



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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International Center for Human Development
Մարդկային զարգացման միջազգային կենտրոն



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E ducation and migration: a challenge and an opportunity



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Among the reasons accounting for migration the change of place of residence conditioned with a strong desire for new knowledge is relatively little researched. Studies of mobility for educational purposes (much like any other migration type) should start with the clarification of the following questions: in terms of migration flows, is your country a point of destination or departure? Perhaps both at the same time? What are the statistics, what are the challenges and what goals should be set?

Education: an incentive for emigration?

Though there are no valid statistical data on what part of “studying migrants” from Armenia return to their country of origin and what part stays abroad in search of employment, still there are some research findings available which reveal that the number of those staying abroad is quite high. Actually, the major reason is not simply the attractive salary and availability of an affluent lifestyle as commonly held. Reasons for “brain drain” vary. For instance, one is the state which annually educates thousands of specialists using the taxpayer money and later on fails to attract these very alumni to state institutions or at least make it clear that it needs them. On the other hand, for people having studied in the best universities abroad or even for those who have had a significant experience in their own countries, civil service means a new, not always acceptable and at times even aversive relations and values. Unfortunately, it is not the knowledge, skills and the experience of a person that decide their position in the state institution.

There is no need to continue the numeration of the reasons. Just to sum up, it should be noted that the lack of social justice is yet another significant factor that affects the decision to leave the country of origin.

To act, or...?

To be content with only a few educational reforms when reforms in other spheres are being procrastinated will mean extermination of already scarce resources. Incidentally, the scarcity of resources is not the most significant obstacle on the way to address the existing issues. According to some experts, budget allocations for education in 2003 have increased thrice. Still, it is quite challenging to find any quality change on any level of education even under the microscope. Moreover, today both the public and private sectors often complain of absence of adequate specialists and skills needed for interactions on the international arena. Notwithstanding this obvious shortage, there are certain opportunities available in Armenia for filling in this gap; for instance, the different educational exchange programs. The segment of the society that apparently should have been the consumer of such opportunities is not even ready to use the existing resources. Another example would be the frequent talks of Bologna process: European standards, quality assurance, credit system, etc. Unfortunately, the country does not have the necessary cadre who would really carry these values and are ready to realize

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the above-mentioned strategy. In the result, the existing resources are just being wasted without reaching any goal.

The role of the state

Thus, in this mosaic of various migration flows the role of the state is quite clear:

- on one hand it should:
 - create a competitive arena for the development of education and science, which will allow relevant institutions to ensure the necessary educational and scientific levels,
 - present Armenia as a country offering quality education in all diplomatic relations;
- on the other hand it should:
 - clearly define the state and public demand: a) develop a list of professions the existence of which is essential for the economic development of the country and b) evaluate internal resources in terms of its capacity to satisfy the shaped demand and in the result determine the volume of services to be purchased from the international market of education
 - clarify a policy adopted towards the so-called “studying migrants” from Armenia, which essentially is not a big challenge. Implementation of a few concrete and clear mechanisms will result in even short-term gains. Specifically, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive database of Armenian students abroad, which will include information on who they are, where and what they study, who finances the studies and what are the living standards where they reside at the moment. Diplomatic missions of Armenia in foreign countries should be granted new roles, such as serving a liaison between these students and their country, for instance, through organization of various social events or certain financial support, such as reimbursement for study materials and accommodation fees. Finally, there should be a transparent window available for these students to be able to get access to the job market in Armenia.

I love my country

Actually, all different policies should be complementary. To address the above-mentioned issue some experts suggest the state use a concrete model: it should become the “consumer” of the necessary professions and should provide both the relevant education and the job. This is an urgent and a short-term intervention. To achieve more fundamental results it is recommended to promote the slogan “I love my country” at all possible levels in parallel to the above-mentioned intervention, which should turn from propaganda to a value sustained by concrete actions.

This paper has been developed based on the opinions passed by the participants of the round table organized within the framework of the project “Support to Migration Policy Development and Relevant Capacity Building in Armenia”. The event took place on July March 25, 2008. The roundtable was attended by independent analysts, government officials, and representatives of the international organizations.

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