

UN/POP/MIG/SYMP/2006/10  
28 June 2006

**International Symposium  
“International Migration and Development”  
June 28-30, 2006, Turin, Italy**

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**Session 2.2.3. : Migrations in the CIS and Central and Eastern Europe  
June 30, 2006 14:30 – 16:00**

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**Migrations in the CIS Region:  
Common Problems and Mutual Benefits**

After 1.5 decades of sovereign development the post-soviet states are pragmatically seeking the most appropriate ways to benefit from globalization they are drawn into. Open to the rest of the world, the post-soviet space remains closely interrelated in the economic and social context. Visa-free population movements between the majority of former soviet republics is a ‘natural’ and humane migration regime for a space where state borders have separated families, relatives, countrymen, and compatriots – the result of centuries and generations when people were living in a common country called the USSR.

At the same time, freedom of population movements is an important *resource* of economic development of the newly sovereign states. The countries of the region demonstrate dramatic disparities in terms of economic development rates, GDP per capita, poverty rates, and economic opportunities for their citizens. In combination with demographic imbalance between the CIS countries, where rapid population decline in Russia and Ukraine contrasts to relatively high population growth rates in the Central Asian states and Transcaucasia; these factors result in numerous migration flows in the region. In this context, the CIS common labor market could be a reasonable economic instrument to provide most effective employment of the region’s labor force, balance labor market deficits with labor surpluses, give an impulse to less developed economies, and serve regional integration for mutual benefit.

**Shifts in migration trends in the post-soviet space**

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a regional structure<sup>1</sup>, which evolved after the USSR dissolution. In terms of migration processes, it represents a common migration system. The Eurasian migration system is characterized by the following factors (Ivakhnyuk 2006a):

historical ties;

geographical proximity, The CIS member states are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, i.e. all the post-soviet states except the Baltic countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia).

- demographic complementarity;
- mutual interest towards common labor market;
- large-scale irregular migration;
- regional cooperation aimed at coordinated migration management.

The scale of international migration within the frames of Eurasian migration system characterizes it as one of the world biggest migration systems. The UN estimate (2005) ranks Russia – the major destination country in the region – the second in the list of the countries with highest numbers of international migrants after the USA, and Ukraine – the fourth after Germany (USA – 38.4 mln. immigrants; Russia – 12.1 mln., Germany – 10.1 mln., Ukraine – 6.8 mln.) (United Nations 2006).

During the last 15 years the nature of migration flows in the CIS region shifted from primarily *forced migrations* – as a result of strong political and economic push factors, such as military conflicts, social outbursts, discrimination of ethnic minorities, economic crisis – to voluntary *economic migrations*. Already since mid-1990s ethnic and political factors of migration were supplemented and then replaced by economic ones, both push and pull (for details please refer to: Metelyev 2006; Mukomel 2005; Iontsev and Ivakhnyuk 2002; Sadovskaya 2002). Socio-economic differentiation among the newly sovereign states stimulated huge waves of labor migrants (Zayonchkovskaya 2003b). Migration flows were directed primarily towards Russia, which was doing comparatively better in its transition to market economy and stabilization of socio-economic situation in comparison to most of the other CIS states. People migrate in quest of jobs, for economic and social betterment, to gain stability.

**Table 1. CIS: Differences in standards of living**

CIS country	GDP per capita, \$US	Percentage of population living on less than 2 \$US per day
Armenia	1234.0	49
Azerbaijan	2585.9	9
Belarus	3316.2	2
Georgia	1765.8	16
Kazakhstan	4386.1	25
Kyrgyzstan	507.7	25
Moldova	917.4	64
Russian Federation	6330.8	8
Tajikistan	411.5	43
Turkmenistan	3888.6	44
Ukraine	2020.6	46
Uzbekistan	498.6	72

Sources: IMF. World Economic Outlook Database. April 2006

UN. Population Reference Bureau. World Population Data Sheet. 2005

It is worth noting that development of private sector in Russia in the 1990s and its growing need for labor, as well as migration flows from labor excessive states were taking place largely spontaneously, without noticeable management by the governments in the region (Ryazantsev 2005). The channels for regular labor migration were not sufficient, official migration infrastructure (public and private employment agencies, labor demand & supply databases, information and

consultation services for migrants, etc.) was not developed. The result was the formation of a large *irregular* regional labor market (IOM 2004; Krasinets et al. 2000). The situation was aggravated by activities of international networks of criminal organizations specializing in human trafficking over the post-Soviet territory. Human traffickers effectively benefit from gaps in national legislation on migration, lack of official migration infrastructure, over-bureaucratic procedures of getting job permissions, against the growing demand for migrant labor in Russia (Tyuryukanova 2006; Ivakhnyuk 2005).

The number of irregular migrants in the CIS region is estimated 5 to 15 million (most

## **Transit migration**

criminality and social tension (Ivakhnyuk 2004). So, both sending and receiving countries are strongly interested in counteracting human trafficking in the region. It can be effective only with combined efforts of the governments, within the frames of inter-ministerial cooperation, exchange of information, joint counter-traffickers operations, etc. (Sadovskaya 2002).

Human dimension of migration needs particular attention of government bodies responsible for migration management. Development of legal channels of migration, access of potential migrants to information about migration possibilities, migrants' rights, and threats of illegal employment, specialized juridical and consultation services for migrants, severe penalties for unscrupulous employers hiring migrants illegally can reduce the sphere of human trafficking and increase human security of migrants (Mukomel 2005).

In this context, efforts to cultivate non-tolerance of a society towards exploitation, violence, and forced labor at the national level and by NGOs can play an important role (Vitkovskaya 2002).

### **Brain drain**

The CIS region, especially Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, have suffered serious

speeding up the development of high technologies sectors (the IT sector in Russia demonstrates the highest annual growth rate of 15%) (Rosstat 2006). Keeping in mind to reduce brain drain damages and to stimulate application of high technologies, Russia concentrates on (1) reorganization of R&D sector with priorities given to forward-looking studies, scientific schools, and talented young researchers; (2) restructuring of economy with special emphasis on HT sector; (3) encouragement of private investments in R&D; (4) development of interstate cooperation in R&D

Azerbaijan	156	700	2 352	2 167	349	7 341
Georgia	237	275	334	477	313	3 984
Kyrgyz Republic	100	400	46	582	186	1 775
Moldova	464	500	58	806	142	1 950
Tajikistan	146	500	32	791	168	1 586
Uzbekistan	n.a.	600	70	3 240	189	8 728
<i>as a share of GDP</i>						
Armenia	5,9	30,8	4,4	24,6	12,4	
Azerbaijan	2,1	9,5	32,0	29,5	5,7	
Georgia	6,0	6,9	8,4	12,0	9,2	
Kyrgyz Republic	5,7	22,5	2,6	32,8	11,6	



capital for starting up their own small business after return to Tajikistan. The survey conducted in Uzbekistan proves that the pattern of spending of migrant remittances does include 'investment segment': 111 small scale companies owned by former labor migrants who have earned initial capital during their trips to Russia have created workplaces for other Kyrgyz people, about 4,000 in all (Maksakova 2002). Similar evidence of investing earnings of labor migrants in creation or development of own business comes from Ukraine (Pirozhkov et al. 2003) and Armenia (Roberts and Banaian 2004).

Taking the case of the Central Asian countries Yelena Sadovskaya argues that international migration can become a *strategy for development* rather than strategy for survival when the economy of sending countries is developing to provide breeding for initiatives of private sector in terms of needs for additional resources for development (Sadovskaya 2006a). Growth of incomes and agricultural sector can be supported by households' strategies in the field of migration: by sending a family member to work abroad a household can provide financial inflow for the needs of its development.

The role of the governments is to support developmental effects of migration: to encourage migrants to remit money home by official channels and to invest them into development projects. Financial and economic bodies of Moldova, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan show interest in experience of the other sending countries (like India, China, Turkey), which have earlier realized the potential role of migrants remittances for economic development and have elaborated systems of practical instruments to attract these remittances for the purposes of development (by tax remissions, preferential terms of investments, crediting, etc.).

### **Towards the CIS common labor market**

Disparities in demographic and economic potential of the CIS countries 'naturally' points at interregional migration as an instrument to promote co-development based on mutual complementarity. Properly managed, international migration in the region can balance lacks and surpluses of labor in different countries and industries. Similarities in educational systems, including professional training and higher school, can be a background for interregional migration of skilled labor (Ryazantsev 2005).

## **Regional interstate cooperation in migration management**

Coordinated management of migrations in the Eurasian migration system is an object of activities of a number of regional organizations: Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) – Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan; GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova), as well as of numerous bilateral agreements.

### *Major multilateral agreements:*

Agreement between the CIS states on cooperation in labor migration and social guarantees for migrant workers (1994)

Agreement between the CIS states on cooperation in preventing irregular migration (1998)

The EurAsEC Agreement on visa-free trips: Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan (2005)

Participation in the Budapest Process (since 2004)

Issyk-Kul Dialog of the International conference on migration policies in Central Asian states, Caucasus states, and neighboring countries

International Agreement on migration management between Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (2000)

### *Bilateral agreements on labor migration:*

Russia – Belarus (within the frames of the Agreement on the Union between Russia and Belarus)

Russia – Tajikistan (inter-government; inter-ministerial; Representative Office of the Ministry of Labor of Tajikistan in Russia)

Russia – Kyrgyzstan (inter-government; between Ministries of Interior; attaché on migration issues)

Kazakhstan – Kyrgyzstan (inter-government, on agricultural workers in border regions)

Tajikistan – Kyrgyzstan (inter-government)

Russia – Ukraine (inter-government, inter-ministerial))

Ukraine – Moldova

Ukraine – Armenia

Ukraine - Slovakia

Uzbekistan – Turkmenistan (on simplified border cross regime for inhabitants of border areas)

Uzbekistan – South Korea (labor quotas)

Tajikistan – Turkey (between Ministries of Labor)

### *Projects in work:*

Elaboration of the CIS Convention on legal status of migrant workers

Elaboration of the Agreement within the frames of the Eurasian Economic Community on temporary employment of citizens of member states of the EurAsEC on the territories of other member states

Common Economic Space of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine. The purpose is free movement of capitals, goods and labor

### *Non-government activities:*



supra-national level attracting necessary human and financial resources and elaboration of fair access of the countries to innovative technologies.

*In the sphere of migrant remittances:*

to encourage migrants to send their remittances via official channels, offer incentives for migrants to invest earned money in business, human capital, local infrastructure, and development projects.

The CIS countries strategy in the field of migration is at the turning point. Both sending and receiving countries of the region are coming to understanding of benefits of international migration for regional development. Cooperation between the countries of the region at the government level and joint efforts of non-government organizations, academics, and media, are aimed at finding consistent tactics to make migration an effective instrument for mutual development of national economies and the region as a whole. For this purpose, the permanent dialogue on coordinated migration management able to reduce its illegal component and encourage orderly movements of labor is of particular relevance.

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