



# The European Union’s “Support to Migration Policy Development and Relevant Capacity Building in Armenia” Programme

Եվրամիության «Աջակցություն Հայաստանում միգրացիոն քաղաքականության և համապատասխան կարողությունների հզորացմանը» ծրագիր

## Policy Brief Համառոտագիր



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Ծրագիրը ֆինանսավորվել է Եվրամիության կողմից



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International Center for Human Development  
Մարդկային զարգացման միջազգային կենտրոն



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Migration Agency of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of RA  
ՀՀ տարածքային կառավարման նախարարության միգրացիոն գործակալություն

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## egulation of Labor Migration is Urgent

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### **Mosaic of migration flows**

Mass migration of Armenia's population has started with the independence of the country. Emigration continues till today, though on a smaller scale. According to expert evaluations, the number of people having emigrated from the Republic of Armenia for the past years comprises from 800.000 to one million.

If the reasons for emigration during the late 80s and early 90s were diverse, with time reasons underlying emigration flaws became more focused. Research and surveys conducted during that period show that within migration processes economic motives are on the top of the list of reasons accounting for the outflow of the population. Two third of the survey respondents believe that the major reason for emigration is defined with the employment issues in the country, namely lack or limited number of jobs, including professional jobs, low level of remuneration and challenges of engaging in entrepreneurship. A recent survey on households reveals that 15% of the sample have members who are labor migrants. Thus, it can be recorded that labor migration continues to hold a dominant position within the mosaic of migration flaws.

And what is the role of the state? It should be noted, that the issue is not fighting against labor migration. Numerous international conventions and agreements, the RA Constitution and legislation clearly state: a human being is free in choosing their place of residence, moving, organizing and implementing their work activities according to their preferences. No institution and no one have any right to willfully restrict these human rights. Not to err against the truth, it should be mentioned that it is exactly due to labor migration that the impact of a number of challenges is being alleviated in Armenia. Remittances which labor migrants transfer to their families and relatives have provided for the survival of many families in the country. Those have become one of the factors ensuring the two-digit economic growth and to some extent have moderated competition within the job market. Still, do the positive outcomes of migration give the society and more importantly, the government any right to close their eyes on the negative aspects of migration?

### **Labor migration and the state policy**

Regardless current developments in the country, the number of labor migrants does not seem to decrease. No such tendency is evident. Solving daily problems (routine chores, organization of job activities) is associated with leaving Armenia and naturally, people apply to their relatives and friends with a request to provide them with such an opportunity. Those having information about migration issues and the necessary skills in modern communication means, particularly electronic mail, as well as mastering the language of the target country, try to address these issues independently, directly contacting foreign employers or mediatory organizations. Whereas, a significant number of Armenian citizens try to use the services offered by local organizations, which offer different packages, make promises and perhaps even take the responsibility to secure jobs for the applicants in a foreign country. A large

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number of cases come to prove that certain ‘dexterous’ businessmen trap the citizens, taking advantage of the high level of “demand” for their services in Armenia. Therefore, all these cases are pregnant with high level of risk: the citizens may discover even without leaving Armenia that they have been cheated on or they may appear in a foreign country with the status of an illegal migrant.

This is only one side of the issue. On the other side, the country lacks a unified system regulating migration flows. Individual agencies within the government have specific rights and responsibilities, they offer public services which oftentimes duplicate each other and even more often lack cohesion. Moreover, feedback and communication mechanisms are mainly missing. Legislation regulating the migration system in Armenia is quite wobbly. In the recent years Armenia has joined a number of international conventions and agreements, has taken certain obligations, which, however, have not been summarized within cohesive political and legal documents. In general, an impression is formed that there is a serious concern regarding the rationale of regulating emigration: it may mean promotion of emigration. In the result we have what we have, a slowly developing legal sphere and in many cases, a feverishly self-regulating sphere.

### **Looking forward to active steps**

Thus, what should be the primary goal of the state under such conditions? The answer should certainly include the following: protection of rights and interests of the RA citizens and development of equal opportunities and available mechanisms to access information and get assistance. The means towards this goal are known: working out adequate legislative framework, ensuring principles of systematized policy and development of a functional mechanism for coordination of efforts.

One thing is clear: labor migration is one of the spheres of our reality which requires urgent and active state intervention.

*This paper is elaborated based on the opinions passed by the participants of the round table focusing on the discussions of the Bill on Regulation of Labor Migration, which took place on June 5, 2007. The round table was attended by independent analysts, government officials and representatives of international organizations. It was organized within the framework of the project “Support to Migration Policy Development and Relevant Capacity Building in Armenia”.*

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