



# 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



This project is funded by the European Union  
Ծրագիրը ֆինանսավորվել է Եվրամիության կողմից



ԲՐԻՏԻՇ ԲԱՌԻՍԻԼ



International Center for Human Development  
Մարդկային զարգացման միջազգային կենտրոն



This project is implemented by  
Ծրագիրն իրականացնում են՝

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

# The fundamental principles and goals of the migration policy in Armenia



International  
Center for  
Human  
Development

a Think Tank

## The European direction of development

The issue of the regulation of the migration process in Armenia has indeed stepped into a crucial phase, which is conditioned by the country adopting the European direction of development. The fundamental documents defining the state policy of development are quite complementary, and define the signposts for the total integration of the country with the European institutions and organizations both in terms of state security and sustainable economic development in significant sectors such as foreign policy, effective governance and defense planning. The political leaders of the country have stated quite a few times that Armenia envisions its sustainable and secure development within the European integration; that relations with the European institutions are essential for Armenia and that close relations with the EU are in the long-term interest of the country. Incidentally, the aspiration to become a full-fledged member of the European community as a goal promulgated by the state implies not only the penetration of pan-European values into all the state and public sectors, but also the direct approximation of the Armenian legislative and institutional frameworks to the EU standards.

## Parallel to the vector of European integration

In the context of the European direction of development it is crucial to define a migration policy which is effective and coordinated, and complies with the goals of the RA national security, sustainable human development and the RA demographic policy, as well as with the international standards regarding the protection of the rights and interests of the individuals involved in migration processes. In addition, it is particularly important that the definition of the expected mid-term outcomes of the fundamental principles and goals of the migration policy be parallel to the vector of European integration.

## The fundamental principles

The fundamental principles of the state policy on the regulation of migration processes should firstly be based on the relevant clauses of the RA Constitution, and thus, exclude any manifestation of discrimination against migrants and guarantee their equal rights. Any individual legally abiding in Armenia should be ensured their rights to free movement on the territory of Armenia, to choose a residence location, to return to and to leave the country. It is also important to enact the principle of protection of the RA citizens both in foreign countries and in Armenia. The regulation of migration flows is essentially impossible without mutually beneficial and equal collaboration with other countries. There is also an urgent need to enact the most significant European principles in this sector, such as civil society participation in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the relevant policies.

## A political symphony

The RA migration policy should comply with the national interests of the Republic, the priorities promulgated through various state policies in all the sectors, as well as the international commitments the country has made, including the most important ENP commitments. It is essential to use the major resources available for the regulation of migration and shelter issues in a coordinated manner, specifically the tools such as improvement of the legislation, institutional reforms, participation of the civil society and public awareness instruments. In terms of institutional reforms, it is important to ensure an effective and coordinated work practice among the institutions responsible for the development, coordination and implementation of the migration policy, which essentially can be established through a clear distribution of tasks, establishment of an effective cooperation, specialist capacity building, and information coordination and analysis. It is important to ensure the regular review and refinement of the migration policy through its continuous monitoring, proper evaluation and revisiting the lessons learnt.

19 Sayat Nova  
Yerevan 0001  
Armenia

Tel.: +374 10 582638  
Fax: +374 10 527082

mail@ichd.org  
www.ichd.org

## **The ‘Euro-goal’ and the ‘Euro-target’**

---

The European direction of development in a way defines also the major goal of the migration policy. It should be the approximation of the Armenian migration system to the European standards of migration policies. The anticipated mid-term outcome of such a policy should be the facilitation of visa procedures with the European Union. At the same time, the domestic issues and priorities of the migration policy should be defined within the context of a balanced state policy on territorial development of the Republic of Armenia.

## **“We’re the stepsons of the world...”**

---

An interesting observation can be made: even though the commitments of the Republic of Armenia within the ENP Action Plan are basically of a technical nature, the issue of migration regulation is also one which requires demonstration of a political will bilaterally. This is clearly reflected in the relations of the EU and Georgia. The EU is presenting political ‘gifts’ to Georgia and makes significant gestures of good will, expecting minimal reforms in return. Even certain concrete measures have been taken, for instance, the citizens of Georgia are granted a Schengen visa by the German Consulate in Georgia through a unified procedure. On the political dimension this issue is already on the agenda; the expected results are clear and predictable; the actions to be taken are rather easy, and the motives for taking these actions are numerous. On the other hand, on the technical dimension the ‘spoiled cousin’ – Georgian side – is hesitant to address some apparent issues and either freezes the solution process, or even when it does address any issue, it does so but reluctantly. The EU has adopted a differential approach to Moldova as well, with whom it has agreed to implement a facilitated approach to signing readmission agreements, which is one of the issues related to the EU accession. Thus, the EU has signed a unified agreement on readmission with Moldova.

The EU has a different approach to Armenia though. For instance, our country is compelled to sign bilateral readmission agreements individually with each EU country. This actually implies that the transition to facilitation of the visa procedure with the EU will be a complicated and a timely process for Armenia. One thing is obvious: there will be no political ‘gifts’. The future of the issue is quite vague; the EU promises are rather general; the timeline is unknown; things to be done are numerous and quite difficult, and therefore, the motives are quite weak and the political agenda is mostly nominal. There can be only one conclusion: we should hasten the process of addressing this issue ourselves, instead of waiting for political ‘candies’ from the EU. There will be no presents for Armenia and the issue can move in the direction of solution only if the country takes the initiative of doing so, by paying special attention to the issue and including it in the country’s agenda on internal policies and by addressing urgently the technical issues associated with this process. We will not be granted ‘satisfactory’ grades. We are destined instead to get only an ‘excellent’ mark.

## **The shortcut to connecting two points**

---

The process of developing a migration system in compliance with the EU standards is a complicated process requiring significant investments of resources. For instance, one of the prerequisites for the facilitation of the visa procedure is the installment of the system of biometric passports in compliance with the EU standards. However, the technical issues in this respect are absolutely complicated. Moreover, these standards are rather dynamic and in the near future may change in order to unify the system. On the other hand, it seems that this clearly significant issue has been overlooked in the agenda of the Eastern Partnership. Therefore, in terms of choosing a proper option for the regulation of the migration system, it would perhaps be worth to simply ‘translate’ the EU Aquis into Armenian and to enhance the institutional system following a best example from an EU member, an Eastern European or a Baltic country most closely matching the Armenia reality. One thing is undisputable: the RA migration policy needs an ‘owner’ who will lead the solution of the issue to the desirable outcome in this extremely important and difficult time. Concrete steps have already been taken in this direction: the working group created by the RA prime minister has already developed a list of recommendations and presented it to the government. All is left to do is to act on a timely manner with the further steps.

*The paper is elaborated based on the opinions passed by the participants of the discussion “Evaluating indicators of the impact of state regulation policy of migration”, which took place on June 25, 2009. The roundtable discussion was attended by independent analysts, government officials, and representatives of the international organizations. The round table was organized with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.*