, a relative majority of migrants were employed before emigration in the health and social sectors, as well as in the trade and car sectors, and in education. Abroad, the sectoral distribution changed somewhat. Indeed, 37 percent of interviewees were employed in the construction and building industry (14%). Looking for a job abroad was not so problematic. Around 46 percent found a job immediately or even before their emigration. Conversely, it was upon their return that looking for a job became more difficult: 27 percent did not find a job and 28 percent took more than three months to find a job.

## Key Issues of the Reintegration of Migrants Returning to Armenia

Reintegration can be defined as a re-inclusion or the re-incorporation of a person into a group or a process, e.g. of a migrant into the society of his or her country of origin or habitual residence. (IOM, 2011, p. 82). According to another definition, it is a process through which a return migrant participates in the social, cultural, economic and political life of his/her country of origin (RDP Glossary)<sup>19</sup>. Reintegration includes economic, social-psychological and cultural aspects, which are interrelated and which mutually affect one another.

The reintegration of returned migrants in their country of origin is a tough process. Success depends, to a large extent, on whether their migration experience abroad was successful, how they have integrated in the host society and what migration experience they have returned with. A successful economic and social experience abroad can be an incentive for fast and efficient reintegration in the home country. Conversely, the failures encountered during the migration experience cannot only force the migrant to return to his country of origin. It can also hinder reintegration.

Cassarino (2008) argues that migrants' patterns of reintegration are shaped by three interrelated elements: the context of reintegration in the home country, the duration and type of migration experience lived abroad, conditions in the host and origin countries which motivated return, i.e., the pre- and post-return conditions. Returnee's *motivation* in migration and return are crucial in calculating the likely outcome of reintegration. The more the returnee's personal decision actually influences their return, the better their reintegration. *Free-will* and the *readiness* to return are two fundamental elements that go to make up return migrants' preparedness.

Cassarino (2008) also notes that *readiness* to return reflects the extent to which migrants have been in a position to mobilize resources. These can be the adequate tangible resources (i.e. financial capital) or intangible resources (i.e. contacts, relationships, skills, and acquaintances) needed to secure their return, whether it is temporary or permanent. "*Preparedness* pertains not only to the free choice of migrants to return home, but also to their readiness to return" (Cassarino 2008:17).

## Employment Problems

For a successful reintegration of returnees in the country of origin the solution of the employment problem is very important. Economic reintegration is the process by which a migrant is reinserted into the economic system of his or her country of origin, and by which he or she is able to earn his or her own living (IOM, 2011, p. 82). Research reveals that, in economic terms, the returned migrants refer to the absence of vacancies and job places, as well as to the obstacles to starting their own business. Reintegration strategies are different for migrants. "Successful" are the migrants, who have managed to save money and start their own business upon return, or those who have obtained skills and

---

<sup>19</sup> European University Institute 2011. Return Migration and Development Platform (RDP) Glossary. <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/glossary-2/>. Accessed 27 October, 2012.

knowledge, that helped them to find a job. According to the ETF survey, 45% of respondents stated that after return they could not find a job. Only 1% of the respondents were aware of official programs and schemes that assisted return migrants. Moreover, none of the respondents benefited from such a scheme. 67% of respondents returned with savings (on average 859 Euros). These savings was mainly used for meeting family needs and buying property. 42% of returned migrants found work in Armenia after their return. On average, returnees found work within a year of their return. More female returned migrants secured jobs upon their return (52%) than their male counterparts (40%). 32% of those who are employed state that their experience abroad helped them to find better job opportunities in Armenia. 46% of returned migrants, who work or who worked in Armenia after their return, stated that they used their experiences gained abroad in their daily work. Among the experiences obtained overseas, returned migrants most frequently referred to vocational/technical skills (61%) and language skills (16%). Very few migrants consider that their situation got worse after migration (7%). 49% state that their situation has remained unchanged and 42% of respondents think that their situation has improved or significantly improved. 68% have serious intentions to migrate again. The likelihood of repeated migration is higher among younger unemployed male returned migrants.

According to the CRIS survey<sup>20</sup> Armenian returnees who did not invest back home explained that lack of capital was the most recurrent obstacle to getting involved in business. Others simply did not consider this option or were not interested in investing back home. Others mentioned corruption as a deterrent to investment. Consequently, when asked what should be done to foster investments in Armenia, returnees mentioned, in order of priority, easier access to bank loans, tax exemptions and a business-friendly environment.

## Social-Psychological Problems

Social reintegration means the reinsertion of a migrant into the social structures of his or her country of origin. This includes the development of a personal network (friends, relatives, neighbours) but also the development of civil society structures (associations, self-help groups and other organizations) (IOM, 2011, p. 82). Apart from the employment problem, migrants who have been absent from Armenia for a relatively long period face many other challenges.

According to studies, one of the key issues for returned migrants is the lack of information related to different spheres of public life of Armenia, a serious obstacle to their resettlement in the country of origin. Returnees, especially those who have been away from Armenia for a long period and lack any links with their homeland, very often have a pessimistic and, from time to time, a positive, but not real perception of Armenia. As the legal field has changed, new institutions have been established during their absence. Awareness of the current situation in Armenia, of the legislation, employment and business opportunities, is very important. Social networks come to fill that gap very often, i.e. relatives and friends who serve as information support nets. They help the migrants by providing information on Armenia both before they return and during their reintegration process after their return. In particular, relatives, friends, neighbors of the returnees, who form their social capital serve as information, psychological, sometimes financial support sources for them. According to the CRIS survey<sup>21</sup> very few problems regarding the family and Armenian society in general were reported once back in their country of origin. Problems such as the “jealousy and suspicion of family, friends, etc.” and “high family

<sup>20</sup> European University Institute 2011. Return Migration and Development Platform. Field data on Armenian Returnees: <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/research-projects/cris/survey-on-return-migrants/dataset/armenia/field-data-on-armenian-returnees/>. Accessed 10 December, 2012

<sup>21</sup> European University Institute 2011. Return Migration and Development Platform. Field data on Armenian Returnees: <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/research-projects/cris/survey-on-return-migrants/dataset/armenia/field-data-on-armenian-returnees/>. Accessed 10 December, 2012.

expectations” were a more frequent but only at the beginning of their return. Even after return, the family was of great support to the returnees interviewed, both financially and emotionally.

But being absent for many years, they often lose their social contacts the re-activation of which is a problem for them. Sixty-nine percent of the returnees thinks that they have enough social relations in Armenia, 22 % have a few but not enough social relations in Armenia. 6 % of returnees do not have any social relations at all in Armenia. Often, these returnees suffer psychologically both from social insecurity and from the loss of contact with people in their former host country (Johansson, 2008, p. 20).

Some of them find themselves in a difficult psychological situation due to the fact that they are not ready for return and this is very typical for the forced migrants. Some of the returnees have (serious) health problems and need medical assistance.

### **Educational-Cultural Problems**

Cultural reintegration means the re-acceptance (re-adoption) of the values, lifestyle, moral principles, language, ideology and traditions of the country of origin by migrants (IOM, 2011, p. 82).

Cultural and psychological problems are a problem, especially for migrants who have been away from Armenia for a long time. Among re-settlement problems lack of Armenian is a critical problem. This concerns mainly the schoolchildren of returned migrants: the organization of Armenian language lessons (especially for those who reside in the *marzes*) would facilitate their future reintegration in the education system. Also, it is important to ensure their access to the higher educational institutions in the framework of the state order (state fellowships). Diploma recognition and other educational issues are also crucial for young migrants. The research reveals that for some migrants it is very difficult to adapt to an Armenian lifestyle including the impossibility of a private personal and family life away from prying eyes and the ever-present opinions of relatives and community (OSCE, 2008, p. 44). The major reason for psycho-social instability derives from the returnee’s experiences during migration, especially ill-treatment in the host country. A considerable 56% of returnees still suffer from stress-related afflictions due to traumatic experiences during the migration cycle, often because of living conditions abroad. For 25% of these returnees, their traumatic memories have worsened since return and 25% are unable to live their daily life due to these traumatic experiences. For some returnees, the difficult circumstances abroad made them more tolerant to new ideas. But a large number of returnees who lived in asylum centers express how they felt emotionally depressed abroad, mainly because of their passive life as asylum seekers (Johansson, 2008, p. 23).

### **Problems with Documents**

Many returnees have problems with their documents and need legal consultation. In the framework of “Migrants Support Centre” advisory service under the State Migration Service of Armenia 441 called and visited in 2010, of these 141 questions were asked by migrants concerning problems with documents, particularly passports (expired passports, registration), dual citizenship, pensions and benefits, etc. (Chobanyan, 2012a).

### **Problems Related to Military Service**

A large number of people acquire information on the procedure for the citizens who have not passed mandatory military service. They do so as most Armenian citizens abroad fear that they can be persecuted or criminally convicted for not having completed their mandatory military service once back in Armenia.

## **Housing Problems**

Besides the abovementioned problems very often there is a lack of accommodation because some returnees sell their apartments before their departure. And the lack of housing is one of the main problems hindering their return to Armenia. Those who have this problem solve it temporarily after return either by renting an apartment with their savings from abroad or they stay with relatives. Only in a limited number of cases can they manage to buy their own apartments. Certainly, lack of housing is a reason for re-emigration. According to research 47% of respondents live in their own private house, whereas 22% of the respondents still live in the house of a family member. Another 16% live in a rented house (Johansson, 2008, p.17).

## **Organizations Involved in the Policy-Making and Implementation of Reintegration in Armenia**

The chapter here attempts to identify and to map the institutions and organizations that have a role in return and reintegration policy making and implementing programs in Armenia.

## **Policies on Return Migration and Reintegration**

The Concept Papers (2000 and 2004) of the Armenian Government on migration regulation in Armenia lacked the relevant policy for return and reintegration issues. It can be explained through the intensive outflows from Armenia during the 1990s when existing policies focused only on addressing emigration-related issues. Only in 2010, when the Concept Paper on the State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia was approved, “*Assistance to the return of Armenian nationals from foreign countries and to their reintegration in their home country*” was this recognized as the eighth policy priority.

In order to ensure the implementation of the 2010 Concept Paper and “Action Plan for Implementation of the Policy Concept for the State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia in 2012-2016” was adopted by the RA Government in 2011. The purpose of the Action Plan was to transform the main approaches and mechanisms of the Concept Paper into concrete actions with specific responsible institutions and timelines. The measures identified in the Action Plan are to support the return of Armenian citizens to Armenia and future reintegration in their home country from foreign countries and to prevent irregular migration from Armenia:

- “Implementation of employment projects aimed at reintegration of the citizens, returning to the Republic of Armenia, in the labor market and introduction of new projects.
- Provision of advisory services to those returning to the Republic of Armenia by the state entities dealing with migrants, as well as ensuring active partnership relations with NGO-s operating in the field.
- Negotiating with receiving countries on the issues related to providing reintegration support to those returning to Armenia.
- Further development of internet-based informational systems supporting the return of the RA citizens, which will enable those people to contact directly the relevant state bodies of Armenia through e-communication, and receive very quick and clear information on their concern; spreading information on such systems among the RA citizens living abroad.”

(Action Plan for Implementation of the Policy Concept for the State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia in 2012-2016, adopted in 2011, pp. 38-43)

It should be mentioned that the issues related to return, as well as timelines and bodies responsible for their implementation were mentioned in the Action Plan. This allows the hope that the identified actions will be completed in a timely fashion. The establishment of an intergovernmental taskforce to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan will contribute to the accomplishment of the above measures.

October 2011 a Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership (MP) between Armenia and ten EU Member States was signed. Among other objectives, the MP promotes an effective return and readmission policy. And the first upcoming three-year project (with three million Euros' financing) in the framework of the Mobility Partnership is the **“Strengthening Armenia's migration management capacities, with special focus on reintegration activities”**. The overall objective is to strengthen Armenia's migration management capacities with a special focus on reintegration activities. It does this by increasing the capacities of competent authorities and civil society in Armenia: to actively support dignified sustainable return and reintegration; to address the challenges posed by irregular migration; and to facilitate opportunities for legal migration.

As the State Migration Service (SMS) is the key player for migration issues in Armenia, being notably in charge of the coordination of activities among governmental institutions dealing with migration issues in areas of policy development, the SMS will be one of the main beneficiaries of the project. Other Armenian administrations will be able to receive support through this project, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Police, National Statistic Service and the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues. The Project will be implemented through a Direct Grant to France's Office Français pour l'Immigration et l'Intégration, in consortium with other partner Member States. Current and potential returnees and migrants in general will be the final beneficiaries with the better harnessing of the development potential of return, reintegration and circular migration flows.

## Governmental Programs and Initiatives for the Reintegration of Return Migrants

### *The State Migration Service (SMS) of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of the Republic of Armenia*

In collaboration with the relevant ministries of Armenia, diplomatic representatives, as well as with the international organizations, the development and implementation of programs on return of the population emigrated from the Republic of Armenia is one of the functions of the SMS as stipulated in its charter<sup>22</sup>. Thus, the SMS has extensive experience in the implementation of programs for return and reintegration.

- In 2006 the Migrants' Support Centre was established under the SMS, where legal information on migration is provided both to those who intend to leave Armenia and those who have returned. It allows migrants to obtain quality information on migration issues through its hot-line service, as well as visits to the Center<sup>23</sup>.
- The SMS was the first government agency in Armenia to raise the issue of the need for the reintegration of citizens returning to Armenia as a measure towards the prevention and recirculation of illegal migration<sup>24</sup>. During 2004-2009 the *Return Assistance Program for Armenian Nationals from Switzerland* was implemented with the Swiss Government support.

<sup>22</sup> The Charter of the State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of Republic of Armenia. Service charter. [http://www.smsmta.am/?menu\\_id=37](http://www.smsmta.am/?menu_id=37). Last accessed October 28, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> The number of beneficiary migrants who applied to the Migrants' Support Centre in 2006 was 532, in 2007 it was 699, in 2008 441, in 2009 430, in 2010 500 and in 2011 550.

<sup>24</sup> Out of 1500 Armenian citizens deported from Germany in 1997, 92% left Armenia within a year (Pogosian G., 1997). According to the IOM survey the majority of migrants tries all the possible ways to return once again to this or that similar country (IOM, 2002).

38 families were involved in the program (76 persons) and they received various types of reintegration assistance. Overall, the program was a success as the number of asylum seekers in Switzerland among Armenian citizens significantly decreased at that time and in the course of the program (over 4 years) not a single citizen returning from Switzerland to Armenia with the help of the program left Armenia again.

- In the framework of the three-year “**Support for Migration Policy Making and Relevant Capacity Building**” program<sup>25</sup> the web portal is created: [www.backtoarmenia.am](http://www.backtoarmenia.am) or [www.tundardz.am](http://www.tundardz.am)<sup>26</sup>. It enables users to browse useful information on a wide range of issues starting from education and healthcare systems in Armenia up to and including military service. In addition, the website enables Armenian migrants abroad to directly address questions to the respective state authorities online. The system also provides a possibility for direct online communication between migrant and respective state official in order to receive immediate answers to questions posed by migrants. A representative from each relevant Armenian government agency (the MFA, the Ministry of Science and Education, the Ministry of Diaspora, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Healthcare, the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues, the Ministry of Defense, the Police, the State Revenue Committee) is involved as an on-line contact person.

### **The State Employment Service Agency (SESA) under the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues (MLSI) of Armenia**

Three Migration Resource Centers (located at Erebuni Nubarashen, Ijevan and Ashtarak local employment offices) were established within the system of the State Employment Service Agency in 2010. The reintegration services delivered to potential and returning migrants, individual advice concerning job placement and involvement in the state employment programs. It accompanied corresponding governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to provide support<sup>27</sup>. Returning migrants are not considered a special group in Armenia and they are registered in the database of job seekers managed by the State Employment Service Agency.

### **International and non-governmental programs and initiatives on the reintegration of return migrants**

**The International Organization for Migration (IOM)** is one of the international organizations directly engaged in migration affairs. Assisting Voluntary Return (AVR) is one of the numerous services in the migration management sphere that the organization offers to migrants and governments. Since 1994 IOM<sup>28</sup> missions in Western and Central Europe have supported more than 5000 migrants that returned to Armenia. The assistance offered to the returning migrants is wide-ranging:

- Information provision, counseling, departure assistance in the destination country
- Airport assistance upon return to the country origin
- Counseling and referral (including medical cases)

---

<sup>25</sup> The Project was implemented during 2007-2009 and was carried out with the support of the EU in cooperation with the British Council office in Armenia and the International Centre for Human Development, NGO. Back To Armenia. Support for Migration Policy Making and Relevant Capacity Building . <http://www.backtoarmenia.com/?page=about&l=eng>. Last accessed 28 October, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> “Tundzardz” is Armenian version of “back to Armenia” or “back to home” where “tun” means “home” and “dardz” means “back to”.

<sup>27</sup> The State Employment Service Agency. Opening of Migration Resource Center localized in SESA structure. <http://employment.am/en/177/news.more.html>, <http://employment.am/en/49/free.html>. Accessed 17 October, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> According to the information provided by the IOM office in Yerevan 28 December, 2011.

- Disbursement of the reintegration grant
- Assistance in establishing a micro-business (including training and business counseling)
- Monitoring and follow up.

According to the IOM Armenia mission job placement is the biggest concern in migrant reintegration. Therefore, most returning migrants are referred to the State Employment Service Agency to obtain information about existing employment opportunities in Armenia. The establishment of micro-businesses by returning migrants is another opportunity for ensuring a sustainable return of migrants. The IOM offers assistance in establishing such businesses. 121 IOM returnees benefited from training from 2006 to 2011.

Several nongovernmental organizations in Armenia provide reintegration services to return migrants. For that purpose some of the NGOs have established migrants' resource centers. The **Eurasia Partnership Foundation** established six Migration and Return Resource Centers<sup>29</sup> in partnership with local institutions (NGOs and intercommunity unions) already operating in Armenia's regions. Each center offered pre-departure counseling to potential migrants; vocational training opportunities for returnees; information on organizations at home and abroad that provide social assistance to migrants and returnees; and information on employment opportunities in Armenia.

Similar information centers on migration have been established in five regions of Armenia (Kotayk, Lori, Shirak, Gegharkunik and Yerevan) as part of the "*Reinforcement of Management of Migratory flows in Armenia*" project<sup>30</sup> jointly implemented by the **Armenian UN Association** and the **People in Need NGO** (Czech Republic).

The **International Centre for Human Development (ICHD) NGO** is a think tank which is active in migration policy and programs related activities. From January 2007 - December 2009, a project "*Support to Migration Policy Development and Relevant Capacity Building in Armenia*"<sup>31</sup> was implemented. *Post Arrival Assistance to Armenian Returnees from the Netherlands* is another ongoing ICHD project<sup>32</sup>. The project aims at fostering social and economic re-integration for Armenian nationals who do not have the legal right to reside in the Netherlands and then to prevent their irregular re-migration to EU member-states (sustainable return), through counseling and referral. From October 2012, ICHD started to implement the "*Preventing Irregular Migration from Armenia to Belgium*" Project. The overall objective of the action is to prevent irregular migration of Armenians to the Kingdom of Belgium and other EU countries.

The Migration and Integration department in **Armenian Caritas**<sup>33</sup> implements several projects ("*Sustainable Reintegration after Voluntary Return*", "*Migration and Development*", "*Migration and*

<sup>29</sup> Eurasia Partnership Foundation (2007). Labour Migration. Available at: <http://www.epfound.am/english/accomplished/labor-migration.html>. Accessed 17 October, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> The project was implemented in the framework of the EU "*Thematic Programme of Cooperation with Third Countries in the Areas of Migration and Asylum*" during 2009 -2012 with funding from the Czech Government and the European Commission. Armenian UN Association (2009). Reinforcement of Management of Migratory flows in Armenia. Available at: [http://www.auna.am/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=34&Itemid=18&lang=en](http://www.auna.am/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=34&Itemid=18&lang=en) . Accessed 15 October, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> The International Centre for Human Development. Support to Migration Policy Development and Relevant Capacity Building in Armenia. Available at: <http://www.ichd.org/?laid=1&com=module&module=static&id=245>. Also see: British Council of Armenia. Support to Migration Policy Development and Relevant Capacity Building in Armenia. Available at: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/armenia-science-society-migration.htm>. Accessed 15 October, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> The Project is funded by the European Return Fund and implemented by the ICHD in close cooperation with the SMS and the Repatriation and Departure Service of the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands.

<sup>33</sup> The Armenian Caritas (2012). Migration and Integration. Available at: <http://www.caritasarm.am/index.php/en/component/content/article/37-migration-and-integration/11-migration-and-integration>. Accessed 15 October, 2012.

*Trafficking Resource Center*") that aims at enhancing the establishment of sustainable reintegration measures for returnees to Armenia, and also at creating an effective, client-oriented information system for potential migrants.

**The French-Armenian Development Foundation in Armenia (FADF)** implements the “*Return to Sources*”<sup>34</sup> Armenian-French project. Its objective is to facilitate the voluntary return of national Armenians residing illegally in France since 2005. Another Project, the *Institutional capacity building in the field of migration information and cooperation regarding reintegration of Armenian migrants* aims at preventing illegal migration and promoting legal migration. It intends to support the social and economic reintegration of migrants returning to Armenia and to foster the contribution of Armenian Diaspora organizations to the development of Armenia.

To summarize assistance projects in Armenia the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The projects are funded by the EU Return fund or individual EU countries.
- Projects involve very limited categories of returnees, i.e. the “voluntary under compulsory” and “forced” migrants (they are mostly rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants). The bulk of beneficiaries of these projects comprise in returnees from the same countries.
- Different methods are used for organizing the activities of the appropriate entities (e.g. selection of a professional entity for all project components, legal contract with those entities). The working tools of the projects (e.g. needs assessment, statistical databases, etc.) for ensuring the effectiveness of the process and conducting analyses on different parameters also vary.
- Different types of support provided by reintegration projects (e.g. not all the projects have such components as educating children, social and psychological support and consultancy)
- Different levels of financing are not enough for establishing profitable businesses. Besides, returnees do not have their own funds to invest in businesses.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

It should be mentioned that the Government of Armenia’s actions towards return migrants will sometimes, unintentionally, encourage further migration outflows. Benefits offered within the return and reintegration programs will encourage Armenian citizens to emigrate to become return migrants and to benefit from the offered reintegration assistance. For that reason it is very important to raise the awareness among the population about the risks and negative aspects of emigration. Since many people emigrate with a poor knowledge concerning entry, residence and working conditions of destination countries.

Today in Armenia there are no targeted government programs on the reintegration of returning migrants. In fact, there are specific projects on reintegration which are implemented by national, international and non-governmental organizations and which are mainly financed by international organizations and host countries. Government agencies are involved in some of these projects. However, these projects are not sustainable. Systemization of the work of different institutions is still in question. This affects not only the work of public institutions, but also the cooperation of the appropriate international and non-governmental organizations. These projects and their offered support packages can be provisionally divided into two categories: “broad” and “narrow”. The “narrow” package implies only consultative support and reference for returning migrants (it is provided by the SMS, MRC under the State Employment Service Agency and by some NGOs). Apart from consultancy support, the “broad” package includes: certain mechanisms for financing income-

---

<sup>34</sup> The French-Armenian Development Foundation in Armenia (2010-2011). *Return to Sources*. Available at: [http://www.ffad.am/index.php?Page=Migrations\\_Ongoing\\_Project&Lang=1](http://www.ffad.am/index.php?Page=Migrations_Ongoing_Project&Lang=1). Accessed 15 October, 2012.

generating activities (support to starting and existing businesses); requalification trainings; education of children; medical support, etc. (implemented by the IOM, the “People in Need” NGO, the French Armenian Foundation, Armenian Caritas, etc.).

In order to ensure the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants in Armenia, coordinated assistance should be provided to them. Otherwise, this deficiency can contribute to a situation where these people migrate from Armenia again.

In providing support for the reintegration of migrants in Armenia and in addressing the problems encountered by them upon their return to the country of origin, the following steps should be taken into consideration:

## **Information Support**

One of the major problems faced by return migrants is the lack of information, which then becomes an obstacle for their resettlement in the country of origin. It is important to increase their awareness of the legislative framework, employment and private business opportunities in Armenia given the numerous changes in the legal and institutional frameworks that have occurred in their country of origin while they resided abroad. To fill this gap, the following measures should be undertaken:

- Awareness rising among return migrants, especially with regard to the domestic legislation, activities of appropriate institutions;
- Provision of information on existing opportunities in the domestic labor market, public and private employment agencies (including their web pages), banks, credit institutions, business opportunities, potential investments and competitive sectors
- Provision of information on medical services, especially public-financed health services, lists of hospitals and health service benefits for social groups
- Provision of information on social programs, especially family benefit and implementing institutions
- Provision of information on pension security: receipt of overdue pension, pension calculation, estimate of years of service abroad
- Provision of information on general pardons for people who have avoided mandatory military service
- Provision of information on documentation, particularly passports and dual citizenship

This kind of advisory support/service should be provided to returning migrant through a “single window” also called a “one stop-shop”<sup>35</sup>.

## **Employment Support**

Addressing employment issues is very important in reintegration terms for returnees in their country of origin. Therefore it is necessary to:

- Conduct requalification trainings to satisfy the needs identified through the domestic labor demand surveys;
- Pay special attention to the creation of additional opportunities for migrants in the agriculture sector, especially the consumption of agricultural goods produced by people residing in rural areas.

---

<sup>35</sup> The “single window” or “one stop-shop” principle ensures that the beneficiary can receive all requested services at one place.

Studies show that most returning migrants have the wish and intention to engage in micro-business activities. In this regard there is a lack of business skills, knowledge of local legislation, financial and supplementary support. The performance of loans to migrants is becoming worse due to several criteria and inadequate conditions: often they lack a stable income, they lack experience in business, or they do not have a functioning business. It is impracticable to start a new business with bank financing. The following measures are proposed in this area:

- Administering training for organization and the management of business activities
- Awareness raising for legislation regulating the area of micro-entrepreneurship
- Providing conditions for private business loans
- Having in mind government priorities, drafting of business projects based on comprehensive sectoral assessments and the identification of competitive fields by local experts
- Providing financial support to business projects by government organizations and donors

Business consultation and support for starting businesses can be ensured through the support of the national SME (small & medium enterprises) center.

### **Social, Cultural and Psychological Reintegration Support**

Migrants who have been away from Armenia for a long time face not only employment but also educational (especially language), cultural, social-psychological issues. In the reintegration process the language barrier plays an important role. Armenian language classes organized at schools (especially in the regions) for school age children of returned migrants would facilitate their reintegration in the educational system. Government financed education, as well as diploma verifications and other issues connected to education are very important.

- Organizing trainings, meetings, discussions (especially with the involvement of younger migrants) would help these groups to adapt to the environment and traditions more smoothly.

## Bibliography

- Action Fiche on “Strengthening Armenia's migration management capacities, with special focus on reintegration activities, in the framework of the EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership”. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/aap/2011/af\\_aap\\_2011\\_dci-migr\\_p2.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/aap/2011/af_aap_2011_dci-migr_p2.pdf)
- Chobanyan H. (2008). Return Migration to Armenia from Russia: From Reintegration to Remigration. The New South Caucasus: Overcoming old boundaries. Heinrich-Böll-Foundation in the South Caucasus, Tbilisi (in Russian). [Чобанян А. (2008). Возвратная Миграция из России в Армению: От Реинтеграции до Реэмиграции/ Новый Южный Кавказ: пересмотреть старые границы/Региональная стипендиатская программы Фонда им. Генриха Белля для молодых ученых на Южном Кавказе. Тбилиси, ст.144-146]. Available at: [http://ge.boell.org/downloads/Haykanush\\_Chobanyan.pdf](http://ge.boell.org/downloads/Haykanush_Chobanyan.pdf).
- Chobanyan H. (2012a). Observations of the Reintegration Problems of Migrants Returning to Armenia. Yerevan (in Armenian). [Չոբանյան Հ. “Դիտարկումներ Հայաստան վերադարձող միգրանտների վերաինտեգրման հիմնախնդիրների շուրջ”, Երևան, 2012].
- Chobanyan H. (2012b) Return Migration to Armenia: Issues of Reintegration. CRIS Brief, 2012/01, RSCAS/EUI, Florence. Available at: <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/21574>
- Cassarino Jean Pierre (2008). Conditions of Modern Return Migrants – Editorial Introduction, International Journal on Multicultural Societies. 10:2
- Cross-Regional Information System (CRIS) on the Reintegration of Migrants in their Countries of Origin (2012). Available at: <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/research-projects/cris/>
- European Training Foundation (2012). Migration Survey on the Relationship between Skills, Migration and Development in Armenia.
- Ghosh B. (2000). Return Migration: Journey of Hope or Despair? IOM/UN.
- ILO (2009). Migration and Development: Armenian Country Study, Yerevan. Available at: [http://www.smsmta.am/upload/Migration%20and%20Development\\_Study\\_in\\_English.pdf](http://www.smsmta.am/upload/Migration%20and%20Development_Study_in_English.pdf)
- ILO (2010). Research on oversea labor migration from Armenia in 2008-2009 (unpublished).
- IOM (2002). The Return and Reintegration of Migrants to the South Caucasus – An Exploratory Study. Available at: [http://jcp.ge/iom/pdf/SCaucasus\\_ReturnReintegrationDec2002.pdf](http://jcp.ge/iom/pdf/SCaucasus_ReturnReintegrationDec2002.pdf)
- IOM (2011). International Migration Law. Glossary on Migration.
- Johansson A. (2008). Return Migration to Armenia: Monitoring the Embeddedness of Returnees. Available at: [http://www.ru.nl/cidin/outreach\\_activities/research\\_projects/cordaid/Minasyan A., Poghosyan A., Gevorgyan L., Chobanyan H. \(2008\). Study on Return Migration to Armenia in 2002-2008. Yerevan, Asoghik. Available at: \[http://www.osce.org/yerevan/item\\\_11\\\_35901.html\]\(http://www.osce.org/yerevan/item\_11\_35901.html\)](http://www.ru.nl/cidin/outreach_activities/research_projects/cordaid/Minasyan_A.,_Poghosyan_A.,_Gevorgyan_L.,_Chobanyan_H._(2008)._Study_on_Return_Migration_to_Armenia_in_2002-2008._Yerevan,_Asoghik._Available_at:_http://www.osce.org/yerevan/item_11_35901.html)
- NSS of RA (2011). The Demographic Handbook of Armenia. Available at: <http://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=1307>. Accessed on 15 October, 2012.
- Pogosian G. (1997). *Armenian Returnees from Germany, Back to Homeland, Report*. Armenian Sociological Association (ASA), Yerevan.
- Poghosyan G. (2007). *Reintegration. Sociological Research*. Armenian Sociological Association (ASA), Yerevan.
- The “Concept of State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia” was adopted as Appendix to by the RA Government Session Record Decision # 54 dated November 29, 2000.

The “Concept Paper on State Regulation of Population Migration in the Republic of Armenia” was adopted as Appendix to the RA Government Session Record Decision # 24 dated June 25, 2004.

The “Concept for the Policy of State Regulation of Migration in The Republic of Armenia” was adopted as Appendix to the RA Government Session Record Decision # 51 dated December 30, 2010. Available at: <http://www.smsmta.am/?id=1011>

The “Action Program for Implementation of the Policy Concept for the State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia in 2012-2016” adopted by the RA Governmental Decree # 1593 –N dated November 10, 2011. Available at: <http://www.smsmta.am/?id=1010>

UNDP (2009). Migration and Human Development: Opportunities and Challenges, Armenia. Available at: <http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/87C7B39D-F203-1EE9-B27B76D1ABF1CEE6>

UNFPA (2007). The Sample Survey on External and Internal Migration in RA. Conducted by the National Statistical Service of RA and the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues of RA, Yerevan. Available at: [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/rep\\_migr\\_08e.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/rep_migr_08e.pdf)