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## **CARIM EAST – CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

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### ***Asylum seekers, Refugees and IDPs in the EaP countries: Recognition, Social Protection and integration - An Overview***

**Zuzanna Brunarska  
Agnieszka Weinar**

CARIM-East Research Report 2013/45



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**CARIM-East**  
**Creating an Observatory of Migration East of Europe**

**Research Report**  
**CARIM-East RR 2013/45**

**Asylum seekers, Refugees and IDPs in the EaP countries:  
Recognition, Social Protection and integration - An Overview**

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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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## Key points

- The definition of IDPs and refugees depends on the historical and political context and differs from country to country. The Geneva Convention definition is used to determine a part of a larger group of vulnerable populations.
- Relatively low numbers of people seek asylum in EaP states. EaP countries seem to be mostly sending-states as far as issues of asylum are concerned.
- Many of those who find shelter in EaP states treat them as transit countries on the way to further destinations. This does not serve their integration.
- IDPs in EaP countries may be divided into two groups: conflict-related IDPs and those related to natural or human-made disasters. Officially IDPs are now registered only in Azerbaijan and Georgia.
- Integration of refugees and asylum seekers does not seem to be a priority to EaP state authorities. Therefore these groups of people encounter numerous problems on the way to integration, especially with regards to access and integration into the local labour markets. The situation of IDPs in this respect differs from country to country.
- Moldova, despite its vulnerable economic standing, is the only EaP country with a separate law and program for the integration of foreigners.
- In some cases refugee and IDP issues are highly politicized. This includes for example, IDP issues in Azerbaijan and asylum seeker problems in Ukraine. Politicization can have potentially negative consequences for integration as these groups are supported by special measures that set them apart from the mainstream society. At the same time, social cohesion provisions are very scarce.
- It is not entirely clear if integration of IDPs or refugees is in fact a real political interest in some of the countries, given public attitudes to these groups.
- The scarce resources of EaP countries are strained by each conflict and increases in migration flows directed to the EU. The economic situation does not allow for a broader array of integration instruments. Belarus and Azerbaijan however, have better economic situations and do not actively engage in asylum policy.

## **Key recommendations**

- EaP state authorities should develop plans to facilitate the integration of refugees in their countries. Specifically, issues related to labour market integration have to be addressed.
- The EU should support EaP states in switching their policies from policies of integration to policies of social cohesion when addressing the situation of IDPs. This is especially relevant in the case of Azerbaijan and Georgia.
- The depoliticization of IDP issues is the first necessary step towards building a coherent and durable solution to their integration into the society.
- EaP states should consider introducing changes to their legislation in order to fill the existing gaps between their law and international and EU standards in the area of protection of vulnerable populations.
- Bearing in mind the growing pressure from asylum seekers coming from conflict areas such as Syria, the EU should increase efforts to support EaP countries facing these issues, possibly through a deeper cooperation with EASO.

## Introduction

The importance of the issue of international protection of vulnerable populations in the Eastern Partnership countries varies as far as its intensity and characteristics are concerned. While in some countries asylum seekers and refugees seem to be an important object of policy development in keeping with realities on the ground (Ukraine, Belarus), in others the focus is on IDPs (Azerbaijan, Georgia). The difference stems from four factors:

- Whether a country lies on a major migratory route to the European Union, which determines the flows of asylum seekers trying to reach the EU border;
- Whether a country borders a conflict zone that generates asylum seekers and refugee flows;
- Whether a country lives a post-conflict scenario that included changes of controlled territory;
- Whether there have been major natural or human-made disasters that displaced parts of the population.

These factors influence the quantitative picture of these phenomena. The policy choices to address them are shaped on one hand by sheer numbers, and on the other – by beliefs and discourse in a country.

This paper is based on the information included in the twenty-one explanatory notes from CARIM East network members, covering the demo-economic, legal and socio-political aspects of the situation of asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs in individual countries of the CARIM East region. This paper gives an overview of the basic facts concerning populations in need of protection in the Eastern Partnership countries, who are defined as asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs. It focuses especially on their recognition, social protection and integration.

## 1. Statistical picture

Statistical data on asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs is gathered by responsible bodies in EaP states and additionally (in part on the basis of those) by international organizations, primarily UNHCR. The data on refugees and asylum seekers coming to EaP states that is published by EaP state authorities and by UNHCR usually overlaps. The situation looks different as far as the data on IDPs is concerned. As this is sometimes a sensitive issue, often politicized, data discrepancies occur. In addition, statistics concerning asylum seekers and refugees originating from EaP countries, are naturally not gathered by their countries of origin. In this section we will present available statistics on these populations.

### 1.1 Asylum seekers and refugees

**Definitions:** In general, asylum seekers in EaP states are recognized persons who have applied for refugee status under the Geneva Convention, while refugees are those who have obtained it. However, the case of Azerbaijan statistics regarding non-Convention refugees coming from Armenia, for instance, is a highly politicized issue and thus the definition is not clear-cut. In the case of categories of migrants originating from Armenia: refugees and IDPs (people coming from Nagorno-Karabakh and other regions) are presented together. Moreover, people coming from other countries (e.g. Russia, Kazakhstan, and Georgia) to seek asylum in Azerbaijan in the 1990s were often not recognized as refugees by Azeri authorities, based on the fact that Azerbaijan was not in a state of conflict with any of these countries (Yunusov 2013). A similar situation can be found in the past statistics of Armenia and Moldova, where the term ‘refugee’ referred (and sometimes still can refer) to ethnic Armenians fleeing Azerbaijan and to Moldovans from Transnistria. However this is no longer the case.



Table 1 shows data on the number of people and the most numerous nationalities among asylum seekers and refugees coming to EaP countries. Data reported by responsible state bodies was used where available. Otherwise UNHCR data is presented (or added in case of scarcity of state data). It is difficult to present easily comparable data for all EaP countries as the available data is in different formats. As far as data on asylum seekers is concerned, some institutions report the total number of applicants in a given year, and others give the number of currently pending cases. As for refugees, some report the overall number of refugees registered in a country (annual average or at a given point in time), others – the number of people who have obtained refugee status in a particular year.

**Table 1. Geneva Convention Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the EaP States**

Country	Numbers		Most numerous nationalities
	Applied	Obtained	
Armenia	<p>1999-2012: 2661 applications for refugee status, including:</p> <p>1999: 23, 2000: 9, 2001: 10, 2002: 8, 2003: 82, 2004: 162, 2005: 163, 2006: 650, 2007: 291, 2008: 207, 2009: 67, 2010: 68, 2011: 73, 2012: 579</p> <p>(State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration)</p>	<p>1999-2012: refugee status obtained by 1673 foreign nationals, including:</p> <p>1999: 5, 2000: 3, 2001: 2, 2002: 1, 2003: 63, 2004: 146, 2005: 127, 2006: 297, 2007: 274, 2008: 79, 2009: 56, 2010: 25, 2011: 54, 2012: 176</p> <p>(State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration)</p>	<p>Among applicants in 2005-2012: Iraq 38%, Syria 32%, Lebanon 12%, Georgia 6%, Iran 4%</p> <p>Among people granted refugee status in 2005-2012: Iraq 60%, Syria 35%, Iran 2%</p> <p>(State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration)</p>
Azerbaijan	<p>2005: 1054 asylum applicants, 2006: 674, 2007: 537, 2008: 384, 2009: 235</p> <p>End of 2012: 135 pending cases</p> <p>(UNHCR)</p> <p>2008-2009: 208 applicants</p> <p>(State Migration Service)</p>	<p>Refugees registered (stocks) in 2005: 3004, 2006: 2618, 2007: 2352, 2008: 2061, 2009: 1621, 2012: 1468</p> <p>(UNHCR)</p> <p>2008-2009: 2 positive decisions</p> <p>(State Migration Service)</p>	<p>Among registered refugees:</p> <p>2005: Russia 94%, Afghanistan 3%, Iran 1,8%</p> <p>2009: Russia 82%, Afghanistan 9%, Iran 5,7%, Iraq 2%</p> <p>Among applicants:</p> <p>2005: 61% Russia, 18% Afghanistan, 9,6% Iran, 5,3% Pakistan</p> <p>2009: 40% Afghanistan, 31% Pakistan, 17% Russia, 9% Iran</p> <p>(UNHCR)</p> <p>2008-2009: 45% Afghanistan, 37% Pakistan, 14% Iran, 2.4% Iraq</p> <p>(State Migration Service)</p>

Country	Numbers		Most numerous nationalities
	Applied	Obtained	
Belarus	2004-2012: 1030 applicants (Ministry of Internal Affairs)	1997-2012: refugee status obtained by 854 foreign nationals, including:  1997-2003: 719 2004-2012: 135 (Ministry of Internal Affairs)	Among those who obtained a refugee status in 1997-2012: Afghanistan 70%, Georgia 16%, Azerbaijan 3%, Tajikistan 4%, Ethiopia 3%, Iran 1%, including:  1997-2003: Afghanistan 72%, Georgia 14%, Tajikistan 4%, Azerbaijan 4%, Ethiopia 3% 2004-2012: Afghanistan 58%, Georgia 27%  Among those who applied in 2004-2012: Afghanistan 50%, Georgia 15%, Ukraine 4%, Russia 3%, Iran 3%, Pakistan 3%, Iraq 2,5%, Azerbaijan 2,5%  (Ministry of Internal Affairs)
Georgia		3751 refugees registered in Georgia according to the 2002 population census  2012: 573 refugees registered  (MRA)	Mainly Russians (Chechens)
Moldova	1100 asylum seekers in 2002-2012  (Bureau of Migration and Asylum within the Ministry of Internal Affairs)	2006-2011: the number of refugees registered in Moldova hovered around 150 people  About 9% of all applicants are granted refugee status  2002-2012: 1449 persons acquired refugee status and received various kinds of humanitarian assistance  (Bureau of Migration and Asylum within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, UNHCR)	2003: Russia 90% of Registered refugees (Chechens)  2012: Russia 6% of registered refugees, Armenia 16%, Afghanistan 8%, Syria 30%  (UNHCR)

Country	Numbers		Most numerous nationalities
	Applied	Obtained	
Ukraine	<p>About 27 thousand applicants in 1996-2012, including:</p> <p>1996: 1443; 1997: 2716; 1998: 1667; 1999: 1739; 2000: 1893; 2001: 916; 2002: 535; 2003: 1367; 2004: 1364; 2005: 1740; 2006: 2075; 2007: 2155; 2008: 2155; 2009: 1255; 2010: 1500; 2011: 890; 2012: 1573</p> <p>(State Migration Service)</p>	<p>6.1 thousand foreign nationals were granted refugee status or complementary protection<sup>1</sup> in 1996-2012 to, including:</p> <p>1996: 1161; 1997: 1267; 1998: 753; 1999: 643; 2000: 895; 2001: 455; 2002: 2; 2003: 56; 2004: 80; 2005: 49; 2006: 65; 2007: 33; 2008: 125; 2009: 125; 2010: 124; 2011: 133; 2012: 152</p> <p>As of Jan 01, 2013 there were 2435 registered refugees in Ukraine (the number of registered refugees fluctuated between 2000 and 2500 in years 2005-2012).</p> <p>1996-2012: about 22.7% of all applicants were granted refugee status</p> <p>2008-2012: about 8% of all applicants were granted refugee status (State Migration Service)</p>	<p>Among those who applied for refugee status in 2012 (1573 people): Afghanistan 26%, Syria 17%, Somalia 17%, further: Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Iran</p> <p>Among those who were granted refugee status (63 people): Afghanistan (36 people), Azerbaijan (6), Somalia (4)</p> <p>Among those who obtained subsidiary protection (89 people): Somalia (41 people), Afghanistan (17), Syria (16), Iraq (8)</p> <p>Among registered refugees at the beginning of 2013: Afghanistan 55%; Armenia 8%, Azerbaijan 7%, Russia 4.4%, Georgia 3%, Democratic Republic of Congo 2%, Sudan 2%, Iraq 2%, Syria 2%, Iran 2%, Congo, Angola, Belarus, Ethiopia, Somalia, Palestine, Uzbekistan.</p> <p>(State Migration Service)</p>

Source: CARIM East Explanatory Notes on Asylum Seekers, Refugees and IDPs

The number of people seeking asylum in EaP states is relatively low. All EaP states apart from Ukraine are primarily asylum-seeker sending states. Taking into account that not all of those who apply in a given year get a decision in the same year, it is difficult to say exactly what proportion of the applicants receive a positive answer based only on data on the number of those who applied for and those who obtained a refugee status in a given year. However, looking at the numbers provided by CARIM East correspondents for Moldova and Ukraine, we see that in recent years the proportion of those who were granted refugee status among those who applied is relatively low (9% for Moldova and 8% for Ukraine). In comparison, the European Union on average gave positive decisions to 20% of applicants in 2008-2012<sup>2</sup> (Eurostat).

<sup>1</sup> Ukraine started to issue this form of protection only in 2012. However, it differs slightly from the subsidiary protection within the meaning of the EU law (UNHCR 2013).

<sup>2</sup> This is an EU average. However, some EU states were much more generous (Bulgaria, Netherlands, Finland and UK), while others were much more restrictive in giving positive decisions (e.g. Belgium, Spain, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta).

Looking at the fluctuations in the number of people seeking protection in EaP states and the most numerous nationalities applying for asylum, we see that in recent years those fluctuations were related to ongoing armed conflicts. During the years of the Second Chechen War launched in 1999, refugees from Russia dominated refugee inflow to most of the EaP states. Currently, due to the war in Syria there are many asylum seekers from this country. Their share amounted to 30% of refugees and beneficiaries of humanitarian aid and 44% of asylum seekers in Moldova in 2012. In Ukraine in 2012, they constituted 17% of all applicants for refugee status. Meanwhile, in Armenia over 90% of those who applied for refugee status in 2012-2013<sup>3</sup> were representatives of the Armenian diaspora from Syria (according to MRA data). Asylum seekers from Syria (mostly ethnic Adyge displaced to Syria after the Caucasian War of 1817-1864) do also find shelter in Abkhazia<sup>4</sup>, which together with neighboring territories belonging to Russia is considered to be their historical homeland. In recent years Afghanis should also be mentioned among the most numerous nationalities applying for asylum in EaP states.

The most scarce data has been delivered with respect to Georgia. Georgia is a special case as it is the only EaP state where UNHCR—while estimating the number of refugees apart from persons officially recognized as refugees or granted a complementary form of protection/temporary protection—also distinguishes a second category: people in a refugee-like situation. Among 469 cases at the end of 2012 UNHCR identified 329 refugees and 140 people in a refugee-like situation (UNHCR Global Trends 2012). The Georgian government declared recently that it is going to initiate a compulsory re-registration process which gives hope for obtaining more reliable data.

## 1.2 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

In the EaP countries there are basically two types of IDPs: the groups that emerged due to a conflict and forced removals and the groups that were forced to move by natural (or human-made) disasters. The general problem with statistics on IDPs in EaP states is the fact that sometimes it is difficult to say which of the above categories (and to which extent) is included in the presented numbers.

### Conflict-related IDPs

As far as IDPs are concerned, UNHCR notes their presence only in Azerbaijan and Georgia. According to its data as of January 2013, there were over 600.3 thousand IDPs in Azerbaijan and almost 280 thousand in Georgia<sup>5</sup>. We can assume that these are all conflict-related IDPs. As far as Georgia is concerned, statistics on IDPs provided by the MRA include people who have been granted IDP status and who receive the corresponding social benefits.

As mentioned before, in the case of Azerbaijan, issues related to refugees and IDPs are high on the political agenda and statistics are not clear-cut. Estimates presented by the authorities reach 1 million or even 1.2 million people (see Romyantsev 2013).

In the case of the other EaP states, no IDPs have been recently registered. In Moldova, the issue of IDPs came to the fore in the 1990s when due to the Transnistria conflict over 50 thousand people were registered as IDPs. However, at this point the problem has been almost completely solved – most of these people have returned to their places of permanent residence. But there are still about 200 families for whom this remains an urgent problem (Mosneaga 2013). Nevertheless, the problem of IDPs is not widely appreciated in Moldova.

As far as Armenia is concerned, the previously very pressing problem of IDPs seems to have been solved and as for now, no IDPs have been officially recognized in Armenia. Out of the 70-110

<sup>3</sup> 2013 data refers to the period from January to August.

<sup>4</sup> See for example <http://iwpr.net/report-news/abkhazia-takes-ethnic-kin-syria>.

<sup>5</sup> According to the MRA, the number of IDPs in Georgia amounted to 265 109 as of April 2012. These are mainly people who fled Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

thousand people (according to different estimates) who fled Azerbaijan in 1992-1994 due to the Karabakh conflict some returned to their previous places of residence, some remained in Armenia to obtain permanent residence, and around one third emigrated out of the country (Yeganyan 2013, Chobanyan 2013). That is also the official position of UNHCR; according to their statistics there are no IDPs in Armenia<sup>6</sup>. However, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, in its newest report (IDMC 2013), lists Armenia among the states for which the IDP issue is still current, but cites some probably outdated data from the Norwegian Refugee Council in 2004 (NRC 2004), which says there are up to 8.4 thousand IDPs in Armenia.

### **Natural and human-made disasters-related IDPs**

The collapse of the USSR was preceded by a few major natural and human-made disasters that resulted in forced migrations and led to emergence of groups of IDPs in certain EaP states. Among the most severe were the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident (which affected Belarus and Ukraine) and the Spitak earthquake in 1988 in Northern Armenia.

In Ukraine, the last internal displacements were related to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident in 1986. However, the relocation was complete by the mid 1990s. None of our correspondents has mentioned the presence of IDPs in Belarus with respect to the Chernobyl accident.

The 1988, the Spitak earthquake in Armenia resulted in 400-450 thousand IDPs, most of whom returned to their places of residence before the early 1990s.

As far as Moldova is concerned, if one takes into account recent natural disasters – a severe flood in 2008 and droughts in 2007 and 2011 – we can presume that there may be some people in an IDP-like situation in Moldova. However, no data are available on that issue (Ganta 2013).

## **2. Legal framework**

The legal framework includes provisions for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in all EaP countries, albeit to a varying extent. It is important to mention that in Armenia and Moldova, the laws on refugees that entered into force in the 1990s regulated the status and rights of refugees, who were defined as their own nationals fleeing conflict zones. Currently a refugee is predominantly defined as a status holder per the Geneva Convention.

In general, EaP countries do not use the definition of IDPs to denote populations that need resettlement and support due to natural disasters. Instead, IDPs are always defined (if at all) as post-conflict groups. In fact, at present only Azerbaijan and Georgia have separate laws regulating their status. Belarus and Ukraine have no special legal acts addressing IDPs. Armenia does not have a special legal framework addressing IDP issues, but it provides support through governmental policy strategies and actions, focusing mainly on sustainable return to near-border regions. In Moldova, as the issue of IDPs (refugees from Transnistria) seems to have been solved, current legislation focuses on the rights and protection of inhabitants of Transnistria, under a broad legal framework which focusing on reintegration of the country.

As indicated in Box 1, some of the EaP countries joined the 1951 Geneva Convention only at the beginning of the 21st century. Therefore, changes to their legislation have been introduced only recently. For example, in the case of Belarus, the appropriate law aligning national legislation with the Convention entered into force only in 2009.

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<sup>6</sup> See [www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48d126.html](http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48d126.html).

**Box 1. Accession of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees by EaP countries:**

Armenia	6 July 1993
Azerbaijan	12 February 1993
Belarus	23 August 2001
Georgia	9 August 1999
Moldova	31 January 2002
Ukraine	10 January 2002

All the EaP countries have a legal framework in place that implements the provisions of the Geneva Convention. There is also a clear indication of the responsible institutions and state bodies (see Table 2 below).

**Table 2. Main Legal Acts and Responsible Bodies in the Area of International Protection**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Main legal acts</b>	<b>Responsible bodies</b>
Armenia	2008 Law on Refugees and Asylum 2001 Law On Political Asylum	The State Migration Service
Azerbaijan	Law On the Legal Status of Refugees and Displaced Persons	The State Committee on the Affairs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons
Belarus	2008 Law On Refugee Status, Subsidiary and Temporary Protection to Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons	Department for Citizenship and Migration, Ministry of Internal Affairs
Georgia	2011 Law on Refugee Status and Humanitarian Status	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA)
Moldova	2008 Law on Asylum in the Republic of Moldova	Refugees division of the Bureau of Migration and Asylum within the Ministry of Internal Affairs
Ukraine	2011 The Law on Refugees and Persons in Need of Complementary or Temporary Protection	State Migration Service (till 2011 State Committee for Nationalities and Religion)

All the countries give rights to asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs, but their extent varies (see Table 3). Naturally, IDPs are those with the most consistent set of rights, as they are in fact nationals, while asylum seekers tend to have the fewest rights. Refugees are divided into two categories in some countries: post-conflict refugees from a country's own ethnic group and Geneva refugees. The first group has rights equal to those of IDPs, while the second group is in-between asylum seekers and IDPs, with rights and obligations equal to other foreign residents (and thus varying from country-to-country).

**Table 3. Access to Rights by IDPs, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees in EaP countries**

	Right to work	Access to housing, food, and clothing	Right to education	Access to healthcare	Family life	Access to public service	Access to social security
<b>Armenia</b>							
<b>IDPs</b>	yes	yes	yes	yes	n/a	yes (nationals)	yes
<b>Refugees</b>	yes	Yes (temporary)	Yes (basic)	Yes (conditions apply)		No (non-nationals)	Yes (conditions apply)
<b>Asylum Seekers</b>	Yes (temporary)	Yes (conditions apply)	Yes (basic)	Yes (conditions apply)	No (except for special circumstances)	No (non-nationals)	no
<b>Azerbaijan</b>							
<b>IDPs</b>	Yes (preferential treatment in State-run bodies and State companies)	yes	yes (free on all levels)	yes	n/a	yes (nationals)	yes
<b>Refugees</b>	Yes	Yes (temporary)	Yes (free for children)	Yes (free for families and children)	n/a	No (non-nationals)	Yes (conditions apply)
<b>Asylum Seekers</b>	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary)	n/a	No (non-nationals)	no
<b>Belarus</b>							
<b>IDPs</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Refugees</b>	Yes	Yes (temporary, conditions apply)			yes	No (non-nationals)	Yes (conditions apply)
<b>Asylum Seekers</b>	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary)	n/a	No (non-nationals)	no
<b>Georgia</b>							
<b>IDPs</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes (on all levels)	Yes	n/a	Yes (nationals)	Yes
<b>Refugees</b>	yes	Yes (temporary, special conditions apply)	Yes	Yes (conditions apply)	n/a	No (non-nationals)	Yes (conditions apply)
<b>Asylum Seekers</b>	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary)	n/a	No (non-nationals)	no

	Right to work	Access to housing, food, and clothing	Right to education	Access to healthcare	Family life	Access to public service	Access to social security
<b>Moldova</b>							
<b>IDPs</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes (on all levels)	Yes	Yes	Yes (nationals)	Yes
<b>Refugees</b>	Yes	Yes (temporary, conditions apply)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (non-nationals)	Yes (conditions apply)
<b>Asylum Seekers</b>	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary, families with children)	Yes (temporary)	Yes (temporary)	Yes (conditions apply)	No (non-nationals)	no
<b>Ukraine</b>							
<b>IDPs</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Refugees</b>	Yes	Yes (temporary, conditions apply; particular needs of newborns and elderly persons are attended in the law)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (non-nationals)	Yes (conditions apply)
<b>Asylum Seekers</b>	Yes (temporary; for the period of duration of temporary protection status)	Yes (temporary; particular needs of newborns and elderly persons are attended in the law)	Yes (temporary; for minors, in state educational institutions)	Yes (in state medical care institutions)	Yes	No (non-nationals)	Yes (conditions apply)

The above legal framework has been further translated into actual policy programs and governmental strategies that have been proposed to especially address the issues of IDPs and refugees, and to a lesser extent of asylum seekers.



### 3. Integration and social cohesion for specific groups of migrants

As one tries to assess the integration of refugees and IDPs into the societies of EaP countries, one important issue needs to be kept in mind; integration policies in the region have not been focused predominantly on recently arrived foreigners, but rather on four categories of persons:

- Members of a country's own ethnic group, moving from other areas after the collapse of the USSR together with their families (who are often not familiar with the country of destination);
- Refugees and IDPs from conflict areas (representatives of their own ethnic group or own nationals);
- Return migrants and readmitted migrants (their own nationals);
- Repatriates representing other ethnic groups (specific case of Meskhetian Turks in Georgia).

Therefore the policy makers in the EaP states can use the EU experience only to some extent. The EU approach to the integration of recently arrived foreigners is valuable only with regards to a narrow category of incomers with quite few actual cases in need of this specific type of integration. On one hand, the main challenge is to translate the experience of integrating groups such as *Aussiedlers* in Germany and repatriates in Poland and Hungary to the EaP countries in order to promote social cohesion of a country's own nationals and post-conflict IDPs. On the other hand, policies of social cohesion developed in the EU (addressing EU nationals) may be a source of inspiration when it comes to support for a country's own nationals in all categories. What is important is that EU approaches to post-disaster interventions can also be regarded as a useful set of solutions when it comes to support for post-disaster IDPs.

As it stands now, the awareness of these issues and work on slightly different categories of interest is not common in day-to-day EU-EaP cooperation. The focus of EU counterparts on the integration of foreigners is needed but addresses the third or fourth priority of the EaP partners (see CARIM East research papers on integration e.g. Rumyantzev 2013a, Ivaschenko 2013a, Chobanyan 2013a, Badurashvili 2013), while the burning issues of reintegration and social cohesion are less prominent in migration cooperation.

Having said that, the evidence gathered by the CARIM East network clearly shows that asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs in the EaP countries encounter obstacles on their way to integration, especially with regards to housing and employment.

#### 3.1. Geneva Convention refugees and asylum seekers of foreign origin

Although according to law refugees should be provided with appropriate housing, this problem has not yet been solved in all EaP states. Whereas asylum seekers are accommodated in the reception centers, recognized refugees are supposed to find long-term accommodation on their own. Programs of sustainable support have not been developed for this group of people and current solutions are ad-hoc reactions to the situation. However, due to the relatively low numbers of Geneva Convention refugees, the situation is still far from critical. With regards to asylum seekers, reception centers have for the moment experienced a particular strain in Ukraine, but since the war in Syria all EaP countries have seen a surge in the numbers of people searching for asylum. This is a clear challenge.

Only in Moldova have foreigners with refugee status had access to fully-fledged integration programs, including free language courses (Ciumas 2013, Mosneaga 2013). Appropriate law was adopted only in December 2011, which will hopefully lead to the improvement of refugee situations in that country. Even now, Moldova should be treated as a rather positive example and an exception among EaP states. The lack of integration programs in other EaP countries is quite striking. In particular, the lack of language courses hinders access to the labour market for those who have not at least learnt Russian previously and sends them on the road to deskilling and brain waste, putting social

cohesion in danger. It must be noted here that in 2012 the Ukrainian government adopted an Action Plan aimed at improving the situation, but it has not yet been implemented.

The lack of focus on integration can be explained by the composition of recent refugee groups. According to CARIM East notes, refugees originating in other post-Soviet states do not have greater integration problems. However, in Ukraine for example, people coming from other former Soviet republics are now the least likely to obtain refugee status. Refugees from Afghanistan also often speak Russian as many of them were educated on the territory of the former USSR. In Ukraine, the group of refugees from Afghanistan consists mainly of former students from Ukrainian universities who could not return home. But it must be noted that the picture is more complex and significant disparities can be noted in this group: women are usually less likely to integrate as they do not work and do not learn the language (Ivaschenko 2013).

Most of the refugees and asylum seekers in EaP states are dependent on limited state support. Some earn their living in the informal sector. One of the most popular spheres of the economy among refugees is trade (both wholesale and retail). Even highly-skilled refugees prefer to (or are forced to) work in the secondary sector (e.g. in Belarus).

### **3.2. Refugees of the same ethnic origin and post-conflict IDPs**

The failed integration of an old wave of refugees (representatives of a country's own ethnic group or nationality) from the 1990s is still a fact in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (where the recent inflow added to this group in 2008).

Access to basic rights for ethnic refugees in Armenia has been solved but 25 years after their inflow there are issues that still persist, mainly with regards to education and access to the labour market. However, they are not viewed as a target group or special-status group for the state-run programs on integration. With regards to IDPs, the post-conflict and post-disaster IDPs in Armenia are the target group of governmental actions.

The surge in the inflows of Syrian asylum seekers has been the major issue in EaP countries in recent years, especially in the South Caucasus. In Armenia, the number of Syrian Armenians far exceeds (by six times) ordinary reception capacities. However, thanks to links to Armenians living in Armenia as well as to the positive attitudes of the society, accommodation and social integration seem to be less problematic than in the case of totally foreign groups. Language is an issue but courses of Eastern Armenian are provided to limited numbers of participants (Chobanyan 2013).

Azeri refugees and IDPs are treated together as one group and thus their sometimes different problems are not necessarily addressed. Housing problems of IDPs are said to have been solved in Azerbaijan where after 2001-2002, protests started to resettle IDPs from tent camps to more permanent settlements. This process was completed at the beginning of 2010 (Yunusov 2013). The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, however, writes in its report that some of the IDPs have been resettled to locations far from neighboring towns, thus offering limited access to services and labour market opportunities (IDMC 2010).

The above mentioned problems also concern IDPs. The situation of IDPs in Georgia, despite governmental and international support, should still be described as difficult. A study conducted recently by the Centre of Migration Studies at Tbilisi State University showed that the unemployment level among IDPs in Georgia is much higher than in Georgian society at large and is characterized by long-term unemployment. According to the study almost half the IDPs from Abkhazia have not had a job for 3 years (Tukhashvili 2013). Further problems concern tough living conditions in places of temporary residence.

### 3.3 Policies and programs

With regards to all the groups, it must be emphasized that individuals often lack appropriate documents allowing them to take up legal employment, which contributes to their further marginalization. This pertains to individuals subject to complementary protection and asylum seekers in Ukraine, as well as ethnic refugees in Azerbaijan and Armenia (also because these groups are not entirely comfortable with taking up the nationality of the host country, hoping instead for return or for compensations).

However, obstacles to integration can also be found on the demand side, as integration is a two-way process. It is a fact that many refugees treat EaP countries as a temporary stop on the way to further destinations (mainly the USA, Canada and Western Europe). Therefore, they do not intend to integrate. They often do not manage to move further to their target destination and instead continue to live in the EaP states for many years. There are currently no programs that address this issue and encourage individual integration projects of migrants in the region.

As made clear by the table below, the main support for the integration of Geneva refugees, people in subsidiary protection, and asylum seekers is organized by international donors. The EU is the main actor in this regard, supporting not only UNHCR but also local NGOs (especially in Ukraine and Belarus).

**Table 4. Examples of policy documents and support initiatives**

Country	Policy document or support initiative
all EaP countries	Asylum Systems Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, 2013-2014, UNHCR
Armenia	On Assistance for the Return of Internally Displaced Persons Residing in Border Settlements of Armenia to their Places of Origin, 2008 (not implemented yet)
Azerbaijan	State Program for improving living conditions and increasing employment of refugees and IDPs Local Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Azerbaijan - Strategies for Improving lives in displacement - DANSK FLYGTNINGEHJAEPL, co-funded by the EU
Belarus	Temporary Accommodation Center (TAC) for the psychological and social adaptation of refugees (as a part of EU TACIS – UNHCR project “Strengthening the National Asylum System in the Republic of Belarus”) Local Integration of Refugees in the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine Phase 1 and 2 – UNHCR, co-funded by the EU Legal and Social Protection of Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children in Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova - DANSK FLYGTNINGEHJAEPL, co-funded by the EU

Georgia	<p>Overall Assessment of Resources Required for the Implementation of the IDP State Strategy Action Plan 2009-2012</p> <p>Order of Georgian Government # 403 on the Approval of the Action Plan for the Implementation of State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons- Refugees during 2009-2012</p> <p>Decree of the Georgian Government #575 Regarding the Amendment to the Government Decree #403 of 28 May, 2009 about the Action Plan for the Implementation of the State Strategy on IDPs during 2009-2012</p> <p>Order of Georgian Government # 489 On the Approval of an Action Plan for the Implementation of State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons- Refugees, 2008</p>
Moldova	<p>Local Integration of Refugees in the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine Phase 1 and 2 – UNHCR, co-funded by the EU</p> <p>Legal and Social Protection of Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children in Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova - DANSK FLYGTNINGEHJÆLP, co-funded by the EU</p> <p>Strategy on Migration and Asylum Management in the Republic of Moldova</p> <p>National action plan in the field of migration and asylum, 2010-2011</p> <p>National Action Plan in the Field of Migration and Asylum, 2010-2011</p> <p>National Action Plan in the Field of Migration and Asylum, 2008-2009</p> <p>National Action Plan in the Field of Migration and Asylum, 2006-2009</p>
Ukraine	<p>Action Plan for the integration of refugees and persons in need of additional protection in Ukrainian society by 2020, August 2012</p> <p>Local Integration of Refugees in the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine Phase 1 and 2 – UNHCR, co-funded by the EU</p> <p>Legal and Social Protection of Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children in Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova - DANSK FLYGTNINGEHJÆLP, co-funded by the EU</p>

The sense of ownership and responsibility for the fate of foreign refugees and asylum seekers is rather low among EaP countries, and the groups in question have to date been so small that they easily fall off the policy radar. Public opinion in general remains indifferent to these groups, which keeps them off political agenda.

The situation of ethnic refugees and IDPs is slightly different, but it nowadays it pertains mainly to the South Caucasus. Politicization of these groups and their constant separation from mainstream society is most visible in Azerbaijan. In Armenia it seems the situation has been stabilizing, whereas in Georgia the issue was revived after the 2008 war. International donors are also involved in the support for these groups.

## Conclusions

Relatively low numbers of people are interested in finding asylum in EaP states. Those who take the opportunity often treat EaP states as transit countries on the way to further destinations and therefore do not even try to integrate.

IDP issues are still relevant in the Caucasus. Officially, IDPs are registered only in Azerbaijan and Georgia, while in Armenia this once very pressing issue seems to have lost its significance. The problem of IDPs is highly politicized especially in Azerbaijan and thus information concerning this issue is often ambiguous.

All EaP countries are parties to the Geneva Convention and take on their international obligations, albeit to varied extent. All have in place institutional frameworks for the implementation of the

Convention. However implementation of the obligations, especially in the area of integration and access to rights is still imperfect. This can be also said about the situation of post-conflict IDPs, residing mainly in Georgia and Azerbaijan. The main issues for all vulnerable groups concern access to the labour market. However, it must be noted that the employment situation in the EaP countries is rather difficult for the local populations as well.

In general, issues connected to refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs do not seem a priority for EaP state authorities. Relatively small resources are devoted to this policy field and state support is rather limited. The integration policies are instead predominantly financed and implemented by international donors.

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*List of CARIM East explanatory notes on refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs (available at <http://www.carim-east.eu/publications/explanatory-notes/>)*

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