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Emigration-Diaspora Policy Nexus in Migration Policies of the EU Eastern Partnership Countries and in Russia

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Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2013/03



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CARIM-East
Creating an Observatory of Migration East of Europe

Analytical and Synthetic Note
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CARIM-East – Creating an Observatory East of Europe

This project which is co-financed by the European Union is the first migration observatory focused on the Eastern Neighbourhood of the European Union and covers all countries of the Eastern Partnership initiative (Belarus, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) and Russian Federation.

The project's two main themes are:

- (1) migration from the region to the European Union (EU) focusing in particular on countries of emigration and transit on the EU's eastern border; and
- (2) intraregional migration in the post-Soviet space.

The project started on 1 April 2011 as a joint initiative of the European University Institute (EUI), Florence, Italy (the lead institution), and the Centre of Migration Research (CMR) at the University of Warsaw, Poland (the partner institution).

CARIM researchers undertake comprehensive and policy-oriented analyses of very diverse aspects of human mobility and related labour market developments east of the EU and discuss their likely impacts on the fast evolving socio-economic fabric of the six Eastern Partners and Russia, as well as that of the European Union.

In particular, CARIM-East:

- builds a broad network of national experts from the region representing all principal disciplines focused on human migration, labour mobility and national development issues (e.g. demography, law, economics, sociology, political science).
- develops a comprehensive database to monitor migration stocks and flows in the region, relevant legislative developments and national policy initiatives;
- undertakes, jointly with researchers from the region, systematic and *ad hoc* studies of emerging migration issues at regional and national levels.
- provides opportunities for scholars from the region to participate in workshops organized by the EUI and CMR, including academic exchange opportunities for PhD candidates;
- provides forums for national and international experts to interact with policymakers and other stakeholders in the countries concerned.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: <http://www.carim-east.eu/>

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Abstract

Provoked by more frequent discussions about the "emigration-diaspora" nexus among the researchers on international development, this policy brief, written based on the explanatory notes submitted by country-experts of CARIM-East project, explores the emigration-diaspora issues in migration policies of post-Soviet states in the EU neighborhood. As the examination of CARIM-East country experts reveals, the primary focus of emigration policies of post-Soviet states remains linked to labour migration and focuses on the prevention of emigration (and return of emigrated co-nationals), although migration policies of post-Soviet states also emphasize the need for integrating their labour-force into the international labour market. Post-Soviet governments offer various stimuli to attract their former residents to return to homeland, ranging from advocacy campaigns on business development to matching financial investments from remittances to providing grants to those trained abroad. Despite the conceptual ambiguity stemming from including labour migrants into diasporas, or as the development community has referred to -- "migrant diasporas", the policy documents of post-Soviet states use the term diasporas to refer to both permanently emigrated former citizens, and to current citizens living abroad (regardless of length of residency abroad). However, a more systematic examination is needed to understand whether and in which aspects the focus of migration policies of post-Soviet is different or overlaps for labour migrants abroad vs. diasporas.

Frequent have become among representatives of international development research and policy community discussions about "emigration-diaspora" nexus, and about "emigration policies" as such. Perhaps partly driven by the immigration-centered focus of the EU, policy-makers and scholars in the EU and in the West expect to find a policy response, namely an "emigration policy", among the EU neighborhood states which are primarily emigration rather than immigration countries.

This search of policy equivalence is not coincidental, after all emigration volumes were rather dire, for example, for the post-Soviet states in the EU's Eastern neighborhood, such as in Armenia where more than one mln. people (roughly 30% of the population) are estimated to have left the country since 1991 (UNDP 2009 cited in Chobanyan 2012) or Moldova where more than 50% of the labour force is assumed to be involved in labour migration (World Bank 2011 cited in Mosneaga 2012) or in Ukraine with more than 6 mln. migrants (13% of the country's population) residing abroad in 2005 (IOM 2009:19 cited in Tolstokorova 2012). And even Ukraine, Belarus and Russia that have been recipients of labour migrants from the former post-Soviet states and other countries from Asia and the Middle East, still have emigration concerns and brain drain high on the policy agenda (Tolstokorova 2012, Bobrova 2012, Mukomel 2012).

This policy brief explores "emigration-diaspora" policy nexus in six EU Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries-- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine --and in Russia. The discussion is written based on the explanatory notes submitted by CARIM-East country experts.

While in the 1990s the main concern of these post-Soviet states was halting the emigration, in the 2000s the consequences of emigration were interlinked with the low birth-rate of the population and gave a new wave of concerns for depopulation and demographic security and the shortage of labour-force and the high-skilled specialists in the years to come.

Already in the late 1990s, the post-Soviet governments came to realize the political and economic power in labour migrants living abroad (see Oprunenco 2012 for Moldova), and this is when gradually the issues of diaspora and co-nationals living abroad penetrated into policy-making domain.

Is there a separate emigration policy in post-Soviet states?

There are no separate "emigration" policies adopted by the seven countries examined-- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine. Instead, emigration issues are consolidated in various legislative acts (typically in the legislation on the entry/exit of persons) and in bilateral agreements that regulate various aspects of the movement of people and employment of co-nationals abroad. The discussion of emigration in policy-framework documents of EaP countries and in Russia appears in the context of labour migration and addresses the trends and the regulation of labour emigration, prevention of the brain-drain and the mechanisms for the return of labour migrants, as well as the protection of the rights of labour migrants abroad (Chobanyan 2012, Bobrova 2012, Mosneaga 2012, Mukomel 2012, Tolstokorova 2012). Usually the preference is for returning the high-skilled labour-force that has left amidst limited economic and political opportunities. This is also the case for immigrant-receiving countries, such as Belarus, where the high-skilled labour force that emigrated has been replaced with low-skilled labour immigration (Bobrova 2012).

While on the one hand this may indicate a weak policy emphasis on emigration, on the other hand one can argue that emigration matters are being treated as dependent on socio-economic and political factors, and thus require a more multi-dimensional policy response and hence, are elaborated linked to other policy priorities, such as on sustainable development, employment, demographic security, etc.

The primary focus of emigration policies remains the prevention of emigration (and the return of emigrated co-nationals), although migration policies of post-Soviet states (such as Azerbaijan, Belarus or Armenia) also emphasize the need for integrating their labour-force into the international labour market (Bobrova 2012, Chobanyan 2012, Romyansev 2012).

Based on country needs, post-Soviet governments offer various stimuli to attract their former residents to return to homeland. For example, the 2020 Strategy of Russia offers grants for its high-skilled citizens trained abroad to encourage their return (Strategy 2020:240 cited in Mukomel 2012). Belarus has since 2011 allocated a USD 1000 for each family who would return to live in Belarus (Boborva 2012). In Moldova the government implemented a pilot project PARE 1+1 (Mosneaga 2012), where the objective was to match the investments from remittances made for business development (1+1). Moldova's Plan of Actions on Fostering Return of Moldovan Labour Migrants from Abroad (2008-2010) indicated also creating various information platforms (such as creating a web-site about jobs and employment options in Moldova), or conducting advocacy campaigns among the Moldovans abroad about the SME development and economic investment environment in Moldova, or about the return integration opportunities in Moldova, or providing training and information on opening businesses in Moldova upon return. Yet, as experts claim, these programs are more developed on the paper than applied in reality, primarily because the poor socio-economic development of Moldova remains highly un-attractive for Moldovan labour migrants to return to their home country (Mosneaga 2012), and emigration still exceeds immigration.

Is there an "emigration-diaspora" policy nexus?

In recent years the link between migration and development has led epistemic communities to extend the term diasporas to also "labour migrants" abroad, and the research on development has picked up a new term "migrant-diasporas" (see for example, de Haas 2012). This vocabulary seems to have now penetrated into also governmental policies and documents on migration. Yet, drawing such an analogy between the two concepts-- labour migrants vs. diasporas--raises various challenges for both research and policy agenda (not the focus of this paper). There is some inherent contradiction in referring to labour migrants abroad as diasporas. After all, diasporas are not only communities with ethnic/cultural identity and some degree of mobilization, but diasporas also imply a settled, albeit permanently migrated, community (Armstrong 1996, Safran 1991), whereas labour migrants are assumed to be temporary (rather than permanently settled) and are not necessarily mobilized communities.

Thus, the use of "diaspora" in lieu of "labour migrants" by national governments is a blatant (albeit unintentional) acknowledgement of non-return and permanent emigration of their labour force and is in contradiction with the assumptions upon which policies on emigrated migrant labour force are elaborated. Additionally, the policy needs for these two distinct categories of people-- diasporas vs. labour migrants- are usually different. However, as I pointed out already, the analogy drawn among such concepts as "labour migrants" and "diasporas" has penetrated into policy documents of post-Soviet governments.

Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Russia have adopted legislation, and Armenia, and Moldova have adopted policy framework documents on diasporas/compatriots living abroad. In these countries, except Ukraine, these legislative and policy framework documents define compatriots/diasporas¹ as

¹ In **Armenia**, the 2009 Policy Framework on Armenia-Diaspora Collaboration Development defines the Armenian diaspora as the Armenian communities established outside of the Republic of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh (p.6). In **Azerbaijan** the Law of Azerbaijan on State Policy Related to Citizens Residing Abroad (adopted 27 December, 2002) defines citizens (гражданин) residing abroad as citizens of Azerbaijan and their children, former citizens of the Soviet Union, as well as former citizens of Azerbaijan and their children (Article 1), and the official discourse has defined the diaspora as a community of ethnic Azeries (Rumyansev 2012). In **Georgia** the Law of Georgia on Compatriots Living Abroad and Diaspora Organizations (adopted 24 November, 2011) defines the compatriot/expatriate residing abroad as a citizen of Georgia, who resides in other state for a long period of time, or a citizen of other state, who is of Georgian descent or/and whose native language belongs to the Georgian-Caucasian language group (Article 3). In **Moldova** the 2000 Decree 1322 of the government on Moldovans abroad defines as "diaspora" persons originating from Moldova and residing abroad (and their descendants) who are united by their ethnicity, roots and common ancestors from former Bessarabia, northern Bukovina, Kherc and current Republic of Moldova and who realize their origin, but given various circumstances happen to be outside of the historical homeland and by that have become representatives of Moldovan

current citizens of their countries who currently live abroad (for a long time), as well as former citizens who have now become citizens of another state (*de facto* diaspora).

The ambiguity of definitions notwithstanding, policies on engaging compatriots/co-ethnic nationals with the homeland have been initiated by all seven states. And these policies seem to target both the financial investments from the diaspora (i.e. voicing the migration-development nexus), and the preservation and strengthening of the cultural identity and the engagement with the social and political life (albeit in limited terms) in the homeland. In Moldova, for example, given the large body of Moldovan citizens abroad, many of whom have been giving up their Moldovan citizenship for Romanian citizenship (RFE/RL 2009, 2010) to get an easier access to the European Union, the Moldovan government articulated its understanding of diaspora (see Decree 1322 of the Government) and directed various policies, among those establishing a congress of Moldovan Diaspora (since 2004), and establishing a Coordination Council (with representatives of Moldovans abroad since 2011), to facilitate the repatriation and reintegration of emigrated Moldovans (Mosneaga 2012). Similarly, in Georgia in 2008 the government established a Ministry of Diaspora Issues to engage its (former) citizens in Georgia's business development and to increase their investments in Georgia, as well as to intensify their ties with the homeland (Chelidze 2012). Especially targeted has been the policy-making in Azerbaijan. Here the government has conducted a very targeted policy to actually construct and mobilize an Azeri community of labour migrants from Azerbaijan as its diaspora -- to use, as experts have argued, diaspora's lobbying influence abroad for promoting the political interests of Azerbaijan and its political elite (Rumyansev 2012). The first congress of World Azeries took place already in 2001 (Rumyansev 2012), and finally in 2008 the State Committee on Diaspora was established. Belarus government has also tried to establish ties with its (former) citizens living abroad, even though at a limited level. In 1993 the government adopted the "Belarusians in the World" program, and the same year took place the first world congress of Belarusians (five since then, and the last in 2009) where the only time members of the congress could get involved in local policy-making process (Bobrova 2012). These are just a few examples, and the list is certainly not exhaustive.

In Armenia too the governmental discourse on diaspora has gradually changed. In 2007 Armenia, after long debate, finally adopted a dual citizenship legislation to include into Armenian citizenship body both the persons of Armenian ethnic descent (i.e. the traditional old Armenian diaspora), as well as the long-term migrants from Armenia who by now had settled in foreign countries, had unilaterally (without a formal application) renounced citizenship of Armenia and were *de facto* dual citizens (Makaryan 2010). In 2008 the government established the Ministry of Diaspora, and in 2009 adopted a Policy Framework Document on the Armenia-Diaspora Collaboration Development to protect the "language, culture, religion, education rights of each Armenian residing either in its motherland or elsewhere" (cited in Chobanyan 2012 :4). To mobilize the input of labour emigration for Armenia, since 2006 the government has started the construction of an All-Armenian Bank-- to use the financial investments and the capital from the diaspora for Armenia's economic development (Chobanyan 2012:4).

In Ukraine, where dual citizenship is not recognized, the distinction between diaspora (settled permanently) and labour migrants is somewhat clearer. The 2004 Law on the Status of Ukrainian Foreigners (заграничний українець) refers to persons who are citizens of another country *and* are ethnically Ukrainians or by origin were from Ukraine (article 1). To preserve the national identity, culture, language of the Ukrainians living abroad the government of Ukraine in 1996-2000 adopted the National program "Ukrainian Diaspora", and adopted the National Action Plan "Ukrainian Foreigners" ("заграничні українці", cited in Tolstokorova 2012). Instead, with focus on labour migrants from

(Contd.)

Diaspora (p.5). In **Russia** the Federal Law of Russia on State Policy of the Russian Federation towards the compatriots abroad (adopted 24 May 1999) defines compatriots abroad not only citizens of the Russian Federation permanently living abroad, but also emigrants and former citizens of the Soviet Union, RSFSR, and the Russian Federation who have become citizens of other states or are stateless persons (Article 1). In **Ukraine**, the 2004 Law of Ukraine on the Status of Ukrainian Foreigners (заграничний українець) refers to persons who are citizens of another country and are ethnically Ukrainians or by origin were from Ukraine (article 1).

Ukraine, in 2004 the government of Ukraine adopted a Program Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of Citizens Leaving for Employment Abroad and on Children Fostered by Foreigners till the year 2010” (cited in Tolstokorova 2012).

To conclude, the preliminary examination conducted by CARIM-East country experts reveals that governments of post-Soviet Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine address emigration typically linked to labour migration issues. Despite the conceptual ambiguity of including labour migrants into diasporas, or as the development community has referred to --"migrant diasporas", the policy documents of post-Soviet use the term diasporas to refer to both permanently emigrated former citizens, and to current citizens and labour migrants living abroad (regardless of length of residency abroad). Thus, on the one hand the policies put the emphasis on preserving the cultural identity of the co-nationals/compatriots abroad, whereas on the other hand they seem to focus on attracting the economic and human capital of their labour migrants for the development of the country. However, a more systematic examination is needed to understand whether and in which aspects the focus of migration policies of post-Soviet is different or overlaps for labour migrants abroad vs. diasporas.

The interested reader can consult the CARIM-East explanatory notes on emigration and diaspora in Armenia (Chobanyan 2012), Azerbaijan (Rumyansev 2012), Belarus (Bobrova 2012), Georgia (Chelidze 2012), Moldova (Mosneaga 2012), Russia (Mukomel 2012), Ukraine (Tolstokorova 2012). Please, see below.

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