

## MIGRANT SUPPORT MEASURES FROM AN EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS PERSPECTIVE (MISMES)

# ARMENIA



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# PREFACE

This report is the European Training Foundation (ETF)'s latest contribution to an informed policy dialogue on migration in the context of employment and skills. It is part of a series of reports that present the main findings of the project on migrant support measures from an employment and skills perspective (MISMES). The project was coordinated by the Migration Policy Centre of the European University Institute (EUI) under the supervision of the ETF.

The result of this project is a worldwide inventory of migrant support measures implemented in sending countries, to facilitate labour mobility and increase the developmental effect of migration. In addition, five in-depth studies were conducted in the countries, which concluded mobility partnerships with the European Union (EU): Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Morocco, and Tunisia. For the purpose of these reports, MISMES are defined as specific policy interventions – pre, during and post migration – aimed at improving the labour market integration of migrant workers or the matching of their skills.

This report is about mapping and reviewing migrant support measures in Armenia<sup>1</sup>. Dr Sona Kalantaryan, from the Migration Policy Centre of the EUI, prepared the report under the coordination of Shushanik Makaryan, also from the EUI. Valuable contributions were provided by Iván Martín as the project coordinator, as well as by Philippe Fargues and Alessandra Venturini from the EUI team. From the ETF team, significant inputs and feedback were provided by Milena Corradini, Ummuhan Bardak and Anna Kahlson.

The study has greatly benefited from the assistance and collaboration of the institutions and individuals involved in the migration work in Armenia and we would like to thank, in particular, Haykanush Chobanyan, Head of the External Relations Division of the State Migration Service, and Hovhannes Poghosyan, Director at the National Institute of Labour and Social Research, who attended the final workshop of the MISMES project in September 2014 and provided very useful comments on this report.

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<sup>1</sup> An Excel file containing more detailed information on a total of 19 projects is available on the web, see: [www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/MISMES](http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/MISMES)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Armenia became independent as a result of the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, accompanied by a number of severe economic and political crises. As with many other former Soviet republics, it was exposed to numerous socio-economic problems related to the decline in industry and the fundamental structural shifts in the economy during the transition period in the post-Soviet era. Moreover, the country faced additional difficulties as a result of a devastating earthquake and the economic blockade due to ethnic conflicts in the region. From 1990 until 2005 it is estimated that between 700,000 to 1,300,000 Armenians left their homeland and settled abroad. Unlike the emigration in the pre-transition period, when migration decisions were well thought out, migration during the transition period was an immediate response to rapidly deteriorating socio-economic and political realities. Only a minority of Armenian migrants choose European countries as a destination, while the absolute majority go to Russia. This is most probably due to the existing barriers and the absence of mechanisms facilitating migration from Armenia to Europe rather than the unattractiveness of these destinations.

Though migration intensity has recently weakened significantly, it still plays an important role in Armenia where a significant part of the working-age population continues to be involved in migration. An important milestone in making Armenia-EU migration issues more constructive was achieved through the Joint Declaration of EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership signed in October 2011. Hence, migration-related issues are important for local and international policy makers which underlines the importance of research in this field. Given the importance of labour migration from Armenia, research on migrant support measures (in particular from employment and skills perspective) implemented in or by the country and their results in terms of medium and long-term impact on migrants has been largely neglected by the research community. As a result, there has been limited information and data available on such interventions and policy measures to support migrants before, during and after migration.

This study makes a first contribution by identifying and mapping these specific policy interventions, namely, migrant support measures from an employment and skill perspective (MISMES), which have been implemented between 2000 and 2014 in Armenia and aims at analysing these measures from the point of view of the cost-efficiency and impact. These measures aim at achieving better migration management through encouraging labour market integration, skill matching and better use of migrants' skills (for more information of study methodology, see Annex 1).

The study was carried out based on secondary data sources (academic literature, policy research, reports, legal documents, projects evaluations, project leaflets, press releases, internet sources etc.), as well as the information obtained through a standardized questionnaire (in English and Russian) circulated among the key MISMES implementers in Armenia (see Annex 2). The collected information allowed a national inventory that maps the implemented measures and provides a detailed description of each measure (see Excel file on the web<sup>2</sup>). The results of this inventory provide information which allows conclusions and policy recommendations regarding the MISMES implemented in Armenia in general, and in the framework of the Armenia-EU Mobility Partnership in particular. Below is a summary of the main findings and recommendations.

There have been at least 19 MISMES projects/measures implemented in Armenia since 2000. These projects are mainly financed from abroad (EU, European countries, international organisations), and implemented both by local and international organisations. The implemented MISMES addressed

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<sup>2</sup> [www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/MISMES](http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/MISMES)

different phases of migration (pre-, during- and post-migration phases) and target a wide range of issues including policy development and capacity building.

The inventory shows that there was only one pre-departure MISMES, an electronic job-matching platform, and two ongoing during-migration MISMES that both deal with capitalising the skills of migrants across borders. The biggest share of MISMES in Armenia belongs to the post-migration phase and addresses the return and reintegration of migrants; and there are also several multidimensional MISMES (typically migrant resource centres), which have the potential to contribute to the effective management of migration as they frequently deal with migrants in all three phases of migration.

The inventory of measures clearly points towards the possibility to better balance the interventions and projects/measures implemented and should be taken into account by both state authorities, international donors and implementing bodies. The inventory also indicates that most measures/projects are funded by international donors and destination countries and that the implementers often are offices of international organisations, and national or international non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

One of the most distinct features of MISMES in Armenia is the retroactive focus of implemented measures, the most common category of MISMES in the post-migration phase is Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes, and the lack of a forward looking approach. The vast majority of MISMES in Armenia dealt with the return and reintegration of migrants, which points to a clear bias favouring measures resolving issues related to 'failure' (the return and reintegration of irregular migrants, rejected asylum-seekers) rather than those ensuring 'success' (circular migration, cross-border skill recognition, etc.). There is no or very little evidence of cross project coordination or learning (within and between countries). This potentially undermines the overall efficiency of implemented projects. The inventory of measures maps the AVRR projects over time and shows a clear overlap. Ideally, the reports and evaluations delivered by the pioneers should have served as an orienting guide for those who followed.

The above presented conclusion regarding balance between implemented measures also indicates a possible lack of collaboration and coordination between organisations, possibly contributing to the overlap among projects. Similar projects run simultaneously requires more human resources and hence makes cost-efficiency questionable. The integration of these projects into already established institutional activities (i.e. State Employment Service Agency) should be considered. This could lead to an increase in overall efficiency through the utilization of already existing capacities (including human resources), better coordination, and lower running costs and ultimately increased sustainability. The inventory also points to a gradual progress regarding the development of institutional, strategic and legal frameworks for the better management of migration.

The efforts regarding migration management in Armenia should have a more forward looking prospective; a set of policy measures ensuring circular migration as well as labour market integration and the improved skill utilization of migrants workers both in Armenia and abroad should prevail. The Mobility Partnership between the EU and Armenia is very balanced in terms of migration phases. It allows for the development of efficient migration management between Armenia and the EU and several of the actions undertaken potentially have MISMES components but the focus, again, mostly have been on return and reintegration. Despite the multifaceted nature of the Mobility Partnership, this indicates that the full potential is still not utilized, and there is room for improvement and that a more forward looking approach would be beneficial. In addition, measures focused on skills, for example the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and alternative use of remittances, such as business start-up schemes, should be given priority.

One of the aims of this study was to evaluate implemented MISMES from a cost-efficiency point of view. Unfortunately, the majority of projects included in the inventory do not have any formal evaluation, and the information regarding ongoing or completed projects is both scarce and, when available, fragmented. This makes evaluation of cost-efficiency impossible. It also indicates the need to develop a framework for the collecting and sharing of project data/information to make impact assessment, external evaluation and long-term follow-up possible.

Many of the measures that are included in this study contained different communication/ information aspects, but other research indicates a low level of awareness about available support among migrants or where to find relevant information. Coordination of information should be strengthened and both implementers and state authorities should put more efforts into raising public awareness of both pre-departure and reintegration measures and better tailor information as well as information channels to relevant target groups.

Finally, there is a need to address policies dealing with corruption and (non)transparency in the labour market. Informal 'connections' is considered the most important factor for getting a good job in Armenia and education and skills/work experience ranks only as the second and third most important factors. This indicates that measures addressing skill enhancement alone might not be sufficient to ensure employment and assuring more transparency in the hiring process can increase the chances of returnees being employed and so mitigate 'brain drain' in general.

# 1. INTRODUCTION: MIGRATION BACKGROUND

In the past years the ETF conducted studies on migration and skills focusing on specific countries neighbouring the EU (ETF 2013). This earlier research provided evidence on the skills profiles of migrants, and how those skills are underutilised abroad and upon return. It also showed the need for policy measures to support migrants to improve job and skills-matching for the benefit of the receiving countries, countries of origin and the migrants themselves (ETF 2014). As a result, the MISMES project was launched and carried out in 2014 by the ETF, with the support of the Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute.

## 1.1 Migration facts

Armenia became independent as a result of the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, accompanied by a number of severe economic and political crises. As with many other former Soviet republics, Armenia was exposed to numerous socio-economic problems related to the decline in industry and the fundamental structural shifts in the economy during the transition period in the post-Soviet era. Moreover, the country faced additional difficulties, which were the results of a devastating earthquake and the economic blockade due to ethnic conflicts in the region, which escalated to the level of military actions.

Experts estimate that between 1990 and 2005, some 700,000-1,300,000 Armenians left their homeland and settled abroad (OSCE and AST, 2008)<sup>3</sup>. Unlike the pre-transition period emigration (i.e. before the Soviet collapse), when migration decisions were well thought out, migration during the transition period was an immediate response to rapidly deteriorating socio-economic and political realities. Though migration has recently decreased significantly, it continues to play an important role in Armenia, with a significant part of the working-age population being involved in migration.

According to the most recent estimates, the stock of Armenian emigrants is around 820,000 (28.2% of the resident population) (World Bank, 2011). Survey-based estimates show that in January 2009 some 9.5% of household members aged 15 years and older were involved in international (71.3%) and internal (28.7%) migration movements. The number of individuals who were involved in international migration since 2009 and who have not returned as of 2012 was around 29,000: almost 79% of them residing in Russia and only 2.5% in European countries (NSS, 2012b). According to the ETF Migration and Skills Survey, 12.7% of interviewed households have had a migrant member (ETF and CRRC, 2013)<sup>4</sup>. The share of individuals who report that they have relatives abroad was found to be larger in other surveys<sup>5</sup>. These estimates reveal that Russia is the main destination of Armenian migrants. The visa-free regime with Russia, large migrants networks, cheap transportation costs and Armenians'

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<sup>3</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in collaboration with Advance Social Technologies (AST) conducted nationwide surveys on labour migration from Armenia for 2002-05 and 2005-07. The results of the survey were later elaborated and presented in 'Labour Migration from Armenia in 2002-2008'. Some authors analysed the results from the individual perspective while the evolution of Armenian society has been observed as the background affecting decisions and influencing migrant behaviour (Guarneri, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> This survey was conducted by the ETF and the Caucasus Resource Research Centre in all 11 regions (*marzes*) and in both rural and urban areas of Armenia at the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012. The survey nationally representative and a total of 2,630 potential migrants and 1,395 returned migrants were interviewed.

<sup>5</sup> The Caucasus Barometer Survey is an annual household survey conducted by the CRRC on social economic issues and political attitudes in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia since 2009 (see <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets/>). The share of respondents who answered positively the question 'Do you have a family member or close relative currently living abroad, outside the borders of country?' for 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 is 0.59, 0.63, 0.68, 0.80 and 0.83 (so not decreasing).



knowledge of the Russian language are all facilitating factors for migration to that country (Calenda 2014).

Research shows that the poor economic situation in the country (low wages, high unemployment rate) is the main push factor for migration: from 4.5 to 7.5% of the population (which constitute 140,000-230,000 individuals) express a willingness to migrate (Vardanyan and Yeganyan, 2013; ETF, 2011). As seen in **TABLE 1.1**, unemployment is a continuous problem. Armenian migrants heavily rely on their social networks in the pre-departure phase and during migration itself. Having a migrant member is an important factor fortifying emigration intentions and with a strong potential for chain migration (Grigoryan 2013). While these networks facilitate the entrance of new migrants into various social spheres in the destination country, these networks also limit migrants' socio-economic mobility opportunities. The networks marginalize migrants from mainstream resources in the destination country (Klvanova 2009).

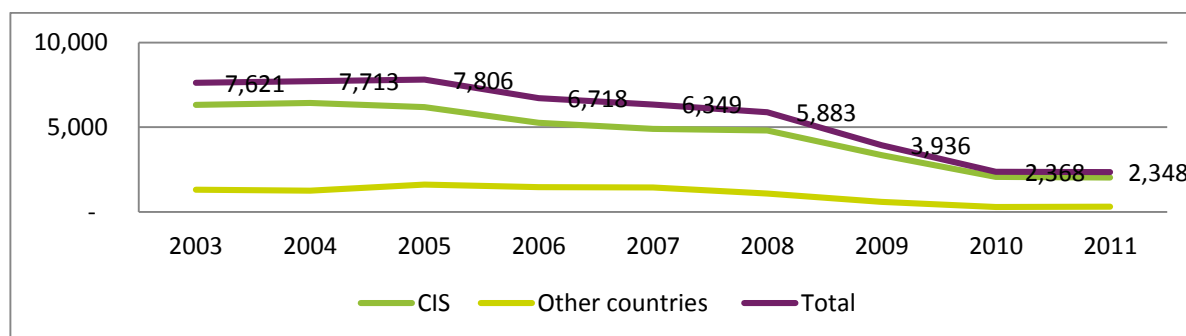
**TABLE 1.1 UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY GENDER AND EDUCATION (%)**

|  | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Total</b>                               | 16.4 | 18.7 | 19   | 18.4 | 17.3 |
| <b>By place of residence</b>               |      |      |      |      |      |
| Urban                                      | 23.2 | 27.3 | 27.8 | 26.9 | 25.5 |
| Rural                                      | 6.6  | 6.3  | 6.1  | 5.8  | 5.3  |
| <b>By gender</b>                           |      |      |      |      |      |
| Male                                       | 14.4 | 17.8 | 17   | 17.3 | 16.5 |
| Female                                     | 18.6 | 19.8 | 21.2 | 19.6 | 18.2 |
| <b>By education level</b>                  |      |      |      |      |      |
| Tertiary, post-graduate                    | 16.7 | 18.2 | 19.5 | 19.5 | 18.2 |
| Secondary specialized, incomplete tertiary | 18.4 | 21.6 | 20.3 | 20.1 | 18.4 |
| Vocational                                 | 16.2 | 19.2 | 20.3 | 17.8 | 24.8 |
| General secondary                          | 16.1 | 18.5 | 19   | 17.4 | 16.3 |
| General basic                              | 13.7 | 15.7 | 15.1 | 17.3 | 15.5 |
| Primary, incomplete primary                | 2    | 3.7  | 4.5  | 2.2  | 1.5  |

Source: NSS online database (NSS, 2011; 2012; 2013), author's elaboration

**FIGURE 1.1** below demonstrates the dynamics of emigration from Armenia based on the difference in registration in and cancellation from local registers. The figure demonstrates that the intensity of emigration weakened from 2003 to 2011. This is perhaps due to the changes in the pull factors of destination (e.g. Russia with worsening of the economic situation and tightened immigration policies with the new legislation) rather than by changes in push factors. According to administrative data coming from the passengers' turnover, the annual balance between departures and arrivals is approximately 51,000 persons for 2010-12.

**FIGURE 1.1 MIGRATION MOVEMENTS BALANCE BETWEEN 2003 AND 2011**



Source: NSS (2012a), Demographic Handbook of Armenia 2012, author's elaboration.

Despite the relative decline in the emigration rate, the intention to migrate remains very strong among Armenians. According to the ETF and the CRRC (2013), one third of the respondents 'are thinking seriously about moving abroad to live and work at the moment'<sup>6</sup>. The proportion of those willing to migrate is significantly higher in families that already have a migrant family member (45.37% vs 32.46%). The results of an econometric analysis based on the same survey data conducted by Grigoryan (2013) indicate that the level of education does not affect the likelihood to migrate. Moreover, being employed increases the intentions to migrate. This result might indicate that migration is attractive to individuals who are relatively competitive in the labour market with potentially larger opportunities overseas. There is not much difference in intentions to emigrate between households in rural or urban areas, although households with migrant-members abroad are more likely to own less land in rural areas (Agadjanian and Sevoyan, 2013).

**TABLE 1.2 LABOUR RESOURCES – ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION DYNAMICS**

|   | 2008  | 2009  | 2010  | 2011  | 2012  |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Total population (in 1000s)                               | 3,230 | 3,238 | 3,249 | 3,018 | 3,021 |
| Labour resources (in 1000s)                               | 2,377 | 2,398 | 2,390 | 2,286 | 2,261 |
| Economically active population (in 1000s) – Total         | 1,415 | 1,419 | 1,463 | 1,441 | 1,418 |
| Economically active population (in 1000s) – Young (15-40) | 630   | 628   | 652   | 629   | 625   |
| Economically active population by education level (%)     |       |       |       |       |       |
| Tertiary, post-graduate                                   | 21.1  | 22.5  | 22.9  | 25.4  | 25.4  |
| Secondary specialized, incomplete tertiary                | 23.8  | 24.4  | 23.8  | 24.1  | 23.8  |
| Vocational  | 3.9   | 3.2   | 2.7   | 2.4   | 2.5   |
| General secondary   | 42.1  | 41.2  | 42.4  | 40.2  | 40.8  |
| General basic   | 7.8   | 6.9   | 7.1   | 6.9   | 6.6   |
| Primary, incomplete primary                               | 1.4   | 1.8   | 1.1   | 0.9   | 0.9   |

Source: NSS online database (NSS, 2011; 2012; 2013), author's elaboration

<sup>6</sup> The results of annual Caucasus Barometer Survey confirm that the intention to migrate is not diminishing over time. The pattern is stronger among those considering permanent migration; the share of respondents willing to leave Armenia for good has grown from 21% in 2008 to 32% in 2013 (<http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/>).

As seen in **TABLE 1.2**, slightly more than half of the economically active population in Armenia has at least vocational levels of education. The share of tertiary educated individuals has grown over time and in 2012 it was above 25%. However, the Armenian labour market demonstrates a huge mismatch between the output of the education system and employment opportunities. Almost 14% of employed individuals consider that their job does not comply with their qualifications (**TABLE 1.3**). The skills mismatch is the highest among individuals with secondary specialized/incomplete tertiary and vocational education; respectively, 34% and 28%. Skill mismatch remains an issue for Armenian migrants abroad too. Only half of potential migrants think that the work they will find abroad will correspond to their level of qualifications (ETF and CRRC, 2013). Almost 28% of returnees report that they had jobs below their education level. Qualification-job mismatch abroad is more intense among highly educated migrants (55%) and women (39%) (ETF, 2013).

**TABLE 1.3 SKILL MISMATCH (%) – ANSWERS TO ‘DOES THIS WORK COMPLY WITH YOUR QUALIFICATION?’**

| Level of education                         | Yes                               | No                           |                              |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
|  | It complies with my qualification | It is below my qualification | It is above my qualification |
| Total                                      | 85.77                             | 13.76                        | 0.47                         |
| Tertiary, post-graduate                    | 81.45                             | 18.55                        | 0.00                         |
| Secondary specialized, incomplete tertiary | 65.33                             | 34.07                        | 0.60                         |
| Vocational                                 | 72.07                             | 27.93                        | 0.00                         |
| General secondary                          | 98.90                             | 0.42                         | 0.68                         |
| General basic                              | 98.98                             | 0.41                         | 0.61                         |
| Primary, incomplete primary                | 100.0                             | 0.00                         | 0.00                         |

Note: The estimates are based on self-reported information.

Source: NSS 2012b, Income and Living Conditions Survey 2012, author’s elaboration

The main source of available information regarding returnees are surveys which state that almost 86,400 nationals returned to Armenia from abroad during 2001-07. This is 3% of total population and 29% of all emigrants over the same period. More than 80% of returnees had made at least two trips during this period, and each migrant carried out an average of 2.2 trips, which points to the circular/seasonal nature of migration (Yeganyan, 2013a). Wives of migrants (left behind as their husbands have emigrated) are less likely to be employed outside of the household than wives of non-migrants (Ishkanian, 2002). Remittances, accounting for 20% of the GDP in Armenia (World Bank n.d.), continue to be an important factor shaping the income of many Armenian households. However, their positive effect is limited to the period when remittances are received (Vardanyan and Yeganyan, 2013). This fact is confirmed by the ETF survey: the remittances sent back home are generally spent to cover everyday living expenses of households and only a small part of them are used to invest in education or business activities (ETF, 2013).

Fragmented information is also available on the potential labour force Armenia can offer to the international labour market with a special focus on the skills: qualifications, length of experience and the availability of formal certificates (UNDP, 2009; IOM Armenia, 2011). Few other studies analysed the impact of labour migration on Armenian society (Makaryan and Galstyan, 2013; Minasyan et al., 2007), migration dynamics and migrant profiles (Yeganyan et al., 2001; Gevorkyan et al., 2006; ILO, 2009; BMP, 2011), quality of migration statistics (Makaryan, 2012; UNFPA, 2007), and migration policy making (Ademmer and Borzel, 2013; Chobanyan, 2011; GIZ, 2012; Makaryan and Chobanyan, 2014; Aghababyan, 2011 and 2012; Chobanyan, 2012a-d; Yeganyan, 2012).

When the negotiations on the Mobility Partnership agreement between Armenia and the European Union moved forward, the need to evaluate the channels through which better migration management can be achieved became urgent (Chobanyan, 2013; Yeganyan, 2013a-b; Aghababyan, 2013a-b). As a result, research focused also on the costs and benefits of labour migration management (Barbone et al., 2013a-b; Bournazian and Harutyunyan, 2012). Another interesting research is on the gains of returnees: while more than half of returned migrants states that they acquired new skills during their stay abroad; almost none of these new skills were certified or documented. Despite high volumes of emigration, only 6% of potential and return migrants are aware of migrant support measures and only 3% have used them (ETF and CRRC, 2013).

## 1.2 Migration policies and institutions

Despite its intensity, migration was not, for a long time, addressed adequately by Armenia's policy makers at national level. In the newly independent Armenia, migration was mainly shaped by individual decisions taken under the pressure of socio-economic hardship or/and military conflicts in Karabakh, which led to an economic blockade of Armenia in the early 1990s. The absence of state migration management was partially explained by the lack of experience in migration policy under the new democratic reality which required the development of new legislation and administrative systems. Armenian policy makers began to address issues related to migration management in the early 2000s. However, the absence of an appropriate legal framework ensuring the possibility of regular migration created a number of issues. These, in turn, required more complex solutions with the active involvement of state bodies, international organisations and NGOs.

The functions of the State Department for Migration and Refugees of Armenia (executive body in charge of migration issues during 2000-05) were limited to dealing with issues related to refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons in the country. Only in 2009, with the recommendations of the interagency working group established to reform migration management, the State Migration Service (SMS) was created within the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations (see [www.smsmta.am/](http://www.smsmta.am/)). The SMS has around 30 staff and four main policy units: migration policy, integration issues, asylum issues and external relations. Its key function seems to be registering and dealing with the asylum seekers and internally displaced people of Armenian origin (coming from Azerbaijan and recently Syria) in the database based on the regions (marzes).

The SMS has, as one of its key functions, the coordination of activities among the governmental institutions dealing with migration issues and related policy development (e.g. migration regulations and policies as well as coordination of labour migration). The first elements of the state policy on migration were formulated in 2000 in the Concept of State Regulation of Migration in Armenia. This was later revised in 2004 and, then again, in 2010. In reality no practical steps were undertaken to achieve objectives stated in this document until late 2011. The reason for the reluctant attitude of policy makers might be rooted in the absence of political will due to the fear that such actions would intensify emigration<sup>7</sup>. The main political objectives of the state regulation of migration, first stated in the Republic of Armenia Government Programme in 2008, define 'averting emigration and encouraging immigration' as one of the main objectives<sup>8</sup>. However, it also underlines the importance of the 'integration of citizens of the Republic of Armenia into the international labour market'.

Based on the latest 2010 version of the Concept paper, the Government approved the '2012-2016 Action plan for the implementation of the concept for the policy of state regulation of migration in the

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<sup>7</sup> According to Caucasus Barometer Survey, the Armenian population considers 'emigration' one of most important issues facing Armenia (after unemployment and poverty), see <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/>

<sup>8</sup> 'Key Priorities of Government Activities' was approved by the Governmental Decision N 380-U 28 April 2008.

Republic of Armenia' and established an Interagency Committee for monitoring its execution<sup>9</sup>. Along with many other issues considered, the document contains provisions for the implementation of migration policies from an employment and skills perspective. Particularly, Issue 5 has elements addressing the protection of rights and interests of Armenian citizens leaving for overseas employment while Issue 8 provides a legal framework to ensure support to returnee migrants, as well as their re-integration.

In addition to the SMS and the Interagency Committee, other governmental bodies are involved in the migration management and related to labour migration, especially the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and its State Employment Service Agency for labour migrants and returnees, and the Ministry of Diaspora for the development of the Armenian diaspora partnerships, implementation of cultural programmes, organisation of short visits for youth, businessmen and artists, daily activities of pan-Armenian associations and annual publication of the Armenian Diaspora Yearbook ([www.mindiaspora.am/en/index](http://www.mindiaspora.am/en/index)). Due to the special historical circumstances, there is approximately 7 million Armenian diaspora, with the largest populations in Russia, the United States, France, Argentina, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Turkey, Canada, Ukraine, Greece, and Australia.

The initial absence of a legal framework targeting migration management created a significant barrier for the integration of specific MISMES into migration regulation strategy, making the sustainability of implemented projects challenging. The successful implementation of any project was, first of all, conditional on creating an appropriate environment to enable policy dialogue. There have been several projects implemented by international and local bodies that contributed to capacity building in the field of migration management and that enabled implementation of later measures<sup>10</sup>.

Bilateral labour agreements and specific agreements regarding the portability of social rights of migrants have proved important instruments in facilitating inter-country migration management. Armenia has signed several bilateral agreements on labour migration with of the hope of promoting legal and circular migration (Georgia (1993), Russia (1994), Ukraine (1995) and Belarus (2000)).<sup>11</sup> However, these bilateral agreements were limited because there has been no consistent implementation, partially because of a lack of appropriate mechanisms facilitating it (Chobanyan 2012b). Indeed, none of these agreements comprehensively regulates all migration specific aspects; they only outline generic approaches without specifying the concrete mechanisms for the regulation of employment and for the social protection of labour migrants and their family members (ICHD, 2013). The only exception is Russia, where some concrete actions were set out<sup>12</sup>.

Despite the relatively transparent borders, unexpected obstacles might still threaten mobility between Armenia and Russia. For example, lately around 35,000 Armenian nationals, who were until recently working in Russia, were included in the list of individuals who are not allowed to enter Russia. The situation was caused by recent changes in migration legislation in Russia that made registration requirements stricter and had retroactive power. Subsequent negotiations between state authorities resolved this issue and led to a new agreement regarding the orderly stay of Armenian citizens in

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<sup>9</sup> Government of the Republic of Armenia, Decision No 1593-n 10 November 2011, [www.smsmta.am/?id=1011](http://www.smsmta.am/?id=1011)

<sup>10</sup> The following projects have had an important capacity building contribution: 'Support to migration policy development and relevant capacity building in Armenia', 'Institutional Capacity Building in the Field of Migration Information and Cooperation Regarding Reintegration of Armenian Migrants', 'Towards Sustainable Partnerships for the Effective Governance of Labour Migration in the Russian Federation, the Caucasus and Central Asia', 'Support to the Circular Migration and Re-integration Process in Armenia'.

<sup>11</sup> The full list of Bilateral Agreements is available at: [www.smsmta.am/?menu\\_id=15](http://www.smsmta.am/?menu_id=15)

<sup>12</sup> In the framework of cooperation a joint Armenian-Russian working group was established. The Russian part elaborated the Draft of Intergovernmental Agreement on a regulated recruitment of Armenian labour force for employment in the territory of Russian Federation. The cooperation related issues were further discussed during the meetings of the working group in charge (June 2010 and June 2011).

Russia and *vice versa* (11 July 2014)<sup>13</sup>. Still, this incident indicates the ongoing tendency of tightening entry conditions for Armenian migrants into Russia.

Armenia has cooperation proposals in the field of labour migration with several countries. An agreement regarding the Armenian skilled labour force was pre-signed between Armenia and Qatar (7 July 2011). The United Arab Emirates has also initiated a dialogue regarding bilateral cooperation with Armenia. In 2011 Armenia and Kazakhstan were discussing a draft Memorandum of Understanding on labour and social protection. The draft included a wide range of issues regarding migration management between the two countries. Starting from January 2014 Armenians get the work permit for Poland through the simplified scheme, a privileged system of employment also open to Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Georgia and Moldova.

There have been several attempts to negotiate bilateral agreements between Armenia and the EU Member States regarding migration management. Bulgaria initiated an 'Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Bulgaria on Regulation of Labour Migration' in 2011. During the same period the Armenian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs approached the Italian Government for closer inter-State cooperation on labour migration (Galstyan et al., 2011). However, according to the list of bilateral agreements published by the State Migration Service, the only existing bilateral agreements are about readmission and the extradition of Armenian nationals residing in the European countries. The list of countries with the date of signing of the bilateral agreement in brackets are: Latvia (June 2002), Denmark (April 2003), Lithuania (September 2003), Switzerland (October 2003), Germany (November 2006), Sweden (November 2008), Benelux countries (June 2009) and Norway (January 2010). The related legal documents are available at: [www.smsmta.am/?menu\\_id=15](http://www.smsmta.am/?menu_id=15)

Finally on 27 October 2011 the Joint Declaration for the EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership was signed by Armenia, the EU and ten Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Sweden, the Netherlands), creating a new institutional framework for policy dialogue and bilateral cooperation in this field. The Mobility Partnership declaration has had an annex (so-called 'scoreboard') with a list of cooperation activities and projects for the implementation of the Mobility Partnership by the signatory countries. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

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<sup>13</sup> 'Agreement between the Governments of the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation on the order of stay of the Republic of Armenia citizens in the Russian Federation and the Russian Federation citizens in the Republic of Armenia'. Available at: [www.smsmta.am/upload/bil-arm-register.pdf](http://www.smsmta.am/upload/bil-arm-register.pdf)

## 2. NATIONAL INVENTORY OF MISMES

For the purposes of this report, migrant support measures are defined as specific policy interventions implemented in migrant sending counties, targeting pre, during and post migration phases, and aimed at improving the labour market integration of migrant workers or improving their skills matching in both. Such policy interventions should mobilise specific budget resources to achieve labour market integration or skills utilisation, regardless of who funds or implements.

The report uses 11 MISMES<sup>14</sup> models that were reviewed and classified by the MISMES Global Inventory (ETF 2015a). Annex 1 provides methodological information on how this country inventory and MISMES reviews were conducted (see also ETF, 2015b). Substantial information was collected from the Armenian authorities as well as relevant international organisations, donors and NGOs active in this field in Armenia. Annex 2 provides a list of persons and institutions that received the MISMES questionnaire.

A mapping of migrant support measures from skills and employment perspective implemented in Armenia from 2000 to 2014 revealed at least 19 projects. **TABLE 2.1** lists all 19 MISMES projects, more details of which are given later in the text as well as in an Excel file on the web<sup>15</sup>. These projects are mainly financed from abroad (EU, European countries, international organisations), and implemented both by local and international organisations. The implemented MISMES measures are presented based on the different phases of migration and targeting groups: pre-migration, during migration and post-migration. Finally, the so called 'multi-dimensional MISMES' includes measures covering all phases of migration, and sometimes combined with policy development and capacity building actions.

### 2.1 Pre-migration phase

MISMES implemented at the pre-migration phase usually include pre-departure information, orientation, training schemes and other measures aimed at testing qualifications, skills or the language proficiency of potential migrants. These measures are supposed to facilitate access to the foreign labour market by providing relevant information (migrant workers' rights and obligations, social security schemes and medical insurance) or mechanism enabling international job matching. Currently, there is only one pre-migration MISMES implemented in Armenia: it offers an international placement electronic platform called ULISSES, with promising features but so far weak performance (**TABLE 2.2**).

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<sup>14</sup> The 11 models of MISMES that have been identified and analysed are the following: (1) international job matching and placement services; (2) pre-departure information, orientation and training; (3) professional skills development for migration; (4) facilitating access to labour market information and protection in destination countries; (5) programmes for capitalising skills across borders; (6) assessment, certification, validation and recognition of migrants' skills and qualifications; (7) return employment information platforms and call centres; (8) targeted entrepreneurship and income generating schemes for returnees; (9) assisted voluntary return and reintegration; (10) migration resource centres; and (11) migrant welfare funds.

<sup>15</sup> See [www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/MISMES](http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/MISMES)

**TABLE 2.1 LIST OF MISMES IMPLEMENTED IN ARMENIA BETWEEN 2000 AND 2014**

| MISMES No                       | Title of MISMES/project  | Implementer   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Pre-migration phase</b>      |  |   |
| 1                               | ULISSES – Umbrella Information Support System for Employment Services (sub-project of larger Strengthening Evidence-Based Management of Labour Migration in Armenia)                       | International Centre for Human Development (ICHD) + International Labour Organisation (IOM) |
| <b>During migration phase</b>   |  |   |
| 2                               | Think Tank – Young Professional Development Program for MA and PhD Graduates   | Open Society Foundation   |
| 3                               | Mitigating Social Consequences of Labour Migration and Maximizing Migrants' Involvement in Local Development   | Unicef  |
| <b>Post-migration phase</b>     |  |   |
| 4                               | IRRICO – Integrated Approach Regarding Information on Return and Reintegration in Countries of Origin (return to Armenia)  | IOM   |
| 5                               | Handbook for Armenians Abroad (2 editions)   | ILO, Department for International Development (UK), Diaspora Ministry                       |
| 6                               | Find Your Job in Armenia (job fairs) – as part of the Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA)  | French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) + GIZ                                  |
| 7                               | Piloting for establishing a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the field of tourism/hospitality  | ETF   |
| 8                               | National Information Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility – recognition of formal qualifications gained abroad   | National Information Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility                           |
| 9                               | RACOB: Return Assistance in Armenia – Cooperation OFII-BAMF 'Voluntary return from Germany to Armenia 2012-2014' (AVRR programme)  | OFII + AAAS + Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)                              |
| 10                              | Post Arrival Assistance to Armenian Returnees from the Netherlands (AVRR programme)  | ICHD  |
| 11                              | Return to Sources – Voluntary return of Armenian nationals from France to Armenia (AVRR programme)   | AAAS + OFII + FFAD  |
| 12                              | Sustainable Reintegration after Voluntary Return from Belgium (AVRR programme)   | Caritas Armenia (NGO)   |
| 13                              | Returnees from Europe – Voluntary return from the Netherlands (AVRR programme)   | Caritas Armenia (NGO)   |
| <b>Multi-dimensional MISMES</b> |  |   |
| 14                              | Support to Migration Management Policies and Institutions – setting up a Migration Support Centre within the SMS (Yerevan)   | ICHD  |
| 15                              | Support to the Circular Migration and Re-integration Process in Armenia – setting up four migration resource centres (Armavir, Ararat, Vayots Dzor and Syunik)                             | People in Need (NGO)+ Armenian Relief Society (NGO), State Employment Service               |
| 16                              | Migration and Trafficking Recourse Centres (MTRC) – setting up two centres in Yerevan and Shirak region  | Caritas Armenia (NGO)   |
| 17                              | Institutional Capacity Building in the Field of Migration Information and Cooperation Regarding Reintegration of Armenian Migrants   | OFII, project leader  |
| 18                              | Migration and Development 1, Migration and Development 2   | Caritas Armenia (NGO)   |
| 19                              | Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA) – Strengthening Armenia's migration management capacity with special focus on reintegration, in the framework of the EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership | French OFII project leader + GIZ as junior partner  |



**TABLE 2.2 LIST OF MISMES IMPLEMENTED FOR THE PRE-MIGRATION PHASE**

| MISMES No 1  |                       |               | Implementer   | Funding source |
|--|-----------------------|---------------|---|----------------|
| ULISSES – Umbrella Information Support System for Employment Services (sub-project of larger Strengthening Evidence-Based Management of Labour Migration in Armenia) |                       |               | ICHHD + IOM   | European Union |
| Duration   | Budget                | Beneficiaries | Main activities   |                |
| 2010-13  | €1,000,000 (annually) | Unknown       | Development of an online platform for international job matching, including skills-based registry of potential migrants and job vacancies, pre-departure information and orientation through publishing five guidebooks |                |

### Labour market information and international job matching for potential migrants

ULISSES (MISMES 1) is a job-matching platform that was established in the framework of a larger ‘Strengthening Evidence-Based Management of Labour Migration in Armenia’ project in 2010-13<sup>16</sup>. The project was jointly implemented by the International Centre for Human Development (ICHHD) and the International Labour Organisation (IOM)<sup>17</sup> to promote discussions on pre-departure orientation activities, the portability of social rights, insurance and the development of financial mechanisms for migrants. It was designed to assist the potential migrants willing to work in the EU to find jobs through specialised employment services, so to ensure an adequate job and guarantee health insurance, financial and personal security abroad.

One of the main elements of the project was the development and launching of the skills-based labour force ULISSES Platform. It is an electronic technical platform created to assist potential migrants from Armenia find jobs in EU labour markets through a direct dialogue between the recruitment agencies (both local and foreign) and potential migrants. The platform contains information about available jobs and existing facilitated employment schemes in EU countries. It also provides a user handbook, wide range of information regarding the countries of destination through five electronic country guidebooks; e-brochures on specific employment regulation procedures in the EU; and website links with contact information on employment regulating entities in the EU. The platform also includes an online testing system, which is developed to test and assess a jobseeker’s general knowledge and competences, skills and personality. The platform is still alive but it is not clear whether it functions effectively.

The number of registered recruitment agencies is five. Three private employment agencies from Armenia registered as employment agencies, two employment agencies from Poland and Germany are registered as employers. The number of jobseekers registered in the platform is around 150. The vacancies are mainly for workers in construction and agricultural sectors. The demand for skills varies. For instance vacancies in the construction sector require at least some certification, vocational education, experience etc, while in the agricultural sector the vacancies are mostly for unskilled and low-skilled workers for seasonal work. The jobseekers from the databases of the private employment agencies are registered on the platform on the basis of whether they would like to find a temporary job abroad. The profiles are quite diverse. However, most of them have some education (diploma from higher education institution) and at least some work experience. No information is available on any job placements through this platform.

<sup>16</sup> For more details, see <http://ulisses.am/eng/about-project/>

<sup>17</sup> For more details, see <http://ichd.org/> and [www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home.html](http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home.html)

## 2.2 During-migration phase

During migration MISMES target migrants who are currently abroad and aim at facilitating cross border transfer of skills and experience learnt abroad between migrants and their country of origin. Two during-migration MISMES implemented in Armenia focused on capitalizing on skills across borders (TABLE 2.3). Frequently migrants currently abroad do not have much information about the measures implemented in Armenia. Involvement of Armenian embassies and consulates as mediators could increase the awareness of Armenian migrants abroad and hence contribute to the sustainability of these projects.

**TABLE 2.3 LIST OF MISMES IMPLEMENTED FOR THE DURING-MIGRATION PHASE**

| MISMES No 2  |  |                       | Implementer  | Funding source                          |
|--|--|-----------------------|--|---|
| Think Tank – Young Professional Development Programme for MA and PhD Graduates                               |  |                       | Open Society Foundation  | Open Society Foundation-Think Tank Fund |
| Duration   | Budget   | Beneficiaries         | Main activities  |   |
| 2014-15  | Total budget: less than €100,000 US\$ 7,000 per graduate | 15 graduates per year | Creating opportunities for talented returnees to get engaged in policy-relevant research, analysis and advocacy under the guidance of experienced staff of local think tanks.<br>Assistance to the local think tanks in recruiting new talents into their ranks. |   |
| MISMES No 3  |  |                       | Implementer  | Funding source                          |
| Mitigating Social Consequences of Labour Migration and Maximizing Migrants' Involvement in Local Development |  |                       | Unicef   | European Union                          |
| Duration   | Budget   | Beneficiaries         | Main activities  |   |
| 2013-15  | N/A  | N/A                   | Engagement of migrants' families and diaspora representatives in the development of their communities of origin.<br>Establishing four regional knowledge hubs (in Lori, Tavush, Gegharkunik and Shirak) and provision of relevant social services                |   |

### Programmes for capitalising skills across borders (including diaspora)

#### Think Tank Young Professional Development Programme for MA and PhD Graduates (MISMES 2)

This ongoing project is funded and implemented by Think Tank Fund (Open Society Foundation) between 2014 and 2015. It aims to provide young graduates, holding MA and PhD degrees in the social sciences and humanities from high-quality universities in the OECD countries, with an opportunity to join a local think tank (Civilitas Foundation and Economic Development and Research Centre) for up to six months. With this initiative, Think Tank Fund planned to support annually up to 15 young professionals (from all countries together) to enter local think tanks by funding their stay with up to USD 7,000 per graduate. On the one hand, the programme could contribute to capacity building and assisting local think tanks in recruiting new talent. On the other hand, it potentially allows graduates to be involved in policy-relevant research, analysis and advocacy under the guidance of experienced staff.

### **Mitigating Social Consequences of Labour Migration and Maximizing Migrants' Involvement in Local Development (MISMES 3)**

This is also an ongoing project implemented by Unicef's Armenia Office in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues and the Ministry of Territorial Administration. The project has a three-year duration (2013-15) and is mostly funded by the European Union. The goal is to reduce social vulnerability of labour migrants' families and communities in four target regions of Armenia (Lori, Tavush, Gegharkunik and Shirak) by tailored social services and with best use of migrants' financial and intellectual resources in the development of their communities of origin/return.

It foresees an individual approach to each single family, which could allow the detection of specific vulnerability factors and the specific social needs of each family member. The assessment of the social needs of families of migrants is the starting point for the development of individual recovery projects. The project contains a capacity building component as well. The implementers are planning to engage with social service providers in the four target regions on migrant-related information exchange and referral procedures<sup>18</sup>. The project will also develop policy recommendations and proposals for legislative amendments that will enable the regional initiatives to be scaled-up to the national level, if successful.

The MISMES component of the project aims to engage migrants and diaspora representatives in the development of their communities of origin. It planned to establish four regional knowledge hubs (one in each of the four target regions). These knowledge hubs will facilitate the direct involvement and meaningful participation of migrants, by helping them understand and accept that their personal resources and experiences are community assets. They aim at channelling the intellectual and financial resources of migrants and diaspora towards meeting the social needs of their communities, maximizing their involvement in community development. The link between the local communities and the diaspora will help to bridge the two sides through individual contacts. The measures undertaken have the potential to create efficient platforms facilitating the transfer of both financial resources and 'soft skills'.

The expected outcome is at least 60 arrangements/initiatives organised between diaspora representatives and local organisations in the following areas:

1. supporting business; advice on market entry and assistance with negotiations; access to business contacts; guidance on business strategy; advice on business start-up and product and project development; mentoring support and advice on company and management development;
2. possible financing for both collective (umbrella) and individual development projects.

### **2.3 Post-migration phase**

Many Armenian migrants return and resettle in Armenia after spending many years abroad. The reality back home changes very fast and migrants do not possess sufficient information about many aspects of life in their home country. Post-migration MISMES provides the potential returnees with information which might be useful while organising their return to Armenia. These measures also help the returnees to reintegrate in the home society (recognition of skills and qualifications, labour market integration etc.). The post-migration MISMES are not only the most common but also the most diverse MISMES implemented in Armenia to date (**TABLE 2.4**).

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<sup>18</sup> At this stage only the draft methodology on institutional cooperation has been developed, which is under discussion with various governmental and other stakeholders.

**TABLE 2.4 LIST OF MISMES IMPLEMENTED FOR THE POST-MIGRATION PHASE**

| MISMES No 4   |                   |  | Implementer   | Funding source   |
|---|-------------------|--|---|--|
| IRRICO – Integrated Approach Regarding Information on Return and Reintegration in Countries of Origin (return to Armenia) |                   |  | IOM   | IOM + European Commission                                      |
| Duration  | Budget            | Beneficiaries  | Main activities   |  |
| 2008-10   | N/A<br>Very small | N/A  | Developing guidebooks informing potential returnees about their home country and containing a wide range of information over various areas including education, employment and business   |  |
| MISMES No 5   |                   |  | Implementer   | Funding source   |
| Handbook for Armenians Abroad<br>First edition 2010, second edition 2012  |                   |  | ILO, Ministry of Diaspora   | Department for International Development (UK) + European Union |
| Duration  | Budget            | Beneficiaries  | Main activities   |  |
| 2010-12   | N/A               | N/A  | Developing guidebooks informing potential returnees about their home country and containing a wide range of information over various areas including education, employment and business   |  |
| MISMES No 6   |                   |  | Implementer   | Funding source   |
| Find Your Job in Armenia (TIA) – Job Fairs  |                   |  | OFII + GIZ  | European Union   |
| Duration  | Budget            | Beneficiaries  | Main activities   |  |
| 2014  | N/A               | N/A  | Promoting the link between Armenians abroad searching for work in Armenia<br>Organising job fairs in France and Germany<br>Organising online job fair in Russia   |  |
| MISMES No 7   |                   |  | Implementer   | Funding source   |
| Piloting for establishing a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in tourism/hospitality          |                   |  | ETF (in cooperation with TIA)   | European Training Foundation                                   |
| Duration  | Budget            | Beneficiaries  | Main activities   |  |
| Jan.-<br>Dec.<br>2013   | €20,000           | 5  | Capacity building for establishing a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the field of tourism/hospitality in Armenia, and organising a pilot training programme for assessors and piloting assessment of cooks   |  |
| MISMES No 8   |                   |  | Implementer   | Funding source   |
| National Information Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility (NICARM)  |                   |  | National Information Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility   | European Union   |
| Duration  | Budget            | Beneficiaries  | Main activities   |  |
| 2007-ongoing  | N/A               | Consulting:<br>3,699 cases<br>Assessment of qualification:<br>832 cases<br>Recognition:<br>537 cases | Provision of information, advice or formal decision on the recognition and assessment of qualification; providing to citizens information on their rights regarding recognition of qualifications<br>Provision of adequate, reliable and authenticated information on qualifications, education systems and recognition organisations to interested parties |  |

| MISMES No 9   |                               |   | Implementer  | Funding source  |
|---|-------------------------------|---|--|---|
| RACOB: Return Assistance in Armenia – Cooperation OFII-BAMF – ‘Voluntary return from Germany to Armenia’ (AVRR programme) |                               |   | OFII + AAAS + BAMF   | European Return Fund  |
| Duration  | Budget                        | Beneficiaries   | Main activities  |   |
| Nov. 2012- Dec. 2014  | Less than €100,000 (annually) | 8 persons returned<br>3 businesses created                      | Reintegration of voluntarily returned irregular migrants from Germany in Armenia, qualification assessment, retraining (vocational education and training (VET))<br>Targeted entrepreneurship and business start-ups for returnees |   |
| MISMES No 10  |                               |   | Implementer  | Funding source  |
| Post Arrival Assistance to Armenian Returnees from the Netherlands (AVRR programme)                                       |                               |   | International Centre for Human Development (ICHD)  | European Return Fund + Repatriation and Departure Service, Ministry of Justice of the Netherlands             |
| Duration  | Budget                        | Beneficiaries   | Main activities  |   |
| 2012-13   | €300,000- €500,000 (annually) | Over 120 persons  | Assistance to returnees in employment and self-employment<br>Education and training, and legal assistance.   |   |
| MISMES No 11  |                               |   | Implementer  | Funding source  |
| Return to Sources - Voluntary return of Armenian nationals from France to Armenia (AVRR programme)                        |                               |   | AAAS + FFAD + OFII   | European Return Fund + OFII   |
| Duration  | Budget                        | Beneficiaries   | Main activities  |   |
| Phases from 2005 to 2014  | €300,000- €500,000 (annually) | 1,043 returnees,<br>200 small businesses,<br>48 training course | Support for arranging the actual return of migrants<br>Vocational trainings for job placement<br>Support for the small business creation and follow-up   |   |
| MISMES No 12  |                               |   | Implementer  | Funding source  |
| Sustainable Reintegration After Voluntary Return from Belgium (AVRR programme)  |                               |   | Caritas Armenia  | European Return Fund + Caritas International Belgium + Belgian Ministry of Social Integration through Fedasil |
| Duration  | Budget                        | Beneficiaries   | Main activities  |   |
| 2006-14, 8 years  | Less than €100,000 (annually) | 333 individuals involved, 203 supported                         | Providing returnees with practical help for reintegration by job search, professional orientation and reorientation training, assistance to people after their return for up to maximum one-year period                            |   |
| MISMES No 13  |                               |   | Implementer  | Funding source  |
| Returnees from Europe – voluntary return from the Netherlands (AVRR programme)  |                               |   | Caritas Armenia  | European Return Fund + Maatwerk bij Terugkeer from the Netherlands  |
| Duration  | Budget                        | Beneficiaries   | Main activities  |   |
| 2008-16, 8 years  | Less than €100,000 (annually) | 41 individuals involved, 29 supported                           | Providing returnees with practical help for reintegration by job search, professional orientation and reorientation training, assistance to people after their return for up to maximum one-year period.                           |   |

The Return Employment Information Platforms and Call Centres included the development and dissemination of handbooks for returnees, operating call centres for information and consultation and organisation of job fairs for Armenians in Germany, France and Russia (within the Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA)). Other two activities have targeted the skills of returnees: the first one addresses recognition of foreign formal qualifications and the second one is aimed at developing a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning. Finally, the largest share of post-migration MISMES belong to the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) category. There has been at least five AVRR programmes implemented in Armenia mostly targeting returnees from the EU Member States.

### Return employment information platforms and call centres

Return Employment Information and/or Call Centres platforms provide the potential returnees with a wide range of information regarding: housing; education; medical help; labour market access (such as recruitment agency links); unemployment benefits; transferring foreign pensions; recognition of qualifications; citizenship legislation; how to open a business, etc.

The two initiatives below shows that there have been several handbooks developed by different institutions that are supposed to serve the same purpose. This fact most probably points to the lack of collaboration/dialogue between implementing organisations which leads to overlaps between projects. Moreover, the handbooks by the ILO are in English and hence can mostly reach highly-skilled migrants who can find information through alternative channels too.

### **Integrated Approach Regarding Information on Return and Reintegration in Countries of Origin – IRRICO II (MISMES 4)**

IRRICO II was part of the IRRICO II international programme 'Integrated Approach Regarding Information on Return and Reintegration in Countries of Origin' implemented in 2008-10 by the IOM with very small budget. It was providing potential returnees with information about the current situation in Armenia through (online) guidebooks, which contain information regarding health care, housing, education, employment, business opportunities, custom issues, transportation as well as a list of contacts of relevant organisations and service providers. The guidebook included detailed information regarding employment opportunities, requirements for accessing the labour market, unemployment assistance, employment projects for returnees. The publication had a special section dedicated to the procedures related to recognition of foreign qualifications (institutions dealing with the issue and list of documents required), as well as vocational training possibilities.

### **Handbook for Armenians Abroad (MISMES 5)**

Under the project 'Towards Sustainable Partnerships for the Effective Governance of Labour Migration in the Russian Federation, the Caucasus and Central Asia'<sup>19</sup>, the ILO and the Ministry of Diaspora published a *Handbook for Armenians Abroad*. The first edition was published in Armenian and English in 2010. The handbook included relevant information about Armenia to Armenians living abroad and to facilitate interaction between the Armenian diaspora and their homeland. The second revised version followed in 2012, reflecting changes in areas such as economic and social legislation and rules on dual citizenship.

The project aimed to contribute to a sustainable, participatory and equitable approach to the governance of labour migration in the target countries (Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). And one specific objective was to contribute to the utilization of human resources through developing systems for the portability of qualifications and for the reduction of bureaucratic obstacles.

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<sup>19</sup> For more details, see [www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/moscow/projects/migration.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/moscow/projects/migration.htm)

The Informative Handbook State Employment Service Agency provided information on such issues as the opportunities of finding a job in Armenia, services provided by the State Employment Service Agency, legal ways to find a job abroad and avoid possible threats during the process, repatriation terms and opportunities in case of return.

### **Find Your Job in Armenia (MISMES 6) – within the Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA)**

Job fairs were organised within the framework of the EU-funded Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA) project implemented by the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) and the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ). The job fairs aimed to facilitate job searching for Armenians abroad who was looking for employment opportunities in Armenia. Within the framework of the project three job fairs were organised in April 2014; one took place in Germany, one in France, the third one was promoted online and targeted Armenians who study or work in Russia. The project tried to reach a wider audience and enhance efficiency by collaborating with several non-profit organisations, private businesses and business associations in order to compose a delegation and e-job fair partners.

The organisers also tried to engage a large target group which involved not only individuals who were interested in repatriation but also those who were willing to contribute with their skills and knowledge to companies in Armenia. Hence, the fairs was aimed at repatriation in a broader sense: permanent repatriation, temporary repatriation and virtual repatriation. The job fairs were mainly focused on three main sectors: information technology, agribusiness and hospitality. There is no information on the job placements achieved through these job fairs.

### **Validation and recognition of skills and qualifications gained abroad**

The incompatibility of education systems in different countries frequently creates obstacles for the transferability of skills (informally or formally) across borders. The possibility to validate the skills learned abroad reduces skill underutilization and facilitates the integration of migrants in labour market. There have been two initiatives in this field in Armenia.

### **Piloting for establishing a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the field of tourism/hospitality (MISMES 7)**

This was a pilot project implemented in the framework of an ETF regional project on Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) in January-December 2013. It has reviewed few pilot qualifications in the tourism and hospitality sector and developed a concept for the establishment of a validation of non-formal and informal learning system in Armenia on the basis of the results of a practical test for cooks. The participants in the training course for assessors developed the assessment tools and assessment files for cooks. They also identified potential candidates willing to be assessed in the pilot implementation phase, and prepared them for assessment. The pilot assessment of practical skills was carried out with five candidates who learnt skills on the job abroad and wanted to prove them with a certificate. There has been no concrete follow up and/or mainstreaming, however, after this piloting.

### **National Information Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility (NICARM) (MISMES 8)**

NICARM was established in 2007 to facilitate Bologna process implementation in Armenia. It is a member of the international network of ENIC-NARIC organisations<sup>20</sup> and contributes to the implementation of the principles of the Bologna declaration<sup>21</sup>. NICARM is responsible for providing

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<sup>20</sup>The Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) and European Network of National Information Centres on Academic Recognition and Mobility (ENIC) are international networks that aim to promote the professional and academic recognition of higher education qualifications completed abroad. For greater detail, see [www.enic-naric.net/](http://www.enic-naric.net/)

<sup>21</sup> For more details see [www.armenic.am/?laid=1&](http://www.armenic.am/?laid=1&)

information on Armenian and international higher education systems to interested parties including local and foreign organisations. It plays an important role in facilitating the recognition of foreign qualifications in Armenia. Between 2007 and 2013, 3,699 people applied to the centre, 832 people received a formal assessment of their qualification and 537 individuals were able to have their foreign qualifications recognized (see Annual Report 2013 on the website). Its functions include but are not limited to the following:

- provide adequate, reliable and authenticated information on qualifications, education systems, and recognition organisations to interested parties;
- provide interested parties with advice, final decisions on the recognition of qualifications based on assessment by applying existing criteria and procedures;
- provide citizens with information on their rights regarding the recognition of qualifications.

### Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes

AVRR programmes usually contain a set of comprehensive measures addressing needs of returnees. These measures can include information campaigns for potential return migrants abroad, assistance with travel and transportation home. Upon arrival, return migrants are offered the 'reintegration package' which includes measures facilitating the reintegration of returnees to the labour market through vocational training, job referral and business start-up support. AVRR is the most common MISMES implemented in Armenia which allows comparison and evaluation across projects, and hence it deserves special attention. The AVRR projects frequently contain several MISMES components.

#### **RACOB: Return Assistance in Armenia – Cooperation OFII-BAMF 'Voluntary return from Germany to Armenia' (MISMES 9)**

RACOB was a pilot project implemented between November 2012 and December 2014 to promote the voluntary return of Armenian nationals (asylum seekers or illegal migrants) from Germany. The project was undertaken within the framework of cooperation between the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and the French OFII<sup>22</sup> and funded by the European Return Fund<sup>23</sup>. The local implementing partners were the Armenian Association of Social Aid (AAAS) and the French-Armenian Development Foundation (FFAD)<sup>24</sup>. The programme supported migrants towards reintegration in the labour market through assistance in getting jobs and support in setting up micro-businesses; preparation of business plans; necessary acquisitions (e.g. machinery, tools, beasts); expenses for necessary training (e.g. accounting course); and advice and support for the realization of the business project for up to one year.

The project also contained measures addressing several skills related issues; evaluation of professional skills and competences with requirements of the labour market, professional orientation with subsequent referral to vocational training and actual training delivery. The absence of diplomas or certification proving professional skills and abilities was addressed through requalification/certification training courses. In addition, returnees with low professional qualifications were involved in vocational training organised in the relevant area. Since the launch of the project (November 2012) eight individuals have returned voluntarily back from Germany and three small businesses were created.

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<sup>22</sup> For more details, see [www.bamf.de/DE/Startseite/startseite-node.html](http://www.bamf.de/DE/Startseite/startseite-node.html) and [www.ofii.fr/](http://www.ofii.fr/)

<sup>23</sup> For more details, see [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/return-fund/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/return-fund/index_en.htm).

<sup>24</sup> For more details, see [www.ffad.am/](http://www.ffad.am/)



The average income for small business was EUR 300 per month, and the average annual budget of the project was less than EUR 100,000.

### **Post arrival assistance to Armenian returnees from the Netherlands (MISMES 10)**

This project was implemented between 2012 and 2013 by the ICHD in close cooperation and with the financial support of the Repatriation and Departure Service (Ministry of Justice) of the Netherlands and the European Return Fund. It aimed at (i) fostering the social and economic re-integration of Armenian nationals without legal right to reside in the Netherlands; and (ii) preventing their irregular re-migration to EU Member States, through providing comprehensive assistance (sustainable return). In addition to medical and legal assistance, the project included several measures addressing the employment and self-employment of returnees, as well as, assistance in their education and training. In particular, the returnee migrants had an opportunity to acquire knowledge, the skills necessary to get access to better jobs and, hence, the possibility to have a sustainable source of income.

To reinforce the reintegration of returnees the ICHD organised the following activities: brainstorming; business plan development with relevant experts taking into consideration the migrants experience in the past; and funding support in the scopes of the reintegration assistance. The average annual budget of the project was between EUR 300,000 and EUR 500,000, and over 120 returnees benefitted from this programme.

### **Return to Sources – Voluntary return of Armenians from France to Armenia (MISMES 11)**

This project has started to be implemented in 2005 and renewed every two years since then to assist rejected Armenian asylum seekers or illegal migrants willing to go back from France to Armenia<sup>25</sup>. The last phase 'return to sources VIII' was implemented between January 2013-December 2014 by AAAS, OFII and FFAD to promote the voluntary return of Armenian migrants and to support social and economic reintegration. It was co-financed by the European Refugee Fund (ERF) in partnership with OFII. Within the framework of the project, an Information and Training Centre was opened in Paris to inform the potential returnees about the opportunities of getting re-established back in Armenia. Detailed information on the economic and socio-political environment in Armenia was provided to beneficiaries. The centre prepared their future reintegration in Armenian society by exploring possible income generating ventures.

The French-Armenian Development Foundation (FFAD) acted as the local partner of the project and provided assistance for beneficiaries in Armenia. Since the launch of the programme in November 2005, 1043 individuals decided to return to Armenia. In addition to social accompanying measures, the project included measures addressing the reinforcement of professional competences and the creation of small businesses, aimed at sustainable social and economic reintegration. For improving the labour market integration, returnees were assisted in drawing up a business plan to setup their micro-business activities. FFAD staff provided assistance, prepared a feasibility study and assisted in the actual launch and follow-up of micro-businesses. As a result, more than 200 small businesses were created with an average income of EUR 300 per month. The average annual budget of the project was between EUR 300,000 and 500,000.

Within the framework of the project, several skill-related migrant support measures were implemented to facilitate the enhancement and utilization of migrant skills. For example, vocational trainings in relevant areas were organised for those with relatively low professional skills or those whose skills did not match the requirements of the labour market. Moreover, requalification/certification training

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<sup>25</sup> For more details, see [www.aaas.fr/fr/EU\\_Return\\_to\\_sources](http://www.aaas.fr/fr/EU_Return_to_sources) and [www.aaas.fr/res/2014%20D%C3%A9pliant%20RS%20IX-arm\\_fr\\_ru.pdf](http://www.aaas.fr/res/2014%20D%C3%A9pliant%20RS%20IX-arm_fr_ru.pdf)

courses were organised for returnees whose professional skills were not proven by diploma or certificate. Overall, 48 training courses were organised within the project.

### **‘Sustainable Reintegration after Voluntary Return’ and ‘Returnees from Europe’ – support to the returnees from Belgium and the Netherlands (MISMES 12 and 13)**

These two projects were implemented by Caritas Armenia to assist the economic and social reintegration of voluntarily returned irregular migrants (mainly rejected asylum seekers) from Belgium and the Netherlands. ‘Sustainable Reintegration after Voluntary Return’ was launched in 2006 with a duration of eight years until 2014 and was jointly funded by the EU Return Fund, Caritas International Belgium and the Belgian Ministry of Social Integration through Fedasil<sup>26</sup>. ‘Returnees from Europe’ was launched in 2008, also with an eight-year duration until 2016, and jointly funded by the EU Return Fund and Maatwerk bij Terugkeer from the Netherlands. Each project has had an average annual budget of less than EUR 100,000 and contained several measures addressing the reintegration of migrants. Upon a returnee’s arrival, a needs assessment was organised together with a social worker and priorities were defined taking into account the financial support given over to that returnee (the decision on the amount was taken in the EU sending state).

The implementing team supported the returnees in finding a job; and provided them with professional orientation and reorientation trainings. Moreover, the returnees could obtain funding for a small start-up. Usually, assistance was provided for up to one year after return with a regular follow-up assessment (1 month, 3 months, 6 months and 1 year after their arrival). The implementers mentioned that reintegration depended very much on the skills of returnees. Professionals typically find a job by themselves. The same pattern is also valid with the provision of business start-ups; success is mainly determined by having experience in that exact sphere. For example, whenever the returnees were from rural areas they were provided with small scale cattle breeding business projects. Obstacles mentioned were for example the poor economic situation and corruption within governmental institutions.

AVRR programmes are one of the most common MISMES models implemented in Armenia, which gives an opportunity for comparison. Relatively successful in terms of income-generating projects is ‘Return to Sources’ (MISMES 11) which includes a staff of 15 persons: 48 vocational/requalification trainings were organised and more than 200 small businesses were created. The relative success of the project might be explained by its duration (eight years) which gave the implementers’ time for learning and improving. Two projects implemented by Caritas Armenia (MISMES 12 and 13) have performances similar to the previous one. MISMES 12 involved 333 returnees, 203 of which received some assistance. MISMES 13 involved 41 returnees, 29 of which received assistance. Given their relatively small annual budget, the projects most probably benefit from scale (90 employees) and from having an experienced implementer in the country.

The information available from MISMES 12 and 13 is relatively good in terms of the beneficiary characteristics. Despite the name of MISMES 12 ‘Sustainable Reintegration after Voluntary Return’ 37 out of 40 beneficiaries were rejected asylum seekers. In the MISMES 13 ‘Returnees from Europe’ all 21 beneficiaries were rejected asylum seekers. Hence, their return can hardly be called voluntary. Most had left Armenia for economic reasons. Eight out of 61 left Armenia again. Some 26 of the beneficiaries are employed, 17 are unemployed and 16 are pensioners. Some 23 out of 61 beneficiaries received business support and currently one person is involved in production, 23 in services and 16 in agriculture. Sixteen people, meanwhile, do not have stable accommodation.

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<sup>26</sup> The Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) is a public interest organisation created by the programme law of 19 July 2001. It has been operational since May 2002. See <http://fedasil.be/>

TABLE 2.5 presents the information provided by the implementer. Though it is not sufficient to perform efficiency analyses, it might serve as a starting point.

**TABLE 2.5 INFORMATION REGARDING TWO PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY CARITAS ARMENIA IN 2013**

|                                   | Returnees from the European Union, the Netherlands |                        |                             | Sustainable Reintegration after Voluntary Return, Belgium |                        |                             |
|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Type of assistance</b>         | social aid   | medical                | business                    | social aid  | medical                | business                    |
|                                   | 21   | 1                      | 13                          | 39  | 22                     | 10                          |
| <b>Type of business</b>           | production   | service                | agriculture/cattle breeding | production  | service                | agriculture/cattle breeding |
|                                   | 1  | 8                      | 4                           | 0   | 15                     | 12                          |
| <b>Reason for leaving</b>         | political  | economic               | medical                     | political   | economic               | medical                     |
|                                   | 0  | 18                     | 3                           | 2   | 29                     | 9                           |
| <b>Reason for returning</b>       | rejected asylum-seekers                            | family reunification   | other                       | rejected asylum-seekers                                   | family reunification   | other                       |
|                                   | 21   | 0                      | 0                           | 37  | 3                      | 0                           |
| <b>Current place of residence</b> | Armenia  | out of Armenia         | no info                     | Armenia   | out of Armenia         | no info                     |
|                                   | 17   | 2                      | 2                           | 36  | 4                      | 0                           |
| <b>Personal data</b>              |  |                        |                             |   |                        |                             |
| <b>Age</b>                        | 0-18   | 19-50                  | over 51                     | 0-18  | 19-50                  | over 51                     |
|                                   | 2  | 17                     | 2                           | 5   | 14                     | 21                          |
| <b>Sex</b>                        | male   |                        | female                      | male  |                        | female                      |
|                                   | 10   |                        | 11                          | 19  |                        | 21                          |
| <b>Education</b>                  | secondary  | secondary professional | high                        | secondary   | secondary professional | high                        |
|                                   | 13   | 5                      | 3                           | 28  | 7                      | 5                           |
| <b>Employment status</b>          | employed   | unemployed             | pensioner                   | employed  | unemployed             | pensioner                   |
|                                   | 14   | 3                      | 2                           | 12  | 14                     | 14                          |
| <b>Availability of residence</b>  | has shelter  | no shelter             | other                       | has shelter   | no shelter             | other                       |
|                                   | 16 + 2   | 3                      | 0                           | 27  | 13                     | 0                           |
| <b>Type of residence</b>          | urban  |                        | rural                       | urban   |                        | rural                       |
|                                   | 18   |                        | 3                           | 25  |                        | 15                          |

Note: This table is based on information provided by Caritas Armenia. It contains the characteristics of beneficiaries and the type of assistance provided within two projects: Returnees from European Union and Sustainable Reintegration after Voluntary Return.

## 2.4 Multi-dimensional MISMES

This category of MISMES covers the entire migration cycle (pre, during and post-migration) in one project for providing services to migrants and/or MISMES is combined with policy development support and capacity building of institutions. Therefore, in most cases we observe an evolution towards ‘multi-dimensional migrant resource centres’ where services from pre-departure to reintegration of returnees and assistance to the diaspora are provided in one-stop-shop. **TABLE 2.6** lists six projects of this type, the first one having the typical form of ‘migrant resource centre’ (MRC), and each being followed by specific explanations.

**TABLE 2.6 LIST OF MULTI-DIMENSIONAL MISMES**

| MISMES No 14   |         |  | Implementer  | Funding source                   |
|--|---------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Support to Migration Management Policies and Institutions – setting up a Migration Support Centre within the SMS                     |         |  | ICHD + State Migration Service   | European Union + British Council |
| Duration   | Budget  | Beneficiaries  | Main activities  |                                  |
| 2006-09  | N/A     | 251,822 visits for 2008-09 period<br>840 hot-line calls<br>1,600 returnees used services | Raising awareness among the population and potential migrants about the threats of illegal migration, creation of a ‘Back to Armenia’ web portal designed to provide ‘all-inclusive’ information to Armenian migrants world-wide, wide range of services provided to the migrants and returnees in the Migrant Support Centre (within the state agency premises) |                                  |
| MISMES No 15   |         |  | Implementer  | Funding source                   |
| Support of Circular Migration and Re-integration Process in Armenia – setting up four MRCs (Armavir, Ararat, Vayots Dzor and Syunik) |         |  | People in Need + Armenian Relief Society + State Employment Service  | European Union                   |
| Duration   | Budget  | Beneficiaries  | Main activities  |                                  |
| Jan. 2013 – Dec. 2015  | N/A     | N/A  | Protecting migrants’ rights, reintegration of labour/circular migrants, increasing the awareness of legal migration among potential migrants, risks of irregular migration<br>Creation of four MRCs<br>Promoting re-integration of returnees through the utilization of their skills and the provision of business grants for start-ups                          |                                  |
| MISMES No 16   |         |  | Implementer  | Funding source                   |
| Migration and Trafficking Resource Centres (MTRC)  |         |  | Caritas Armenia  | Secours catholique               |
| Duration   | Budget  | Beneficiaries  | Main activities  |                                  |
| 2012-14  | €89,472 | N/A  | Opening two MRCs (Shirak region and Yerevan)<br>Organising seminars, trainings, events, consultations and publication to generate awareness about the possibility of legal migration and dangers of trafficking<br>Support the reintegration of trafficked victims by providing continuous consultation and support during the project cycle                     |                                  |

| MISMES No 17  |                                    |  | Implementer  | Funding source   |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Institutional Capacity Building in the Field of Migration Information and Cooperation Regarding Reintegration of Armenian Migrants  |                                    |  | French OFII, project leader + AAAS + FFAD + State Migration Service  | EU AENEAS (576,000)<br>AAAS-France (40,000)<br>ANAEM-France (94,000)<br>FR-Armenian Development Foundation (FFAD) (10,000) |
| Duration  | Budget                             | Beneficiaries  | Main activities  |  |
| 2008-11   | €720,000 total,<br>€240,000 annual | N/A  | Supporting the social and economic reintegration of migrants returning to Armenia through accompanying them during their return and reintegration, organising vocational trainings and income generating business set-up programmes.   |  |
| MISMES No 18  |                                    |  | Implementer  | Funding source   |
| Migration and Development 1<br>Migration and Development 2  |                                    |  | Caritas Armenia  | Lichtenstein Government<br>Caritas Austria   |
| Duration  | Budget                             | Beneficiaries  | Main activities  |  |
| 2010-12<br>2013-14  | N/A                                | 240 returnees + 43 families, 180 training, 45 skills transfers | Provision of information on risks of illegal migration through establishment of various communication systems, media, website.<br>Organising meetings, conferences, information leaflets, press releases and website; organising vocational trainings and income-generating business set-up programmes.  |  |
| MISMES No 19  |                                    |  | Implementer  | Funding source   |
| Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA) – Strengthening Armenia’s Migration management capacities, with special focus on reintegration activities in the framework of the EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership |                                    |  | OFII as project leader + GIZ as junior partner   | European Union   |
| Duration  | Budget                             | Beneficiaries  | Main activities  |  |
| October 2012-September 2015   | €3,000,000 total                   | N/A  | Supporting social and economic reintegration for Armenian returnees; the establishment of ‘Referral Centre for Reintegration’ to register returnees and providing social, psychological and legal counselling services; setting-up a micro-project award system for reintegration projects implemented by individual returnees.<br>Support in partnership establishment between VET centres, trade unions, employment agencies and employers organisations; technical assistance to VET reform in Armenia; providing VET possibilities for returnees; organising information campaigns on the possibilities of legal migration, circular migration and risks of illegal migration. |  |

## Migration resource centres (MRCs)

The MRCs usually provide the potential and returnee migrants with a wide range of information. The potential migrants can be informed about opportunities for legal migration, information on destinations and recruitment related abuses. The potential returnees or those who have already returned can receive a wide range of information about employment opportunities, requalification trainings and various forms of support for reintegration. The present discussion summarizes the wide range of activities carried out by MRCs in Armenia.

### **Support to Migration Management Policies and Institutions: Migration Support Centre (MISMES 14)**

A Migration Support Centre was created in the framework of 'Support to Migration Management Policies and Institutions' programme, which addressed the needs of migrants in different migration phases. This EU-funded project was implemented by the ICHD between 2006 and 2009 in close collaboration with the British Council and the State Migration Service. Following the suggestion of the ICHD, a facility centre (MRC) responsible for providing a wide range of information was created within the State Migration Service. Then a trilingual (Armenian, English, Russian) web portal 'Back to Armenia'<sup>27</sup> ([www.backtoarmenia.com](http://www.backtoarmenia.com)) was created. It was designed to provide 'all-inclusive' information to Armenian migrants world-wide through a special web portal and a telephone 'hot-line'. The MRC was operated by five specialists who received special training on operating these facilities.

The portal, which is still accessible but appears to not have been updated since 2012, offers information for potential returnees and it did, during the project, provide personalized service. The latter allowed the web portal visitors to get professional advices/answers for their specific questions. The creation of the portal gave an opportunity to inform extensive migrant populations with Armenian origin all over the world. Moreover, the portal provided input to the State Migration Service regarding the needs of the visitors and therefore aided in tailoring its services and the information provided. As a result, the ICHD initiative assisted in building confidence and trust among migrants towards public institutions in Armenia.

The support activities undertaken can be assessed as successful, based on the statistics coming from the web portal developed within the project; the number of unique visits was 251,822 for 2008-09. The 'hot-line' served almost 840 applicants. Within the framework of the project Tundardz (Back to Home) video series were produced in Armenia, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. These 11 20-25-minute movies covers the achievements and problems faced by migrants, and the lessons to be drawn from their experience. The documentaries cover a wide range of topics and migrants: from refugee camps to places where migrants work, from a year-home-away migrant to the young people born and educated in migrant families for 17 years, from routine to survival issues. There were also TV shows and debates organised. During the same period more than 1,600 returning migrants have used the services of the Migration Support Centre, 130 of which were deported home.

### **Support of Circular Migration and Re-integration Process in Armenia – creation of migration resource centres (MISMES 15)**

'Support of Circular Migration and Re-integration Process in Armenia' is an EU-funded project which started in January 2013 and will continue until the end of 2015. The project aim is protecting migrants' rights leaving for work abroad, reintegration of labour/circular migrants and preventing irregular migration in line with the State Action Plan for Migration (2012-16). It is implemented by two civil society organisations (Armenian Relief Society and the People in Need)<sup>28</sup> and with the involvement of

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<sup>27</sup> Back to Armenia portal won a Grand Prize in the Third All-Armenian Contest on E-Contents, and the prize for Best E-Governance site. For more information, see <http://backtoarmenia.com/?page=about>

<sup>28</sup> For more details, see [www.arsarmenia.org/index.php?act=programs&op=viewitem&itemid=174&langs=am](http://www.arsarmenia.org/index.php?act=programs&op=viewitem&itemid=174&langs=am) and [www.migrant.am/s/](http://www.migrant.am/s/)

State Employment Service. Within the project four MRCs have been established in the southern regions of Armenia (Armavir, Ararat, Vayots Dzor and Syunik), providing consultation to both potential and returning migrants. Each MRC staff is composed of four social workers, a programmer and an employment counsellor. Upon completion of the project, the MRCs is planned to be transferred to the SMS which will continue to operate these entities.

To raise awareness on migration issues among the population, a media campaign is being conducted with the active involvement of media representatives and state officials. In addition, several information dissemination activities have been undertaken locally by MRCs. The local MRCs organise pre-departure orientation on the risks of irregular migration, on the importance of maintaining legal employment and legal status abroad, as well as providing information about the services of relevant civil society organisations abroad.

Other activities are related to skill enhancement and requalification through trainings organised for both potential and returning migrants. Moreover, to assist in reintegration, returnees are offered an opportunity to apply for start-up business grants. The grant is conditional on the fulfilment of established criteria: merit of sustainability, the business plan, number of new jobs to be created by the business and the co-share contribution of the applicant. The grant is provided as an in-kind contribution, i.e. in the form of equipment or technical support (EUR 3,000-10,000). It is compulsory for all applicants to participate in a ten-day training module on writing a business plan, taxation regulation and related legislation, financial reporting, entrepreneurship risks and anti-crisis management<sup>29</sup>.

### **Migration and Trafficking Resource Centre (MTRC) (MISMES 16)**

Two migration trafficking resource centres were created and operated between 2012 and 2014 in Yerevan and Shirak regions by Caritas Armenia with the financial support of Secours Catholique<sup>30</sup>. With a budget of EUR 89,472, the project aimed to mitigate the steady outflow of illegal migrants from Armenia and the consequences of trafficking. The centre functioned as a global resource centre for the promotion and dissemination of information on legal migration and for counselling support to trafficking victims. Trafficking victims benefitted from the possibility of continuous consultation and support during the whole project cycle.

Any individual who applied to MTRC had the opportunity to be informed through consultation and expert advice about the dangers of illegal migration. In the project there were activities organised to generate awareness on the possibilities of legal migration and the threats of trafficking by organising seminars, trainings, events and publications along with project implementation. Moreover, the project tried to strengthen the ability and resources of the key actors engaged in migration and trafficking issues by carrying out impact analyses of applications/cases of MTRC and sharing the results at the end of the project.

### **Other multi-dimensional projects**

As explained before, several projects implemented in Armenia combine different MISMES components from various models. For example, a particular project may provide pre-departure orientation, employment services and training for potential or returnees (as migrant resource centres do), but they never set-up migrant resource centres as such. MISMES 17, 18 and 19 are such multi-dimensional projects which can hardly be allocated to a particular multi-dimensional model as they do not fit any particular definition. Therefore, these three projects are referred to as multi-dimensional projects without further classification.

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<sup>29</sup> Return migrants are eligible if they have worked abroad for six consecutive months, have voluntarily returned to Armenia in the past year, and are older than 18 but not at a pensionable age.

<sup>30</sup> For more details, see [www.secours-catholique.org/](http://www.secours-catholique.org/)

## **Institutional Capacity Building in the Field of Migration Information and Cooperation Regarding Reintegration of Armenian Migrants (MISMES 17)**

'Institutional Capacity Building in the Field of Migration Information and Cooperation Regarding Reintegration of Armenian Migrants' is an EU-funded project undertaken in the framework of AENEAS thematic programme. The project aimed strengthening the links between migration and development while preventing illegal migration, so targeting both potential migrants and returnees. It was implemented between 2008 and 2011, with a total budget of EUR 720,000, the collaboration of the French OFII, the Armenian Association of Social Aid (AAAS), the French-Armenian Development Foundation (FFAD) and the State Migration Service (SMS). It mainly provided reintegration assistance to Armenian returnees by funding vocational training and business set-up programmes, and raised awareness about the legal migration opportunities and possible dangers of illegal migration to Europe.

## **Migration and Development 1 and 2 (MISMES 18)**

'Migration and Development' was another project jointly financed by the Government of Lichtenstein and Caritas Austria and implemented by Caritas Armenia. The first phase of the project started in 2010, and then continued with the second phase (Migration and Development 2) and between 2013 and 2014. The project tried to develop links between migration and development for Armenia by developing sustainable reintegration measures for returnees and measures to prevent illegal migration from communities having high rate migration waves and risks. One pillar of the project was to support the reintegration of returnees from the EU, Liechtenstein and Switzerland by providing social protection and help with economic stability. Another pillar was to establish networks between different organisations in Armenia and the EU, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, to facilitate the return of illegal migrants to Armenia. There were also other activities organised to prevent irregular migration through the provision of social-economic development to communities with high migration risks.

The main beneficiaries of the project was: (i) voluntary and deported returnees (from the EU, Switzerland and Liechtenstein); (ii) potential migrants /students, young generation unemployed population of Armenia; (iii) population from the high-rate migration communities; (iv) communities which have returnees from the EU; and (v) the public at large. Within the framework of the project Caritas Armenia organised a wide range of activities. Activities were disseminated through meetings, conferences, distribution of leaflets, press releases and through a website. Returnees were supported to stabilize their social status through the establishment of their own businesses in their community. For this purpose, the project provided the beneficiaries with an opportunity to obtain zero interest rate loans. Returnees who for some reason did not have the opportunity to establish a business were directed into vocational training programmes in which both the previous professions of the participants and the current demands in the Armenian labour market were taken into consideration. They included accountancy, computer and other vocational courses which supported the returnees in re-entering the labour market.

For loan the person should be Armenian who lived abroad for at least a year and returned to the country after January 2010. The loan size was up to EUR 2,500 and it was provided for one or two years depending on the business type. Once the loan applications were submitted the beneficiaries participated in business courses on establishing and expanding business activities and preparing business plans. The business plans submitted by the applicants were assessed by the so-called Revolving Fund Dispensing Committee responsible for granting loans based on the following criteria: (i) the feasibility and urgency of the submitted business plan; (ii) the realistic nature of the budget; (iii) the personal ability of the applicant; (iv) the own investment size of the applicant; and (v) the creation



of new jobs via the submitted project<sup>31</sup>. The follow-up measures allowed for easy monitoring of the business projects. Caritas Armenia organised necessary training for the beneficiaries and provided information and guidelines, including accounting assistance and free legal consultations during the whole period (from the loan application until its full repayment). The beneficiaries were obliged to submit financial and narrative reports every three months according to formats developed by Caritas Armenia.

As a result of the project implementation, 240 returnees were reintegrated into the society, 43 returnee families gained economic stability, 45 returnees had opportunities to convey and localize their know-how skills in Armenia. 180 returnees and potential migrants participated in vocational training. Though development projects *per se* lay outside the scope of this inventory, it is worth mentioning that the project contained elements targeting local development and hence mitigating illegal migration and brain drain. Within the project framework two innovative business projects were implemented, measures were taken to prevent 'brain drain' among 720 graduate students, six community development projects and five economic projects were implemented in regions having high rate of migration.

### **Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA) – Strengthening Armenia’s Migration Management Capacity, with special focus on reintegration, in the framework of the EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership (MISMES 19)**

Targeted Initiative for Armenia is a EUR 3 million EU-funded project, implemented by a Consortium of eight EU Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania) under the lead of the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) and GIZ as junior partner within the framework of EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership. The project’s duration is 36 months (October 2012-September 2015), so still ongoing with multifaceted activities<sup>32</sup>. The project aimed to strengthen migration management in Armenia with a special focus on reintegration activities through supporting return and the activities of competent authorities and civil society organisations. The four specific objectives of the project are the following<sup>33</sup>:

- reinforce capacities of responsible authorities for the management of return and reintegration of Armenian migrants;
- support the social and economic reintegration of Armenian nationals who return voluntarily or involuntarily from EU Member States and other geographical areas;
- support the capacities of the Armenian authorities and diaspora associations in benefitting from the links between migration and development, including circular migration;
- design and implement information campaigns for Armenian communities’ abroad, relevant Armenian organisations and for the Armenian general public on legal migration including labour and circular migration, and on the risks of irregular migration.

According to the information received through the MISMES questionnaire, there were several measures undertaken to achieve these objectives and some of them have components relevant for this inventory. For reintegration of migrants, the project foresaw the establishment of ‘Referral Centre for Reintegration’ to register returnees and providing social, psychological and legal counselling

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<sup>31</sup> According to a decision made by Caritas Armenia and the beneficiary signed a bilateral loan contract which contains provisions about conditions of the loan and the repayment schedule. All of the equipment and property obtained through the loan remain as a guarantee as long as the beneficiary repays the loan in full.

<sup>32</sup> See [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/armenia/projects/list\\_of\\_projects/309112\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/armenia/projects/list_of_projects/309112_en.htm)

<sup>33</sup> Annex 1 to the AAP 2011 part 2 of the Thematic Programme for Cooperation with Third Countries in the field of Migration and Asylum. Last accessed 7 July 2014 at: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/aap/2011/af\\_aap\\_2011\\_dci-migr\\_p2.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/documents/aap/2011/af_aap_2011_dci-migr_p2.pdf)

services. The implementers supported partnerships between VET centres, trade unions, employment agencies and employer organisations. They consider setting up a micro-project award system for reintegration projects put together by individual returnees. The project also provided support for retraining and career-orientation programmes for returnees and for the employment and job matching of migrant workers. The project also provides technical assistance for the VET framework reform in order to make foreign qualifications more readable.

The Annex of the Annual Action Programme (AAP) provides an indicative breakdown of the overall amount by main components (**TABLE 2.7**) and the details of the project performance monitoring, which involves strict reporting requirements, regular debriefings and the full involvement of the steering committee in the planning process. The performance of the project is measured on the basis of the following indicators:

- number of migrants or potential migrants targeted by information campaigns on the negative consequences of migration, prevention of irregular migration awareness raising on risks linked to irregular migration, and legal migration channels to the EU;
- number of bi-lateral agreements on the social protection of migrant workers signed between the Armenian SMS and destination countries;
- number of returned and reintegrated migrants;
- number of business initiatives to invest remittances;
- number of job seekers having been recruited.

**TABLE 2.7 INDICATIVE BREAKDOWN OF OVERALL AMOUNT BY MAIN COMPONENT**

| Component                      | Amount (EUR) |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Objective 1                    | 600,000      |
| Objective 2                    | 1,100,000    |
| Objective 3                    | 500,000      |
| Objective 4                    | 400,000      |
| EU visibility                  | 50,000       |
| Audit and external evaluation  | 50,000       |
| Administrative costs (max. 7%) | 200,000      |
| Contingency (max. 5%)          | 100,000      |
| Total (for 36 months)          | 3,000,000    |

Source: Annex 1 to the AAP 2011 part 2 of the Thematic Programme for Cooperation with Third Countries in the field of Migration and Asylum (pp. 31-32).

However, since the project is still ongoing, we have yet to see the outcomes and the evaluation reports. But it is interesting to be able to see how the monitoring of the project have been planned.

### 3. MISMES IN THE EU-ARMENIA MOBILITY PARTNERSHIP

Only a minority of Armenian migrants chose European countries as a destination. This is most probably explained by existing barriers and the absence of mechanisms facilitating migration from Armenia to Europe rather than the unattractiveness of these destinations. An important step in making Armenia-EU migration matters more constructive was achieved through the signature of the Joint Declaration for the Mobility Partnership between the EU, Armenia and ten Member States signed on 6 October 2011 (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the Netherlands)<sup>34</sup>.

The Mobility Partnership declaration created a new institutional framework for policy dialogue and bilateral cooperation in this field, with an annex (so-called 'scoreboard') of cooperation activities and projects for its implementation. It was followed by the signing of two other legal documents: the Readmission Agreement of persons residing without authorization in the European Union<sup>35</sup>; and the EU-Armenia Agreement on the facilitation of the issuance of visa<sup>36</sup>.

The Mobility Partnership declaration aimed to strengthen the migration dialogue between Armenia, the EU and its Member States through better managing legal (and) labour migration (including circular and temporary migration); enhancing cooperation on migration and development; preventing and combating irregular migration; promoting an effective return and readmission policy, while respecting human rights and the relevant international instruments for the protection of refugees and taking into account the situation of individual migrants and the socio-economic development of the parties. The documents also specifies the importance of regularly updating Armenia's migration profile and developing legal and technical framework on migration related data collection and management, including cooperation with national institutions and agencies of the European Union.

The Mobility Partnership declaration contains clauses relevant for all phases of migration and can, hence, serve as a solid ground for the development of the so-called 'win-win-win' environment beneficial for all parties involved; EU member-states, Armenia and individual migrants. In the section regarding mobility, legal migration and integration, the declaration includes several clauses, the implementation of which can be addressed and reinforced by various MISMES. First, the declaration specifies the importance '[... of informing] potential migrants on opportunities for legal migration, including labour migration, to the European Union and on requirements for legal stay, including opportunities for studying in the Member States; to explore the possibilities of promoting labour migration and developing legal frameworks relating to employment conditions for migrants, while matching labour market opportunities [...]'. In this respect, MISMES, such as international job matching platforms, can facilitate the implementation of these goals.

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<sup>34</sup> Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the European Union and Armenia, signed on 6 October 2011. Last accessed 2 July 2014 at: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/global-approach-to-migration/specific-tools/docs/mobility\\_partnership\\_armenia\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/global-approach-to-migration/specific-tools/docs/mobility_partnership_armenia_en.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations, State Migration Service, 19 October 2011, Order N 54-A, Order on ensuring of the implementation of the government order # 1360-n, 22 September 2011 on considering by state authorities the applications received from foreign countries within the framework of the agreement between the EU and the Republic of Armenia on the readmission of persons residing without authorization. Last accessed 9 July 2014 at: [www.smsmta.am/upload/3-pet-eng.pdf](http://www.smsmta.am/upload/3-pet-eng.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and the EU on the facilitation of the issuance of visas (signed on 17 December 2012, entered into force on 1 January 2014), available at: [www.smsmta.am/upload/EU\\_AM\\_VFA\\_eng.pdf](http://www.smsmta.am/upload/EU_AM_VFA_eng.pdf)

Moreover, the document specifies the necessity of '[...] pre-departure training, especially in the area of vocational education and training and language training [...]', which can be addressed by pre-departure information, orientation and training schemes. Further, the declaration indicates that it is important to '[...] prevent, reduce and counteract the negative effects of the brain drain and brain waste, including through return policies targeting in particular skilled Armenian migrants and taking into consideration best standards of ethical recruitment; to facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications [...]'. The MISMES models such as temporary stays of qualified migrants in countries of origin and promoting return of high skilled migrants can be suitable for achieving these goals.

Finally, the declaration states the importance of measures addressing promotion and support of '[...] voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of returning migrants through implementation of specific joint programmes offering training, possibilities to improve migrants' employment qualifications and assistance in finding jobs; to provide joint specific programmes devoted to protection of and assistance for vulnerable categories of returning migrants; to develop entrepreneurship and build a legal framework in the field of small and medium enterprises [...]'. These intentions were later further specified in the EU–Armenian Readmission Agreement and can be addressed by such measures as Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes for returning migrants.

Since October 2011, there have been numerous projects implemented in Armenia in the framework of the EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership and some of them have contained measures which are subject of interest for this study. The details of some measures are presented in the National Inventory of MISMES section and further discussed in terms of their efficiency and possible improvements whenever possible. The State Migration Service provided on its website a list<sup>37</sup> of ongoing and completed actions of which the following ones potentially have MISMES components:

1. Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA): Strengthening Armenia's migration management capacity, with special focus on reintegration activities, in the framework of the EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership;
2. Mitigating social consequences of labour migration and maximizing migrants involvement in local development;
3. Piloting for establishing a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the field of tourism/hospitality;
4. Return Assistance in Armenia – Cooperation OFII-BAMF (RACOB);
5. Return to Sources – Voluntary return of Armenian nationals from France to Armenia;
6. Returnees from Europe – Voluntary return from the Netherlands;
7. Strengthening tailor-made assisted voluntary return;
8. Returning Experts Programme: Promotion of knowledge transfer to countries of origin;
9. Strengthening evidence-based management of labour migration in Armenia;
10. Temporary return of qualified nationals enhancing government and institutional capacity by linking the diaspora.

The first activity of the list, Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA), is a EUR 3 million project funded by the EU and implemented under the leadership of OFII (French Office of Immigration and Integration)

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<sup>37</sup> The provided list of projects/actions has not been recently updated and hence cannot be complete.

and with junior partner GIZ within the framework of EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership Declaration. It is a 36-month project (October 2012-September 2015) to strengthen Armenia's migration management capacities with special focus on reintegration activities by increasing the capacities of competent authorities and civil society to support dignified sustainable return and reintegration, to address the challenges posed by irregular migration, to facilitate opportunities for legal migration and to strengthen the positive impact of migration on Armenia's social development<sup>38</sup>.

There has been no information available on the last four activities of the list although they seem to be typical MISMES activities. This list of activities indicates that despite the multifaceted potential of the Mobility Partnership in facilitating circular migration, the focus has been, to date, on the return and reintegration of migrants.

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<sup>38</sup> See [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/armenia/projects/list\\_of\\_projects/309112\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/armenia/projects/list_of_projects/309112_en.htm)

## 4. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Inventory of MISMEs in Armenia presented in this report represent the first attempt at mapping skills and employment related migrants support measures before, during and after the migration process, implemented in or by countries of origin. MISMEs and their results in terms of medium and long-term impact on migrants is an area that have previously been neglected to a large extent by the migration research community. As a result, information and data on such measures have been limited. It should be acknowledged that the present discussion is based, in great part, on a desk study and, therefore, the direct beneficiaries (migrants) were not interviewed. The findings presented in this study indicates that migration still plays and will play an important role for many Armenians. Hence, migration-related issues are important for local and international policy makers, which underlines the importance of research in this field.

The conclusions presented in this chapter aims at systematizing and analysing the findings and reveals several patterns and opens room for further discussion. These discussions range over such subjects as general efficiency, challenges faced by implementers and direct beneficiaries and venues for improvement, while taking into account contextual factors specific for migration management in Armenia. The collected information reveals that the MISMEs implemented in Armenia cover all four major categories (pre-, during, post- and multidimensional MISMEs projects). However, there is no question that they are more focused on the post migration phase, at least in terms of number of interventions. This and other main findings are summarised below in key points and for each finding some recommendations are developed. Even though they are presented under separate headings they are interlinked and sometimes overlapping.

### **Overall 19 MISMEs implemented in Armenia between 2000 and 2014, the majority of which focusing on the post-migration phase – achieving a better balance**

The only pre-departure MISMEs implemented in Armenia is an online job-matching platform called ULISSES, which was supposed to facilitate circular migration as the main vacancies offered are of a seasonal nature (construction and the agriculture sector). However, despite its promising features, it failed to perform its main function of cross-border job matching as there is no record of any potential labour migrant who succeeded in finding a job abroad with this tool.

There are two ongoing during-migration MISMEs implemented that both deal with capitalising on the skills of migrants across borders. The projects aim at maximizing the involvement of the diaspora in local development through the transfer of both financial and so-called soft skills. These projects have good potential especially in the context of migration and development, still, there are challenges as well. Frequently, diaspora members are not available due to their work commitments abroad. The temporary return of highly-skilled professionals is usually costly and is based on short-term assignments, and hence the type and depth of the provided expertise is also restricted (IOM, 2012). Moreover, the durability and sustainability of these projects is an additional challenge. Instead, alternative MISMEs such as targeted entrepreneurship and business start-up support schemes (for migrants abroad or their families in Armenia) could have a more sustainable effect.

The biggest share of MISMEs belongs to post-migration phase, mainly focused on return reintegration platforms and AVRR programmes. There were at least three MISMEs resulting in the developing of handbooks for potential returnees, all supposed to serve the same purpose. The inventory of measures clearly points towards the possibility to better balance the interventions and projects/measures implemented and should be taken into account by both state authorities, international donors and implementing bodies. The inventory also indicates that most measures/projects are funded by international donors and destination countries and that the implementers often are offices of international organisations and national/ international NGOs.

## AVRR – the most common MISMES implemented, and overlap of projects

The most common category implemented is AVRR although the lack of information regarding project budgets makes it difficult to assess their cost-efficiency. However, the efficiency of the AVRR programmes can be questioned for several reasons. First, despite its voluntary nature, AVRRs implemented in Armenia mostly deal with rejected asylum-seekers from European countries. Their return is more a result of the failure of their migration plans and can hardly be called voluntary return. Second, survey-based estimates indicate that only a very small part (3.7 %) of returnees comes from European countries; the majority of returnees (85.2 %) come from Russia. So far implemented AVRR programmes target almost exclusively those coming from EU Member States, which mean that they are not open for returnees coming from other countries and therefore do not address the needs of the major part of returnees in Armenia. Third, though reintegration measures have the potential to help returnees to adapt in Armenia, the survey based evidence shows that 98.8% of the target audience are completely unaware of the existence of reintegration schemes (ETF, 2013). The potential and added value of these measures can only be evaluated once they truly target the potential audience.

It is important to tailor the integration measures according to the skills of beneficiaries. In Armenia the majority of returnees have lower than post-secondary education and return migrants are less likely to have post-secondary education compared to potential migrants (ETF and CRRC, 2013). The importance of skills is acknowledged by the implementers of AVRR who mention that skills and the previous experience of migrants are among the most important factors for successful reintegration: 'For professionals it was easy to find a job themselves. Even with the provision of business start-up opportunity the successful ones were the cases where the returnees have experience in that exact sphere.' Among the main obstacles the AVRR implementers point out the weak economic situation, high unemployment and corruption within governmental institutions. The majority of AVRR presented here address return and reintegration and are implemented at different points of time. However, there is no or very little evidence of cross project coordination or learning (within and between countries). This potentially undermines the overall efficiency of implemented projects. **FIGURE 4.1** below maps the AVRR programmes over time. Ideally, the reports and evaluations delivered by the pioneers should have served as an orienting guide for those who followed.

The conclusion above regarding balance between implemented measures also indicates a possible lack of collaboration and coordination between organisations, leading to overlaps among projects. In addition, Figure 4.1 demonstrates that there are similar AVRR programmes run simultaneously, which requires more human resources and hence makes cost-efficiency questionable. The information obtained through questionnaires reveals that the implementers themselves evaluate the overall success of the implemented MISMES quite poorly: sometimes only five out of ten. In some cases the implementers explain the poor performance by relatively small staff employed (three persons for post arrival and reintegration unit) or relatively small budgets (from EUR 100,000 to EUR 300,000) or a combination of both. Project implementers frequently mention the shortage of human resources as one of the obstacles they face.

**FIGURE 4.1 AVRR PROGRAMMES OVER TIME**

| Project/policy intervention  | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Return assistance in Armenia – Cooperation OFII-BAMF (RACOB)   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Post arrival assistance to Armenian returnees from the Netherlands   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Return to sources  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Institutional capacity building in the field of migration information and cooperation regarding reintegration of Armenian migrants         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Returnees from Europe  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Sustainable reintegration after voluntary return   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Migration and Development 1 and 2  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Strengthening Armenia's migration management capacities, with special focus on reintegration activities in the framework of the EU-Armenia |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |

**Coordination and sustainability of implemented measures and the potential of the EU-Armenia Mobility Partnership**

The scope of return and reintegration measures addressing the skills and employment of returnees can be considered as active labour market policies with a special focus on returnees. Hence, the integration of these projects into already established State Employment Service Agency activities should be considered. This could lead to an increase in overall efficiency through the utilization of already existing capacities (including human resources), better coordination, and lower running costs and ultimately increased sustainability. The Inventory also points to a gradual progress regarding the development of institutional, strategic and legal frameworks for the better management of migration.

Another more general but nonetheless important recommendation is tailoring/developing MISMES taking into account country specific context. There is a need to develop universal approaches with standardization of implemented measures in specific MISMES models or the so-called ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach frequently used by implementing institutions. However, such an approach might lead to overlooking some important contextual factors and could result in failure or inefficiency of implemented measures. Instead, a more country, region, migrant category (skill, gender, age) specific approach would help overcome obstacles neglected due to generalization. This too could be important from a sustainability point of view.

As stated above, MISMES in Armenia have a strong post-migration phase bias. A stronger focus on measures in all phases of migration, for example the facilitation of circular migration, the wider cross-border recognition of skills and qualification, the portability of social rights and schemes allowing the productive use of remittances could create conditions for a successful migration path, for the fulfilment of individual goals/projects and, as a result, for smoother return and reintegration. There is a positive association between successful migration and successful return, the vast majority of migration experiences considered as successful led to a highly successful or successful return. In the case of Armenia, relatively short circular movements have led to successful migration outcome (ETF, 2013). Hence, migrant support measures focused on mechanisms enabling legal temporary and circular migration could contribute to a successful migration path and hence the sustainable effect of implemented measures.



Implemented MISMES should have a forward looking perspective; a set of policy measures ensuring circular migration as well as labour market integration and the improved skill utilization of migrants workers both in Armenia and abroad should prevail. The Mobility Partnership between the EU and Armenia is very balanced in terms of migration phases<sup>39</sup>. It allows for the development of efficient migration management between Armenia and the EU and several of the actions undertaken potentially have MISMES components but the focus, again, mostly have been on return and reintegration so far. Despite the multifaceted nature of the Mobility Partnership, this indicates that the full potential is still not utilized, and there is room for improvement and that a more forward looking approach would be beneficial.

### **Multidimensional MISMES, such as MRC, potentially contributing to better migration management**

The last part of the MISMES inventory in Armenia includes measures and projects addressing migrant needs in the entire migration cycle (pre, during and post-migration) in one project and/or MISMES measures combined with policy development support and capacity building of institutions. Thus they cannot be pinned down to a particular MISMES model. These multi-dimensional MISMES have the potential to contribute to effective management of migration as they frequently deal with migrants in all phases of migration and policy aspects of migration management. In most cases an evolution is observed towards 'multi-dimensional migrant resource centres' where services from pre-departure to reintegration of returnees and assistance to diaspora are provided in one-stop-shop. They are typically called 'migrant resource centre' (MRC) or something similar with a high potential to contribute to better migration management.

In this regard, the 'Support to Migration Management Policies and Institutions' project, which was implemented in collaboration with the State Migration Service (SMS), deserves special attention. The Migration Support Centre created within the SMS premises and the online web portal ([www.backtoarmenia.com](http://www.backtoarmenia.com)), short documentaries and TV shows reached a wide audience. The Migration Support Centre received 1,600 returning migrant applications, the 'hot-line' served almost 840 individuals. The success of the project and the wide audience reached might be explained by the involvement of the state authorities and points to the possible need of a more overarching approach in line with state policies. This could potentially contribute to further development of migration management policies.

### **More skill-specific MISMES to be implemented**

In general, the implemented measures seem to lack skill-specific approaches. The same measure can be efficient for an unskilled individual, while irrelevant for a skilled individual and *vice versa*. Below are a few examples of measures that could increase the focus on the skills dimension and effective job matching.

- *Developing systems enabling recognition and portability of qualifications:* several projects includes measures addressing the recognition of skills developed abroad both formally and informally. However, there is no mechanism enabling international recognition of skills and qualifications obtained in Armenia and the development and implementation addressing the assessment, certification, validation and recognition of potential migrants' skills is crucial if the aim is the reduction of skill underutilization. It must be acknowledged that mutual recognition of qualification is possible only if the Armenian education system is brought up to international standards by

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<sup>39</sup> Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the European Union and Armenia, signed on 6 October 2011. Last accessed 2 July 2014 at: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/global-approach-to-migration/specific-tools/docs/mobility\\_partnership\\_armenia\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/global-approach-to-migration/specific-tools/docs/mobility_partnership_armenia_en.pdf)

reform and the Mobility Partnership underlines the importance of educational reforms to enhance mobility of skills and qualifications.

- *Implementing efficient mechanisms for cross-border job matching to enable circular and temporary migration:* for increasing job matching one possibility is to integrate the existing Armenian job matching systems into the European ones (such as EURES, the European job mobility portal). Improving the ULISSES job-matching system to actively follow-up the job placements which are done through this website is also necessary.
- *Developing alternative mechanisms to access information about labour markets abroad:* for example to develop a web platform which would allow to verify the demand for skills and qualifications possessed by an individual in a particular country (possibly, it can be based on ULISSES). For example, by inserting the age, education, language proficiency and other characteristics one can see where his/her skills are demanded, see the unemployment rate, vacancy rate, wages in the relevant sector. But this needs to be an inter-active (not passive) online tool to become efficient.

### **Evaluation, follow-up and information challenges in the field of MISMEMS**

A prevailing challenge for this inventory has been to gather relevant information, such as project and evaluation reports, regarding past and ongoing projects and measures implemented in Armenia. In general, this is due to a lack of information rather than willingness to share information and the evaluation of any policy measure is conditional on the way it is designed and on the information available. Unfortunately, in the vast majority of MISMEMS cases included here both conditions are violated and it has not been possible to assess the different MISMEMS. The prevailing part of the projects are complex and contain several MISMEMS components, while the information regarding the budget is very generalised, which makes it difficult to attribute the overall expenses to some particular outcome. Therefore, it is difficult to estimate the cost-efficiency of a particular component and any calculated indicator would not be comparable across implemented policy measures.

This points both to the need to develop a methodological framework enabling the evaluation of the internal and external efficiency of projects at different stages of implementation as well as a mechanism/ requirement to share the project related information publicly. The first part could include further use of a set of standardised indicators (such as the number of beneficiaries, the number of persons employed, the number of individual retrained, the number of individuals assisted, the number of start-ups financed) and also address the lack of intermediate and follow up evaluations focused on impact.

The availability of project-related information (similar to that presented above) would allow comparability of implemented measures as well as the identification of the common factors of success or failure. This would allow learning from previously implemented projects within and across countries and between different implementing organisations.

### **Coordination and dissemination of information to be strengthened**

Many of the implemented MISMEMS have some form of information component and there is a need for making even more information available and accessible for potential as well as returning migrants. For example, an Armenian citizen living abroad and planning to return will most probably consider the diplomatic representations of Armenia in the country of residence the first source of information. However, there is no information or links available on the websites of diplomatic representations. This might be explained by poor collaboration of project implementers with state authorities.

Creating a capacity coordinating collection and dissemination of information regarding the whole set of MISMEMS implemented in Armenia would allow (i) to systematically collect and publish the relevant

information (including the above-mentioned indicators); (ii) to increase the transparency of implemented projects; and (iii) to develop a dialogue between the implementing institutions and possibly diminish duplications and overlaps. Better coordination might be achieved through either new capacity development within the State Migration Service or with an extension of the mandate of the Inter-ministerial Committee which coordinates the implementation of the '2012-2016 Action plan for implementation of the concept for the policy of state regulation of migration in the Republic of Armenia'.

In addition, re-tailoring the channels of spreading information about ongoing pre- and post-departure schemes might increase outreach. Only an extremely small fraction of potential migrants (6%) are aware of the existence of pre-departure support schemes in Armenia (ETF and CRRC, 2013). The percentage of returnees aware of various reintegration support policy measures is even smaller (1%). An individual with relatively high skills might find the information necessary in organising his or her departure more easy thanks to daily access to the internet. Instead, people with lower education or those occupied in sectors or regions where there is less access to electronic resources might need a more individualized approach and face-to-face communication. Hence, both implementers and state authorities should put more efforts into raising public awareness of both pre-departure and reintegration measures and better tailor information as well as information channels to relevant target groups.

### **Developing alternative remittance schemes**

The remittances sent by Armenian migrants are usually spent for consumption, making migration a source of short-term income with no long-term benefits. Living expenses are among the most frequently cited use of remittances (95.7%), education comes only fourth, leaving business investment (0.2%) far behind, even compared to other similar countries (ETF, 2013). Creation of incentives and schemes redirecting part of remittances from consumption (similar to those implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the IOM in Tajikistan (Global Migration Group, 2010)) could allow the use of savings for entrepreneurial activities upon return, and hence, ensure a smoother reintegration and contribute to local development in general.

### **Developing policies addressing corruption and (non)transparency in the labour market**

Questionable transparency of labour markets and corruption, in general, might be among the push factors intensifying emigration and preventing return. Having 'connections' is considered the most important factor for getting a good job in Armenia, according to the Caucasus Barometer Survey<sup>40</sup>. Education and professional abilities/work experience ranks only as the second and third most important factors. Hence, measures addressing skill enhancement alone might not be sufficient to ensure employment. In this regard, measures assuring more transparency in the hiring process can increase the chances of returnees being employed and so attenuate 'brain drain' in general.

According to the information obtained through questionnaires, implementers consider 'corruption within governmental institutions' as one of the main challenges identified in the follow-up stage. It is important to develop mechanisms which would allow monitoring the transparency of administrative procedures faced by the returnees while establishing their business in Armenia. According to the 'Investment Climate 2013' report from the business anti-corruption portal, the 2009-12 Anti-Corruption Strategy implemented by Armenian government did not have any significant impact of the level of corruption in Armenia<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Please see the results from 2011, 2012 and 2013 at: <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/>

<sup>41</sup>For more details, see [www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/europe-central-asia/armenia/initiatives/public-anti-corruption-initiatives.aspx](http://www.business-anti-corruption.com/country-profiles/europe-central-asia/armenia/initiatives/public-anti-corruption-initiatives.aspx)

# ANNEXES

## Annex 1. Methodology for the country case studies

The MISMES project (migrant support measures from an employment and skills perspective) was launched in 2014 by the ETF to provide evidence-based, policy-oriented inputs to guide the EU dialogue on migration with the neighbourhood countries and coordinated by the Migration Policy Centre of the European University Institute. It reviewed the range of migrant support measures from employment and skills perspective with the aim of assessing (i) their cost-effectiveness; and (ii) their impact on labour migration outcomes.

For the purpose of this study, MISMES is defined 'specific policy interventions implemented in sending countries in pre, during and post-migration periods, aimed at (i) improving the labour market integration of migrant workers (by facilitating labour mobility and job matching, access to labour market information and protection); and/or (ii) reducing the underutilization of skills of individual migrant workers and improving skills-matching more generally'. This excludes general policies and regulations such as bilateral agreements, international conventions on the recognition of qualifications and social security agreements.

### Main MISMES models identified and analysed in the Global Inventory (ETF, 2015a):

- international job matching and placement services;
- pre-departure information, orientation and training;
- professional skills development for migration;
- facilitating access to labour market information and protection in destination countries;
- capitalizing skills across borders (including diaspora);
- assessment, certification, validation and recognition of migrants' skills and qualifications;
- pre-return and return employment information platforms and call centres;
- targeted entrepreneurship and income generating schemes for returnees;
- assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes;
- migration resource centres (MRCs); and
- migrant welfare funds.

### Main outputs of the MISMES project:

- **A Global Inventory** aimed to develop a typology of migrant support measures from an employment and skills perspective, categorizing them in terms of migration phase (before, during, after migration or multidimensional MISMES), objectives and stakeholders (migrants, funding and implementing institutions, NGOs, state bodies) (ETF 2015a). The Global Inventory tried to identify factors of success and common denominators, including contextual factors that may affect the impact of MISMES, and map the challenges in implementing each category of migrant-support measures.
- **Five country case studies** aimed to review MISMES in five countries of the EU Neighbourhood (full studies for Moldova, Georgia, Morocco and desk studies for Armenia and Tunisia). The country case studies tried to draw lessons for the optimization of their Mobility Partnerships with

the EU from an employment and skills perspective and was carried out following a common methodology and structure (for more information on MISMEMS methodological note, see ETF 2015b).

### Stages in developing the country case studies (see ETF, 2015b):

- **Methodological workshop:** Held at the Migration Policy Centre in Florence (13-14 March 2014), aiming to discuss the preliminary findings of the MISMEMS Global Inventory and to agree on the methodological approach to the country case studies on the basis of country concept notes presented by the country case study authors.
- **Desk research:** Comprehensive desk research to map implemented policy interventions based on secondary data sources (academic literature, policy studies, project leaflets, internet sources from international organisations, governmental agencies and other implementers, project evaluations, Scoreboard information within the Mobility Partnership, etc.). Based on this research and the primary sources described below, each country case study compiled a MISMEMS inventory in respective country from 2000 to 2014.
- **MISMEMS questionnaire:** A standardized electronic questionnaire (see MISMEMS Methodological Note (ETF 2015b)) was circulated among identified implementers in each country of study to supplement the desk research. In the case of Armenia, twenty MISMEMS questionnaires were sent to the institutions listed in Annex 2 and 10 were received back completed in the preliminary phase of the study.
- **Field missions and in-depth interviews:** The Armenia country case study was carried out as desk research and does not include a field mission. In the cases of Moldova, Georgia and Morocco, there were joint three-day country missions with a team formed by the country author, the MISMEMS project coordinator and ETF officers (country manager and migration team specialist). For Tunisia, a two-day country mission was conducted by the country case study authors. In the framework of those missions, a series of face-to-face meetings with implementers, policy makers and stakeholders were held to gain additional insight into implementation dynamics and various policy measures. In each of those missions, a focus group on one particular MISMEMS was organised. Complementarily, country authors conducted additional interviews when necessary.
- **Case studies:** For an in-depth understanding of implementation challenges and success factors of a particular MISMEMS, a project implemented in each of the countries was chosen for a case study, again with the exception of Armenia which was carried out as desk research.
- **Final technical workshop:** The MISMEMS team of the Migration Policy Centre, the ETF migration team and relevant country managers and a number of public officers from the countries of the studies came together at the ETF in Turin on 29-30 September 2014 to discuss the draft country case studies and the findings of the MISMEMS Global Inventory.

## Annex 2. List of institutions that received the MISMES questionnaire

- Ministry of Labour and Social Issues
- State Employment Service Agency
- State Migration Service, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations
- Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Centre (SMEDNC)
- EU Advisory Group to Armenia
- European Training Foundation (ETF)
- Targeted Initiative for Armenia (TIA) project office (OFII and GIZ)
- ILO Armenia office
- IOM Armenia office
- Republican Union of Employers of Armenia (RUEA)
- Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia (CTUA)
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Armenia (CCIA)
- Caritas Armenia office
- Hayastan (Armenia) All-Armenian Foundation
- International Centre for Human Development (ICHHD)
- People in Need / CLOVEK V TISNI OPS
- Armenian Relief Society (ARS)
- French-Armenian Development Foundation (FFAD)
- Armenian Association of Social Aid (AAAS)
- Tanger Private Employee Recruitment Agency

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>AAAS</b>    | Association arménienne d'aide sociale (Armenian Association of Social Aid)  |
| <b>AENEAS</b>  | EU Programme for financial and technical assistance to third countries in the area of migration and asylum                        |
| <b>ANAEM</b>   | Agence nationale de l'accueil des étrangers et des migrants (French National Agency for the Reception of Foreigners and Migrants) |
| <b>AVRR</b>    | Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (programme)   |
| <b>BAMF</b>    | Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees)   |
| <b>CIS</b>     | Commonwealth of Independent States  |
| <b>ETF</b>     | European Training Foundation  |
| <b>EU</b>      | European Union  |
| <b>EUI</b>     | European University Institute   |
| <b>Fedasil</b> | Belgian Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers  |
| <b>FFAD</b>    | Fondation franco-arménienne pour le développement (French-Armenian Development Foundation)  |
| <b>GIZ</b>     | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation)                             |
| <b>ICHD</b>    | International Centre for Human Development  |
| <b>ILO</b>     | International Labour Organisation   |
| <b>IOM</b>     | International Organisation for Migration  |
| <b>MISMES</b>  | Migrant Support Measures from an Employment and Skills Perspective  |
| <b>MRCs</b>    | Migration resource centres  |
| <b>NGO</b>     | Non-governmental organisation   |
| <b>NSS</b>     | National Statistical Service of Armenia   |
| <b>OFII</b>    | Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration (French Office for Immigration and Integration)                              |
| <b>OSCE</b>    | Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe   |
| <b>SMS</b>     | State Migration Service (Ministry of Territorial Administration)  |
| <b>TIA</b>     | Targeted Initiative for Armenia   |
| <b>Unicef</b>  | United Nations Children's Fund  |
| <b>VET</b>     | Vocational education and training   |

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