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### ***Moldova: Emigration And Diaspora***

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## **Abstract**

Moldova's newly gained independence has led to the population's full-scale migration. Due to a difficult socio-economic situation and low life standards, migration has become a common practice. It is of two types: permanent and temporary emigration (international labor migration). Approximately 1 million Moldovan citizens were included in emigration processes, which had a negative impact on the country's demographical safety and its socio-economic development.

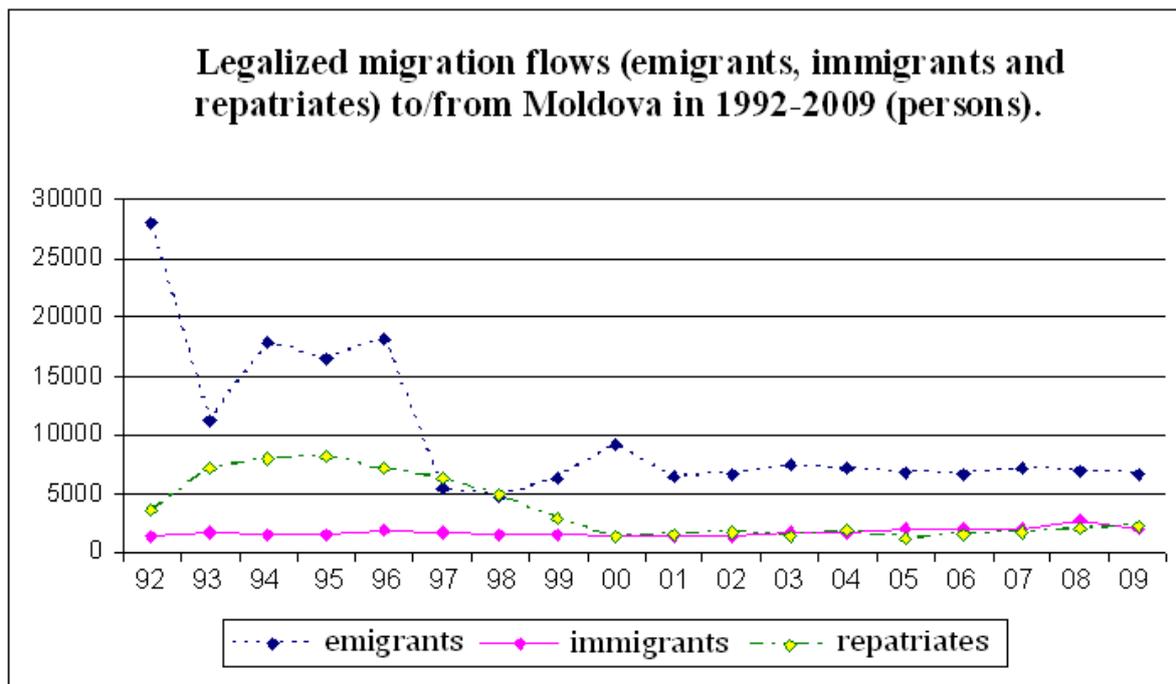
Moldova's authorities are concerned about this, yet, the solution to the problem is in the democratic context – a freedom to enter and leave the country according to the migrant's wishes. The migration policy is directed towards the regulation of migration processes; work with Moldovan Diasporas; development of policies that would stimulate the migrants' desire to return home; interacting with different international organizations; creating a visa-free regime between Moldova and the European Union. This article analyzes the work of Moldovan authorities in this field, in the last 5 years.

After declaring itself an independent democratic state, the Republic of Moldova undertook real steps to ensure democratic rights and liberties of its citizens. One of such rights was the freedom of movement, the right to exit and enter the country. This right was first declared in the Law “On migration” (1990). However, emigration was regarded only as temporary departure for work or studies. At the same time main emphasis was placed upon regulation of immigration processes.

The country’s Constitution (1994), a number of laws and legal acts defined the main approaches of Moldova to emigration, corresponding to international legal norms and democratic state principles.

According to official statistics, in the context of a profound social and economic crisis during the first years of independence, over 210 thousand people went abroad for permanent residence<sup>1</sup>. Compared to the beginning of 1990s, starting from the early XXI century the number of persons leaving for permanent residence stabilized at the level of 6-7 thousand people a year<sup>2</sup> (see Fig. 1). Nevertheless, this exceeds practically twice the aggregate annual influx of immigrants and homecomers to the Republic of Moldova<sup>3</sup>.

**Fig. 1. Legalized migration flows (emigrants, immigrants and repatriates) to/from Moldova in 1992-2009 (persons)**



At the same time mass process of international labor migration (temporary emigration) started from the second half of the 1990s. At present over 700 thousand people are involved in temporary labor migration, i.e. around 50% of the economically active population<sup>4</sup>. More than 240 thousand Moldovan

<sup>1</sup> Mosneaga V. Moldova in the context of international migrations. In: International Migration of population: Russia and contemporary world. International migration of population in the post-soviet territory: two decades of successes, mistakes and expectances. Volum 25. – Moscow, Moscow State University Press, 2011, p. 63

<sup>2</sup> Anuarul statistic al Republicii Moldova 2009. – Chisinau, Statistica Moldovei, 2010, p. 64

<sup>3</sup> Moraru V., Mosneaga V., Rusnyak G. Migration pendulum.- Chisinau, “Tipografia-Sirius”, 2012, p. 12

<sup>4</sup> Moldova after the global crisis: promoting competitiveness and shred growth”. April 4, 2011. World Bank. – Chisinau, 2011, p.14

citizens are legally staying (gained permission to stay and work in 2009) in the European Union (according to EUROSTAT)<sup>5</sup>. On the one hand, this leads to emergence of Moldovan diaspora in many countries of the world. On the other hand, this aggravates the problems of demographic security and supply of labor resources for the national market, and presents a threat to sustainable economic development of the country.

For a long time Moldovan authorities were not very concerned about emigration. Emigration reduced the acuteness of ethnic and later social confrontation within the country. With the growing labor migration multimillion financial transfers started to come to the country from migrants who helped the population and their own families survive. Thus, social conflicts and protests were absent. This situation satisfied Moldovan establishment.

Let us note that under the influence of international institutions and the European Union the attitude of Moldovan authorities and Moldovan political class to emigration started to change. Trying to minimize negative effects and risks associated with mass emigration, Moldovan government undertakes certain measures. It is noteworthy that during the first years of independence none of the governments and none of political parties supported the idea of abandoning the democratic principles of freedom of exit and entry, closing the borders and artificially restricting emigration.

Though Moldova has no conceptual / strategic document in the field of emigration (diaspora and repatriation), nevertheless there is (in addition to article 27 of the Constitution and five laws) a rather well-developed legal basis (1 Presidential decree, 7 regulations and 1 governmental instruction). These documents helped adopt Procedural Regulations of the Coordination Council for Diaspora Support (2005, starting from 2011 diaspora representatives are members of the Council); Procedural Regulations of financial support to preserve national and cultural identity of diaspora (2007); Action program of diaspora support (2006); National action plan of diaspora support (2008); National action plan to stimulate the return of Moldovan migrant workers (2008). Especially important is the Governmental regulation (2011) that formulated the decision to establish the Agency of Diaspora Affairs and develop Action plan for 2011-2014 to support Moldovan diaspora. This Plan ought to supplement the Action plan to introduce the National Strategy in the field of migration and asylum (2011-2020).

It is noteworthy that, despite the presence of serious contradictions between political forces in Moldova about the paths of country's social development, Moldovan migration policy carried out in the course of the last two decades is characterized by certain continuity, accumulation and use of conceptual and practical experience, both international and national. It covers a number of areas:

- ensuring the constitutional right of Moldovan citizens to freedom of movement, exit and return home. At the same time Moldovan authorities do care about the fate of the country. They are concerned about unregulated mass labor migration of Moldovan workforce abroad and negative consequences of this process. The Law "On migration" (2008) developed in accordance with the main international conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) regulates the activities of private employment agencies abroad and introduces certain restrictions on employment of Moldovan citizens. These restrictions are associated with property and family obligations, custody over children of migrant workers etc.

- interaction with Moldovan diaspora and ethno-cultural communities abroad. This process became more intensive from the first half of the 2000s. Starting from 2004 four congresses of Moldovan diaspora were carried out (once in two years). In 2005 Coordination Council for Diaspora Affairs was formed. Emerging Moldovan diaspora is regarded as a crucial instrument in development of mutually beneficial relations with other countries.

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<sup>5</sup> Moraru V., Mosneaga V., Rusnyak G. Migration pendulum.- Chisinau, "Tipografia-Sirius", 2012, p. 34

Creating conditions for small business development, authorities strive to attract Moldovan communities abroad, their financial capital and intellectual potential for modernization and socio-economic development of the country as a whole, as well as individual settlements, small business etc. Pilot program is carried out to attract financial transfers to the country's economy PARE 1+1 for 2010-2012, state program of small and medium business support (2009-2011). In order to do this, information campaigns are organized to teach the population to use bank services, rely on official channels for financial transfers, inform them about possibility of bank loans to start private business etc.

Starting from 2009 active efforts have been made to attract Moldovan diaspora to political life of the country. This resulted in growing political role and electoral activity of diaspora at 2010 parliamentary elections.

- work with Moldovan scientific diaspora. From 2010 projects have been carried out to attract researchers who had initially come from Moldova to develop the country's research and technology potential. Cooperation of Moldovan Academy of Sciences with the International Migration Organization and universities of the European Union member states is important in this context;
- stimulation of return of Moldovan migrants home and their reintegration. In 2008 the Government developed and is now implementing the action plan to stimulate the return of Moldovan labor migrants. The plan envisages complex measures to inform migrants about employment opportunities in the home country, repatriation procedures, founding their own business, expanding employment opportunities for young people, social protection etc. So far the effect of such actions is not large, which is associated primarily with socio-economic situation in the country.
- consideration of migration problems in the context of social policies of the country. The government strengthens complex, strategic and future-oriented approach to migration issues that are included in a number of national programs and strategies (Strategy in Workforce Employment Area (2007-2015), Strategy of Youth Affairs (2009-2013), Strategy in Migration and Asylum (2011-2020), Strategic program in demographic security (2011-2025), Action plan in the field of human rights (2011-2014), Plan of protection of children left without parental care (2010-2011) etc.).
- international cooperation in the field of mobility and return migration. The Republic of Moldova is one of the first countries (along with Cape Verde), with which the European Union signed an agreement on mobility and return migration (2008). Unfortunately, economic recession of 2008-2010 interrupted its implementation. However, activities continue in several areas. Thus, from 1 January 2012 financial incentives are provided to EU university alumni who came back and found employment in the home country.
- achievement of visa-free regime with the European Union member states. Moldovan authorities assume that existing visa regime is one of the obstacles on the path of migrants' return home. National program was developed and signed to implement the Republic of Moldova – European Union action plan in the field of visa regime liberalization (March 2011). Let us note that monitoring carried out by European institutions identified a number of significant positive changes related to border security, introduction of biometric passports in Moldova etc.

Moldovan Ministry of Information Technology is in charge of issues associated with emigration and departure for permanent residence abroad. Non-governmental organizations, both local and foreign ones, are involved along with national institutions. They are specialized in rendering intermediary services in emigration to Canada and other countries; in attracting and organizing temporary migration for Moldovan citizens, especially students. The Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family and National Agency of Workforce Employment are in charge of issues associated with temporary labor emigration.

Migration management identified the problems in coordination of activities of national institutions (management of various aspects of migration is entrusted to the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, National Bureau of Ethnic Relations, Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family etc.). In order to improve the quality of management, it was decided (in late 2011) to establish the Agency on Diaspora Affairs and Migration. Its competences and scope of authority are yet to be finalized.

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