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

ANALYTICAL NOTE 2012/01

***A STATISTICAL OVERVIEW ON RETURN MIGRATION
TO THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA***

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By Annett Fleischer

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

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A Statistical Overview on Return Migration to the Republic of Armenia

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1. Background

In a nutshell, the current statistical situation on return migration to the Republic of Armenia (RA) can be described as a blank sheet of paper with only weak marginal spots on it, i.e. there are no precise and systematic data on the scope of return migration to Armenia.¹

Like many other migration countries, Armenia does not record returnees. Neither the National Statistical Office, nor the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Migration Agency for Armenia's Ministry of Territorial Administration assesses return flows and stocks to Armenia. The statistical background of return migration to Armenia is weak and information about pre- and post-return conditions, return motivations or patterns of reintegration is non-existent (Bachmann *et al.* 2004, Johansson 2008).

There are no precise and systematic data on return flows and stocks to Armenia.

The few available statistical data on the number of Armenian returnees suffer from a lack of accuracy and consistency, particular concerning the definition of the phenomenon of return migration. Moreover, such available data focus almost entirely on expelled migrants (so-called voluntary and forced returnees).² Therefore, they are far from reflecting the composite nature of return migration to Armenia. They also need to be critically examined concerning their sources, the terms and definitions used. For such reasons, assessing the number of Armenian returnees is by no means easy. The first part

¹ The author would like to thank Jean-Pierre Cassarino for his insightful comments on this report.

² The most relevant references dealing with voluntary and enforced return of Armenian nationals are:

- UNDP Armenia. "Migration and Human Development: Opportunities and Challenges." Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/87B390CE-F203-1EE9-B95DF29A79F6080C>.
- Eurostat Metadata. "Statistical database." Accessed February 06, 2012. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database.
- European Migration Network. "Return Assistance in Germany. Programmes and Strategies fostering Assisted Return to and Reintegration in Third Countries." Accessed February 06, 2012. http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Publikationen/EMN/emn-wp31-return-assistance-en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

of this report will examine the two places for data collection on return migration: the country of destination and the country of origin. In the countries of destination, estimates are based on Armenian immigrants leaving the territory. In the country of origin, information is collected on the basis of Armenian nationals re-entering the country.

Available statistical data focus almost exclusively on expelled migrants (so-called voluntary and forced returnees).

The second part of the study explores the political implications of the lack of insufficient and accurate data for the implementation and clear assessment of the mechanisms aimed at facilitating the cross-border mobility as well as the return and reintegration of migrants in Armenia. This aspect refers, among others, to the newly adopted mobility partnership between Armenia and the European Union (EU).

2. Statistical situation in the destination countries

Official data available in the countries of destination register Armenian citizens who legally entered and reside on their territory. They also register Armenian nationals leaving the country, but do not record where they leave for. For example, the German Federal Institute for Statistics (Destatis) and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) recorded in 2010 the arrivals of 884 Armenian citizens in Germany and the departure of 612 Armenian citizens.³ However, Armenian nationals who depart from Germany do not necessarily leave for Armenia. Hence, we cannot assume that they returned to their country of origin.

The OECD International Migration Database recorded the outflows of foreign population by nationality.⁴ The data explains, for example, that in 2009, 3442 Armenian nationals left the United States of America, 1559 departed from Poland and 1268 from France. Again, the data on the departure of foreigners from OECD countries is not an adequate measure of return migration to Armenia.

³ Federal Statistical Office Germany. "People registered in Germany and leaving the country according to their citizenship." Accessed February 06, 2012.

http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/DE/Content/Publikationen/Fachveroeffentlichung/en/Bevoelkerung/MigrationIntegration/AuslaendBevoelkerung_templateId=renderPrint.psm1

⁴ OECD International Migration Database. "Outflows of foreign population by nationality." Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>

3. Statistical situation in Armenia

Data on return migration to Armenia are scanty, mainly because Armenian returnees are not required to register upon their arrival in their country of origin. In total, only 10 to 15 per cent of all Armenian citizens are officially registered in the country and hence, statistically ascertained.⁵ Returning Armenian nationals with a valid passport face no formalities in re-entering their country, and very

Only 10 to 15 per cent of all Armenian citizens are officially registered.

often there will be no administrative record of such entries. This means Armenian citizens who returned on their own initiative to their country of origin are in the majority of cases not registered and therefore, there is also no information on the duration of their stay abroad, the reasons for return or their situation after re-entering Armenia. The government of Armenia can only

capture *some* data on Armenian citizens who participated in an "Assisted Voluntary Return" (AVR) programme or who were deported. This lack of data particular on decided return migration has consequences for governmental and non-governmental programmes on reintegration. So far, existing reintegration initiatives focus almost exclusively on expelled migrants.

The National Statistical Service (NSS) of the Republic of Armenia collects statistical data on migration stocks and flows based on the "Migrant's Statistical Registration Form" filled in by persons registering or deregistering their residence status on the territory of Armenia at the local branches of the Passport and Visa Department of the Police of Armenia.⁶ Yet, these aggregated data include foreigners and Armenian citizens. Since the citizenship of arriving person is not recorded, we cannot estimate the number of returning Armenian citizens.

Likewise, the Border Management and Information System (BMIS) provides statistical records on arrivals in and departures from Armenia.⁷ However, these data only show the total volumes of passenger turnover through Armenia by air, road and railway transport. In 2010, passengers from other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries⁸ arriving in Armenia totalled 748 and 157 from other countries (including those who did not specify the country). These statistical records do not include any information about the citizenship of passengers arriving or departing, the duration of

⁵ This information was obtained during an interview with the State Migration Service in Yerevan (Armenia) on the 17th of February 2012.

⁶ National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia. "Main Statistical Data 2012." Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://www.armstat.am/en/>

⁷ Total Airport Management Information System (TAMIS). "Electronic Border Management Information System." Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://www.aitsystems.am>

The Government Decision # 884-N, dated 22 June 2006 and entitled "On Creation of the Electronic Border Management Information System, Defining the Procedure for its exploitation and the List of its Users". This decision regulates the electronic management of flows through the state border crossing control points. The Decision nominated the National Security Service of Armenia a Coordinating Authority for the BMIS.

⁸ The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

the time lived abroad, conditions of returning, etc. Therefore, we cannot assume that the number of arriving passengers in Armenia inform about the number of Armenian returnees. Such data are aggregates including visitors, businessmen, returning Armenian citizens and other passengers who arrive in Armenia.

The last Armenian population census was carried out in October 2011. Results will only be published in 2013. The census does not allow the stocks and flows of migrants to be assessed whether they are leaving from or returning to Armenia. Respondents, who were permanently or temporary absent, were asked about their place of residence and the main reasons for changing residence (questionnaire for 2011 census round, question 13.4.⁹), but such information cannot shed light on the number of returnees to Armenia.

Available data dubbed as dealing with the return of Armenian nationals actually refer to their removal or readmission to Armenia (so called “voluntary return” or “deportation”). According to the Law on Consulate Service, the Consulate Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs delivers “return certificates” (or *laissez-passers*) at the request of a destination country to facilitate the removal of Armenian nationals. In 2011, the

The majority of “return certificates” were issued on the request of the Russian Federation.

Consulate Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia issued 21130 “return certificates” (compared with 19528 in 2010 and 19824 in 2009).¹⁰ The majority of “return certificates” were issued on the request of the Russian Federation (16868 “return certificates” in 2011). In addition, from 2004 to 2009 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) registered 30497 Armenian nationals who were removed (see Table 1, “voluntary return”) from the Russian Federation, against 1961 from the United States of America, 1307 from Germany, 640 from France and 264 from Switzerland. The removal of these Armenian nationals was organised in the framework of a so called “Assisted Voluntary Return” (AVR) programmes managed and implemented by the international organizations such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Armenian Caritas, the French Armenian Development Foundation, People in Need and others. The total number of Armenian citizens who were deported between 2004 and 2009 from Russian Federation is 2731, from Poland 1178, from France 429, from the United States of America 238, from Germany 187, etc. (see Table 1, “deportation”).¹¹

⁹ See the 2011 census questionnaire: <http://www.armstat.am/file/doc/99465273.pdf> Accessed February 06, 2012.

¹⁰ The source is a reference letter of the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Return certificates (*laissez passé*) were issued to irregular Armenian immigrants or rejected asylum seekers who were either deported or returned with an “Assisted Voluntary Return” (AVR) programme to Armenia.

¹¹ UNDP Armenia. “Migration and Human Development: Opportunities and Challenges.” Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/87B390CE-F203-1EE9-B95DF29A79F6080C> . The table was prepared on the basis of data from the reference letter of the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs Consular Department.

Table 1: Voluntary Return and Deportation of Armenian Citizens from Abroad, 2004-2009

Country	Voluntary return	Deportation
Argentina	5	-
Austria	40	-
Belarus	56	25
Bulgaria	168	75
Canada	-	20
France	640	429
Germany	1307	187
Greece	35	-
Israel	8	-
Italy	4	79
Netherlands	74	39
Poland	-	1178
Russian Federation	30497	2731
Spain	-	53
Sweden	127	127
Switzerland	264	-
Turkey	77	-
Turkmenistan	98	9
United Arab Emirates	3	19
United Kingdom	25	76
United States of America	1961	238
Total	35389	5288

Source: UNDP Armenia. “Migration and Human Development: Opportunities and Challenges.” Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://europeandcis.undp.org/home/show/87B390CE-F203-1EE9-B95DF29A79F6080C>. The table is based on data collected from the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs Consular Department. Note: - data not available.

Interestingly, these data on deportation of Armenian nationals do not correspond with the Eurostat Metadata of Armenian nationals expelled from each EU-27 Member State from 2008 to 2010.¹² For example, for Germany Eurostat recorded 830 Armenian nationals who were expelled from 2008 to 2010 while the MFA registered only 187 deportees for a period of five years. In contrast for Poland, MFA reported a much higher number of removed Armenian nationals for the mentioned period (1178), while Eurostat estimated 360 Armenians expelled from Poland. This inconsistency could be partly explained with a different definition of terms such as “voluntary return”, “deportation” or “expulsion”. In any case, national and international data on enforced return and expulsion do not inform us about the composite nature of return migration to Armenia. They only portrait a small part of the broader picture and do not include Armenian nationals who decide, on their own initiative, to return to Armenia.

¹² Eurostat Database. “Table on Armenian nationals expelled from each EU-27 Member State from 2008 to 2010.” Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/research/analyses/statistics/armenia/armenian-nationals-expelled-from-each-eu-27-member-state-2008-2010/>.

4. Other sources

The Integrated Living Conditions Survey (ILCS)¹³ from 2010 asks respondents to answer a question on whether anyone in their household “has migrated” or “returned from migration”. However, there is no clear definition of the terms “migrate” or “migration” and hence, the data does not show whether people migrated internally or internationally, short or long-term or under what circumstances they returned.

The “Return Migration to Armenia in 2002-2008: A Study”¹⁴ carried out by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Advanced Social Technologies (AST) conducted a nationwide quantitative household survey on return migration in 2008, however, since it is a household survey, these data do not allow estimations on the number of returnee to RA nor do they provide a comprehensive and precise picture of the statistical situation of return migration to Armenia. Yet, the study provides some information which can be used for the sampling of our field survey, e.g. geographical distribution of returnees in Armenia, countries of destination, age and gender structure of return migrants.

5. Observations

As mentioned before, available statistical data do not reflect the actual number of Armenian returnees. These statistical shortcomings have, among others, implications for the implementation and monitoring of the Mobility Partnership (MP) that Armenia concluded in October 2011 with the EU. According to the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström:

“the Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between European Union (EU) and the Republic of Armenia (RA), together with other instruments such as future Visa Facilitation and Readmission agreements, will be key in increasing the mobility of European and Armenian citizens in a well-managed and secure environment”.¹⁵

The aim of this agreement is to cover a range of issues such as the management of legal movements of people between the EU and Armenia (circular and temporary migration schemes including visa facilitation), the fight against unauthorised migration, including readmission agreements, and

¹³ “The Armenian Integrated Living Conditions Survey.” Accessed February 06, 2012.

http://www.armstat.am/file/article/poverty_2010e_2.pdf

¹⁴ “Return Migration to Armenia in 2002-2008.” Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://www.osce.org/yerevan/35806>

¹⁵ European Commission Press Release. “Better mobility between the EU and Armenia.” Accessed February 06, 2012. <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/1257&type=HTML>

Ten Member States of the European Union, namely the Kingdom of Belgium, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic, the Republic of Italy, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Republic of Poland, Romania and the Kingdom of Sweden as well as the European Training Foundation (ETF) are involved in this partnership, which remains open to be signed by other Member States.

agreements on border cooperation and control.¹⁶ Moreover, the promotion of an effective return and readmission policy is explicitly mentioned.¹⁷ The vision of return is shaped by two priorities: on the one hand, the mobility partnership focuses on highly-skilled migrants; on the other hand, it emphasizes the promotion of “voluntary return” of irregular Armenian nationals as well as their “sustainable reintegration”¹⁸ in Armenia.

This restrictive understanding of the phenomenon of return migration and of defining returnees reflects the operational objectives contained in a mobility partnership. Both MP cooperation partners are not first and foremost concerned about people, but rather promote an abstract and conceptual agreement on temporary labour-migration schemes (within the framework of circular migration schemes mainly to mitigate “brain drain”) and a speedy return of Armenian nationals staying without authorisation on the territory of the EU (within the framework of readmission agreements).

Furthermore, Armenian nationals who decide on their own initiative to return to their country of origin (whether short-term or long-term) are not considered in the agreement. Just like there are no clear measures supporting their social, economic and political reintegration. Importantly, the question arises whether and how it is possible to assess and monitor the efficacy of this agreement. Given the paucity of available statistical data on Armenian returnees’ conditions, assessing the impact of the mobility partnership might turn out to be difficult, above all, when it comes to understanding their social and professional reintegration processes.¹⁹

Statistical shortcomings make it difficult to assess and monitor the efficacy of bilateral agreements.

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion on Mobility Partnerships, see Cassarino 2010: 34-38.

¹⁷ Currently, Armenia has readmission agreements with the following twelve countries: Kingdom of Belgium, Republic of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Kingdom of Denmark, Republic of Lithuania, Luxemburg, Federal Republic of Germany, Netherlands, Kingdom of Norway, Russian Federation, Kingdom of Sweden, and the Swiss Federal Council. Negotiations with other countries such as Republic of Poland, Romania, Estonia, Cyprus, the Ukraine and Moldova are in the process of development.

¹⁸ The term “sustainable reintegration” implies that return is still viewed as the end of the migration cycle.

¹⁹ The same observation applies to the “Policy Concept for the State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia” and its corresponding “Action Plan for Implementation 2012-2016”. Both documents lay emphasis on the effective return of unauthorised Armenian citizens living abroad. One of the main concerns lies in providing assistance to rejected asylum seekers and to organise their “voluntary return” to Armenia. Furthermore, it is envisaged to develop and implement reintegration programmes, e.g. for the reintegration of Armenian rejected asylum seekers in the labour market of Armenia. International organizations have been mobilised to provide this kind of assistance.

6. Conclusion

This statistical review shows that there exist few available data and information on return migration to Armenia. They focus almost exclusively on the number of removed or readmitted Armenian nationals. Regretfully, statistical data on Armenian nationals who returned to their country of origin, without being expelled, are scanty, if not non-existent. Under such circumstances, it is not possible to provide a complete statistical picture of return migration to Armenia. Existing data do not allow the stocks of returnees to be assessed properly, whereas information about migrants' patterns of reintegration and their capacity to contribute to the development back home is missing.

In addition, governmental and intergovernmental programmes on return migration and reintegration also target almost exclusively migrants who were forced to return. This emphasis seems to be politically motivated and encouraged by destination countries who are mainly concerned with the readmission of illegal migrants. Returnees are limitedly viewed as persons who were forced to return, explaining the reasons for which return is viewed as the end of the migration cycle.

Returnees are limitedly viewed as persons who were forced to return, explaining the reasons for which return is viewed as the end of the migration cycle.

Available statistical data, as they stand now, can hardly foster the development and implementation of adequate policies and measures aimed at supporting reintegration back to Armenia.

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