

Georgia Migration Policy in 2010-2022 and Compliance with the EU Migration Approaches

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International migration is one of the global challenges of the modern world. Scientific circles, policy makers and the population have mixed attitudes towards international migration and migrants. Generally, economic pragmatism is contrasted with social and public security challenges. The authors aim to briefly analyze Georgia's migration profile and strategy and reveal correlation between economic growth and international migration flows into and out the country. As analyzed data for the period 2010-2022 reveal, migration balance has been improved in recent years and in some cases Georgia had positive balance. Such kind of development can be explained by well-structured migration policy strategy, which was developed relying on EU experience, new legislative approaches and widely applied international standards. © 2024 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

migration policy of Georgia, EU migration approaches

The variety of positive and negative factors, wide range of political, economic, social, cultural consequences and impacts caused by international migration make it difficult to form a well-defined attitude towards international migration. The severity of the problem of international migration leads to the inevitable necessity of developing an adequate policy [1]. Key reasons for international migration includes but not limited to political, economics, security threats, armed conflicts, social tension, private factors [2]. However, the first attempt to analyze the people's movement crossing the national borders was made in the 19th century by German scientist Ernst Ravenstein [3]. He developed eleven laws for migration, where

economic reason is named as one of the laws forcing people to move to another country. Later on, the number of researchers and studies confirmed his assumptions [4-8].

Scientific and academic studies clearly reveal that approaches to international migration and challenges go far beyond the national country borders and on the other hand, far beyond the simple economic reasons. Consequently, wide range of disciplines addresses the numerous aspects of state policy and programs [9, 10].

The main international organization, which is dedicated to the migration, is the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is the part of the United Nations organizational system.

Beside this organization, European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations (ERCOMER), the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, the Institute for the Study of International Migration, the Migration Policy Institute, the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies, the Centre for Refugee Studies, the Refugee Studies Centre, etc. are working on the issue [11].

Together with international attempts, national states have been developing their own policies on migration [12]. In the given paper, we studied the case of Georgia in terms of migration policy development and impact on macroeconomic data about international migration flows into and out the country. The intensity and pattern of countries' involvement in international migration mostly depends on the levels of country's development and welfare, as well as geo-economic and armed conflict risks. Therefore, the higher is the risk of economic and political uncertainty, the higher is the risk of international migration. However, as soon as political and economic risks reduce, other motives such as family reunion, education, professional development, etc. take imperative. To reach the purpose of the study the research hypothesis was defined as follows:

Hypothesis: Well-defined national migration policy will decrease the international migration outflow of the small country (such as Georgia). This process would take place, despite the macroeconomic parameters and political-economic risks, as the other factors that encourage international migration such as education, family reunion, better remuneration are still in place and create other incentives for international migration.

The development of the migration management system in Georgia began in the 90s of the last century. In 1995, the basic structures were developed, and in 1997, the initial conceptual vision was formed. The acceleration of the process of integration with the European Union gave a new impetus to this direction. The first concrete steps were the

establishment of Government Commission on Migration Issues in 2010 and Partnership for Mobility projects launching in Georgia. Later, Georgia signed the Agreements on Simplification of Visa Issuance Procedure and Readmission and the EU started Visa Dialogue with Georgia. This process transformed into EU's Visa Liberalization Action Plan – 2013-2015 [13]. The first strategy related to migration management was issued for the years 2013-2015. The second one was developed for the following years of 2016-2020 [14]. Meanwhile, Georgia successfully met the entire technical and political preconditions that the Visa Liberalization Action Plan envisaged and gained visa free regime with the EU in 2017.

The current strategy on migration was developed for the years 2021-2030 [15]. The strategy is to adapt to the new reality and continue to deal with modern challenges. Given the existing experience and the long-term nature of the strategy, its tasks are of a more general nature. Instead, specific actions at the activity level are defined in appropriate action plans, which are developed per year.

Thus, the strategy's objectives and sectoral priorities are defined along several interrelated and interdependent dimensions – local, regional and global. The strategy meets the obligations stipulated by the Association Agreement, as well as the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) [16], in particular, target 10.7 of the 10th goal – facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. The main directions of 2021-2030 strategy are as follows:

- Improving migration management;
- Promotion of legal migration;
- Fight against illegal migration;
- Reintegration of returned migrants;
- Involvement of diaspora in the development of the country;
- Development of the asylum system;
- Integration of foreigners.

Thus, the current strategy forms the country's long-term vision towards the main directions in the field of migration, and at the same time calls for more demands on the implementation process, its mechanism and involved agencies.

Since the early 90s of the last century, Georgia, located at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, has experienced significant integrational migration flows. From the very beginning, emigration was driven by factors such as economic challenges, political instability, and conflicts in the region. Many citizens of Georgia have emigrated in search of better security environment and better economic opportunities in USA, EU member States, Canada, Russia, Turkey, and etc. It was the period, when Georgia gained independence, country felt in the deep economic crisis due to the political disorders in the country and in the whole region. The worsened economic and social situation obliged population to migrate. Unfortunately, this process took huge scale and caused demographic decline and massive migration [17, 18].

After the change of power in late 2003, when the United National Movement came into the government, the economic situation relatively improved, electricity and natural gas supply arranged and the perception of the population changed towards believe that the country will improve economic performance. No wonder that migration data in those years have improved.

Sharp decline in data sequence was clearly observed. However, the net migration was still negative, though the coefficient, calculated per 1000 person was dramatically declined. According our working hypothesis, we should correlate these data with economic growth. Unfortunately, we are not able to make such kind comparison since the gaining the independence in early 90s of the last century. The international standers for calculating GDP growth and all other indicators related with country's economic performance had been changed and the State Statistical Office of Georgia made

relevant changes to the data. The new showings are calculated just from 2010. Therefore, to insure that data are comparable and scientifically correct for judgement, we will look through the data since 2010 (see Table).

Analyzing data presented in the Table, we can easily mention that since 2013, when the political power took the Political Party Georgian Dream, the net migration sharply declines. Of course, we do not analyze all political and economic circumstance and consequences that the political change entailed. We just evaluate the economic figures and compare the data with the migration policy, the state had elaborated in accordance with country's European integration and international standards towards the approaches to the migration as it was defined in our research hypothesis.

Table. Net Migration in 2010-2022 and GDP growth

Year	Net migration	Coefficient per 1000 person	GDP 2015 constant Prices/ billion GEL	Real GDP growth (in comparison to previous year)/%
2010	-30,438	-8.0	26.6	
2011	-35,982	-9.6	28.6	7.4
2012	-21,521	-5.8	30.4	6.4
2013	-2,606	-0.7	31.5	3.6
2014	-6,543	-1.8	32.9	4.4
2015	-3,408	-0.9	33.9	3.0
2016	-8,060	-2.2	34.9	2.9
2017	-2,212	-0.6	36.6	4.8
2018	-10,783	-2.9	38.4	4.8
2019	-8,243	-2.2	40.3	5.0
2020	15,732	4.2	37.6	-6.8
2021	-25,966	-7.0	20.21	10.5
2022	54,509	14.7	45.8	10.5

Source: Geostat.ge

<https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/322/migratsia>

2013-2015 period the economic growth was moderate the fluctuated accordingly, between 3.6% in 2013, 4.4% in 2014 and 3.0% in 2015. Meanwhile, this is a period, when the state developed its first Strategy on Migration 2013-2015. Later on, in 2020 and 2022 we observe positive balance of migration. If in 2020 the positive migration balance

together with negative economic growth (-6.8%) could be explained by Covid-19 pandemic impact, in 2022 the positive balance is much bigger and comprise 54 509 persons coupled with 10.5% economic growth and new Strategy on Migration 2021-2030 which already took into account past experience and new challenges of the global migration flow management. However, not only listed factors influence migration balance of Georgia, namely, Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine, caused new flow of migrants from different countries, among them Ukraine, Russia, etc.

In Georgia, like in other countries of the world, the factors causing emigration and immigration are complex and related to political, economic, social changes. At the same time, sometimes they are connected to the individual decisions of population and have strongly personal nature. In the recent history of Georgia, there was a period, when emigration was mainly caused by the unstable situation and security in the country such as civil war and armed conflicts. Later, the growth of international emigration flows was mostly defined by economic and social factors. In this regard, the networks of immigrants abroad and better educational opportunities in developed countries played the prominent role.

Country started to manage migration relatively late. Meanwhile the massive immigration took place soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was followed by sharp decline of economy, accompanied by civil and armed territorial conflicts. Country started to develop structured approach to migration policy in 2013, when the EU Commission passed the Visa Liberalization Action Plan to Georgia and first Strategy of Migration 2013-2015 was developed. Later, the second strategy was elaborated which took into account the experience the country had and reflected the EU best practices as well as European legislative approaches together with international standards defined by International Organization for Migration.

As data show, migration balance have been improved in recent years and in some cases, Georgia had the positive balance. Such kind of development can be explained well-structured migration policy strategy, which was developed relying on EU experience, new legislative approaches and widely applied international standards. Migration management improvement and struggle against illegal migration, in its turn, support qualitative improvement of jobs Georgian migrant occupying.

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საერთაშორისო მიგრაცია თანამედროვე მსოფლიოს ერთ-ერთი გლობალური გამოწვევაა. სამეცნიერო წრეებს, პოლიტიკის შემქმნელებს და მოსახლეობას არაერთგვაროვანი დამოკიდებულება აქვთ საერთაშორისო მიგრაციისა და მიგრანტების მიმართ. ზოგადად, ეკონომიკური პრაგმატიზმი სოციალური და საზოგადოებრივი უსაფრთხოების გამოწვევებს უპირისპირდება ხოლმე. ნაშრომი მიზნად ისახავს მოკლედ გააანალიზოს საქართველოს მიგრაციის პროფილი და სტრატეგია, გამოავლინოს ურთიერთქმედება ეკონომიკურ ზრდასა და საერთაშორისო მიგრაციულ ნაკადებს შორის ქვეყანაში და მის გარეთ. როგორც 2010-2022 წლების გაანალიზებული მონაცემები ცხადყოფს, მიგრაციის ბალანსი ბოლო წლებში გაუმჯობესდა და ზოგიერთ შემთხვევაში საქართველოს დადებითი ბალანსი ჰქონდა. ასეთი განვითარება შეიძლება აიხსნას კარგად სტრუქტურირებული მიგრაციის პოლიტიკის სტრატეგიით, რომელიც შემუშავდა ევროკავშირის გამოცდილების, ახალი საკანონმდებლო მიდგომებისა და ფართოდ გამოყენებული საერთაშორისო სტანდარტების საფუძველზე.

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