

Chapter 2

Georgia's migration landscape

Georgia is a country of net emigration, with migration increasingly driven by economic factors. Migration is high on the political agenda, and Georgia has long understood the potential it offers for national development. It has taken innovative steps to integrate it into wider policy making and to co-ordinate migration management.

This chapter gives a brief overview of emigration since Georgia's independence: its drivers and impact, who the migrants are and where they have gone, how they remit and the impact this has on their household and country, and what happens to them when they return. It also examines what data are available and where the gaps lie. Finally, it lays out the policy and institutional framework covering emigration, remittances, return migration and relations with the country's diaspora and how migration relates to wider development policy.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Emigration from Georgia has varied in intensity since 1991, when the country regained its independence from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Following the dissolution of the USSR, Georgia gradually opened up to international trade and integrated into the world economy, but the collapse and instability of the economy during the 1990s led to large waves of emigration. While some of these flows were internal, particularly around the conflict regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, many were also international.

The return to stability in the 2000s, particularly following the Rose Revolution in 2003,¹ led to greater economic and social progress. Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita grew from USD 928 in 2003 to USD 4 440 in 2014, an increase of nearly 400% (World Bank, 2016a). The percentage of the population living below the relative poverty line decreased from 25% in 2004 to 21% in 2013 (ADB, 2014). Georgia has also made progress in implementing several reforms over the years. For instance, the country ranked 16th globally in the World Bank's *Doing Business* index in 2017, an improvement from a ranking of 23rd in 2016. Between 2004 and 2012 the number of procedures needed to start a business fell from 9 to 2 and the time involved fell from 25 to 2 days (World Bank, 2016b). In 2013-14, the country put in place a universal health system (SCMI, 2015a).

On the other hand, inequality has continued to increase. Between 2003 and 2009, the top 20% of the population saw their consumption increase by over 26%, while the bottom 20% saw an increase of only 10% (World Bank, 2011). Although the country has made tangible progress, poverty continues to be a major challenge. Employment opportunities have remained limited and the quality of services and more general quality of life in Georgia lag behind many European countries, despite economic growth.

Although it has always been economically driven, these recent factors have helped reshape emigration from Georgia. At the same time, many emigrants have also started to return to Georgia following the country's change in fortune, providing it with new opportunities.

This chapter describes the migration landscape in Georgia, setting the scene for the chapters and analysis that follow. It outlines current trends in migration and reviews what the existing research tells us about the key issues linked to migration in the country. It also reviews the role of migration in national development policies, reviews specific migration-related policies and the institutional framework for managing migration.

A brief overview of migration and remittance trends in Georgia

Until 1991, emigration from Georgia to beyond the USSR borders was largely controlled and limited, although migration within the USSR was possible. Large-scale emigration from Georgia did not begin until the dissolution of the USSR. Because some individuals born in Georgia were living in other Soviet Republics at the time, independence and the change in borders generated emigrants practically overnight.² For this reason, and other reasons, interpreting Georgia's migration statistics can be challenging. This section presents an overview of migration and remittance trends in Georgia, using the data available.

Georgia is a country of net emigration

Estimation on long-term trends in migration flows are typically based on census data. Since its independence, Georgia has had two census rounds: one in 2002 and one in 2014. While the 2002 round did include specific questions about migration, technical issues reduced the collection of migration data. Since these households were not selected to be representative of all households in the country, the 2002 emigration data cannot serve as a reliable source of migration statistics (Tsuladze, 2005).

The most recent census in Georgia took place in November 2014 and also asked specific questions on emigration. It defined an emigrant as a person who had left Georgia, lived abroad permanently or temporarily since 1 January 2002 and who had been absent from Georgia for more than 12 months.³ The results highlighted the major role played by emigration in the 15% fall in Georgia's total population from 4.37 million in 2002 to 3.71 million in 2014. According to the data collected, there were 85 541⁴ emigrants in 2014, equivalent to 2.3% of the population, 45% of whom were men and 55% women. Prior to leaving, 32% of emigrants had been living in Tbilisi, 23% in the region of Imereti and 13% in the region of Kvemo Kartli. At the time of the census, emigrants were overwhelmingly of working age – 75% were between the ages of 20 and 54. Most live in Russia (22%), followed by Greece (15%), Turkey (11%) and Italy (11%) (GeoStat, 2016).

Apart from the census results, several international organisations have also estimated the size of the Georgian emigrant stock, but come to different conclusions. This is particularly the case for the Migration Policy Centre (MPC), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the World Bank (Table 2.1). A major explanation for the different estimations is how emigrants are defined, as some organisations define them on the basis of their citizenship and others on their place of birth. For instance, the World Bank estimated that there were 1 058 300 (24.9% as a percentage of the population) emigrants from Georgia in 2010, while UNDESA estimates 734 065 (17.3%) for the same year, more than 300 000 individuals fewer (Table 2.1).

As also seen in the census data, Russia stands out as the major destination for emigrants, despite the introduction of a visa regime for Georgian citizens in

2001 and the 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia, which virtually ended migration flows between the two countries (Table 2.1). The flows which occurred prior to 2008 mean a large number of emigrants from Georgia continue to live in Russia, although presumably a large number of these emigrants have since acquired Russian citizenship. This group still count as having emigrated if migration is defined based on country of birth. Apart from Russia, the estimated numbers suggest that many Georgian emigrants reside in former republics of the USSR, particularly Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, which is at odds with the results from the census. Greece is the most common non-USSR country listed, but Turkey and Italy appear underestimated in comparison to the 2014 census results, probably due to the fact that estimating emigrant stocks by country is difficult without regular census data (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. **Stocks of emigrants from Georgia by selected countries of residence 1990-2013**

Country of destination	UNDESA1								Type	World Bank2		MPC3
	Type	1990	Type	2000	Type	2010	Type	2013		2010	Type	2012
Russian Federation	B	656 888	B	625 298	B	441 793	B	436 005	n/a	644 390	B (2002)	628 973
Ukraine	B	76 612	B	72 826	B	68 386	B	67 875		72 410	C (2001)	6 446
Greece	C	23 963	C	21 283	C	36 628	C	37 912		41 817	B (2006)	13 254
Armenia	B R	1 603	B R	67 525	B R	36 329	B R	37 277		75 792	-	-
Uzbekistan	B	31 462	B	25 154	B	23 288	B	23 175		-	-	-
Cyprus	B	3 802	B	6 950	B	13 388	B	17 994		13 497	-	-
USA	B	7 691	B	11 346	B	14 386	B	14 907		25 310	B (2011)	14 270
Germany	B	1 410	B	10 482	B	13 255	B	13 406		18 164	C (2012)	17 163
Spain	B	104	B	523	B	10 168	B	10 621		10 702	B (2012)	10 501
Turkey	B R	5 868	B R	6 443	B R	8 740	B R	9 512		7 295	C (2011)	1 740
Israel	B R	25 921	B R	21 123	B R	9 328	B R	9 479		26 032	B (2005)	44 462
Other South4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		98 123	-	-
EU28		39 695		50 566		100 313		108 728		95 992		-
World		890 120 (16.3%)		913 777 (19.3%)		734 06 (17.3%)		738 733 (18.1%)		1 058 300 (24.9%)		767 489 (18.5%)

Note: "Type of data" denoted as follows: foreign-born population (B), foreign citizens (C), UNHCR refugees (R), not available (n/a). Numbers in parentheses in last row represent the share of the population, using population figures from UNDESA *World Population Prospects 2015*, <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>.

UNDESA (2013), Includes occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Estimates refer to 1 July of the reference year, <http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/index.html>.

World Bank (2010). Data based on the 2008 revision of UN DESA's data on International Migrant Stock and Ratha and Shaw (2007). No indication as to whether occupied territories of Abkhazia or Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia are included. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

MPC (2013), based on national data. No data provided for Armenia, Uzbekistan and Cyprus. No indication as to whether occupied territories of Abkhazia or Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia are included, http://www.enigma.ge/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ENIGMA-State-of-Migration_Electronic_Version2.pdf.

Note by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to "Cyprus" relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue".

Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union: The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Sources: Table adapted from SCMI (2015a).

According to both the World Bank and UNDESA, the second most common region of destination after the former Soviet Republics are EU member states (Table 2.1). Data from Eurostat's residence permits, shown in Table 2.2, confirm that the number of long-term emigrants from Georgia in the EU member states increased between 2010 and 2014 (Eurostat, 2015). It also highlights the fact that family reasons for emigrating are just as important as remunerated activities.

Table 2.2. Increasing numbers of Georgian citizens live in the European Union
Residence permits by reasons for migration (2010-14)

Year	Education reasons	Family reasons	Remunerated activity	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Other	Total
2010	3 687	17 114	17 511	1 741	462	12 576	53 091
2011	3 445	19 248	19 131	1 727	440	13 438	57 429
2012	3 967	21 013	17 847	1 856	420	14 950	60 053
2013	4 146	23 949	19 098	1 894	621	16 327	66 035
2014	3 844	15 723	15 892	2 022	629	11 163	49 273

Note: As of October 2015, 2014 data were missing for Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands and Austria.

Source: EuroStat, "Residence permit statistics", http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Residence_permits_statistics.

Due to the lack of administrative sources, it was impossible to estimate annual migration flows in the early years of independence. Since 2004, the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GeoStat) has made efforts to collect such data, providing an annual assessment of migration dynamics in the country. Despite improving migration statistics, data on annual migration flows remain incomplete for three reasons:

1. Data are not collected on the countries of destination, emigrants' level of education and the length of time emigrants have spent abroad.
2. Many Georgians are unregistered in their host countries, making it difficult to count them using host country statistics.
3. Prior to 2012, the data collected by GeoStat were not consistent with international standards, notably those defined by the United Nations, meaning data are not comparable with other countries.

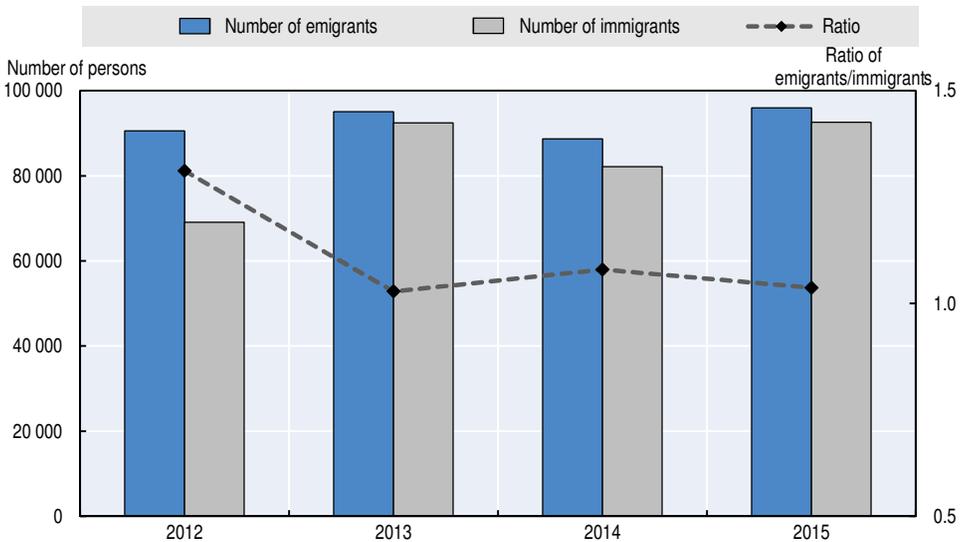
Before 2004, GeoStat used expert estimates of migration flows, defining an emigrant as a person moving abroad (changing usual place of residence) for at least 12 months, and an immigrant as a person moving to Georgia for at least 12 months.

From 2004 to 2011, GeoStat calculated net migration using a simple metric: official border crossings by nationality, without referencing the duration in or out of the country by those crossing borders. In 2012, GeoStat began measuring net migration using border crossings of persons moving abroad for at least 6 months and one day (emigrants) and persons moving to Georgia for at least

6 months and one day (immigrants). Figure 2.1 presents the figures using the new methodology for 2012-15. Bearing in mind the limitations of the methodology,⁵ the data suggest that Georgia is a country of negative net migration, meaning more people leave the country than enter it. The average age of emigrants that left the country in 2015, based on the methodology described above, was 34.5 and 58% of them were men. The gender balance is the reverse of that found in the census data, where there are more female emigrants. This may be due to the definition used for emigration. The census defines an emigrant based on a 12-month absence and GeoStat's net migration flow report is based on a shorter 6-month definition. As many men work temporarily and for short periods in neighbouring countries, it may explain why men are overrepresented in GeoStat's flow data.

Figure 2.1. **Georgia is a country of net emigration**

Annual migrant inflows and outflows (2012-15)



Source: GeoStat (2015), "Migration", www.geostat.ge/?action=page&p_id=173&lang=eng.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933457726>

It is also worth noting that it is not possible to explicitly identify return migrants using GeoStat's methodology described above. Statistics on return migration in Georgia are therefore not available.

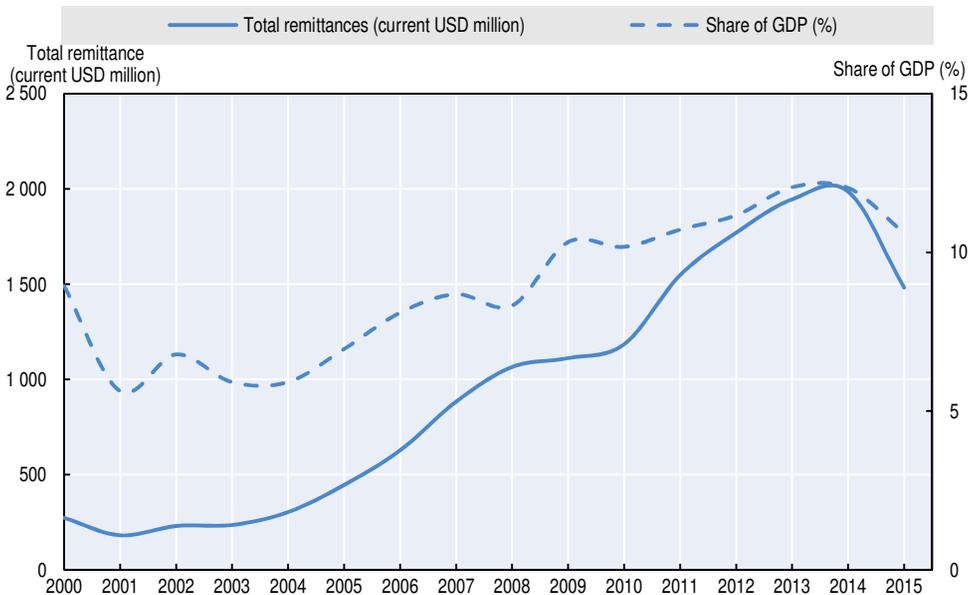
In 2016, Georgia began testing the online-based Unified Migration Analytical System (UMAS), which will enable better and more regular collection of migration data. The system will gather data from the databases of various Georgian administrative bodies, making it easier to monitor migration flows and provide timely analysis.

Remittances to Georgia are increasing, while the financial cost of remitting is decreasing

Remittances form an important part of the Georgian economy. In absolute terms, they remained stable from 1998 to 2004, but then took off and have been increasing ever since (Figure 2.2). In 2014, they were estimated to be worth nearly USD 2 billion, up from about USD 300 million in 2004, a growth rate of more than 500%.⁶ A major reason behind the steep rise was increased access to formal money transfer channels and improved banking infrastructure in the country, particularly in rural areas (Zurabishvili, 2012). In 2007, one-third of remittances were being received through informal channels, as opposed to being sent through money transfer operators or banking institutions (EBRD, 2007).

Figure 2.2. **Remittances have grown rapidly in Georgia**

Total remittances (million USD) and share of remittances as a share of GDP (%)



Source: World Bank (2017), World Development Indicators, <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933457739>

The importance of remittances to the economy has grown steadily, from about 6% of GDP in 2004 to 12% in 2014 (Figure 2.2). The share fell slightly in 2009, mainly due to the 2008 financial crisis. In 2015, it had decreased again to 10.4%, probably partly due to a slowdown in economic activity in Russia. According to the Caucasus Barometer, 16% of households in Georgia were receiving money from relatives living abroad in 2015 (CRRC, 2015).

In 2015, an estimated 59% of remittances originated from Russia, which is not surprising given that most emigrants from Georgia live there. The next countries in order of importance are Ukraine (8%), Greece (5%), Armenia (4%) and Germany (3%) (World Bank, 2016c). However, the statistics show a gradual decrease in the share of remittances from Russia over time. The volume of transfers from Russia shrank by almost USD 100 million from 2013 to 2014 (SCMI, 2015a).

The cost of remitting money from Russia has fallen substantially over time. In 2008 the average cost of remitting USD 200 was around 2.7% of the transfer total, but it had fallen to 1.3% in 2016 (World Bank, 2016d).⁷

What are the key issues and knowledge gaps?

Emigration from Georgia is still largely understudied. The studies so far provide fragmented evidence on the character of emigration from and return to Georgia, as well as the remittances sent by emigrants. Clear gaps exist due to the lack of longitudinal data and information on current emigrants. This section provides an overview of the major recent empirical studies on emigration from Georgia.⁸

There has been a gradual shift in emigrant destination

In the early years of independence, many people left because of political uncertainty and conflict. However, more recently, studies confirm that the lack of (good) jobs has become a major push factor. A project using expert interviews and a representative survey of 1 500 households in Georgia concluded that the main push factor had shifted over time towards unemployment and economic hardship (GDN and IPPR, 2009). Another study also found that one-third of people aged 18-50 had an intention to emigrate, particularly those with poor job prospects (ETF, 2013).

In general, emigration from Georgia is not of highly skilled workers, mostly because the demand for emigrants in Russia is for lower-skilled labour. One of the reasons most Georgians emigrate to Russia and not to the richer countries in Western Europe is the higher cost of emigrating to those countries. An empirical study confirmed that individuals in Georgia with higher education were up to four times more likely to emigrate to a high-income country (Dermendzhieva, 2011). Another study, featuring interviews with 4 000 households in 2011-12, showed that most return migrants had been living in Turkey, Russia and Greece, while the more educated ones came from the countries of the European Union, and the United States (ETF, 2013). As education levels increase in Georgia, it is plausible that more migration occurs between Georgia and Western Europe.

Indeed, the characteristics of migrants often determine the country of destination. A study of Georgian emigrants in Germany, Greece and Turkey featuring a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods

showed that common emigrant traits were identifiable for each country (ICMDP, 2014). In Germany, Georgians had largely emigrated for educational purposes, with many young professionals arriving through formal study and employment programmes, while those in Greece and Turkey had lower levels of education and had largely emigrated for employment reasons. Many migrants in Greece had irregular status and found it difficult to adapt to the country and were therefore often socially excluded. Turkey is deemed a convenient location for temporary labour migration, as emigrants from Georgia benefit from a visa-free regime with Turkey.

The study also confirmed gender differences across emigrant flows. In Greece, migrants were predominantly women in domestic work, while Turkey attracts a mix of women and men. Although, like Greece, it is mostly a destination for female migrant domestic workers, it is also attractive to men seeking seasonal work on tea and hazelnut plantations, in factories, and physical labour in construction and privately owned workshops (ICMPD, 2014). A twin survey between 2006 and 2008 undertaken with people in the municipality of Tianeti and emigrants in Greece also confirmed that women were increasingly more likely to emigrate from Georgia than men (IOM, 2009; Zurabishvili and Zurabishvili, 2010).

Return migration is often temporary

While an increasing number of emigrants seem to be returning to Georgia, studies have found that many of them plan to migrate again. A 2003 national study of 960 return migrants in Georgia suggested that 20% of them planned to migrate again in the six months following the interview. In addition, another 10% of them mentioned that other family members were planning to migrate within the next six months, while 3% mentioned that the entire household was considering doing so, suggesting that social networks established through the returned migrant are likely to play a role in the decision to migrate (Badurashvili, 2004). A follow-up study in 2005 using 50 in-depth interviews with return migrants also suggested that return migration was rarely permanent (Sakevarishvili, 2005).

A major reason for the limited sustainability of return migration seems to be the poor experience of reintegration. Georgia has put in place a number of services over the years to help return migrants to reintegrate, including through assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes, in collaboration with the IOM. A study based on five focus groups with returnees in four Georgian cities found that the awareness and knowledge levels of these programmes was limited and that many of the returnees interviewed experienced problems in reintegrating into the labour market, the social system and its services, and Georgian culture, after having been away for a while. Unsurprisingly, many of them expressed a willingness to emigrate again (DRC, 2007). These problems

were reconfirmed in a study a few years later (BAMF, 2013). In fact, one study, based on 202 unemployed individuals, 100 employers, 102 returnees and 20 experts in the cities of Kutaisi and Rustavi found that return migrants have a particularly high rate of unemployment (66%) (DRC, 2012).

With the advent of closer ties with the EU, one study argues that leveraging more positive development outcomes from return migration, and in particular turning emigration into more of a circular phenomenon, will be key to accelerating development in Georgia in the coming years (Labadze and Tukhasvili, 2013).

Less is known about the impact of remittances, return migration and diaspora links on development in Georgia

Compared to the body of research work on the determinants of emigration, research on its impact on development is limited, despite the fact that remittances and return migration are an increasingly important phenomenon.

A 2007 study found that most households spent the majority of the money received as remittances on everyday consumption, while investment remained limited and mainly confined to real estate (EBRD, 2007). A more recent study confirmed that remittances are seldom used for productive investments (Badurashvili and Nadareishvili, 2012). Another study suggests that young and better-educated people living in urban areas are more likely to receive remittances, raising the suspicion that they do not reach the most vulnerable parts of society and thus could increase inequality (Gugushvili, 2013).

Another recent study found that remittances contribute to fostering social capital formation by providing households with the means to help out other households in need. They do not appear to provide disincentives for work or create downward pressure on the earnings of those left behind, as previous research in other countries has suggested (Gerber and Torosyan, 2013). The study also confirmed that most remittance income is used for consumption, but found increases in education and healthcare expenditure in urban areas and improved health outcomes in rural areas.

What role does migration play in national development strategies?

Migration remains high on the political agenda in Georgia (ICMPD, 2015). Georgia is one of a few countries in the world that is increasingly including migration in national development strategies, defined by its migration strategy document. The government offers three motivations for Georgia's 2016-20 migration strategy (SCMI, 2015b): i) ensuring the security and long-term stability of the country; ii) helping to facilitate the process of approximation⁹ of national legislation with that of the EU; and iii) to better manage migration in order to tap its potential for economic and social development in the country.

The desire to include migration in Georgia's wider development sphere dates back to 1997 when the President of Georgia approved the Migration Policy Concept of Georgia, which outlined the country's vision on immigration processes, international protection and internal migration. While these efforts were novel and represented a significant step forward, the document lacked an implementation mechanism.

In October 2010, the government created the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) but it was not until 2012 that it approved a much more developed migration strategy, which notably included an action plan to support it. With the assistance of the EU Mobility Partnership¹⁰ and within the EU-funded Targeted Initiative for Georgia (TIG) framework to "Support the reintegration of Georgian returning migrants and the implementation of the EU-Georgia readmission agreement", the SCMI drafted the inaugural 2013-2015 Migration Strategy of Georgia (SCMI, 2012). The process of developing a strategy paper in the field of migration management was therefore largely facilitated by the co-operation between Georgia and the EU within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as well as the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP). One of the challenges has therefore been to ensure that Georgian legislation, and specifically its migration-related policies, are synchronised ("approximated") with the relevant EU legislation.

On the heels of the expiry of the 2013-15 migration strategy, the SCMI incorporated the lessons learned from it into a new strategy, drafted and approved in 2015, for 2016-20. Its vision is stated as:

"To create, by 2020, a legislative and institutional environment that:

- ensures the state's enhanced approximation to the EU;
- facilitates peaceful cohabitation of various religious, cultural and ethnic groups;
- protects migrants' rights and their successful integration into society;
- promotes the reintegration of returned migrants and the usage of the positive economic and demographic aspects of migration for the development of the country;
- and increases legal migration opportunities for the citizens of Georgia." (SCMI, 2015b).

A major challenge and priority for Georgia, highlighted in the new strategy, is the significant fall in Georgia's population between the 2002 and 2014 census years.

The current strategy includes the following eight thematic directions, each with its own specific subgroups:

1. facilitating regular migration
2. combating illegal migration
3. developing the asylum system

4. facilitating the integration of immigrants and the reintegration of returned migrants
5. leveraging migration for development
6. improving migration management
7. raising public awareness of the strategy, and migration issues in general,
8. deepening international co-operation.

Each thematic direction has a goal and a list of objectives to reach before the end of the strategy period, supported by analysis. Apart from general initiatives that aim to improve all dimensions of migration, such as better policy co-ordination, data collection and analysis and deeper international co-operation, several of the eight thematic directions are explicitly linked to emigration, remittances, return migration and links with the diaspora. For instance, the first thematic direction discusses steps to improve the registration of emigrants and promote the internationalisation of the education sector, providing more opportunities for educational exchanges and meaning Georgian credentials are more likely to be accepted by employers abroad. Another thematic direction discusses facilitating the reintegration of return migrants.

Some of the directions remain vague on these issues. For instance, there is a specific direction on leveraging migration for development, which mentions migration's potential for development, the development of circular migration and the investment potential of emigrants and the diaspora, but it only seldom specifically mentions the use of remittances.

In order for migration to be effectively integrated into a country's national development strategy, the migration strategy must take into account the country's other objectives and ongoing initiatives. To what extent does Georgia's migration strategy achieve this? First, it highlights the importance of integrating the links between migration and labour market and education policies, such as vocational training and higher education planning. Second, it contains a section on the strategies with which it complies. These are:

1. The State Strategy for the Formation of the Labour Market in Georgia (2015-2018)
2. The State Border Management Strategy of Georgia (2014-2018)
3. The National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights in Georgia (2014-2020)
4. The Communication and Information Strategy for the European Integration (2014-2017)
5. The Socio-economic Development Strategy of Georgia – Georgia 2020 (2014-2020)
6. The Association Agenda between the European Union and Georgia (2014-2016)

7. The Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy of Georgia (2013-2020)
8. The Policy Planning System Reform Strategy (2015-2017)
9. The Diaspora Relationship Strategy of Georgia (2015 draft).

The list is long and covers much of the development sphere in the country. However, two of the strategies listed (numbers 2 and 9) are migration-oriented and should naturally be integrated into the migration strategy anyway, while several important sectors are seemingly left out, including agriculture, finance, investment and trade. Beyond the migration strategy however, it is often the case that the sectoral strategies do not take into account the migration dimension.

Government policies targeting migration are new and concentrate on the diaspora

Policies related to emigration, diaspora engagement and return migration in Georgia are relatively new. The government only began establishing relationships with the diaspora and promoting their activities about a decade ago. Specifically, it established the Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues in 2008 and with it the Parliamentary *Committee* on Relations with *Compatriots* Residing Abroad. In 2010, the committee was renamed the Committee for Diaspora and Caucasus Issues.

In November 2011, the Georgian Parliament adopted a legislative framework for relations with the diaspora in the form of the Law on Compatriots Residing Abroad and Diaspora Organizations, which came into effect on 1 March 2012. The law defines a compatriot residing abroad as a citizen of Georgia who resides in another country for an extended period or a citizen of another state who is of Georgian descent and/or whose native language belongs to the Georgian-Caucasian language group. For the purpose of this law, Georgian descent means a person whose ancestors belonged to any ethnic group living within the territory of Georgia and recognises Georgia as his/her country of origin. The status of compatriot residing abroad offers several advantages. Those who have this status can enter Georgia without a visa and may stay for up to 30 days. They also have the right to state-funded secondary and higher education and are eligible to represent Georgia in international sporting competitions.

In 2013, the Office of the State Minister developed a State Strategy for Diaspora Issues, aiming to define government policy on diaspora issues and promote the management of migration processes in relation to the diaspora. As of January 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took over responsibility for the strategy.

What is the institutional framework governing migration?

Georgia's approach to migration management and its national migration strategy are products of its legislative framework on migration. This section describes this framework and how coherence across laws and ministerial

objectives is handled. It is worth mentioning that many of the recent changes in legislation described below were undertaken in the context of Georgia's advanced integration process with the EU, VLAP and the process of approximation of national legislation to European Standards.

Institutionally, several ministries deal with matters related to emigration, most notably the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs. The Ministry of Justice is charged with issuing travel documents and determining the status of stateless persons. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its diplomatic missions and consular offices abroad, ensures the protection of the rights and legal interests of Georgian citizens. It also negotiates visa and other migration-related agreements with other countries. The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs monitors the employment and paid work of emigrants abroad who emigrated via specific programmes, ensuring they are adequately protected and their interests are served, particularly by their employers.

In addition to these three ministries, which are concerned with the process of emigration and the protection of emigrants working and living abroad, the Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues is charged with strengthening ties with Georgians living abroad, mobilising their economic and social potential for the development of the country, and preserving their national identity.

Four laws govern the process of emigration and rights of emigrants. The Law on the Procedure for the Citizens of Georgia to Leave and Enter Georgia was passed in 1993 sets the role of the state to review and decide upon the emigration of its citizens is outdated and impractical from a legal point of view. Its revision is on the government's agenda. The Organic Law of Georgia on Citizenship of Georgia, passed in 2005, provides protection of rights of citizens of Georgia abroad in accordance with international law and legislation of Georgia. The Law on Compatriots Residing Abroad and Diaspora Organisations was passed in 2011. It defines the legal status of diaspora organisations and compatriots living abroad.¹¹ More recently, the government passed the Law of Georgia on Labour Migration, which deals with regulation of Georgian workers abroad.

The reintegration of return migrants has taken a central place in migration policy in recent years. The TIG, a project under the Mobility Partnership Agreement signed between Georgia and the European Union in November 2009, has helped facilitate the return process. This programme trains local authorities to deal with return migrants, aids return migrants through Mobility Centres and carries out information campaigns. The Mobility Centres, of which there are four in Georgia,¹² have been particularly useful, as they provide a number of essential services to return migrants – transport, accommodation, vocational training and business plan development (SCMI, 2015a) – although they have had limited success in generating larger scale return (Chelidze, 2013).

Immigration matters are also dealt with by a number of ministries. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for issuing residence permits, granting citizenship to aliens and co-ordinating anti-trafficking policy. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for carrying out border controls, and combating illegal migration and human trafficking. The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs is responsible for matters related to labour migration. The legislation on immigration has been overhauled in recent years. The previously mentioned Organic Law on the Citizenship of Georgia, establishing the procedures for acquiring citizenship, and the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, establishing visa and residence permit types, were both passed in 2014. In 2015, the Law on Labour Migration, establishing a mechanism for regulating labour migration flows, was passed. With migration flows becoming increasingly complex, Georgia began institutionalising cross-ministerial migration management in 2010, with the creation of the SCMI. The SCMI, which is chaired by the Ministry of Justice, consists of 13 state agencies¹³ that discuss and decide on issues related to migration management. It acts as a consultative body for the government. Notably, a number of international organisations¹⁴ and local non-governmental organisation (NGOs),¹⁵ dealing with migration, are also part of the Commission and hold consultative status.

As the main body collecting information on migration and co-ordinating the country's migration policy, the SCMI's tasks are primarily to ensure policy coherence. This includes monitoring overlaps between migration-related activities of various institutions, and ensuring resources are being used efficiently. Seven thematic working groups within the SCMI work on specific issues including migration and development and the reintegration of return migrants, statelessness and analytical systems.

The Secretariat of the SCMI provides analytical and administrative support and is hosted by the Public Service Development Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia. The Secretariat prepares research briefings on migration in the country, drafts the Migration Strategy of Georgia and facilitates activities envisioned by the strategy, such as monitoring the implementation of its action plan and updating the SCMI about progress. It also organises biannual co-ordination meetings on migration management issues. Projects by different organisations are presented at these meetings, and participants are given the opportunity to discuss their work. This provides a valuable resource open to both policy makers and the academic community.

Conclusions

Georgia has a novel proactive stance on migration management, which stands out as good practice. The SCMI is a unique forum through which the government can co-ordinate the often complicated interactions between government bodies and cross-cutting issues related to migration.

However, Georgia still lags behind on several development indicators and more can be done to ensure migration plays a positive role in the country's development, including gathering better data and more research.

Systematic studies to understand thoroughly the relationship between migration and public policies have been scarce. This report hopes to fill part of that research gap by providing evidence of the inter-relationships between migration, sectoral policies and development, so that migration can be better integrated into mainstream policies.

Notes

1. The Rose Revolution refers to peaceful protests in Georgia occurring in November 2003 and leading to a change of power in the country. It generally marks the end of the Soviet era of leadership in the country.
2. This is because some international organisations define migration according to one's country of birth.
3. For emigrants who had been gone for under 12 months at the time of the census, this definition was modified to include those "who planned to stay abroad for more than 12 months". The census also likely underestimates emigration since it was asking households about former members so cases where the entire household had emigrated would not be counted.
4. Amongst this group, 79 583 individuals were born in Georgia.
5. Net migration is calculated using net entries versus exits and dividing the difference by the estimated total population in Georgia on July 1st of a specific year, and then multiplying this number by 1 000.
6. The National Bank of Georgia reports lower levels of remittances than the World Bank, reflecting a smaller share of remittances in GDP. For example, the National Bank of Georgia reported remittance inflows equal to USD 1.4 billion in 2014 (NBG, n.d.), compared to the World Bank's figure of USD 2 billion (World Bank, 2017), meaning a share of remittances to GDP of 8.7% vs. 12%. In 2015, the National Bank of Georgia reported a remittance inflow of USD 1.1 billion (NBG, n.d.), while the World Bank's figure was USD 1.5 billion (World Bank, 2017), and a share of 7.7%, rather than 10.4%. The differences can be explained by definitions and data sources. The National Bank of Georgia obtains remittance data directly from the figures reported by the commercial banks and other financial institutions engaged in money transfer operations, whereas the World Bank estimates are based on the International Monetary Fund's balance of payments data, reported by the countries.
7. Prices are from the second semester of each respective year.
8. It should be pointed out that most of these studies are not surveys of emigrants, but rather of members of their families left behind. Data collected therefore provides second-hand information. At the same time, the studies used different methodologies, and had different major goals and research questions, making it difficult to directly compare findings.
9. A condition for membership of the European Union is that the candidate countries align their national legal systems with existing EU legislation in all areas, a process called approximation.

10. EU Mobility Partnerships provide a flexible and non-legally binding framework for ensuring that the movement of people between the EU and a third country can be managed effectively. A Mobility Partnership was signed between the EU and Georgia in 2009.
11. As mentioned earlier, this provides the right to enter the country without visa, stay in the country for up to 30 days, access the education system and receive scholarships and represent Georgia at sporting events.
12. There are Mobility Centers in Batumi, Kutaisi, Tbilisi and Telavi.
13. The 13 institutional bodies are: The Ministry of Education and Science; the Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues; the Office of the State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration; the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development; the Ministry of Justice (chair); the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Refugees and Accommodation; the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the National Statistics Office; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Internal Affairs (co-chair); and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs.
14. These include the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the German International Co-operation Society (GiZ), the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, the Danish Refugee Council, the International Organization for Migration, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the International Labour Organization.
15. These include the Innovations and Reforms Centre, the Migration Centre, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, the UN Association of Georgia and the Civil Development Agency.

References

- ADB (2014), *Country Partnership Strategy: Georgia (2014–2018)*, Asian Development Bank, Manila.
- Badurashvili, I. (2004), “Determinants and consequences of irregular migration in a society under transition: The case of Georgia, Caucasus”, <http://paa2004.princeton.edu/abstracts/41960>.
- Badurashvili, I. and M. Nadareishvili (2012), *Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe: Final Country Report: Georgia*, Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und -gestaltung e.V. (GVG).
- BAMF (2013), “Return to the Caucasus Region: Return motives, reintegration patterns, sustainability – The case of Georgia”, in *Return and Reintegration – Types and Strategies Using the Example of Turkey, Georgia and the Russian Federation*, German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.
- Chelidze, N. (2013), “Readmission, return and reintegration in Georgia”, *CARIM-East Explanatory Note*, No. 13/25, Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration, European University Institute, Florence.
- CRRC (2015), *2015 Caucasus Barometer*, online database, Caucasus Research Resource Center, <http://www.caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2015ge/INCSOUAB/>.
- Dermendzhieva, Z. (2011), “Emigration from the South Caucasus: Who goes abroad and what are the economic implications?”, *Post-Communist Economies*, Vol. 23/3, pp. 377-398.
- DRC (2012), *Research on Georgia's Labour Market and Reintegration of Returning Migrants*, Danish Refugee Council, Tbilisi.

- DRC (2007), "Migration and return in Georgia: Trends, assessments, and potential", unpublished, Danish Refugee Council.
- EBRD (2007), "Georgia National Public Opinion Survey on Remittances", European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, London, www.ebrd.com/downloads/sector/etc/surge.pdf.
- ETF (2013), *Migration and Skills in Georgia: Results of the 2011/12 Migration Survey on the Relationship Between Skills, Migration and Development*, European Training Foundation.
- Eurostat (2015), "Residence permit statistics", Eurostat Population database, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Residence_permits_statistics (accessed on 1 April 2016).
- GDN and IPPR (2009), *Development on the Move: Measuring and Optimising Migration's Economic and Social Impacts in Georgia*, Global Development Network, Delhi and the Institute for Public Policy Research and, London.
- GeoStat (2016), *2014 General Population Census: Main Results*, National Statistics Office of Georgia.
- GeoStat (2015), "Migration", GeoStat database, www.geostat.ge/?action=page&p_id=173&lang=eng (accessed on 1 September 2016).
- Gerber, T.P. and K. Torosyan (2013), "Remittances in the Republic of Georgia: Correlates, economic impact, and social capital formation", *Demography* Vol. 50/4, pp. 1279-1301.
- Gugushvili, A. (2013), "The development and the side effects of remittances in the CIS Countries and Georgia: The case of Georgia", *CARIM-East Research Report, 2013/29*, Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration, European University Institute.
- ICMPD (2015), *The State of Migration in Georgia*, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, Vienna.
- ICMPD (2014), *Georgian Diaspora and Migrant Communities in Germany, Greece and Turkey: Transnational Realities and Ties with Georgia*, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, Vienna.
- IOM (2009), *Tianeti Household Census 2008 and Tianeti Emigrants to Greece 2008*, International Organization for Migration.
- Labadze, L. and M. Tukhashvili (2013), "Costs and benefits of labour mobility between the EU and the Eastern Partnership Partner Countries. Country report: Georgia", *CASE Network Studies and Analyses Working Paper, No. 463/2013*, Center for Social and Economic Research, Warsaw.
- MPC (2013). *Migration Profile Georgia*. Migration Policy Center, June 2013. Florence: European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.
- NBG (n.d.), *Statistical Data: Money transfers by months*, National Bank of Georgia, Tbilisi, <https://www.nbg.gov.ge/index.php?m=304>.
- Takevarishvili, M. (2005). "Research of social status/welfare standards of migrant workers: Comparative study before, during and after migration", unpublished.
- SCMI (2015a), *2015 Migration Profile of Georgia*, State Commission on Migration Issues, Tbilisi.
- SCMI (2015b), "Migration strategy of Georgia 2016-2020", unofficial translation, State Commission on Migration Issues, Tbilisi.
- SCMI (2012), "Migration strategy of Georgia 2013-2015", unofficial translation, State Commission on Migration Issues, Tbilisi.

- Tsuladze, G. (2005), *Emigration from Georgia Based on the Findings of the 2002 Census : Methodological aspects and analysis of findings*, Edited by Levan Tarkhnishvili, Tbilisi: Caucasus Research Resource Center.
- UNDESA (2013), *International Migration Flows to and From Selected Countries: The 2013 revision*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/> (accessed 1 September 2014)
- World Bank (2017), *World Development Indicators* (database), <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>.
- World Bank (2016a), "GDP per capita (current US\$)", *World Development Indicators* (database), <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>, (accessed on 1 September 2016).
- World Bank (2016b), *Doing Business*, database, World Bank, Washington, DC, www.doingbusiness.org/Custom-Query/georgia (accessed on 1 December 2016)
- World Bank (2016c), "Bilateral remittance matrix 2015", *Migration and Remittances Data*, www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data (accessed on 1 September 2016).
- World Bank (2016d), *Remittance Prices Worldwide* (database), <http://remittanceprices.worldbank.org> (accessed on 1 September 2016).
- World Bank (2011), *Georgia Poverty Dynamics, 2003 – 2010*, Report No. 63110-GE, World Bank, Washington, DC.
- World Bank (2010), *Bilateral Migration Matrix 2010*, Washington, DC, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data> (accessed 1 September 2014).
- Zurabishvili, T. (2012), "Dynamics of remittances in Georgia", *CARIM-East Explanatory Note*, No. 12/32, Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration, European University Institute, Florence.
- Zurabishvili, T. and T. Zurabishvili (2010), "The feminization of labor migration from Georgia: The case of Tianeti", *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research*, Vol. 1, pp. 73-83, www.soclabo.org/index.php/laboratorium/article/view/170/3



From:
**Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration
and Development in Georgia**

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264272217-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD/Caucasus Research Resource Center - Georgia (2017), "Georgia's migration landscape", in *Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development in Georgia*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264272217-6-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org. Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at info@copyright.com or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at contact@cfcopies.com.