



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

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### ***Return and Readmission: the case of Armenia***

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There is, for the last five years, virtually no reliable statistical and research data available in Armenia on emigrants returning to Armenia: much as in the case of other migration processes. The numbers and structure of returning migrants, the reasons and the nature of their return, and information about how well they reintegrate in Armenia are all obscure.

To get a general idea about these processes and phenomena one has to resort to the somewhat outdated information from 2002-2007. Such an approach can be justified, we believe, because these data have not become completely irrelevant. In other words, there are no reasons for believing that besides quantitative changes in migration in Armenia qualitative changes have also taken place.

According to the data of complex sample migration survey in 2007<sup>1</sup>, as of the time of survey (October 2007) 86,400 nationals returned to Armenia from abroad, 2002-2007. This is almost 3% of the total population of the country, and about 29% of all emigrants over the same period.

The distribution of this group by year of arrival and priority of return is as follows.

**Table 1. Distribution of migrants who returned to Armenia, 2002-2007, by year of return and by priority of return<sup>2</sup>.**

Year	Number of returned migrants (thousand people)	Including by priority of return (%)		
		First	Second	Third and more
2002	2,6	37.5	62.5	-
2003	10,5	37.5	62.5	-
2004	9,4	20.7	69.0	10.3
2005	14,7	35.6	57.8	6.6
2006	25,7	11.4	72.2	16.4
2007	23,5	5.6	63.9	30.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>86.4</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>65.7</b>	<b>26.5</b>

As can be seen from table 1, over 80% of return migrants had made more than one migration trip within the given period. Most of them were, likely, short-term migrants (trip duration was less than one year), most probably seasonal labor migrants: this is confirmed by the fact that for fewer than 6 years over one quarter of the returnees managed to emigrate three times and more.

The accuracy of this statement is indirectly confirmed by the fact that over 80% of return migrants returned from the Russian Federation and over 5% were from other CIS countries. Those who returned from European countries and the USA accounted for only about 5%, and the share of those from all other countries combined was even smaller, under 4%.

This fact can also be confirmed to some extent by the following data of the survey referenced above:

- ✚ two of every three returnees were male,
- ✚ almost three out of four returnees were of the most active employable age (20-54 years old),
- ✚ while abroad, 54% were employed, but more than half of these were employed for less than 12 months,
- ✚ almost six out of ten migrants employed abroad, who returned home, were engaged in construction, i.e. a typically seasonal sector.

According to the research data, important reasons which encourage emigrants to return home are: they are homesick and miss their families; there are family circumstances, over one-fifth of

<sup>1</sup>Report on sample survey on external and internal migration in the Republic of Armenia. HCC PA, UNFPA, Yerevan, 2007, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p.53.

respondents listed each of these reasons (a total of 45.4%); as well as what might broadly be called employment reasons: 17.9% achieved the purpose of their trip/completed their work; 10.3% had low level of income/wages, and 4.2% had no job. These account for a total of one third of respondents.

Unfortunately, the research program did not include a tool that would identify those who were forced to return because of deportation or administrative expulsion. 2.2% of returnees indicated that the reason for their return was “pressure of the public/legal system”. This only confirms the fact that the number of forced returning migrants did not exceed this threshold.

Our attempts to get at least somewhat complete and accurate information from such sources as the RA Ministry of Interior, the RA police, the RA Population Registry, unfortunately, were also unsuccessful. At least, we did not find information on the public web-sites of these authorities.

This is despite the fact that since early 2002 the Republic of Armenia has signed readmission agreements with 11 countries: Latvia, Denmark, Lithuania, Switzerland, Germany, Bulgaria, Sweden, Benelux countries, Norway, Czech Republic and the Russian Federation.

No organized data on readmission processes could be found at the State Migration Service of Armenia either. The only information offered to us by the employees of this authority was correspondence between the competent public authorities of Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Russian Federation, on the one hand, and Armenia on the other hand. This correspondence dated to 2011-2012 and regarded the establishment of citizenship for a limited number of alleged Armenian nationals, and even fewer nationals, who were, in fact, subject to readmission.

There are two non-governmental organizations which are involved in the implementation of the assistance programs for voluntary return to Armenia.

One of them is a Czech non-governmental organization “People in need”. In 2009-2012 it implemented the project “Reinforcement of Management of Migratory Flows in Armenia”. For the three years when this project was running, 2,633 persons benefited from some kind of assistance, out of which 1,460 persons were migrants returned from the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Moldova, the Czech Republic and Belgium.

1,090 persons benefited from advisory assistance in the framework of the program: 542 were returned migrants and 548 were potential migrants. There was also a hotline in place, through which 1,066 phone calls were answered, including 625 calls from potential migrants and 441 calls from returned migrants.

Thirty-two re-training courses were organized jointly with the agency “State Employment Service of Armenia”, in which 283 persons took part, and 110 got a job.

Small grants were provided to assist returned migrants in their reintegration. Grants were offered with the help of regional subdivisions of the agency “State Employment Service of Armenia”. In order to enhance the efficiency of this part of the program, there was a preliminary business training for grant seekers. Of 159 persons who underwent this training, 70 prepared and presented their own business projects, 27 of whom received financing. As a result of the implementation of these projects, 110 new jobs were created.

The second organization engaging in these kinds of activities is “Caritas Armenia”.

Beginning with 2006 it implemented several programs jointly with some European Union countries, which aimed at the prevention of illegal migration and at the reintegration of emigrants who returned voluntarily.

Thus, since 2006 the “Stable reintegration following voluntary return” program has been in place. This program financed by the Belgian government and by the European Union, has benefitted 163 families with efficient assistance for reintegration in Armenia, with 273 members.

Another program of “Caritas Armenia” was “Migration and Development”. This program started in 2010 and was financed by the Government of Lichtenstein and by “Caritas Austria”. Assistance was granted to 198 members of 83 families in the framework of this program.

Currently, the program “Returnees from Europe” is in the course of implementation. This program financed by the European Union was launched in 2008. Partners of “Caritas Armenia” here are “Caritas Germany” and “Caritas Netherlands”. The number of people who benefited from assistance under this program so far is small: just 10 persons.

Finally, the last joint program of the organization “Caritas Armenia” implemented in 2008-2009, jointly with “Caritas Austria” in terms of migration was “Network of European organizations supporting reintegration”. It was also financed by the European Union. Four families including nine family members benefited from support under this program.

In conclusion, we would like to note that though there already exist legal mechanisms for deportation and readmission, these tools have been little used since Armenia regained its independence.