



European
University
Institute

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies




**CROSS-REGIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM
ON THE REINTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS
IN THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN**

BRIEF 2012/01

***RETURN MIGRATION TO ARMENIA:
ISSUES OF REINTEGRATION***

HAYKANUSH CHOBANYAN

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

**Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC**

MARCH 2012

CRIS Brief, 2012/01

Return Migration to Armenia: Issues of Reintegration

By Haykanush Chobanyan

The Cross-Regional Information System (CRIS) on the Reintegration of Migrants in their Countries of Origin is aimed at addressing the social economic legal and institutional factors and conditions shaping returnees' patterns of reintegration in their countries of origin. It sets out to explain why some return migrants succeed in reintegrating back home whereas others do not. CRIS is part and parcel of the Return migration and Development Platform (RDP) hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence. It is co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC, Berne) and the European University Institute.

Return Migration and Development Platform (RDP) – Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS), European University Institute – Via delle Fontanelle, 19 – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI) – Italy – +39 055 46 85 892 – Email: RDP@eui.eu – URL: <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/>

© 2012, European University Institute
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

This text may be downloaded only for personal research purposes. Any additional reproduction for other purposes, whether in hard copies or electronically, requires the consent of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.

Requests should be sent to forinfo@eui.eu

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not reflect the view of the CRIS project.

To cite this publication: Haykanush Chobanyan (2012), “Return Migration to Armenia: Issues of Reintegration”, *CRIS Brief* 2012/01, RSCAS/EUI, Florence.

Return Migration to Armenia: Issues of Reintegration

By Haykanush Chobanyan

Email: chaykanush@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

This report sets out to describe the current statistical and institutional situation of return migration to and reintegration in Armenia. The author elaborates this situation from the Armenian perspective by

- explaining available statistical data on return migration,
- illustrating the priorities of the Armenian government and of international and national non-governmental organizations and
- examining the extent to which the return issue is taken into consideration in the framework of their actions.

In Armenia, there is no uniform and homogeneous definition of the term “return migrant”. Depending on the source, the term is used differently. Therefore, in this report the term “return migrant” is defined according to the respective sources. In most Armenian policy papers and legal acts “return migrants” are not defined.¹

The first part of the report proposes a statistical overview of return migration to Armenia. The second part describes the main initiatives and programmes that have been implemented so far on the reintegration of return migrants.

¹ The viewpoint of CRIS regarding return migration to Armenia is detailed on <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/research>. See also the [RDP glossary](#).

2. Available statistical sources

The first part of the report describes statistical sources available to understand the phenomenon of return migration in Armenia. It includes definitions of terms used by the respective sources.

Armenia does not record return migrants. As a consequence there are few statistics available for deriving a comprehensive and accurate appreciation of the return phenomenon. In the following, sources which provide some information on the stocks and flows of return migration to Armenia are presented.

The National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia (NSS)² collects and publishes statistical data and organizes statistical surveys and the population census every ten years.

The population census of 2001 does not include any information on return migration.³ The last population census which was carried out in October 2011 asked about the place of residence and the main reasons for changing residence (questionnaire for 2011 census round, question 13.4).⁴ The results of the 2011 population census will be published in 2013.

Immigration and emigration data are collected through statistical forms, so called Migrant's Statistical Registration Forms. These statistical coupons are filled in by persons registering or deregistering their residence status on the territory of Armenia at the local branches of the Passport and Visa Department of the Police of the Republic of Armenia. The immigration data cover Armenian citizens and foreigners who intend to stay for more than three months. The emigration data cover persons who deregistered their place of residence in Armenia. These data, which are processed by the NSS, indicate a decrease in the number of persons who arrived in Armenia. While in 2002, a total of 1,715 persons arrived (1,260 from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)⁵ and 455 from other countries); in 2010 a total of 905 persons entered Armenia (748 from CIS countries and 157 from other countries).⁶ Yet, these aggregated data include foreigners and Armenian citizens. Since the citizenship of arriving person is not recorded, we cannot estimate the number of Armenian returnees.

² "National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia." Accessed February 13, 2012, www.armstat.am.

³ See the 2001 census questionnaire, "Census of Republic of Armenia 2001." Accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/80.pdf>.

⁴ See the 2011 census questionnaire, "Census of Republic of Armenia 2011." Accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99465273.pdf>.

⁵ The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

⁶ "Demographic Handbook of Armenia 2011." Accessed February 13, 2012, http://www.armstat.am/file/article/demos_11_8.pdf.

The Border Management and Information System (BMIS) was launched in order to improve border control and management and facilitate border-crossing data exchange between law enforcement bodies.⁷ The BMIS registers the entry and exit of international passengers (see Table 1).

Table 1: Volumes of International Border Crossings in 2000-2010

Year	Arrived	Left	Balance	Total volume of passenger flows
2000	399,7	457,2	-57,5	856,8
2001	508,2	568,6	-60,4	1076,8
2002	590,7	593,4	-2,7	1184,0
2003	618,3	628,5	-10,2	1246,9
2004	739,9	737,8	2,1	1477,7
2005	845,8	833,3	12,5	1679,2
2006	983,7	962,0	21,8	1945,7
2007	1293,6	1296,8	-3,2	2590,3
2008	1397,2	1420,2	-23,1	2817,4
2009	1432,0	1457,0	-25,0	2889,0
2010	1745,1	1774,9	-29,9	3512,0

Source: “The State Migration Service of Armenia.” Accessed February 13, 2012, http://www.smsmta.am/?menu_id=18.

The above data do not include information about the citizenship of the passengers, on their country of destination or of origin, nor on the duration of their stay abroad or in Armenia. Thus, the volumes of international border crossings do not allow the number of Armenian returnees to be assessed.

The “Return Migration to Armenia in 2002-2008” study carried out by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Advanced Social Technologies (AST) defined returnees as temporary or permanent migrants who left Armenia after 1991 to live, work or study abroad and who returned to Armenia at least once between 2002 and 2007. The term “permanent returnees” refers to those returnees who came back to Armenia and were not planning to leave in 2008, while the term

⁷ “Border Management and Information System.” Accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.aitystems.am>.

“temporary returnees” refers to those who planned to leave again.⁸ The study indicates that from 2002 to 2007, more than 80 per cent of the migrants returned to Armenia at least once. The return rate has been lower among those who left Armenia before 2002: 64 per cent of them returned to Armenia in 2002-2007. About 24 per cent of the migrants or approximately 55,000 people returned to Armenia in 2002-2007 and were not planning to re-emigrate in the near future.

According to the “Return Migration to Armenia” study, most migrants returned from the Russian Federation. The authors explain this result by

- high migration rates to Russia
- relatively low transport costs between Armenia and the Russian Federation
- the fact that Armenian citizens do not need a visa to enter Russia.⁹

Concerning the gender distribution, the study shows that around 70 per cent of the interviewed return migrants are men and 30 per cent are women. According to the study, return migrants are on average between 35 and 41 years-old.

Data on employment of Armenian returnees show that about 60 per cent of the return migrants were employed in 2008. Among those Armenians who did not migrate, the employment rate was 43 per cent. The majority of the interviewed return migrants stated that their migration experiences helped them improve their on-the-job skills, develop soft skills, and hence increased their competitiveness on the Armenian labour market.

The survey also indicates that the average wage of returnees is higher than that of non-migrants. The mean monthly income of returnees was estimated at 72,500 AMD (242 USD), which is approximately 10 per cent higher than that of non-migrants (66,000 AMD=220 USD). The authors explain the higher wage level of returnees with their higher skill levels. In addition, most returnees worked in the private sector (mainly in the construction industry) where salaries are higher than in the public sector.

The Sample Survey on External and Internal Migration in the Republic of Armenia was conducted by the National Statistical Service and the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues from June to November 2007.¹⁰ The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided funding and technical assistance for the survey.

⁸ “Return Migration to Armenia in 2002-2008.” Accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.osce.org/yerevan/35806>.

⁹ Armenian citizens do not need a visa to enter the Russian Federation. However, once they arrived they are required to apply for a residence permit.

¹⁰ “Report on Sample Survey on External and Internal Migration in RA.” Accessed February 13, 2012, http://www.armstat.am/file/article/rep_migr_08e.pdf.

The purpose of this survey was to evaluate changes in migration trends from 2002 to 2007 following the socio-economic reforms adopted in the country, as well as to assess the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of migration flows, the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of migrants and the future migration plans of different groups involved in migration processes.

Section 4 of the survey provides information on household members who were in Armenia during the period of the survey but had been residing in a foreign country for more than three months during the period of 2002-2007 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Representation of the household members involved in foreign migration transfers during the period of 2002-2007

	Household members under survey		% against the total	Within the total number of Armenian population (person)
	Number	Specified weight		
Migrants who returned from foreign countries/re-emigrants	265	2.6	30.1	86,397
Migrants residing in foreign countries/emigrants	590	5.7	67.1	205,620
People who immigrated from foreign countries/immigrants	25	0.2	2.8	8,782
Total	880	8.5	100.0	300,799

Source: "Report on Sample Survey on External and Internal Migration in RA." Accessed February 13, 2012. http://www.armstat.am/file/article/rep_migr_08e.pdf.

According to the sample survey, 8.5 per cent of the household members included were formerly involved in foreign migration processes from which 2.6 per cent were defined as re-emigrants (i.e. migrants who returned from foreign countries) and 5.7 per cent still residing in foreign countries. The majority of Armenians returned from the Russian Federation (80 per cent), 5 per cent from European countries, 5 per cent from the United States of America and the remaining migrants returned from other countries. Return migrants predominantly belonged to the age group 20-29 years. The sample survey indicates that more men (62 per cent) than women (38 per cent) returned to Armenia. 70 per cent of the return migrants were married.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) Migration and Skills Project¹¹ plans a field survey for 2012 particularly focusing on education and skills levels and employment status of potential and return migrants before, during and after the migration process. The project defines a return migrant as anyone who left the survey country aged 18 or over; has worked at least three months continuously abroad; came back within the last ten years; and is now present and available for interview”.

The Consulate Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) delivers “return certificates” (“travel documents” or “laissez-passers”):

- at the request of an Armenian citizen who lives abroad (legally or illegally) and does not have valid travel documents (expired or lost passports, etc.) and wishes to return to Armenia
- at the request of the authorities of the destination country to facilitate the return of Armenian citizens who do not fulfil the entry or residence rules and conditions in the destination country and do not have a valid passport

Thus, the MFA has information about Armenian nationals who returned with a “return certificate”. However, the information is incomplete since Armenian citizens who possess a valid passport can return without the knowledge of Armenian authorities. In 2011, the Consulate Department of the MFA issued 21,130 “return certificates” (compared with 19,532 in 2010 and 19,824 in 2009).¹²

Table 3 shows the number of Armenian citizens who received a “return certificate” from 2004 to 2009. The highest return rate in both categories (“voluntary return” and deportation) is reported for the Russia Federation. This is explained by the fact that the Russian Federation is the main destination country for Armenian citizens.

¹¹ “ETF - European Training Foundation Armenia.” Accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Armenia>.

¹² Data on the number of “return certificates” was provided by the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs Consular Department upon request of the State Migration Service of Armenia, February 28, 2012.

Table 3: Voluntary Return¹³ and Deportation of Armenian Citizens from Abroad, 2004-2009

Country	Voluntary return	Deportation
Argentina	5	-
Austria	40	-
Belarus	56	25
Bulgaria	168	75
Canada	-	20
France	640	429
Germany	1,307	187
Greece	35	-
Israel	8	-
Italy	4	79
Netherlands	74	39
Poland	-	1,178
Russian Federation	30,497	2,731
Spain	-	53
Sweden	127	127
Switzerland	264	-
Turkey	77	-
Turkmenistan	98	9
United Arab Emirates	3	19
United Kingdom	25	76
United States of America	1,961	238
Total	35,389	5,288

Source: UNDP Armenia. "Migration and Human Development: Opportunities and Challenges." Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/87B390CE-F203-1EE9-B95DF29A79F6080C>.

The table is based on data collected from the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs Consular Department.

Note: - data not available.

¹³ The UNDP report does not define the term "voluntary return".

3. Institutional context

This second part describes some multilateral, bilateral and national regulations, agreements and policies on return migration and reintegration. It investigates the main initiatives and programmes on the reintegration of return migrants.

Since 2008 the government of Armenia has expressed its interest in launching cooperation with the EU in the framework of Mobility Partnership. The Mobility Partnership has the purpose of better managing legal and labour migration, including circular and temporary migration, enhancing cooperation on migration and development and preventing and combating irregular migration and trafficking and smuggling of human beings, as well as promoting an effective return and readmission policy, while respecting human rights and the relevant international instruments for the protection of refugees. In October 2011, a Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between Armenia and the EU was signed.¹⁴ Within the framework of the Mobility Partnership, a three-year project on the reintegration of Armenian returnees is currently discussed. The project is supposed to start in spring 2012 and has a budget of three million Euro. The main objective is to strengthen Armenia's migration management capacities with special focus on reintegration activities by

- increasing the capacities of competent authorities and civil society in Armenia to actively support dignified sustainable return and reintegration
- addressing the challenges posed by irregular migration and
- facilitating opportunities for legal migration.

The priorities of the Armenian government regarding migration were summarized as follows: After Armenia's independence in 1991, the state regulation policy implemented by Armenia in the area of migration was mainly directed at the solution of the problems of refugees coming from Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabagh and other former USSR territories. The policy of state regulation in the area of migration was mainly based on day-to-day management. Since 2005 a number of political, legislative and institutional changes occurred in the administration of Armenia migration processes, which lead to a new state regulation in the field of migration. The Armenian authorities declared European integration as a political priority for the development of Armenia as demonstrated in the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) with the EU, which has recently been upgraded into a qualitatively new stage – the Eastern Partnership Programme – in the framework of which Armenia has undertaken the obligation to legislatively and institutionally approximate its migration administration system with that of the EU's. According to the Concept of the State Regulation of

¹⁴ So far ten EU Member States signed the agreement, namely the Kingdom of Belgium, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic, the Republic of Italy, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Republic of Poland, Romania and the Kingdom of Sweden.

Migration in the Republic of Armenia, there are recently attempts to switch from a passive-contemplative and operative-reactive policy to proactive-foreseeable migration policy.

In the Concept for the Policy of State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia of 2004, the third priority task of the government is “Preventing the emergence of illegal migration from the Republic of Armenia and supporting the return and reintegration of Armenian citizens illegally staying abroad”. The concept paper mentions several goals regarding return migration and reintegration:

- Concluding with the respective countries inter-state treaties against illegal migration, including provisions on the return, receipt, and transit of illegal aliens between the contracting parties (readmission treaties¹⁵).
- Developing projects to support the reintegration of citizens readmitted to Armenia and negotiating with foreign states and international organizations in order to acquire financial and technical support and counselling in this field.

In 2010, a new Concept of State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia has been approved.¹⁶ The 8th priority area of the concept paper is “Assistance to the return of RA nationals from foreign countries and to their reintegration in their home country”. The following tasks were assigned:

- Further improvement of the Internet information system supporting the return of Armenian nationals, which will allow these persons to establish direct electronic contacts with relevant specialists in the public administration bodies and get speedy and accurate answers to their inquiries, dissemination of information about this system among Armenian nationals living abroad.
- Organization of the delivery of consulting services to persons returning to Armenia in state bodies working with migrants, activation of partnerships with non-governmental organizations operating in this sphere.
- Negotiations with host countries on issues of assistance to the reintegration of persons returning to Armenia with their support.

¹⁵ Currently, the RA has readmission agreements with the following twelve countries: Kingdom of Belgium, Republic of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Kingdom of Denmark, Republic of Lithuania, Luxemburg, Federal Republic of Germany, Netherlands, Kingdom of Norway, Russian Federation, Kingdom of Sweden, and the Swiss Federal Council. Negotiations with other countries such as Republic of Poland, Romania, Estonia, Cyprus, the Ukraine and Moldova are in the process of development.

¹⁶ “State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of RA.” Accessed March 12, 2012, <http://www.smsmta.am/?id=1010>

“The Action Plan for Implementation of the Policy Concept for the State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia in 2012-2016” which was adopted by the RA Governmental Decree # 1593 –N, November 10, 2011 states that its main goal is to transfer approaches and mechanisms of the concept paper into concrete actions.¹⁷ The Action Plan for Implementation outlines a number of activities to support the return of Armenian citizens and their reintegration, e.g.:

- Implementation of employment projects aimed at reintegration of the citizens, returning to the Republic of Armenia, in the labour market and introduction of new projects.
- Provision of advisory services to those returning to the Republic of Armenia by the state entities dealing with migrants, as well as ensuring active partnership relations with NGOs operating in the field.
- Negotiating with receiving countries on the issues related to providing reintegration support to those returning to Armenia.
- Further development of internet based informational systems supporting the return of Armenian citizens.

One of the tasks of the State Migration Service (SMS) of the Ministry of Territorial Administration is the development and implementation of programmes on return migration.¹⁸ In 2006, a Migrant’s Support Centre was established to provide information on migration. SMS created a web portal called “Back to Armenia”.¹⁹ This web page informs potential return migrants about health, education, citizenship, military service, pension and allowance in Armenia. There is also the possibility to directly ask questions to the respective state authorities. Several ministries are involved in the organization and operation of the web page, e.g. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Science and Education, Ministry of Diaspora, etc.

In 2010, three Migration Resource Centres (MRCs) have been established in the State Employment Service Agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues. The reintegration services provided to return migrants include:

- provision of individual consultation connected with job placement,
- involvement in the state employment programmes and
- assistance in finding governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to receive support.²⁰

¹⁷ “State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of RA.” Accessed March 12, 2012, <http://www.smsmta.am/?id=1027#>.

¹⁸ “State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of RA.” Accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.smsmta.am>.

¹⁹ “Back to Armenia.” Accessed February 13, 2012, www.backtoarmenia.am.

²⁰ “State Employment Service Agency of RA Ministry of Labour and Social Issues.” Accessed March 12, 2012, www.empolyment.am.

Moreover, there are several international and national NGOs involved in "Assisted Voluntary Return" (AVR) programmes. Among others, they provide return migrants who participated in one of these programmes with information concerning health related issues, education and training (e.g. small business training courses), employment and offer counselling.²¹

²¹ Among others, the following organizations, NGOs and centres collaborate on AVR programmes: Eurasia Partnership Foundation, People in Need, the International Centre for Human Development, French-Armenian Development Foundation in Armenia and Armenian Caritas.

References

Back to Armenia. Accessed February 13, 2012, www.backtoarmenia.am.

Border Management and Information System. Accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.aitsystems.am>.

Census of Republic of Armenia 2001. See the 2001 census questionnaire. Accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/80.pdf>.

Census of Republic of Armenia 2011. See the 2011 census questionnaire. Accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/80.pdf>.

Demographic Handbook of Armenia 2011. Accessed February 13, 2012, http://www.armstat.am/file/article/demos_11_8.pdf.

European Training Foundation Armenia. Accessed February 13, 2012, <http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Armenia>.

National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. Accessed February 13, 2012, www.armstat.am.

Report on Sample Survey on External and Internal Migration in RA. Accessed February 13, 2012, http://www.armstat.am/file/article/rep_migr_08e.pdf.

Return Migration to Armenia in 2002-2008. Accessed February 13, 2012. <http://www.osce.org/yerevan/35806>.

State Employment Service Agency of RA Ministry of Labour and Social Issues. Accessed March 12, 2012, www.empolyment.am.

State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of RA. Accessed March 12, 2012, <http://www.smsmta.am>.

UNDP Armenia. "Migration and Human Development: Opportunities and Challenges." Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/87B390CE-F203-1EE9-B95DF29A79F6080C>.