Policy Brief
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n search of a happy medium: does Armenia need a concept paper on migration?

ICHD **Policy** brief

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International Center for Human Development

a Think Tank

What is the axis of Armenian migration?

When the human population started to grow, the caves became narrow… and there was migration: the man tried to find an environment that would provide necessary conditions for securing his lifestyle to the best. Then people started to identify themselves with a certain kind and there were clans, tribes, communities, cities, governments and states with dividing lines in between them and eventually, state borders. Thus, crossing a border became a trial for co-existence of human kinds. And in search of the best habitat the man stepped into the 21st century where the quest was labeled "migration" and the various human kinds started to develop rules in their states in order to manage this phenomenon, to support the positive outcomes of migration and in contrast to keep the level of negative consequences low, thus protecting their own kinds.

So, how will the kind called "Armenian" regulate migration and protect itself? What are the specific characteristics of this kind? For a species comprising 12 million this is quite a serious issue as only the three million of the kind lives on the territory of its state and even this part keeps dreaming of emigration… Obviously, the axis of migration is related to emigration and if there is any real need for rules, they should apply to the regulation of this phenomenon or more precisely, to prevention or elimination of probable negative consequences of migration.

How to write rules for life, not for paper?

The most concise and comprehensive frame for any list of rules has usually been considered the concept paper which clearly defines priorities, objectives, goals and certain steps to achieve those goals. Does the state of Armenia need such a document? The answer to the question should derive from a vital necessity and a consistent and strong political will. Otherwise there will be another ambitious and unrealistic document rich in democratic aspirations which can be proudly presented at various international conferences, but afterwards will just keep attracting dust on the shelves of this or the other ministry in between different conferences. Still, there is no need to despair: there are certain steps which will prevent such an ending. Here are the most important ones:

1. It is essential to study the field, to get a snapshot of the reality before developing any concept paper. It will allow understanding whether there is a real need for regulation and what are the concrete issues to be regulated. It is quite possible that the existing national machinery already self-regulates the sphere and there is no need for any other intervention.

2. This is actually the most significant of all the steps and it should be initiated by the state which needs to take the ownership for the process in order for this document to incite real actions.

3.   National priorities should be clearly highlighted in the list of existing issues, classifying those in terms of time factor, i.e. issues to be addressed immediately, in a midterm and long term perspective.

The process can start once these conditions are fully realized and accepted. Still, to continue the process efficiently it is necessary to consider yet two other factors:

1.   The definition of the issues should be ambitious BUT REALISTIC. The existing resources should be evaluated minutely and the actions towards attainment of goals should fit into the capacity of the available resources.

2.   Finally, it is essential to coordinate all the activities. Since migration abides on the crossroad of various aspects of social life, it is paramount to withstand the temptation of "pulling the cover to oneself" by different institutions. Efficiency, even to the least extent, can be achieved only in case the content of the process is regarded as a priority by all the players involved in the process. Otherwise, a hazardous structural mess will start, the best outcome of which can be development of an insipid document.

What direction should the cart take?

Once the cornerstones for the development of the concept paper are laid, it is necessary to determine the direction the process should take. It can be manifold but it should basically include the following benchmarks:

−   *Formation of a working* group: a team that is monistic regarding its interpretations of the goal and pluralistic in its approaches to the issue. It should represent all the stakeholders of the process.

−   *Clear definition of the issues*: Ambiguity and generalities should be avoided by all means and there should not be any fear of very concrete details.

−   *Development of a national action plan:* the latter should include a detailed list of roles and responsibilities.

Is it possible to demonstrate adequate political will to achieve such a result? If the answer is 'yes', it is worth to get into deep water. It is then worthwhile to join both internal resources and external support. If no, no need to waste neither internal, nor external resources, no matter how tempting the availability of the latter may appear.