

# The State of Migration in Georgia

Report developed in the framework of the EU-funded  
Enhancing Georgia's Migration Management (ENIGMMA)  
project



State Commission  
on Migration  
Issues



This project is funded  
by the European Union

## Authors

**Mariam Chumburidze**, Good Governance and Innovations Programme Coordinator at the Innovations and Reforms Center (IRC), has worked for the Ministry of Justice on migration and holds Master's degrees in Finance and International Management.

**Nino Ghvinadze**, Researcher at ICMPD ENIGMMA Pilot Analytical Unit at the SCMI Secretariat in Georgia, has a degree in international security and economics, has experience in strategic planning and has been involved in various impact assessment studies.

**Sopiko Gvazava** is a project assistant at the Innovations and Reforms Center (IRC) in Tbilisi. She has experience in working on migration issues and as a researcher, and studied English Philology.

**Roland Hosner**, Research Officer at ICMPD Vienna, serves as a focal point for migration and integration statistics, has a Master's degree in sociology and has been teaching methodology courses at the University of Vienna.

**Violeta Wagner**, ENIGMMA Project Manager (general overview of the drafting), has an international law background and more than 10 years of practical experience working for state administrations in the area of migration. She has managed migration-related projects in Georgia for ICMPD since 2011.

**Tamar Zurabishvili**, Researcher at ICMPD ENIGMMA Pilot Analytical Unit at the SCMI Secretariat in Georgia, has a PhD in Sociology, and is regularly involved in applied research of migration to/from Georgia.

Editing by Roland Hosner, Tamar Zurabishvili and Violeta Wagner

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Paata Shavishvili (Head of the Population Census and Demography Division, National Statistics Office of Georgia) for clarifications on migration statistics, the Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN) for valuable data, reports and insight on ecomigration, Ina Jaschinski (Vienna Institute of Demography, Austrian Academy of Sciences) for the discussion of demographic data, and Anna Bara, Veronika Bilger, Albert Kraler and Martin Wagner (all ICMPD) for discussing sources and parts of the report.

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)  
Gonzagagasse 1  
1010 Vienna  
Austria  
[www.icmpd.org](http://www.icmpd.org)

International Centre for Migration Policy Development  
Vienna, June 2015

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**ISBN 978-3-902880-39-0**

## Executive Summary

Migration is high on the political agenda in Georgia. Large shifts in population and phases of significant emigration during the last 25 years have shaped approaches to migration management and efforts to efficiently manage migration in Georgia. Through the current Migration Strategy and the related Action Plan for 2013-2015, Georgia has started to successfully institutionalise migration management. A new Migration Strategy document, covering the period from 2016 to 2020, is being developed at the time of publication, with this report contributing to the drafting process.

*The State of Migration in Georgia* is an up-to-date report which covers a wide range of migration-related issues, a review of the legislative and the migration management institutional frameworks, an analysis of available research and data, and includes a detailed breakdown of immigration and emigration (populations and movements) for Georgia.

While migration-related data collection methodologies have changed over time, and population as well as **migration statistics will be subject to revision**, preliminary results from the 2014 General Population Census show a **population decline of around 640,000 persons** since the 2002 census. Available data also suggest a trend towards increased immigration, but both the consistent surplus of births and immigration have been outweighed by emigration.

In the absence of official data on immigrant stocks in Georgia, estimates put the number of the **foreign-born population** at 190,000, including more than 100,000 migrants born in the Russian Federation. **Current inflows** have been assessed through statistics on border crossings and reached around 82,000 persons (2014), 61% of which were Georgian nationals, with Russian citizens (12%) being the second-largest group.

Russians, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Ukrainians, Kazakhs, Belarusians, Chinese, Turks and Indians appear to be among the main groups of immigrants living in Georgia today, considering statistics on residence permits, migration statistics, census data until 2002 and UN estimates. The number of **naturalisations** has increased in recent years to around 12,000 in 2013. Azerbaijanis (285,000) and Armenians (249,000) were found to be the largest ethnic minority groups (according to self-identification) in the 2002 census; however, without additional information it is not possible to distinguish the shares of foreign-born and Georgian-born among these minorities.

The most recent estimates from the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) on **international migrant stocks** put the number of Georgian-born persons currently living abroad at 740,000. Here as well, the largest group is residing in the Russian Federation (440,000), with sizeable groups also in Ukraine, Greece and Armenia. Relatively speaking, persons from Georgia who have been recognised as **refugees** abroad, including other forms of protection (6,700), and **asylum seekers** (11,600) constitute relatively small groups.

**International protection** has been gaining importance rapidly, as is shown by the marked increase in annual asylum applications in Georgia, but remains at a comparatively low level, with 357 persons granted refugee and humanitarian status currently settled in Georgia. During 2013, 717 asylum seekers (compared to 599 in 2012) – mostly from Iraq – filed new applications, and 31 persons were issued positive decisions.

Net **emigration** from Georgia was high during the 1990s. The often-cited population decline between 1989 and 2002 was largely due to **ethnic emigration** (Russians, Armenians, Greeks, and other groups), to the exclusion of the two break-away regions of Georgia from official statistics, and (only to a minor extent) to emigration loss among ethnic Georgians. Current emigrant flows amount to 89,000 persons (for 2014), almost four-fifths of which are Georgian nationals, with one-fifth being foreign nationals.

Despite the fact that no comparable increase in the number of Georgian emigrants is visible from available data, **remittances** to Georgia have shown steady growth and amounted to a record sum of almost 1.5 billion USD in 2013. On a smaller scale, out-remittances also reached a record high of 155 million USD in the same year.

**Internally Displaced Persons** (IDPs) and ecological migrants are among the most vulnerable groups of migrants, largely owing to their socio-economic position. However, while the legal status of IDPs is defined and statistics are collected regularly (224,000 in 2014), the number of ecomigrants is unknown and no legal provisions exist to regulate the quality and security of housing, labour market integration or livelihood strategies. Improvements in these fields are also needed for IDPs.

The data presented show that migration flows have diversified both in terms of geographical dispersal and characteristics of migrants. Further, the collected and analysed data also confirm that Georgia's attractiveness for immigrants is growing.

However, more research on migration, migrants and migration policy in Georgia is required, and public institutions as well as research institutions should receive more support. Public institutions should also aim to use available research resources and results for defining migration policy in Georgia. Until the publication of the full 2014 national census results, this publication aims at delivering the most comprehensive assessment of migration processes, effects, and migrant populations for Georgia. It can also serve as a source of evidence-based analysis for the drafting of the new State Migration Strategy for 2016-2020.

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## List of Acronyms

AA	Association Agreement
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CEC	Central Election Commission
CENN	Caucasus Environmental NGO Network
CIM	German Centre for International Migration and Development
COI	Country of Origin
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Centers
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECMI	European Centre for Minority Issues
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENIGMMA	Enhancing Georgia's Migration Management (project funded by the European Union under the Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation Programme and implemented by ICMPD)
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEL	Georgian Lari (currency)
GeoStat	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
GSP+	General System of Preferences+
IBM	Integrated Border Management
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ID	Identification Card
IDFI	Institute for Development of Freedom of Information
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFS	Instrument for Stability
IHS	Integrated Household Survey
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPAP	Individual Partnership Action Plan
IRC	Innovations and Reforms Center
KRDF	Kakheti Regional Development Foundation
LEPL	Legal Entity under Public Law
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia
MPC	Migration Policy Centre
MRA	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NIP	National Indicative Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCA	Agreement on Partnership and Co-operation
PDPI	Office of the Personal Data Protection Inspector
PSDA	Public Service Development Agency
RRM	Rapid Reaction Mechanism
SCMI	State Commission on Migration Issues
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
TACIS	Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange
TIG	Targeted Initiative for Georgia
TSMU	Tbilisi State Medical University
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VLAP	Visa Liberalisation Action Plan

## 1. Introduction

The main objective of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the migration situation in Georgia based on existing data and information, and to discuss the results of existing empirical research on migration.

Starting with a **brief overview of migration and population changes** in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (chapter 2), the existing **migration policy framework is outlined**, including the legal basis and related institutions (chapter 3). **Georgia's intensified relations with the European Union**, specifically those relevant for migration issues, are discussed in chapter 4.

Compiling diverse sources of data and available reports, **immigrant groups in Georgia**, types of immigration, asylum and humanitarian protection, and irregular migration are then analysed in more detail (chapter 5). The related areas of **integration and reintegration** (of return migrants) are presented in chapter 6.

**Migration from Georgia**, motives and emigrant groups are discussed in chapter 7, with a focus on available migration statistics and estimates, also covering those seeking international protection abroad.

Both emigration and immigration **affect the economic and social development** of the country, thus effects on the financial capacities of households, on employment, skills, inequality, and on society in general are highlighted in chapter 8.

While **internal migration** has not been a widely researched phenomenon, it is connected to patterns of international migration. Internally displaced persons, ecological migrants and movements between rural and urban areas are dealt with in chapter 9.

The final chapter includes a summary overview of recommendations for policy and research/data analysis as well as detailed suggestions for further improvements according to each of the report topics.

Preliminary results from the 2014 census in Georgia have been included in the report<sup>1</sup>. A thorough revision of population and migration statistics for the period 2002-2014 will be undertaken by GeoStat and full census results are to be published in 2016.

This report was drafted and developed jointly by the ICMPD ENIGMMA team and Georgian researchers involved in the project: they are researchers in the Piloted Analytical unit established by the project at the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues and/or participated in the research activities within the project (see list of authors). As one of the aims of the EU-funded ENIGMMA project is to support the creation of an evidence-based migration policy framework, this report is intended to provide policymakers as well as researchers and other professionals with state-of-the-art analyses, data and trends in the field of migration to, from, and within Georgia.

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<sup>1</sup> Otherwise this report reflects data and sources available as of January 2015.

## 2. Georgia's Migration History

Tukhashvili and Shelia (2012) identify three key periods in the history of Georgian migration during which a decline in population numbers occurred:

- The First World War
- The Second World War and its aftermath
- The first decade of the post-Soviet period

Losses during the first two periods are mainly attributable to casualties caused as a result of the participation of Georgians in military forces, and are estimated at 263,000 and 196,000 persons respectively. In contrast, the population loss in the post-Soviet period is mainly attributed to international migration, and is known to be around one million persons (see chapter 7 for more details).

Results from the censuses in 1989 and 2002 show that the population decline affected rural areas less than urban areas (in absolute and relative terms). Almost 70% of this decline took place in urban areas – although it should be noted that the figures for 2002 no longer include the two break-away regions of Georgia<sup>2</sup> and are thus not directly comparable to 1989 data. Since 2002, the balance has changed again, with a marked decline in rural population and the urban population (57%) more distinctly outnumbering rural population (43%) in 2015 (see table 1).

**Table 1. Urban and rural population, population change from 1989 to 2015**

Population	1989	2002 <sup>1)</sup>	2015 <sup>1)</sup>	1989	2002 <sup>1)</sup>	2015 <sup>1)</sup>
	persons	persons	persons	%	%	%
Urban	2,991,300	2.284.800	2,140,400	55.4	52.3%	57.4
Rural	2,409,500	2.086.700	1,589,100	44.6	47.7%	42.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,400,800</b>	<b>4,371,500</b>	<b>3,729,500</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

1) Population in 2002 and 2015 given excluding the occupied territories of Abkhazian Autonomous Republic and Tskhinvali region. The population size for both regions combined in 1994 has been estimated at 279,000 (see Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, 2005: 33).

Source: GeoStat, 2014e, 2015e

Overall, Georgia's population decreased by more than 1 million people from 1989 to 2002 (GeoStat, 2013a: 18). More than a quarter of this decline (279,000) is due to territorial changes, as Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region have not been included in population statistics since 1994. The largest share of the remaining population change has been the effect of ethnic minorities emigrating, most of them Russians and Armenians (see table 2). The ethnic Georgian population has only declined slightly during this period, by around 126,000 persons.

Although natural population growth has dipped from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s (see annex table 3), the natural change in Georgia's population has been consistently positive since 1990. The decline in population after 1994 can thus only be explained by mostly negative migration balances since that time.

As various population studies suggest (Badurashvili, 2005; Dershem & Khoperia, 2004), up to 10% of Georgian households have at least one emigrant (where a household member is understood as someone contributing financially to the household), and roughly 7% of the current Georgian population has experienced some kind of migration – either being a current

<sup>2</sup> The Abkhazian Autonomous Republic and Tskhinvali region, also respectively referred to as Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the literature.

or return migrant (Tchaidze & Torosyan, 2010), though this number may vary in different regions of Georgia (Zurabishvili & Zurabishvili, 2010).

**Table 2. Ethnic groups in Georgia, 1979, 1989 and 2002**

Ethnic Groups	1979	1989	2002 <sup>1)</sup>	1979	1989	2002 <sup>1)</sup>
	persons	persons	persons	%	%	%
Georgian	3,433,000	3,787,400	3,661,200	68.8	70.1	83.8
Abkhaz	85,300	95,900	3,500	1.7	1.8	0.1
Ossetian	160,500	164,100	38,000	3.2	3.0	0.9
Russian	371,600	341,200	67,700	7.4	6.3	1.5
Ukrainian	45,000	52,400	7,000	0.9	1.0	0.2
Azerbaijani	255,700	307,600	284,800	5.1	5.7	6.5
Armenian	448,000	437,200	248,900	9.0	8.1	5.7
Jewish	28,300	24,800	3,800	0.6	0.5	0.1
Greek	95,100	100,300	15,200	1.9	1.9	0.3
Kurd	25,700	33,300	20,800	0.5	0.6	0.5
Other	45,000	56,600	20,600	0.9	1.0	0.5
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>4,993,200</b>	<b>5,400,800</b>	<b>4,371,500</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

1) Population in 2002 given excluding the occupied territories of Abkhazian Autonomous Republic and Tskhinvali region. The population size for both regions combined in 1994 has been estimated at 279,000 (see Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, 2005: 33).

Data from the 2014 census for ethnic groups not yet available

Source: GeoStat, 2013a: 22

Besides rural-urban differences in rates of emigration, it is important to see how the migratory directions and ethnic composition of the Georgian population have been changing in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Migratory movements during the existence of the Soviet Union were mainly contained within the Soviet republics, and only a minor part of migrants were crossing the Soviet borders. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Georgians started to move also to distant destinations; also, migration to former Soviet republics has since been counted as international migration. At the same time, while during the Soviet period a major part of migrants within the Soviet Union moved for employment or educational purposes, medical reasons, or family reunification, the character of emigration in the first years of Georgian independence mainly consisted of two types of migrants – those leaving due to economic hardship, and those leaving due to political turmoil. Once the Soviet Union collapsed people who could expect better socio-economic prospects either in other former Soviet republics or elsewhere, and who had the opportunity to leave due to connections, left. As Irina Badurashvili (2004) indicates in her study, motivations to leave Georgia initially were mostly prevalent among non-ethnic Georgians, who could expect better opportunities in the countries of their ethnic origin (Jews, Greeks, Germans, and Russians among them, see chapter 7 for more details).

After the 2003 Rose Revolution, several changes were applied to migration-related legislation, announcing an open door policy and granting citizens of more than 118 countries visa-free entry and stay in Georgia for up to 360 days. At the same time, liberal access to the Georgian labour market, meaning that foreigners did not require work permits to work in Georgia, made it easy to employ foreigners in Georgia; this was further reinforced by favourable economic policies, the reduction of the overall tax rate and the development of the banking system, thus offering attractive investment opportunities to investors (Migration Policy Center, 2013). These initiatives and easier procedures for naturalisation to further the socio-economic integration of persons interested in investing in Georgia gradually changed the migration profile of the country, slowly turning it from an emigration and transit country into a country of immigration as well (see chapter 5 for more details).

The recent history of migration has shown several major changes in respect to destination routes, and the characteristics of migrants. Despite the fact that flows and stocks of emigrants from Georgia are often difficult to account for, existing evidence shows that emigrants from Georgia are now represented in the major EU countries. At this stage, Georgia has become integrated into the world migratory system, with emigrants and immigrants responding to existing global challenges that shape the character of migration to and from the country.

### 3. Current Migration Policy

Georgia's migration policy and management structure has evolved fairly fast in the past five years. If one takes IOM's assessment mission report *Review of Migration Management in Georgia* (2007) as a basis for comparison, significant progress has been made since then in almost all directions. Comprehensive policy framework documents have been developed and approved, a migration management structure and coordinating agency has been established, and sector specific policies are maturing step by step. The most fundamental change, however, was the revision of the key principles underlying migration policies – Georgia's liberal approach towards migration is being transformed in line with the EU Migration Acquis. The ultimate goal in this regard is to efficiently manage processes of migration to and out of Georgia and to harmonise local policies with the EU standards as a step towards EU approximation.

This chapter covers three main migration policy and management areas currently on the table of migration policymakers in Georgia. These are (1) the strengthening of the institutional set-up for better migration management, (2) the improvement of policy framework documents, such as strategies and action plans, and (3) the development and improvement of sector-specific policies, such as visa policy, labour migration, data management system, return and reintegration, and others. The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the abovementioned migration management and policy areas with the aim of explaining current policy directions and their perspectives. The specific legislative norms or administrative aspects of these policies are examined to different degrees in the following chapters.

#### 3.1. Migration Management

Better coordination between the state agencies involved at different stages of migration management and the creation of a central agency with the overseeing capacity was recommended by IOM's assessment mission (IOM, 2007). It was also concluded in the assessment mission's report that the migration management process was too fragmented and needed consolidation (p. 4). In 2010, the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) was established by Government Decree No. 314. Later, in 2012, the Secretariat of the Commission was formed with the financial support of the EU. The function of the Secretariat is to support the Commission's regular operations and provide expertise on migration-related issues. It is hosted by the Public Service Development Agency (PSDA), an LEPL under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia.

The SCMI brings together representatives of 12 state agencies:

- The Ministry of Justice (chair)
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs (co-chair)
- The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
- The Ministry of Education and Science
- The Ministry of Finance
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees
- The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs
- The Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure
- The National Statistics Office
- The Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues
- The Office of the State Minister of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Issues

The chairman of the Commission is the Minister of Justice, and the co-chair is the deputy Minister of Internal Affairs.

Although it does not hold any chair position in the SCMI, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is an influential agency in the Georgian 'migration community', as it oversees the implementation of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP) with the EU.

Since 2013, the SCMI has 12 additional members with the consultative status comprised of representatives of seven international organisations and five national non-governmental organisations:

International organisations:

- The Danish Refugee Council
- The Delegation of the European Union to Georgia
- The German Society for International Cooperation
- The International Centre for Migration Policy Development
- The International Labour Organization
- The International Organization for Migration
- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees

National non-governmental organisations:

- The Civil Development Agency
- The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
- The Innovations and Reforms Center
- The Migration Centre
- The UN Association of Georgia

The purpose of including consultative members has been to provide additional expertise to the Commission and encourage regular inter-sector cooperation and exchange.

The aim of the SCMI, as stated in its statute, is to define an integrated policy of the government of Georgia in the sphere of migration and improve migration processes management (article 1). It is expected to achieve this goal through improved coordination among relevant authorities, preparation of expert commentary and recommendation on ongoing migration issues, and the development of policy proposals on the most pressing subjects.

The Commission operates through subject-specific working groups, such as the currently operating working groups on statelessness, on consolidation of reintegration activities, on monitoring the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons (herein referred to as the Aliens Law), on migration strategy, and on developing of a unified migration analytical system. Depending on the needs in the given field, the working groups are responsible for either drafting a new legislation and harmonising it with international instruments, or coordinating inter-sectoral dialogue on specific issues such as reintegration programmes or analytical databases.

Up until now, the Commission's and its secretariat's work has been deemed quite positive, both among the SCMI members and by international observers. It is widely credited for the progress made in overall policy development and management. However, the SCMI is still a developing institution and certain aspects of its functioning require institutionalisation and fostering.

### **3.2. Policy Framework Documents**

The development of a chain of key policy documents was another step forward towards better migration management. The first Migration Strategy of Georgia for the years 2013-2015 was developed throughout 2011 and 2012 and approved in 2013. In August 2012, before government approval, the document was presented for public discussion and changes have been made to the draft document in the beginning of 2013. The Strategy document is expected to be revised in 2015 to set the strategic policy goals for the following five years (2016-2020). There is a special strategy development working group under the SCMI, comprised of representatives of all SCMI member governmental agencies, which will also work on the development of the Action Plan in cooperation with organisations that have SCMI's consultancy status.

The Migration Strategy was preceded by the State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons first drafted in 2007. The latest versions of the Strategy and the Action Plan cover the years 2012-2014. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) developed the 2014-2018 Strategy for the State Border Management and the Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues is working

on the diaspora engagement strategy. Elaborating a strategic vision for the respective fields of different state institutions involved in migration management is undeniably a positive development; however, one major shortcoming that has to be addressed is the lack of synchronisation and cross-reference between these documents which is due to be addressed in the new Migration Strategy for 2016-2020 presently being elaborated by the SCMI.

The extensive work on the policy framework documents has been widely supported by EU funded initiatives and is being carried out with the broad engagement of EU technical expertise. Currently, the biggest assistance from the EU side in the migration field falls under the 'More for More' framework allocated to support the implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and the VLAP (European Commission, 2014a).

### 3.3. Sector Policies

Some of the most essential developments have occurred in the policy areas related to international migration and Georgia's international obligations, primarily to meet the VLAP recommendations. Areas left outside of VLAP, such as the legal status and accommodation of ecological migrants and keeping track of internal migration, received relatively little attention. On the other hand, the most sweeping changes were introduced in the visa and residence policies, asylum policy, readmission, border management, and the issuance of biometric documents. Noteworthy progress was also made with regard to improving data collection and management, diaspora engagement, and circular migration.

**Management of inflow and movement of foreigners.** In line with the EU common practices and with multiple recommendations of European partners and international organisations (IOM, 2007; VLAP) Georgia revised its lax visa and residence policies. A, B, C, and D visa categories, similar to the Schengen visa code system, were introduced; the length of the ordinary visa and the visa-free stay were limited to 90 days during a six months period; and granting of residence permits became inter-linked with the type of visa previously issued. The purpose of these changes was to collect better data and achieve an understanding of the groups of foreign nationals in the country – the reason and length of their visit as well as their "change of status".

Additionally, to improve the control over how visas are granted, the practice of issuing visas at border crossing points became limited to extraordinary cases. In ordinary situations, applications have to be submitted to Georgian consulates abroad weeks prior to the trip. Still, citizens of 94 countries (118 countries before the amendment was made) can enter Georgia without a visa and stay in the country for 90 days in a 180-day period. A data sharing system between the MFA, the MIA and the PSDA was established to improve data cross-checking among the agencies. In 2015, the Georgian e-visa was also introduced: foreigners can now apply for and receive the Georgian visa online at the website launched by the MFA (<https://www.evisa.gov.ge/GeoVisa/>).

The introduction of the regulation of access to labour market for foreign nationals, envisaged by the future labour migration law, is part of the same overarching policy goal. The draft labour migration law has been shared with international organisations and local NGOs. Parallel to this, the document has been submitted to the parliament of Georgia for consideration. For now, foreign nationals in the country enjoy unlimited access to Georgia's labour market.

**Policies on return and readmission** of foreign and Georgian nationals were also essential parts of the visa facilitation agreement with the EU. Georgia and the EU signed the readmission agreement in 2010; it entered into the force together with the visa facilitation agreement on 1 March 2011. Implementation protocols defining readmission conditions, forms of transfer, and other details have to be formulated in a bilateral framework with individual EU Member States. Georgia has already concluded these protocol agreements with several states<sup>3</sup> and many more are under development.

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<sup>3</sup> Implementing protocols were signed and ratified individually with Hungary, Bulgaria, Estonia, Austria, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Outside of the EU, Georgia has readmission agreements with Ukraine, Switzerland, and Norway. The list of agreements was retrieved from [www.codex.ge](http://www.codex.ge) (website currently offline).

The agreement and protocols are meant to ease the return of Georgian (and third country) nationals to Georgia and reduce irregular migration. Travel and other costs are covered by the country requesting the return. Outside of these agreements, the only state mechanism to facilitate the return of irregular Georgian migrants is the issuance of temporary travel documents for those who do not have a valid travel document but want to return or are being deported to Georgia.

Procedures regulating the deportation of irregular migrants from Georgian territory have also been modified and adjusted to EU standards. A new temporary accommodation centre under the MIA's Migration Department was opened in Tbilisi in 2014. The centre has the capacity to house up to 80 persons while the documentation for their deportation is being prepared. However, at the time of writing, the practical implementation of accommodation and/or deportation via the Migration Department has not yet started.

**Integrated Border Management (IBM)** reform was also strongly recommended under the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan (Priority Area 4), the Eastern Partnership Roadmap (B.2.e) and the VLAP (block 2, 4.1). Georgia undertook this commitment under the NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) as well. The reform started as early as 2005, and as of 2014 significant progress has been achieved, both in terms of the infrastructure and development of human resources. An Integrated Border Management mechanism, which involves a combining of customs data with the passport database, the state revenue service, and the patrol police databases, is already in place. The State border management strategy and the action plan for 2014-2018 underline the importance of inter-agency cooperation for integrated management. A key challenge which still lies ahead for Georgia's border management is the finalisation of border demarcation with Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the Russian Federation.

Georgia's quick progress with regard to issuing biometric passports in 2010 and ID cards in 2011 also contributed to improvements in border crossing management and visa facilitation. As of the end of November 2014, 784,473 ordinary biometric passports, 552 travel biometric passports, and 99 travel biometric documents have been issued by the PSDA (PSDA, 2014).

**Changes in asylum policy** were driven by a growing number of asylum seekers in the region and by the political will of Georgia's government to meet its international obligations. A legal basis for the reception and protection of asylum seekers had existed since the late 1990s, but neither the legal provisions, nor the relevant policies were comprehensive or fully enforced. Revisions made in 2011-2012 harmonised Georgian legislation with international conventions and emphasised protection and integration aspects of persons granted asylum. The importance of asylum policy and the need for better integration mechanisms were stressed in the Migration Strategy document too.

Improving the capacity of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees (MRA) to verify the country of origin information of asylum applicants is one pillar of the implementation of this policy. In this area too, the EU's technical expertise is widely used for guidance.

The **development of a unified migration analytical system**, one of the most technically challenging projects initiated in the past years, is an essential part of the policy decision to impose more control over migration flows. The ENP Action Plan (EU-Georgia ENP Action Plan, 2006, point 4.3.2) and the IOM assessment mission report (2007) also called for the creation of a centralised database which would combine all migration-related data in a synchronised manner. The unified migration analytical system is meant to allow more evidence-based policymaking in the country and hence bring migration management to a new level. The database is still in a very early developmental stage, but the first steps of technical assessment and concept development have already been taken and the work is in progress. It is planned to study experiences of EU countries regarding the development of similar databases in order to learn about good practices and avoid further difficulties. The development of the Migration Profile documents (Building Migration Partnerships, 2011; MRA, 2013a) in the framework of the Prague Process laid the ground for migration data collection and analysis.

The adoption of the law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection (2011) and active monitoring of its implementation through the Office of the Personal Data Protection Inspector (PDPI) prepared the ground for allocating adequate attention to the subject matter in the design of the

unified migration analytical system. Representatives of PDPI are also involved in the working process and preliminary consultations have been conducted.

The **promotion of circular migration schemes** is one of the priority policy initiatives of the Georgian government. There was an interest in supporting bilateral temporary working schemes earlier too, but no actual steps were taken (IOM, 2007). In 2013, Georgia and France signed an agreement on the stay of qualified specialists and circular migration. The document is currently awaiting ratification from the French side. Additionally, a pilot circular migration project is being implemented together with the German Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM) and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ).

Circular migration schemes are broadly approved policy tools for promoting regular migration and reducing irregular movements. At the same time, these schemes significantly facilitate return and reintegration of emigrants in their home communities.

**Increased attention to awareness raising** as a tool to promote regular migration and to educate Georgian nationals about the threats associated with irregular migration is evident in the Migration Strategy 2013-2015. Lack of information and inadequate documents presented by visa applicants may be one of the reasons for a significantly high number of visa refusals of Georgian nationals at the border or by consular services (Chelidze, 2013a).

**Growing importance of diaspora policies** is also evident in public discourse and strategy documents (Migration Strategy, National Security Concept of Georgia, 2011), but progress is rather slow, given that the Diaspora Strategy was drafted some time ago and has not been approved yet. Most of the programmes targeting diaspora groups are usually donor-driven.

There are a number of important issues missing in the current migration policy discourse in Georgia. Immigrant integration policies are not taking centre stage as of yet, this mostly applies to integration of immigrant groups whether in relation to returning Georgian citizens or internally displaced persons there are certain steps undertaken both by the Georgian Government and international organisations to foster the process. The Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship (2014) and language programmes organised by the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as a grant competition for NGOs announced by the MRA in 2015 to support reintegration of returnees are a step forward in this regard, but no comprehensive policy has been elaborated.

Nor does the issue of ecomigrants receive sufficient attention. The law on ecomigrants has been drafted but never passed parliamentary hearings. The state does provide sporadic assistance to the victims of environmental disasters, but the assistance does not have a systematised form and the victims do not have a legally defined status. There is no mechanism to register and track these families and no policy to deal with the issue (CENN, 2013a).

## 4. Georgia and the European Union

Relations between Georgia and the EU have started in 1992 following the recognition of Georgia's independence by the European Union. Achieving closer long-term cooperation with the EU is a long-term strategic priority of Georgia's foreign policy that ultimately led to the signing of the Association Agreement (AA) including the agreement on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) in 2014.

### 4.1. Key Agreements

The European Union and Georgia started a preparation process to sign the **Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)**<sup>4</sup> in 1994. The agreement was signed on April, 22, 1996 by the EU Member States, the President of the European Commission and the President of Georgia, and entered into force in 1999. The agreement referred to all the aspects of EU-Georgia relations, including political cooperation, trade, democracy and human rights, science and technology, education, customs, the fight against corruption, transport, energy, telecommunications, the environment and culture.

On June, 14, 2004, in order to enhance cooperation with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the European Union launched the **European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)** (European External Action Service, 2014). The objective of the ENP was to bring the enlarged EU and its neighbours closer and to enhance the prosperity, stability and security of all concerned. It helped to build ties in new areas of cooperation and encouraged Georgia's objective of further approximation with European economic and social structures. The EU-Georgia Association Agreement is the outcome of the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy.

Georgia started to benefit from the EU's **Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)** in 1995, and in 2005 was granted additional preferences offered under the Generalised System of Preferences Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance (GSP+) (Delegation of the European Commission to Georgia, 2007). The Arrangement was first valid until 2008, but was successively extended in 2008 and in 2014, and will continue during a transition period of two years after the entry into force of the DCFTA. The GSP+ provides a non-reciprocal tariff reduction on duty-free access for Georgian exports to the EU.

The Communication from the European Commission on the Eastern Partnership was adopted on December, 3, 2008, and was approved at the meeting of the European Council on March, 19, 2009. The **Eastern Partnership (EaP)** is an EU policy aimed at bringing Eastern Neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) closer to the European Union. It facilitates further integration of the partner countries into the EU, promotion of common values, and strengthens regional security and economic development through bilateral and multilateral formats. The first Eastern Partnership Summit was held in Prague on 7, May, 2009.

In November 2009, the **Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership** between the European Union and Georgia<sup>5</sup> was signed in Brussels during the Justice and Home Affairs Council. The Mobility Partnership is a long-term framework based on political dialogue and cooperation, which will be developed on the basis of the existing relationship between Georgia and the European Union and its Member States, evolving over time.

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<sup>4</sup> Commission Decision No. 99/515/EC (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Georgia), slip op. (31 May 1999), cited in 1999, OJ L 205. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:31999D0515>

<sup>5</sup> Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the European Union and Georgia (20 November 2009). [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/global-approach-to-migration/specific-tools/docs/mobility\\_partnership\\_georgia\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/global-approach-to-migration/specific-tools/docs/mobility_partnership_georgia_en.pdf)

The **Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas (Visa Facilitation Agreement)**<sup>6</sup> and the **Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation (Readmission Agreement)**<sup>7</sup> were signed in June and November 2010 respectively, and entered into force on 1 March 2011.

The **Visa Liberalisation Dialogue** between the EU and Georgia was launched on 4 June 2012 in Brussels (European Commission, 2012). Upon receiving the Visa liberalization Action Plan (VLAP) in February 2013, Georgia started the first – legislative and planning – phase of the VLAP implementation, which was successfully completed in October 2014, and moved to the second phase (European Commission, 2014b).

On 2 December 2010, the comprehensive air transport agreement on the establishment of a Common Aviation Area between the EU and Georgia was signed in Brussels.

Georgia and the EU launched the negotiations on the **Association Agreement** including the **Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area** on 15 July 2010. The Association Agreement was successfully signed on 27 June 2014<sup>8</sup>, between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part. The AA aims to deepen political association and economic integration with the EU.

Accompanying the Association Agreement, the EU and Georgia also agreed on an EU-Georgia Association Agenda, defining a set of priorities for 2014-2016 with a view to implementing the AA/DCFTA. On 1 September 2014, the provisional application of the AA started enabling implementation of 80% of the Association Agreement, including the DCFTA component. The process will continue until the European Parliament and national legislative authorities of the EU Member States finalise the ratification process.

Along with these agreements, Georgia has also ratified several EU agreements and protocols, which are particularly relevant for the harmonisation of Georgia's legislation and practices with those of the EU (see annex, table 1).

## 4.2. Development Cooperation

EU-Georgia development cooperation started as early as 1992, with 531 million Euros of EU assistance being provided to Georgia during the period 1992-2007 (Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, 2011: 7). The main fields of development cooperation included *inter alia* democracy and good governance, the financial sector, agriculture and rural development, and peaceful solution of conflicts. Support to civil society alongside working with governmental bodies has been high on the agenda in EU-Georgia relations. At a later stage, the EU introduced a joint mechanism with Georgia (the so-called Budget Support Programme), which entitles EU and Georgian authorities to work directly and without any intermediaries on the development agenda.

EU assistance has been provided via the following instruments: the Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS), the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM), Food Security Programmes, Cross Border Cooperation, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Macro Financial Assistance, Regional Programmes, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), Twinning, TAIEX, SIGMA<sup>9</sup>,

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<sup>6</sup> Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas (17 June 2010), cited in 25.2.2011 OJ L 52/34. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2011:052:FULL&from=EN>

<sup>7</sup> Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation, (22 November 2010), cited in 25.2.2011, OJ L 52/55. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22011A0225%2803%29&from=EN>

<sup>8</sup> Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part (27 June 2014) cited in 30.8.2014 OJ L 261/140. [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/georgia/pdf/eu-ge\\_aa-dcfta\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/georgia/pdf/eu-ge_aa-dcfta_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/neighbourhood-wide/twinning-taiex-and-sigma/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/neighbourhood-wide/twinning-taiex-and-sigma/index_en.htm).

Thematic Programmes, the Instrument for Stability (IfS), the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, and Education and Training Programmes<sup>10</sup>.

At a donors' conference held in Brussels in October 2008, the European Union announced funding of up to €500 million to assist Georgia in the period 2008-2010 to overcome the destructive effects of the 2008 August war (Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, 2011: 27).

The National Indicative Programme (NIP)<sup>11</sup> funded four priority areas in Georgia through the ENPI, with a total allocation of €120 million for the period 2007-2010<sup>12</sup>:

- Democratic development, rule of law and governance (€32 million), supporting democracy, human rights and civil society development, as well as rule of law and judicial reform and good governance, public finance reform and administrative capacity.
- Economic development (€32 million), covering the promotion of external trade and improving the investment climate, supporting implementation of the ENP Action Plan, and regulatory reforms, education and science.
- Poverty reduction and social reforms (€38 million), including strengthening social reforms in health and social protection and also rural and regional development.
- Peaceful settlement of Georgia's internal conflicts (€19 million).

€180 million was allocated to Georgia for the 2011-2013 NIP financed under the ENPI, with four priority areas:

- Democratic development, rule of law and governance (€45-63 million)
- Trade and investment, regulatory alignment and reform (€27-45 million)
- Regional development, sustainable economic and social development, poverty reduction (€63-81 million)
- Peaceful settlement of conflicts (€9-18 million)

Georgia received a total of €642 million in EU assistance between 2007 and 2013 that includes the new EU initiative "more for more" and support in the framework of Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF). The EU's indicative financial allocation for the period from 2014 to 2017 is envisaged to be up to €410 million (European Commission, 2014d).

With a variety of opinion polls (Menabde, 2014) having been carried out in Georgia at different times, the majority of Georgia's population supports Georgia's moving closer to the EU and considers this one of the main keys to the country's economic prosperity and security.

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<sup>10</sup> An overview of EU technical and financial assistance instruments and programmes can be found here: [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/eu\\_georgia/tech\\_financial\\_cooperation/instruments/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/eu_georgia/tech_financial_cooperation/instruments/index_en.htm).

<sup>11</sup> The NIP, together with the Country Strategy Paper (CSP), which covered 2007-2013, were the two key documents on which the main EU-Georgia cooperation objectives, policy responses and priority fields were based.

<sup>12</sup> See [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/eu\\_georgia/tech\\_financial\\_cooperation/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/eu_georgia/tech_financial_cooperation/index_en.htm).

## 5. Immigration

### 5.1. Introduction and Framework

Data and research on immigration to Georgia is largely lacking, with only fragmentary research available on the situation of immigrants currently residing in the country. There are several working papers, policy briefs and media reports devoted to the topic of immigrants in Georgia (e.g. Rimple, 2012; European University Institute, 2013; Jiayi, 2012), however, they can hardly be used as a basis for academic reference, although they do provide a snapshot about immigrants from certain countries in Georgia. Regarding the integration of immigrants, the Georgian legislation in general acknowledges their rights and access to the major social, labour and educational services, only limiting their political (voting) rights depending on their immigration status. However, in terms of institutional or infrastructural settings in place to facilitate declared and acknowledged rights of the immigrants, almost no opportunities exist (except for asylum seekers and persons granted protection).

For a number of years, Georgia had a comparatively liberal visa regime for citizens of 118 countries who did not require a visa to enter Georgia and were able to stay – take residence and work – for a year without the need to get any kind of residence permit. Similarly, no student visa for students from those countries was required. In order to stay legally in the country, these nationals could simply leave Georgia for a couple of days and re-enter with the right to remain in the country for another 360 days. This also resulted in the fact that some immigrants who came to Georgia for educational purposes were also reluctant to apply for residence permits or student visas, preferring rather to renew their stay by simply leaving and re-entering the country (which is one of the reasons why there is limited data on immigration to Georgia).

The new Aliens Law<sup>13</sup> which provides revised requirements for the visa regime in Georgia entered into force on 1 September 2014. The law envisages granting visas at the Georgian border only under special/extraordinary circumstances. Immigrants who require a visa to enter Georgia need to obtain it in advance at one of the Georgian diplomatic missions abroad, while nationals of 94 countries<sup>14</sup> do not require a visa to enter Georgia, but are only able to remain in the country without a visa for 90 days within a 180-day period. Specialised visas for study, work and other activities have been introduced.

Until recently, these regulations resulted in limited data about immigrants, as making estimates on who entered the country to stay and who came as a tourist was almost impossible. Another persisting challenge is related to the habitual residence of immigrants. Legally, all persons residing in Georgia, including immigrants, have the duty to notify the Public Service Development Agency if they change the address where they habitually reside. However, as the consequences of failure to notify the PSDA are rather insignificant as compared to the difficulties related to the notification (for instance, if a person rents a dwelling, s/he requires the written consent of the owner or declarations made by two witnesses to register at that address, which are often difficult to obtain), the majority of people opt to not notify the registry. As a consequence, there are no precise statistics on where immigrants reside. Another challenge is that no data have been collected on the economic background or the activity of migrants entering and staying in Georgia.

Until the final results of the 2014 national population census are made available by GeoStat (scheduled for spring 2016), which will include citizenship and country of birth as variables, only estimates are available to assess the size and composition of the immigrant population in Georgia.

The most comprehensive (and also the highest) estimate is provided by UN DESA and calculates the number of the foreign-born population in Georgia at around 190,000 for 2013 (UN DESA, 2013a). Immigrants from the Russian Federation form the largest group, followed by Ukraine and Kazakhstan (in terms of country of birth (see table 3)). Although the range of countries included in this estimate is broad, notable immigration countries appear to be missing, e.g. Greece, Israel, India, Iran, Egypt and the USA, when compared to other sources such as residence permit statistics, previous census results on ethnic groups and recent

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<sup>13</sup> Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons (2014).

<sup>14</sup> The list of countries can be found here: [https://www.geoconsul.gov.ge/en/nonvisa\\_en.html](https://www.geoconsul.gov.ge/en/nonvisa_en.html).

migration statistics (see below and chapter 2, table 2). The figures for other countries, such as Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey, appear to be underestimations. The World Bank (2011) estimated migrant stocks for Georgia at 167,000 in 2010.

**Table 3. International Migrant Stock for Georgia, 2013 (foreign-born population, estimate)**

<b>Country of Birth</b>	<b>Number of persons</b>
Russian Federation	104,549
Ukraine	25,044
Kazakhstan	12,107
Belarus	9,306
Uzbekistan	8,593
Azerbaijan	4,377
Poland	3,007
Republic of Moldova	2,490
Lithuania	2,478
Armenia	2,227
<b>Other North</b>	<b>2,070</b>
<b>Other South</b>	<b>2,051</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>189,893</b>

Including Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Source: UN DESA, 2013a

The *Caucasus Barometer*, an annual survey in Georgia implemented by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC), includes a question on the place of birth of respondents. When the survey results from 2013 (which are based on a probability sample) are weighted and extrapolated to the Georgian population, this produces an estimate of around 95,000 foreign-born persons in Georgia (CRRC, 2013a). As the sample does not include children and adolescents (respondents had to be at least 18 years old) and also excludes those who do not speak Georgian, Armenian or Azeri, the actual number of the foreign-born population is likely to be higher (the population of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was also not included in the sampling frame, see CRRC, 2013b).

Data from the 1989 and 2002 censuses include a breakdown of the Georgian population by ethnicity (according to self-identification; see table 2), but not by country of birth or citizenship – the correlation between these concepts is not known for Georgia. Large ethnic groups of Azerbaijanis and Armenians do not necessarily correspond to similar numbers of immigrants from these countries, depending on the number of first- or second-generation migrants (or migration movements dating back even further).

Hence, although the PSDA, who issues temporary (up to a maximum of 6 years) and permanent residence permits, does provide data on the number of residence permits issued to foreign nationals, taking into consideration the abovementioned facts, these data only cover a small fraction of immigrants (IDFI, 2014).

### 5.3. Immigrant Population

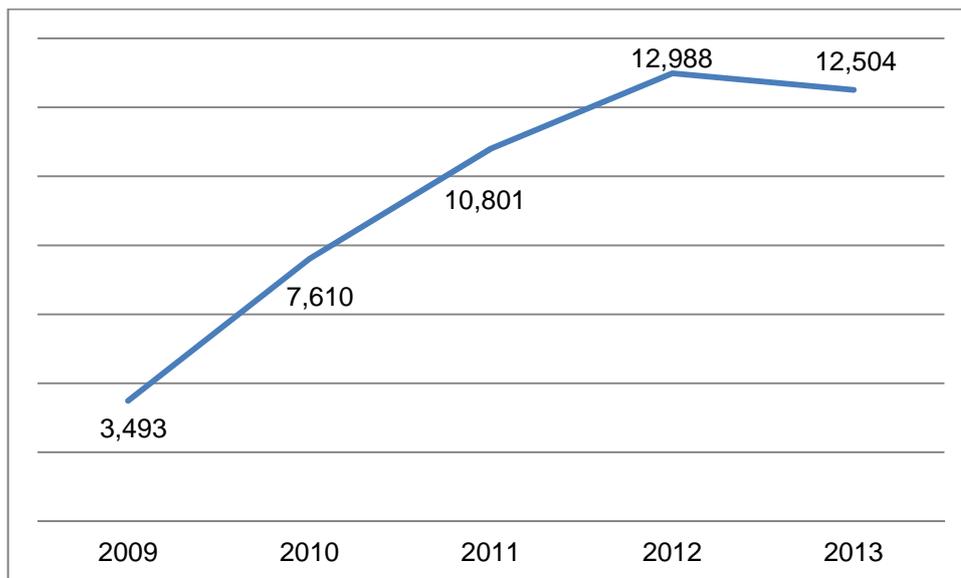
#### 5.3.1. Residence Permits

Available data on residence permits only include (1) temporary residence permit holders residing in Georgia in the year during which the residence permit was granted and (2) permanent residence permit holders in cumulative numbers. These data exclude all those who have entered and stayed in the country without the need for permits due to the reasons explained above. After enacting the new Law on Aliens and Stateless Persons, data on residence permits issued by type will be available.

From 2005 to 2013, about 40,000 residence permits – both permanent and temporary – were issued. Among these, about a quarter (8,791) was permanent residence permits. The number of temporary permits is a simple aggregation of all temporary permits issued, which does not take into account the fact that the same person may have applied for and received several temporary permits during these years.

The number of residence permit holders grew to nearly 13,000 persons in 2012. Graph 1 provides data on those persons who took permanent and temporary residence in Georgia with residence permits during the years 2009-2013.

**Graph 1. Temporary and permanent residence permit holders (number of persons)**



The number of residence permit holders is estimated taking 2009 as the base year, the number of residence permit holders includes the total number of temporary and permanent residence permits issued; in the succeeding years, permanent residence holders from previous years are aggregated and only temporary residence permits issued in the specific year are added.

Source: LEPL Public Service Development Agency, 2014

Russian citizens (5,412) comprised the largest group of residence permit holders in 2013 (see table 4). Other common nationalities include China, Turkey, India and Ukraine.

**Table 4. All residence permits by most frequent citizenship 2013**

<b>Citizenship</b>	<b>Number of residence permits</b>
Russian Federation	5,412
China	1,357
Turkey	941
India	730
Ukraine	625
Armenia	550
Iran	453
Azerbaijan	439
Egypt	423
USA	162
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,504</b>

Source: LEPL Public Service

Development Agency, 2014

### 5.3.2. Acquisition of Citizenship

From 2005 to 2013, about 53,000 foreign nationals were granted Georgian citizenship. Among these, the large majority were Russian citizens (37,462), followed by Turkish (3,464) and Israeli (3,367) citizens. This points to large and established immigrant groups from these countries in Georgia, although citizenship and residence do not necessarily coincide. Georgia applies *jus sanguinis* when granting citizenship, so children of foreign nationals only become Georgian nationals through naturalisation later on, not at birth.

Matters related to Georgian citizenship are generally outlined in the Constitution of Georgia<sup>15</sup> and details are provided in the Georgian Organic Law on the Citizenship of Georgia. According to the Constitution, Georgian citizenship can be acquired either through birth or through naturalisation (Article 12(1), Chapter 2). The Constitution also stipulates that a Georgian citizen cannot at the same time be a citizen of another country, excluding exceptional cases where citizenship is granted by the President of Georgia based on merit or state interest (Article 12(2), Chapter 2)<sup>16</sup>.

Data concerning citizenship acquisition in Georgia can be obtained from the LEPL Public Service Development Agency, under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, which among others is in charge of the civil acts registration – births and granting of citizenship through naturalisation. Table 5 provides data on the number of new citizenships acquired by birth and through naturalisation, as well as the sum of these two categories for the years 2009-2013.

Naturalised citizens represent foreign citizens who have been granted Georgian citizenship through the procedures of naturalisation as provided in the Organic Law on the Citizenship of Georgia. The criteria which foreign citizens need to fulfil to qualify for citizenship vary between types of naturalisation: ordinary procedures, simplified procedures in exceptional cases, and reinstatement of citizenship. Ordinary procedures require residence in Georgia for a continuous period of five years, knowledge of the Georgian language to a certain extent, knowledge of the history of Georgia and employment, property, or owning or sharing a business in Georgia. Certain categories of persons are exempt from some of these

<sup>15</sup> Constitution of Georgia, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> Dual citizens have equal rights in Georgia as persons holding only Georgian citizenship, with one exception: as article 29(1<sup>1</sup>), chapter 2 of the Constitution stipulates, a dual citizen cannot hold the positions of President, Prime Minister or Chairman of the Parliament.

requirements (for instance, refugees are exempt from the requirement of owning a property and employment in Georgia, see the Organic Law on the Citizenship of Georgia, Chapter 12, Article 4). Exceptional circumstances allow the President of Georgia to grant citizenship to a person, regardless of whether they satisfy the requirements for naturalisation, who is of special merits for the country, or to grant citizenship to a person if it is in the interest of the country.

**Table 5. New citizenships issued from 2009 to 2013**

Year	Number of citizenship by birth <sup>1)</sup>	Number of citizenship through naturalisation <sup>2)</sup>	Total number of new citizenships
2013	58,712	12,172	70,884
2012	58,446	8,552	66,998
2011	59,605	10,371	69,976
2010	63,909	7,176	71,085
2009	63,997	10,259	74,256

1) Data includes all live-births, children born to Georgian nationals either in or outside Georgia, excluding children born to foreigners in Georgia.

2) Cases of naturalisation of aliens and stateless persons.

Source: LEPL Public Service Development Agency, 2014

#### 5.4. Regular Immigration

During 2014, more than 82,000 people immigrated or returned to Georgia, according to GeoStat. Six out of ten persons moving to Georgia in 2014 were return migrants - Georgian nationals (see table 6)<sup>17</sup>. Citizens of the Russian Federation (9,692) and Turkey (4,672) were the second- and third-largest groups, followed by Armenian and Azerbaijani citizens. Women constitute the majority of all immigrants overall (60%) and within all the citizenship groups. The percentage of female migrants is particularly high among Turkish citizens (77%). On average, immigrants are 36 years old, with female migrants being slightly older (37.6 years) than male migrants (34.8 years).

**Table 6. Immigrants by citizenship and gender in 2014**

Citizenship	Immigrants				
	Both sexes	% by citizenship	Male	Female	% Female
Georgia	49,706	60.5	20,659	29,047	58.4
Russian Federation	9,692	11.8	4,468	5,224	53.9
Turkey	4,672	5.7	1,055	3,617	77.4
Armenia	3,856	4.7	1,543	2,313	60.0
Azerbaijan	2,163	2.6	988	1,175	54.3
Other (incl. unknown)	12,072	14.7	4,510	7,562	62.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>82,161</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>33,223</b>	<b>48,938</b>	<b>59.6</b>
Mean Age	35.9		34.8	37.6	

Sources: GeoStat, 2015c, d h, own calculations

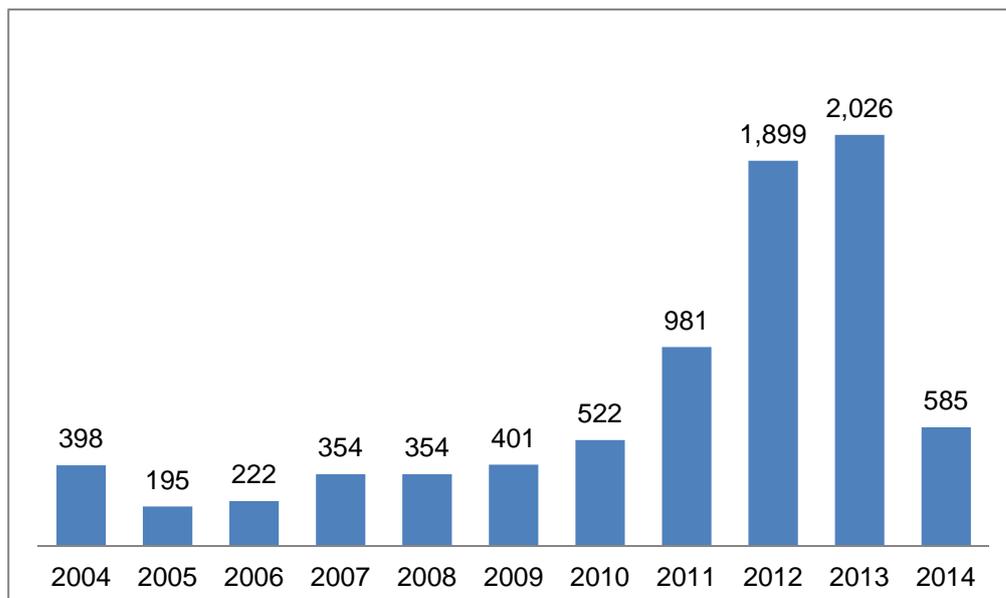
<sup>17</sup> For definitions of migrants, see annex.

### 5.4.1. Educational Immigrants

A relatively new group of immigrants to Georgia are educational immigrants, who come to Georgia for higher education. Educational immigrants are long-term immigrants who stay for several years, and although they cannot be considered permanent immigrants, since many of them plan to go back to their home countries after they finish their studies, their presence in Georgia and specifically in the capital city, Tbilisi, where they are mainly concentrated, is quite visible.

According to data provided by the Ministry of Education and Sciences of Georgia (see graph 2 below), the number of foreign students enrolled at Georgian higher educational institutions increased steadily from 2005 to 2014. The biggest increases were in 2011 and 2012, when the number of foreign students enrolled at Georgian higher education institutions almost doubled, and then, in 2014, after a slight increase in 2013, foreign students enrolment decreased by more than two-thirds. One of the reasons for such a significant decrease could be changes in the recently adopted Aliens Law that introduced several amendments to the procedures of issuing visas and residence permits, aimed at better management of immigrant flows. According to an earlier version of the law, educational immigrants from a variety of countries could either enter the country without a visa or get a visa at the Georgian border and stay in the country without a residence permit for a long time. After the amendments were enacted, prospective educational immigrants were required to apply for student visas in the Georgian diplomatic missions or consulates in their home countries in advance and the possibility to get a visa at the border was reserved only for extraordinary cases. Another factor could be the size of tuition fees that foreign students pay in Georgia. Usually, these tuition fees are several times higher than those for local students. Besides this, some higher educational institutions, for example, Tbilisi State Medical University (TSMU), which attracts a large number of foreign students, also tend to increase tuition fees for foreigners annually. Currently, tuition fees for foreign students in Georgia may amount to up to 7,000 USD per year, depending on the higher education institution and the specialisation. Together with the living expenses that immigrants need to cover, receiving an education in Georgia may become an expensive endeavour on the one hand, and on the other hand may become comparable to other educational opportunities abroad that prospective educational immigrants consider when making decisions regarding tertiary education.

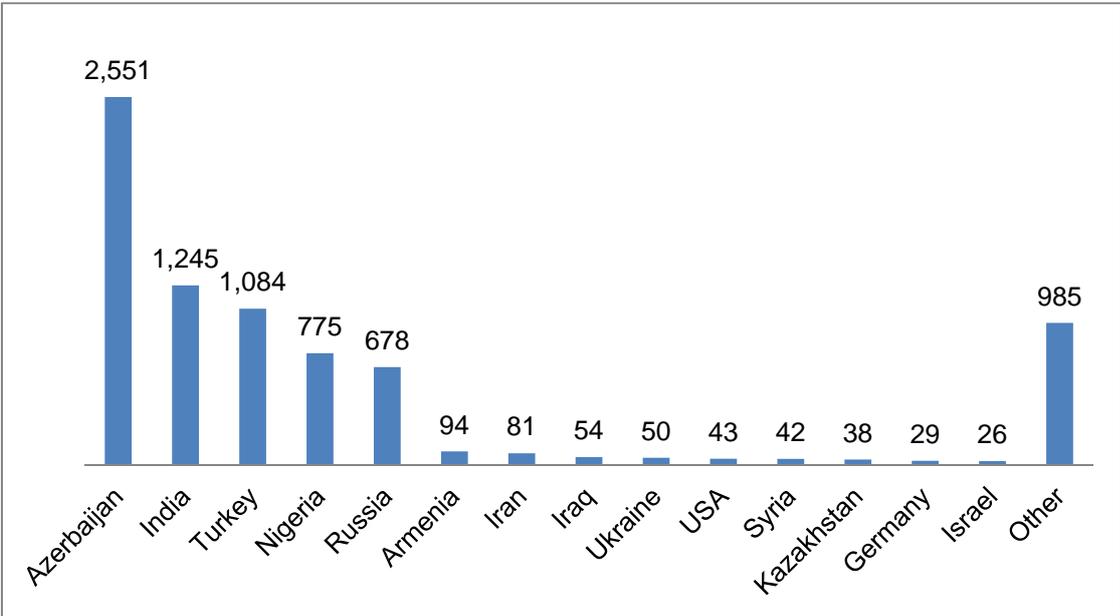
**Graph 2. Number of foreign students enrolled at Georgian higher education institutions per year, 2004-2014**



Source: Ministry of Education and Sciences, 2014a

In terms of sending countries, educational immigrants from Azerbaijan enrolled in Georgian higher educational institutions constituted the biggest group between 2004 and 2014, followed by educational immigrants from India, Turkey, Nigeria and the Russian Federation (graph 3). In the case of Azerbaijani and Russian educational immigrants, some part of these groups presumably consists of ethnic Georgians. For those unable to enrol at higher educational institutions in their home country, potential reasons to choose Georgian higher education institutions may be proximity, comparable educational costs and the possibility to study in either Russian or English. Immigrants from countries such as India, Turkey or Nigeria might have decided to come to study in Georgia due to the possibility to study in English, lower tuition fees, and the recognition in their home countries of qualifications and degrees awarded by Georgian higher educational institutions.

**Graph 3. Enrolment of foreign students by major sending country, 2004-2014**



Source: Ministry of Education and Sciences, 2014a

Educational immigration is one of the spheres that has the potential to benefit both the receiving country by increasing the revenue of higher educational institutions, increasing competitiveness among these institutions and increasing diversity on campus, and educational immigrants, by providing high-quality education. Hence, attracting educational immigrants offers itself as a state migration priority; however, no specific provision supporting educational immigration yet exists in Georgia.

**5.4.2. Labour Immigrants**

Despite the fact that the economic situation in Georgia is challenging, and although high unemployment is coupled with a lack of well-paid jobs, Georgia still attracts immigrants that come with the aim of working. According to PSDA data, provided in table 7 below, the Russian Federation, China and Turkey were the leading countries of citizenship of immigrants applying for residence permits between 2009 and 2013. However, regarding the differentiation of permanent and temporary permits, some quite interesting differences emerge, as can be seen from the table.

Iranian, Chinese and Turkish immigrants mostly request temporary residence permits on the basis of work. The same is true for about a half of Indian temporary resident permit holders (data not shown here). Although the PSDA data are unable to fully capture the scale of all immigrant flows, it is still noteworthy that immigration to Georgia is increasing from countries such as India, China, and Egypt, which have no previous close historic and/or cultural links with Georgia. Immigrants from the Russian Federation and Ukraine overwhelmingly request

permanent residence permits on the basis of either being former Georgian citizens, close relatives of Georgian citizens or permanent residence permit holders. From 2009 to 2013, a total of 8,525 permanent residence permits were issued in Georgia, with nationals of the Russian Federation, Armenia and Ukraine receiving slightly more than 80% of all permanent residence permits issued.

**Table 7. Permanent and temporary residence permits issued to foreign nationals coming to Georgia, top 10 countries, 2009-2013**

Citizenship	Permanent	Temporary	Total
Russian Federation	5,668	959	6,627
China	6	6,415	6,421
Turkey	108	5,045	5,153
India	41	4,570	4,611
Iran	36	2,514	2,550
Ukraine	622	448	1,070
Azerbaijan	348	656	1,004
Egypt	10	942	952
Armenia	630	120	750
USA	118	533	651

Source: LEPL Public Service Development Agency, 2014

During the last number of years, Georgia has also become attractive for foreign farmers, involved both in small- and large-scale agricultural development. Specialised consultancy organisations have been established both within Georgia and countries of origin which have started the provision of tailored services to prospective immigrants (for example Crown Immigration, a consultancy service that works with farmers from India; BBC, 2013; Transparency International Georgia, 2014b). Crown Immigration alone provided its services to and assisted about 2,000 Indians, mainly from India's Punjab state, to buy land in Georgia. However, following the moratorium on buying land in Georgia, the number of Indian farmers in the country may have decreased (Transparency International Georgia, 2014b).

## 5.5. Asylum in Georgia

Georgia's state institutions have only recent experience with granting asylum and providing lasting support to refugees. Other than for Chechen refugees in the late 1990s, Georgia was not a destination or transit country for asylum seekers of various nationalities. Therefore, Georgia's asylum policies and regulations are rather recent (a Law on Refugees and Humanitarian Status was only adopted in 2011), but do closely follow European and international standards. The MRA is the main administrative body managing asylum applications. It is also therefore a main source of asylum-related statistics. UNHCR works in close cooperation with the MRA and together with other international donors (mainly the EU and USAID) assists Georgia in meeting its international obligations. However, broader independent monitoring and scrutiny of asylum status determination, reception, and further treatment of asylum seekers is largely absent.

### 5.5.1. Legislative Framework

The legislative framework regulating the legal status and treatment of asylum seekers in Georgia has been evolving since 1998<sup>18</sup>. The main provisions related to protection are prescribed in the Constitution of Georgia (Article 47), which declares that Georgia should grant asylum to foreign citizens and stateless persons in accordance with internationally recognised principles and norms. Presidential Decree No. 387 adopted in 1998 established the first provisions on granting asylum to aliens. In 1999, Georgia became a party to the 1951 UN

<sup>18</sup> See Gabrichidze (2011) for systematic analysis of asylum-related legislation in Georgia. The report analyses the situation as of 2011 (a few major legislative amendments have been made since then).

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its respective protocol from 1967. The Law of Georgia on Refugees (1998), which covered issues related only to asylum seekers and refugee statuses, was in 2011 replaced by the Law of Georgia on Refugee and Humanitarian Status (2011) that, together with the respective Decree of the MRA on the Procedures for Granting Refugee or Humanitarian Status, provide detailed provisions for treating asylum seekers from the moment they approach the Georgian authorities until the final decision. The recent Aliens Law also regulates certain aspects of asylum policy.

Based on the existing legislative framework, Georgia recognises two types of international protection: refugee and humanitarian status. Asylum seekers are protected from being returned during the asylum procedure and are eligible for state-sponsored accommodation. The MRA takes the decision on registering a person as an asylum seeker. The status of asylum seeker is the basis for granting rights and imposing responsibilities stipulated in article 18 of the Law on Refugee and Humanitarian Status.

Refugee status is granted to a person who is not a citizen of Georgia or a stateless person permanently residing in Georgia, who articulates a well-founded fear that s/he may become a victim of a persecution on the basis of race, religion, faith, ethnicity, belonging to a certain social group or having certain political views (Law on Refugee and Humanitarian Status, Article 2).

Humanitarian status, as defined by Georgian law, is similar to the European subsidiary protection status. Under humanitarian status, the Georgian state provides a relatively short form of protection to those who do not fall under the refugee definition. It covers foreign citizens who were forced to leave their country of origin due to violence, external aggression, occupation, internal conflict, mass violation of human rights or a significant breach of public order, and persons who may face serious risks to their life or other serious human rights violations in case of return to the country of origin and who cannot be returned due to the non-refoulement obligations undertaken under Georgian and international law (Law on Refugee and Humanitarian Status, Article 4.1). Persons resettled from neighbouring countries due to natural disasters or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who are not citizens of Georgia and are not eligible for the IDP status also qualify for the humanitarian status (Law on Refugee and Humanitarian Status, Article 4.2).

### 5.5.2. Asylum Statistics

Although the number of asylum applications in Georgia has increased more than fivefold in the past 2 years, from less than 100 applications per year to more than 700 in 2013, the number of positive asylum decisions remains quite small (table 8). Therefore, the increase in asylum applications can be explained by external factors (intensified conflicts in the neighbouring regions and Georgia's geographic and political proximity to destination countries in Europe) rather than by a liberalisation of the Georgian asylum policy or other internal developments. Roughly 90 percent of the applications received in 2012-2013 were from people fleeing from the Middle East (Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and Iran). Even though asylum seekers from Iraq constitute the biggest share of applicants, many of them are so called "double refugees" fleeing refugee camps in Syria (US Department of State, 2013).

**Table 8. Asylum seekers applying in Georgia and positive asylum decisions (first instance) by country of origin, 2009-2013**

Country of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Iraq	1	1	-	443	478
Egypt	-	-	-	22	80
Syria	-	-	-	18	60
Russian Federation	14	32	34	36	28
Iran	7	4	31	42	26
<b>Total asylum seekers</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>717</b>
<b>Asylum or humanitarian protection granted</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>31</b>

Source: IDFI, 2014b

**Table 9. Negative decisions on asylum applications, 1st instance, by country, 2009-2013**

Country of origin	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Iraq	1	1	-	41	213
Egypt	-	-	-	-	17
Syria	-	-	-	-	9
Russian Federation	6	22	10	7	20
Iran	5	3	13	23	14
<b>Total Refused</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>303</b>

Source: MRA, 2014a

The influx of asylum seekers has increased in the region as a whole. Turkey has so far seen the highest number of applicants, because of its common border with Syria. In 2013, from Iraq and Syria alone, Turkey received more than 25,400 asylum seekers, compared to 539 in Georgia, 300 in Armenia, and 18 in Azerbaijan (UNHCR, 2014a).

According to UNHCR, a total of 325 asylum seekers were awaiting decisions on their status in Georgia at the end of 2013 (UNHCR, 2014a). According to the MRA, the total refugee population in Georgia as of February 2014 was 357<sup>19</sup>. 191 (54 percent) of the total are men and 166 (46 percent) are women (see table 10). 148 persons, or 41 percent, of all refugees are underage (less than 18 years old).

**Table 10. Age and gender distribution of refugees and persons with humanitarian status, February 2014**

Gender/Age	0-4	5-11	12-17	18-59	60+	Total
Male	8	27	47	103	6	191
Female	9	14	43	98	2	166
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>357</b>

Source: MRA, 2014b

Housing and the reception of asylum seekers remains a challenge. A reception centre in the village of Martkofi opened in 2010 but can house only 60 adults. A further enlargement of the centre in Martkofi is planned, while there are also plans to build new centres in regional centres such as Gori, Rustavi, Kutaisi, and Zugdidi. Most of them are to be built with the support of international donors. According to the law on Refugees and Humanitarian Status (Article 18.1), asylum seekers have the right to receive accommodation from the state, either in the reception centre or, in exceptional cases, at other facilities allocated by the authorities. It is hard to verify whether all applicants who are not settled in the reception centre receive alternative accommodation.

The Georgian state allocates rent allowances to persons who are granted refuge or humanitarian status. According to the MRA, 8 families (25 persons) received this assistance in 2013. In 2014, the number of families was 13 (45 persons). By Government Decision No. 145 (2006), persons granted a refugee or humanitarian status also receive a monthly allowance of 30 Georgian Lari (about 13 Euros), which is much less than the subsistence minimum in the country. For 2013-2014 the Statistics Office of Georgia (GeoStat) estimated the subsistence minimum at 150 Georgian Lari (about 60 Euros). Refugees and humanitarian status holders also have access to free basic health insurance.

The biggest group of refugees is concentrated in the Kakheti region (see table 11), the vast majority of whom are of Chechen origin. They sought refuge in Georgia in the late 1990s mainly due to the second Russia-Chechnya war. Tbilisi hosts the second-largest group – 65 refugees and persons with humanitarian status.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR (2014) reports a different number for the same period, in the 2014 Operations profile for Georgia the number of refugees is reported to be 847.

**Table 11. Distribution of refugees and persons with humanitarian status by place of residence, February 2014**

Region	City	Number
Kakheti	Akhmeta	261
Tbilisi	Tbilisi	65
Kvemo Kartli	Gardabani	23
Samegrelo	Zugdidi	3
Imereti	Kutaisi	2
Samtskhe-Javakheti	Vale	2
Adjara	Batumi	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>357</b>

Source: MRA, 2014b

### 5.5.3. Overview of the Asylum Procedure

The number of persons receiving protection in Georgia is growing (from 6 in 2009 to 31 in 2013) together with the number of applications. However, compared to the number of asylum seekers, the recognition rate is still low. As little as 7 percent of applicants in 2012 and 4 percent in 2013 were granted refugee or humanitarian status (see table 8 above).

In the case of approval under humanitarian protection, the status is granted for 1 year. It can be extended if the conditions for granting the status persist. If the conditions worsen, persons with humanitarian status can reapply for refugee status. When an applicant is recognised as a refugee in Georgia, a residence permit is issued for 3 years. Both refugees and humanitarian status holders can apply for temporary travel documents; however, if they leave Georgia for more than 1 month, their social assistance is cancelled. Status holders are required to reregister with the authorities once a year.

In situations of mass influx, the status determination normally happens based on the *prima facie* principle (general situation in the country). This was the case with Chechen asylum seekers in the 1990s. Individual applications are assessed by special commissions established under the MRA, although resources of other state institutions, such as the MFA and the MIA are also usually used.

A rejection of an asylum application can be decided at two stages:

1) An asylum seeker's application can be rejected during the first instance review of the application, which means that they are not registered as asylum seekers at all. Authorities have to take this decision within 10 days after the application is filed. Significant numbers of applicants are refused at this stage (see table 9). Reasons for negative decisions include the provision of fraudulent documents, refusal to provide information, violation of the timeframe, criminal prosecution in Georgia, a criminal conviction in the country of origin, infectious diseases, a negative asylum decision in another country, or a renewed application when the situation in the country of origin remains unchanged (Law of Georgia on Refugee and Humanitarian Status, article 13).

2) After the person is registered as an asylum seeker and is provided with basic rights and guarantees, the MRA has 6 months to determine the status of the asylum seeker. This period can be extended by a maximum of 3 months, if needed. Applicants have the right to stay at the reception centre for the entire time until their status is determined and for 3 months afterwards, if the decision is positive. In the past two years, more than 90 percent of registered asylum seekers were rejected at this stage.

In case of a negative decision on asylum in the first instance, applicants have a right to appeal in court. They maintain the status of an asylum seeker until the final court decision comes into effect. According to the US Department of State country report on human rights practices (2013), some flaws remain in the status determination and adjudication processes. In 2012, only 5 percent of court appeals resulted in granting refuge and 16 percent in granting a humanitarian status.

In the case of a final negative decision, asylum seekers have one month to leave Georgia. If a person overstays the period of his/her legal stay for up to three months, an administrative fine of 180 Georgian Lari (about 74 Euros) is imposed. If a person stays longer than three months, the amount of the fine doubles. If the person still does not leave before the given date, s/he will be considered an irregular migrant and will be subject to deportation procedures. Deportation decision-making and procedures are prescribed in the Aliens Law (chapters 10 and 11 of the Law).

## 5.6. Irregular Migration

The number of illegal border crossings in Georgia was fluctuating around 100 individuals per year in 2010-2012, with most of the illegal crossings taking place at land (56 cases in 2012) or air borders (55 cases in 2012). When it comes to the citizenship of those attempting to cross the border irregularly, as presented in table 12 below, they are mostly citizens of Georgia, of neighbouring Armenia, the Russian Federation, Turkey, or the more geographically distant Iran (MRA, 2013a). According to more recent data from the MIA covering the period from January to June 2014, 30 attempts to illegally cross the Georgian border were detected by border control officers. Georgian (10 cases) and Russian (8 cases) citizens constituted the majority of these attempts, followed by Syrians (4 cases), Azerbaijanis (3 cases), citizens of the UK (2 cases), citizens from Iraq and Tajikistan (one case each), and one stateless person. Besides this, in the same period, the MIA also detected 29 falsified travel documents, compared to 32 falsified documents identified during 2013.

**Table 12. Number of illegal border crossings by citizenship, 2010-2012**

<b>Citizenship</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>Total</b>
Armenia	34	26	11	71
Azerbaijan	6	3	3	12
Georgia	42	21	32	95
Iran	3	21	22	46
Russian Federation	26	10	6	42
Syria	2	-	6	8
Turkey	7	3	9	19
Uzbekistan	-	1	9	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>303</b>

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2014

From January to June 2014, the Georgian border enforcement agencies refused entry to a large number of foreign nationals – more than 4,700 persons; out of which citizens of the following countries stand out: Iraq, the Russian Federation, Iran, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan (see table 13). Compared to 2013, the number of entry refusals in the first 6 months of 2014 increased from 1,273 to 4,722 cases.

The reasons for such a significant increase are not known, since the MIA does not provide clarification of the basis for refusals in publicly available statistics (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2014).

**Table 13. Refusal of entry: Top 10 citizenships, January-June, 2014**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Refusals</b>
Iraq	1,017
Russian Federation	895
Iran	853
Azerbaijan	413
Uzbekistan	355
Turkey	167
Kyrgyzstan	105
Turkmenistan	92
Syria	87
Saudi Arabia	75
Other	663
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,722</b>

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2014

## 6. Integration and Reintegration

### 6.1. Introduction

In the past few years, consistent efforts have been made to streamline the existing regulatory framework in order to allow for equal participation and inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and return migrants in Georgia. However, further harmonisation at the by-laws level is still needed in order to eliminate existing discrepancies in implementation of the existing regulations (Innovations and Reforms Center & UN Association Georgia, 2014). Besides, progress is not always complemented by proactive government programmes to enact the law and policies on the ground. Very little effort is made by either the government or non-governmental organisations to support the integration of immigrants and refugees. This, to a certain extent, is due to the fact that this group is largely understudied. Programmes targeting reintegration and inclusion of returned migrants are also limited. The small-scale initiatives which have been implemented up until now have mostly been funded by international donor organisations.

Most of the research and reports available on the subject of integration concentrate on reintegration issues of returned Georgian emigrants. One of the first studies of the returned migrant experiences and their prospective migration intentions was conducted by Irina Badurashvili (2004). During the survey, 960 return migrants were interviewed nationwide. One of the major findings of the study was that a fifth of former migrants planned to go abroad again in the following 6 months (p. 28). A study conducted by Mariam Sakevarishvili (2005) using qualitative methodology and interviewing 50 returned migrants also confirmed Badurashvili's findings, demonstrating that reintegration into Georgian society was not quite successful. Studies conducted about 7 to 8 years later came to the same conclusions. Mirian Tukhashvili's recent report *Socio-Economic Problems of Returning Migrants' Reintegration in Georgia* (2013) analysed a survey of 205 returned migrants in Tbilisi, Rustavi, and Kutaisi. The majority of returned labour migrants found it extremely hard to find employment relevant to their qualifications and did not have the opportunity to put the skills and knowledge acquired abroad into practice.

A qualitative study of the returnees who came back through the voluntary assisted return programmes conducted by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC, 2007) and a study of voluntary and forced returnees from Germany by the German Ministry for Migration and Integration (Zurabishvili et al., 2013) also conclude that the ability of returnees to reintegrate into the labour market in Georgia is the key to sustainable return and yet this remains a challenge for most returnees. Chelidze in *Readmission, Return and Reintegration in Georgia* (Chelidze, 2013a) analysed the impact of the readmission agreement and voluntary return schemes on the scale of the return of Georgian nationals and found it to be negligible.

Only a few brief reports and articles provide insight into the inclusion problems of repatriates and immigrants. *Chinese in Georgia*, a working paper by Jiayi Zhou (2012) discusses integration aspects of Chinese migrants both in terms of their willingness to integrate and the receptiveness of Georgian society and the state (e.g. ease of procedures for registration and documentation). A policy brief by the CARIM-East project (European University Institute, 2013) looks at the perceptions of Chinese, Indian, and Turkish immigrants in Georgia.

Finally, an unpublished report prepared for the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation *Integration of Individuals with Refugee and Humanitarian Status in Georgia* (2014) analysed legislative and normative barriers of inclusion for refugees and asylum seekers. Additionally, the Caucasus Research Resource Centers' unpublished preliminary report on *Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration, and Development* (CRRC, 2014) includes a section on the legislative framework for the integration of immigrants.

### 6.2. Inclusion and Integration of Immigrants

The regulatory framework for the inclusion and integration of immigrants has evolved in the past two to three years. Given the pace and the context of its evolution, the existing framework is quite comprehensive. The two latest laws (the Aliens Law and the Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship) which contain some provisions on integration were adopted in 2014. The former amended the entry, registration and residency procedures for foreigners, while the latter introduced the concept of naturalisation of foreign nationals. The Law of Georgia on

Refugee and Humanitarian Status (2011) defines the status, rights and responsibilities of asylum seekers and persons with refugee or humanitarian status. These rights should be, but only partially are, reflected in the respective laws – the Law of Georgia on Health Care, the Law of Georgia on State Pension (a reform package is currently being discussed), the Law of Georgia on General Education, the Law of Georgia on Social Assistance, and the Law of Georgia on Insurance. Not all provisions of the framework laws are adequately translated into all normative acts, ministerial orders, or the statutes of the respective ministries. The harmonisation of these regulations is an ongoing process.

Georgia’s current Migration Strategy, covering the period from 2013 to the end of 2015, mentions the need for improvement of the integration of persons with refugee and humanitarian status to comply with international standards (see section 4.3 of the Strategy). However, there is very little content dealing with the integration of other groups of immigrants. There are general plans to improve services and infrastructure for foreign nationals residing in Georgia (see section 4.1 of the Strategy) but not any long-term integration policy or programmes.

The Labour Migration Law will be another founding regulation defining the conditions of integration of foreign nationals into Georgia’s labour market. The draft law is currently being developed and is expected to be finalised and passed in 2015. The law is expected to introduce the pre-registration requirement for employers who wish to hire a foreign national. Currently, foreigners legally residing in the country have completely unrestricted access to Georgia’s labour market and local employers have unlimited access to the foreign labour force in the country.

### 6.3. Inclusion and Integration of Persons Granted Protection

As touched on above, integration issues are mentioned in Georgia’s Migration Strategy; however, the main efforts are directed towards the integration of refugees and persons with humanitarian status in Georgia.

One of the key foreign organisations providing financial and expert support in refugee matters and their naturalisation in Georgia is UNHCR, which *inter alia* has been funding the project ‘Naturalisation and Registration of Refugees’ and implementing it in partnership with the Innovations and Reforms Center (IRC) and the Kakheti Regional Development Foundation (KRDF) since 2009. Table 14 presents some statistics on the naturalisation of refugees of Chechen origin by year (Innovations and Reforms Center, 2014).

**Table 14. Cases of Naturalisation of Refugees from Chechnya**

Year	Number of applications	Number of positive decisions	Number of negative decisions
2014 <sup>20</sup>	92	0	5
2013	100	27	73
2012	112	110	2
2011	208	200	8
2010	180	172	8
2009	39	26	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>109</b>

Source: Innovations and Reforms Center, 2014

Besides naturalisation, the project also provides support in documentation, so that the beneficiaries concerned can exercise their right to education, employment, healthcare, etc.

<sup>20</sup> The data for 2014 covers the period from 1 January to 1 October only.

Taking into consideration that the refugees also lack property ownership and a livelihood, KRDF also provides further assistance to refugees from Chechnya with livelihood creation and property acquisition. Through this assistance, property was acquired by 64 refugees and 126 refugees managed to register their property in the property registry (Kakheti Regional Development Foundation, 2014).

Due to the willingness of the government to enhance the integration of refugees into society, it asked UNHCR to carry out a participatory assessment concerning the integration needs of refugees (UNHCR, 2014b). The findings of the assessment suggest that a lack of job opportunities and the language barrier represent the main problems hampering integration. It is notable that at the end of October 2014, the Ministry of Science and Education of Georgia launched a new web portal<sup>21</sup> containing materials to learn Georgian as a second language free of charge. Taking into consideration the findings of the UNHCR participatory assessment, this web portal may be able to provide some help in overcoming the language barrier. However, the results remain yet to be seen.

To those refugees who are not able to integrate in Georgia or simply seek better opportunities in third countries, UNHCR provides assistance in the application to the selected country as well as the resettlement procedures. According to UNHCR Georgia, in the past six years it facilitated 32 cases of resettlement from Georgia to third countries. Cases of assisted resettlements by citizenship of refugees and by year are shown in table 15.

**Table 15. Assisted Resettlements by UNHCR Georgia, by citizenship, 2009-2014**

Year	Russian Federation	Armenia	Iran	Uzbekistan	Kirgizstan	Cuba	Azerbaijan
2014	-	-	-	-	-	1	5
2013	3	-	2	-	-	-	-
2012	-	4	1	5	5	-	-
2011	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2010	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

Source: UNHCR Georgia, 2014. Requested in December 2014.

#### 6.4. Return and Reintegration of Emigrants

The importance of dignified return and reintegration of Georgian nationals is stressed in Georgia's Migration Strategy. This process is not regulated by Georgian law, but there are a number of key international agreements that define the general framework. A declaration on the EU-Georgia Mobility Partnership signed in 2009 is one of the key framework documents. The latest development in this regard is the EU-Georgia agreement on readmission of persons residing in the EU without authorisation. The agreement was signed in 2010 and enacted in 2011 and aims to reduce illegal migration.

One of the key mechanisms for achieving the goals set in the framework agreement is the programme for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Migrants (AVRR), implemented by IOM and the EU's Targeted Initiative for Georgia (TIG). At the moment, the AVRR is continuing to be implemented by IOM. The AVRR has two main goals:

- To monitor the implementation of the EU-Georgia readmission agreement to make sure that it is being enforced and that the fundamental human rights of returnees are protected.
- To enhance the reintegration of Georgian returning migrants by keeping them informed on administrative procedures, skills development, career counselling,

<sup>21</sup> Georgian as a Foreign Language website [www.geofl.ge](http://www.geofl.ge).

emergency housing and small grants to support the livelihood creation. It is worth noting that this support is available not only to forced returnees, but to all returned emigrants who wish to obtain it.

The Mobility Centres Project<sup>22</sup>, implemented by IOM with EU funding, also provides on the ground reintegration support to returned emigrants. These centres operate in four key cities across Georgia: Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Telavi, and Batumi, and provide different types of support, from basic administrative assistance to temporary emergency accommodation. Skype communication is also available to help the returned migrants get in touch.

According to the Visa Liberalization Action Plan, Georgia has a commitment to gradually take over the functions of the “Mobility Centres”. The 2014 Government of Georgia state budget allocated 400.000 GEL for the implementation of reintegration programmes during 2015. The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia issued targeted grants to non-governmental organisations for the purpose of providing reintegration support services to returned migrants. The “Reintegration assistance program for Georgian returnees” includes the following services:

- Financing of medical assistance and medications, including psycho-social rehabilitation
- Vocational training
- Financing social projects
- Paid internship and
- Legal aid.

This program also includes public awareness campaigns to increase community involvement, as well as public awareness and support to the migration-related issues. Activities provided by the program cover the following regions of Georgia: Tbilisi, Qvemo-Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Shida-Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti.

One of the key challenges persons returning to Georgia face is the recognition of education and skills obtained abroad. Three levels of education are recognised by the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement, these are:

- Secondary education
- Vocational education
- Higher education

Education which cannot be recognised includes:

- Pre-school education
- Home schooling
- Education obtained through exchange programmes

Government and some organisations have carried out awareness campaigns for returned emigrants to inform them about the opportunities available domestically, however, awareness among returnees (particularly those who have been absent for a long period) is rather low.

One important development which needs to be outlined is the announcement by the government that it has allocated financial resources for reintegration programmes in the 2015 state budget (The Georgian Times, 2014). However, details on what types of activities will be supported have not yet been released.

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<sup>22</sup> The Enhanced Cooperation for Secure Borders and Safe Migration project implemented by IOM. More information available on the website: <http://informedmigration.ge/cms/en/Mobility-Centre>.

## 7. Emigration

### 7.1. Introduction

International migration appeared on the agenda for Georgia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In the first years after independence, emigration was mainly directed towards regions of the former Soviet Union, but has since gradually diversified. Analysing migratory trends from Georgia starting from the early 1990s is challenging due to the differing quality in statistical data and data collection, thus a high degree of caution is required when using older data.

### 7.2. Recent Emigration

GeoStat provides annual statistics on migration flows to and from the country (see table 16). However, the methodology used for migration statistics has varied over time<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, preliminary results from the 2014 census have shown a major population decline in Georgia from 2002 to 2014, contrary to previous population statistics (see table 3 in the annex). Based on these most recent census data, the Georgian population as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 amounts to 3,729,500 persons.

The necessary revision of official population and migration statistics will also result in revised figures for immigration, emigration and net migration. The population decline of around 640,000 persons between the 2002 and 2014 census rounds is likely to translate into markedly more negative net migration for this period. Pending the publication of the revised data, current migration statistics are presented here.

**Table 16. Net Migration for Georgia, 2004-2013**

Year	Net migration (persons)	Immigration	Emigration
2014	-6,500	82,200	88,700
2013	-2,600	92,500	95,100
2012	-21,500 <sup>b</sup>	69,100	90,600
2011	20,200		
2010	18,100		
2009	34,200		
2008	-10,200		
2007	-20,700		
2006	-12,100		
2005	76,300		
2004	5,500		

b) Break in time series

Figures to be revised according to 2014 census results

Sources: GeoStat, 2015a, b

<sup>23</sup> 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 until 2011, net migration was calculated based on the number of official border crossings, without reference to length of stay in the country (using data from the MIA). Only the nationality of those crossing the border was recorded, but not the duration of their stay. Hence, net migration data until 2011 describe the balance of inward/outward flows of all types of visitors, not only migrants. Since 2012, however, the data has been collected based on a new methodology. Immigration and emigration data are based on border crossings for the reference year (t) as well as the preceding (t-1) and following (t+1) year, defining an emigrant as a person moving abroad for at least 6 months and 1 day (cumulative, during a 12 months period), and an immigrant as a person moving to Georgia for at least 6 months + 1 day (cumulative; GeoStat, 2013c: 6, see also annex 1). After each census, population and migration estimates are revised for the period since the preceding census. Because of these time-series breaks, for the years before 2012 GeoStat provides only numbers for net migration, and not for immigration or emigration.

Existing data suggest that current out-migration is higher than inward migration, with 2,600 more individuals leaving the country in 2013 (for at least 6 months and one day) and 6,500 more emigrants than immigrants in 2014 (for a breakdown by citizenship and gender see table 2 in the annex).

The breakdown of emigrants by citizenship (see table 17) shows that almost four out of five migrants (79%) leaving the country in 2014 were Georgian citizens. Russian (6%), Armenian (3%) and Turkish (3%) citizens made up the largest part of the remaining migrants who left Georgia in 2014. 59% of all emigrants were women in 2013, with a markedly higher female share among Turkish citizens leaving Georgia (75%). The mean age was 34 years, with female emigrants being slightly older on average (35.8 years) than male emigrants (32.6 years).

**Table 17. Emigrants by citizenship and gender in 2014**

Citizenship	Emigrants				
	Both sexes	% by citizenship	Male	Female	% Female
Georgia	69,855	78.8	29,634	40,221	57.6
Russian Federation	5,424	6.1	2,359	3,065	56.5
Armenia	2,821	3.2	1,137	1,684	59.7
Turkey	2,395	2.7	610	1,785	74.5
Azerbaijan	1,254	1.4	557	697	55.6
Other (incl. unknown)	6,955	7.8	2,549	4,406	63.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>88,704</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>36,846</b>	<b>51,858</b>	<b>58.5</b>
Mean Age	34.0		32.6	35.8	

Sources: GeoStat, 2015c, d, own calculations

There are no data in the Georgian statistics on the countries of destination for emigrants. Judging from the size and development of Georgian population groups abroad (see section 7.3. on Georgian emigrants worldwide below), the EU and the Russian Federation are the regions currently attracting the most migrants from Georgia. However, after 2000 (when the Russian Federation introduced a visa regime for Georgian citizens), migratory flows of Georgian labour migrants to the Russian Federation started to decrease gradually (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012). This decrease was later exacerbated by the 2008 war between the Russian Federation and Georgia, when migrant flows towards Russia virtually stopped.

The 2014 census also included a questionnaire for household members abroad at the time of enumeration, which had not been out of the country for more than 12 months. Census results will therefore also include this group, comprising recent and temporary emigrants, and provide details on their demographics, their countries of residence and motives for migration.

The migration balance for Georgian citizens was negative in 2012 (-31,000), 2013 (-21,000) and 2014 (-20,000) (GeoStat, 2015c). A breakdown by citizenship of migrants is not available for periods before 2012, but an indirect indication that the number of Georgian emigrants has been increasing is the dynamics of annual remittances that have been sent back to Georgia (see section 8.2.).

### 7.3. Emigrants from Georgia Worldwide

The main data source for global data on international migrant stocks is the estimates provided by UN DESA (2013a). They contain estimates for migrants by country of destination and origin, and by gender. National data sources used are mostly censuses, population registers and nationally representative surveys (UN DESA, 2013b). Where possible, data on country of birth were obtained to identify migrants, while citizenship was only used when the variable

country of birth was not available (the type of category is listed for each country of destination)<sup>24</sup>.

The estimates published by the World Bank (2010, 2011) are based on UN DESA's data from 2008 and the bilateral migration matrix compiled by Ratha and Shaw (2007). Country data were then updated using sources including UN DESA, OECD, and national sources; with national censuses, registers, and labour force surveys being the original sources, data on country of birth were used where available, citizenship elsewhere<sup>25</sup>.

The two sources mainly differ in their estimation methods (geographic coverage might be a minor issue as UN DESA data explicitly include migrants from the break-away regions in Georgia while the World Bank documentation does not state whether these territories are included as regions of origin).

A rough overview provided by the Migration Policy Center in 2013, based on national statistics alone, is also included in the comparison below (see table 18). Reference years vary widely and at least three major countries of destination are not listed in their report. The data were included here nevertheless to achieve a broader comparison of estimates.

By far the largest number of emigrants from Georgia is located in the Russian Federation. Total estimates differ over time and between sources mainly due to differences in the size of this group. According to UN DESA, there were around 660,000 Georgian emigrants in the Russian Federation in 1990, 625,000 in 2000, 442,000 in 2010 and 436,000 in 2013 (individuals born in Georgia). Analysing these numbers alone, the decrease during the 2000s of around 184,000 migrants would likely be attributable to return migrants, as none of the other destination countries show corresponding increases. In the absence of detailed immigration statistics in Georgia for this period, this cannot be directly compared to or corroborated with data on return migrants. These lower numbers for 2000 and 2010 might also be underestimations – the World Bank estimated 644,000 Georgian emigrants in the Russian Federation in 2010 (almost 50% more than the UN DESA estimate for the same year). What also remains unclear is how many of these migrants are ethnic Russians who were born in Georgia (this group might not be considered as “Georgian” emigrants, depending on the definition applied).

When compared to estimates by UN DESA, the World Bank estimates stand out because of the overall higher figures and the higher number of emigrants in the Russian Federation in particular. World Bank estimates for Georgian-born emigrants in Ukraine, Armenia and Israel seem outdated, closer to UN DESA's figures for 2000 (see table 18), while figures for Greece, Cyprus and Spain are closer to the UN DESA 2010 estimate. The total number of Georgian emigrants in 2010 according to the World Bank, around 1,058,000, is closer to UN DESA's 2000 estimate of 914,000 emigrants than to the 2010 estimate, the difference for 2010 data largely stemming from discrepancies related to the following countries of destination: the Russian Federation, Armenia, Israel, and other countries of the Global South (a residual category used by the World Bank which is distributed across countries in the UN DESA estimates).

Given that the World Bank used data from UN DESA's 2008 revision of data on international migrant stock, that estimates for 2010 appear to be partly based on outdated data, and that no recent update from the World Bank is available, UN DESA's 2013 estimates appear more useful for assessing the current number of Georgian emigrants. Based on these estimates,

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<sup>24</sup> Redistribution of data was used for estimates when the original data did not comply with standard categories for countries or areas (e.g. when the origin covered more than one country). Interpolation or extrapolation was used for estimates when there was no data for the reference years, but at least two data points available (for more detailed information on sources and estimation methodology see UN DESA, 2013b).

<sup>25</sup> The bilateral migration matrix published by the World Bank (2010) does not include the type of category (country of birth, citizenship, refugee status, etc.) by country. Estimation (as described in Ratha & Shaw, 2007) is used for countries with no available data and for migrants whose country of origin or destination is unknown. The categories “Other South” and “Other North” were created to cover migrants not attributable to a specific origin or destination country. In order to provide estimates for one point in time (when the date of the most recent data sources differs across countries), total migrant stocks for destination countries (including breakdown by origin) were scaled to the UN's latest available estimate of country-level migrant stocks.

**Table 18. Georgian emigrant stocks by selected country of residence, 1990-2013**

		UN DESA <sup>1)</sup>		World Bank <sup>2)</sup>		MPC <sup>3)</sup>						
	Type of data	1990	Type of data	2000	Type of data	2010	Type of data	2013	Type of data	2010	Type of data	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	n/a	72,410	C (2001)	6,446
Greece	C	23,963	C	21,283	C	36,628	C	37,912	n/a	41,817	B (2006)	13,254
Armenia	B R	1,603	B R	67,525	B R	36,329	B R	37,277	n/a	75,792	-	-
Uzbekistan	B	31,462	B	25,154	B	23,288	B	23,175	n/a	0	-	-
Cyprus	B	3,802	B	6,950	B	13,388	B	17,994	n/a	13,497	-	-
USA	B	7,691	B	11,346	B	14,386	B	14,907	n/a	25,310	B (2011)	14,270
Germany	B	1,410	B	10,482	B	13,255	B	13,406	n/a	18,164	C (2012)	17,163
Spain	B	104	B	523	B	10,168	B	10,621	n/a	10,702	B (2012)	10,501
Turkey	B R	5,868	B R	6,443	B R	8,740	B R	9,512	n/a	7,295	C (2011)	1,740
Israel	B R	25,921	B R	21,123	B R	9,328	B R	9,479	n/a	26,032	B (2005)	44,462
"Other South" <sup>4)</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	n/a	98,123	-	-
<b>EU 28</b>		<b>39,695</b>		<b>50,566</b>		<b>100,313</b>		<b>108,728</b>		<b>95,992</b>		<b>-</b>
<b>World</b>		<b>890,120</b>		<b>913,777</b>		<b>734,065</b>		<b>738,733</b>		<b>1,058,300</b>		<b>767,489</b>

Type of data: foreign-born population (B), foreign citizens (C), UNHCR refugees (R), not available (n/a)

Sources: UN DESA, 2013, World Bank, 2010, Migration Policy Center, 2013, own calculations

1) UN DESA, 2013. Including Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Estimates refer to 1 July of the reference year, namely 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2013.

2) World Bank, 2010. Data based on the 2008 revision of UN DESA's data on International Migrant Stock and Ratha and Shaw (2007). Latest available data as of 1 October 2010. No indication whether Abkhazia or South Ossetia are included.

3) Migration Policy Center, 2013, based on national data. No data given for Armenia, Uzbekistan or Cyprus. No indication whether Abkhazia or South Ossetia are included.

4) Ratha and Shaw distribute "unidentified" migrants, i.e. those for which the country of origin or destination is unknown, between countries. This produces estimates for Georgian emigrants in unspecified countries, e.g. if someone does not or cannot provide information on his/her country of birth or citizenship.

739,000 emigrants born in Georgia currently live abroad (16% in relation to the Georgian population in mid-2013).

According to this source, Ukraine has the second-largest group of Georgian-born emigrants, around 68,000 in 2013, followed by Greece (38,000), Armenia (37,000) and Uzbekistan (23,000). With these populations, it is also not known to which extent they consist of ethnic minorities born in Georgia. The number for Greece is likely to be higher still, as the estimate is based on citizenship data and naturalised immigrants as well as unregistered persons (e.g. domestic workers) are not covered. Israel used to be one of the major countries of destination, however, the size of the Georgian emigrant population decreased by more than 50% from 2000 to 2010, the most recent estimate being 9,000 emigrants. Almost all of both the ethnic Greek and Jewish population in Georgia left in the early 1990s (Labadze & Tukhashvili, 2012: 12). Cyprus, the USA, Germany, Spain, and most recently Turkey have overtaken Israel as destination countries in the last 25 years.

EU Member States have become more important as destinations since 1990. While around 40,000 Georgian resided in one of today's 28 EU countries in 1990, this number had almost tripled to around 109,000 residents by 2013. After the Russian Federation, the European Union therefore counts the second-largest population of Georgian emigrants today. Excluding EU countries and the Russian Federation, most emigrants from Georgia currently live in former Soviet republics – Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova (81,000), followed by Western Asia (61,000 in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Israel) and Central Asia (33,000 in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan).

Georgian emigrants as defined by the country of birth criterion may not necessarily or even primarily be ethnic Georgians. The large shifts in the ethnic composition of the Georgian population due to emigration waves among ethnic minorities (Komakhia, 2008) point to a diverse group of migrants. Large numbers of ethnic Russians and Armenians, Greeks and Ukrainians have left Georgia since its independence, and these four countries show the largest numbers of emigrants from Georgia today, according to UN DESA's estimates.

When comparing the population changes according to Georgian statistics since 1990 and emigrant stocks abroad according to the UN, a large discrepancy is visible. For example, the cumulative net migration loss in Georgia between 1990 and 2000 amounted to around 855,000 persons (see annex, table 3), yet the estimate for global stocks of emigrants from Georgia only increased by 24,000 persons. Assuming that a difference of this magnitude between independent sources cannot be due to inaccuracies alone, presumably a large part of migrants from Georgia during this period were not born in the country but rather were immigrants in Georgia<sup>26</sup>, and were therefore not counted in national censuses, registers, or surveys abroad as being born in Georgia. This also applies to the population decline between the 2002 and 2014 census (-640,000), likely due to emigration, and the absence of a corresponding increase in Georgian emigrants in international statistics. Lacking information on citizenship and country of birth in Georgian censuses before 2014, confirmation of this interpretation would require an in-depth analysis of national sources.

A more detailed analysis based on national migration statistics is needed for corroboration, more solid interpretations and to shed more light on inconsistencies between estimation methods.

#### **7.4. Characteristics of Emigration from Georgia**

"Georgia faced a large-scale emigration during the period following independence and the break-up of the former Soviet Union in 1991: thousands of people migrated in a search of high-wage employment opportunities. Despite the fact that mainly unemployed persons were emigrating at the time and the pressure at the labour market was mitigated, a mass level of emigration negatively affected the labor market as it lost qualified labor force." (Building Migration Partnerships, 2011: 92).

At the same time, Georgian emigrants seem to be responding to existing labour market needs in receiving countries. Studies demonstrate that there is a broad differentiation between countries in terms of a gendered demand for labour. Greece and Italy as receiving countries mainly attract female emigrants, while males prefer to emigrate to France, Israel, the USA, the UK, or Ireland (IOM, 2009).

A recent ICMPD report (2014) about Georgian diaspora and migrant communities in Germany, Greece and Turkey points to widespread brain waste among migrants working abroad (see also chapter 8).

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<sup>26</sup> Those born in other former Soviet republics and moving to Georgia before the breakup of the USSR are from today's perspective counted as international migrants – but were internal migrants at the time.

The feminisation of emigration from Georgia is a relatively new trend which was first discussed based on the research in Daba Tianeti, a small mountainous region in the north-eastern part of Georgia (Zurabishvili & Zurabishvili, 2010). In line with the higher share of female migrants visible in recent migration statistics, the findings of the Tianeti study describe the characteristics of certain settlements in Georgia, from where more females than males emigrate. The major reasons for this were found to be a specific demand for female-dominated jobs, and less scrutiny from the immigration authorities in the destination countries towards female emigrants. Major destination countries for female migrants were Greece and Italy, and to a lesser extent, Israel (Zurabishvili & Zurabishvili, 2010), which provide women with opportunities for employment. Hofmann and Buckley (2013) argued that in a patriarchal society like Georgia, women still need to negotiate and reaffirm their roles as 'good' mothers or 'good' wives, since mainstream public discourse still views the emigration of women quite negatively.

## 7.5. Seeking International Protection

According to UNHCR data (UNHCR, 2014a) there were 6,740 recognised refugees from Georgia worldwide in 2013 (see table 19). The largest group of refugees were resident in France, followed by Austria, the Russian Federation, the USA, Canada, Germany and Sweden. Strikingly, the refugee population is to a large part distributed among EU and other European countries. Over the course of the last ten years, France has gradually replaced Germany as the primary country of residence. The number of Georgian refugees in the Russian Federation showed a marked rise in 2009, the year after the war over South Ossetia, followed by a decline starting in 2011. Figures for Ukraine show a sudden increase in 2007, to around 5,000 refugees, and an equally sudden decrease to 600 refugees in 2010. Total numbers for refugees from Georgia change accordingly over time. From below 7,000 in 2004 to 12,000 in 2007, the numbers peak in 2009, indicating a refugee movement out of the regions in Georgia affected by war. From 2010 until 2013, the total numbers gradually decline, most notably due to lower numbers in the Russian Federation, Germany and Ukraine, down to pre-2007 levels. General reasons for this decline could be return, naturalisation or the cessation of refugee status. Detailed interpretations for country-specific developments would require further research.

**Table 19. Georgian refugees abroad, top 10 countries, 2004 to 2013**

Country of residence	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
France	998	1,516	1,668	1,786	1,889	2,105	2,153	2,249	2,391	2,571
Austria	153	226	291	377	532	654	730	774	819	788
Russian Federation	238	119	120	205	670	2,329	2,478	1,900	1,404	762
USA	791	817	1,289	1,093	1,111	1,091	928	802	693	608
Canada	245	290	297	471	486	501	495	506	504	485
Germany	2,639	2,664	1,173	1,385	1,509	1,943	2,034	2,105	2,202	333
Sweden	77	96	106	139	148	165	173	177	170	158
Netherlands	713	693	467	366	282	216	173	146	117	111
Italy	41	41	41	55	65	89	84	89	90	110
Ukraine	86	81	80	5,079	5,076	5,079	571	568	66	63
Other countries	645	758	808	854	830	848	824	796	805	751
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,626</b>	<b>7,301</b>	<b>6,340</b>	<b>11,810</b>	<b>12,598</b>	<b>15,020</b>	<b>10,643</b>	<b>10,112</b>	<b>9,261</b>	<b>6,740</b>

Source: UNHCR, 2014a

Worldwide, there were 11,560 asylum seekers from Georgia in open asylum procedures at the end of 2013. The most asylum seekers were reported in Greece (4,764), Germany (2,449) and France (2,326). Here as well, EU and European countries are the main receiving countries (Canada and the USA each reported only around 100 asylum seekers from Georgia in 2013), while numbers in the Russian Federation are consistently and strikingly low, not exceeding 800 persons since 2000 (see table 20). The low number of refugees despite the high number of asylum seekers in Greece is

evidently connected with very low recognition rates. Data gaps in 2009, 2011 and 2012 for Greece are apparently owing to inconsistent national data, and would likely show an initial strong increase of asylum seekers from 2008 to 2010 and then a more gradual rise until 2013 (based on data of annual applications).

Neighbouring Turkey receives neither asylum seekers nor refugees from Georgia according to UNHCR data. Georgian passport holders are exempt from visas for 90 days when entering Turkey (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey, 2014), which provides the opportunity for transit to EU countries.

Starting in 2006, an increase in total asylum seekers from Georgia can be observed, reaching 7,200 persons in 2010, then declining and peaking again in 2013 (see table 20)<sup>27</sup>. The marked rise from 2012 to 2013 from 4,500 to 11,600 asylum seekers – more than a 100% increase – is mostly attributable to the data gap for Greece in 2012 and to a lesser extent to a doubling of the numbers in Germany and France.

Rather than the number of current asylum seekers, the number of applications filed during a year might be an indicator of the political and security situation in a country – and of migration flows. 12,559 asylum seekers from Georgia applied for asylum abroad in 2013. The number of new asylum seekers<sup>28</sup> from Georgia almost doubled from 2007 to 2008 (to 9,225) and increased again in 2009, peaking at 15,735 individuals. It is safe to assume that this was caused by the 2008 August war in South Ossetia. After 2009, the numbers of asylum seekers applying per year decreased to 10,200 in 2010 and 8,500 in 2011. A large increase can be seen in 2012, to a level close to that reached after the most recent war. Taking a closer look, these 14,100 new asylum applications were mostly filed in France (4,000), Poland (3,600) and Germany (1,400), notably more than in the previous year in each of these countries.

**Table 20. Georgian asylum seekers 2004 to 2013**

<b>Persons pending by country of residence</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Greece	114	86	-	470	758	-	3,594	-	-	4,764
Germany	167	547	326	174	247	495	439	455	1,163	2,449
France	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,137	2,326
Sweden	229	85	80	117	193	225	166	167	193	384
Austria	-	-	1,752	1375	1,350	1,188	643	410	326	322
Poland	22	7	2	4	51	349	586	378	339	191
Ireland	146	-	135	179	214	52	199	177	172	159
Switzerland	78	45	51	30	266	246	133	98	201	153
Latvia	1	-	1	-	15	10	-	109	99	145
Russian Federation	10	5	14	483	630	790	534	262	177	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,791</b>	<b>3,011</b>	<b>4,386</b>	<b>4,066</b>	<b>5,086</b>	<b>4,759</b>	<b>7,195</b>	<b>2,910</b>	<b>4,522</b>	<b>11,560</b>
<b>Persons applied during year (all countries)</b>	<b>11,673</b>	<b>9,312</b>	<b>5,382</b>	<b>5,513</b>	<b>9,225</b>	<b>15,735</b>	<b>10,195</b>	<b>8,501</b>	<b>14,094</b>	<b>12,559</b>

Source: UNHCR, 2014a

<sup>27</sup> Figures on active asylum seekers are not sufficient for interpretations about refugee movements or populations as they depend on the number of concluded asylum procedures and their timeliness. A country may receive a large volume of applications and issue decisions promptly, leading to a low number of active asylum seekers, and/or issue a large share of negative decisions, leading to a low number of refugees. Similarly, the total number of asylum seekers is affected by backlogs in procedures as well as recent refugee flows.

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR gives total numbers of new applications including all levels of procedures – first instance, appeal, administrative review, etc. A person might thus be counted more than once during a year or in consecutive years.

Since 2000, the total recognition rate worldwide for refugees from Georgia has varied between 7% and 22% (UNHCR, 2014a, not shown). The year 2009 stands out through the highest number and rate (22%) of positive decisions, most of which resulted in subsidiary protection status or other forms of national protection status<sup>29</sup> (1,936), much fewer in refugee status (316). These consistently low acceptance rates combined with consistent refugee flows can be read as a (temporary) migration strategy to circumvent the lack of legal channels to migrate to EU countries. Recognition rates in 2012 were low for most countries (see table 21): 13% in Switzerland, 2% in France, 0.3% in Greece and 0% in Poland, where a report from 2009 states that a large part of applicants move on during the procedure without informing the authorities (Thomsen, 2009), with the Russian Federation being the exception with an overall recognition rate of 34%. The main countries of destination for asylum seekers from Georgia in 2012 were France, Poland, and Germany. Entering the EU via Poland means comparatively low costs for those leaving Georgia, while France and Germany might be attractive due to relatively high recognition rates in the recent past (Thomsen, 2009).

Analysing the number of refugees, asylum seekers, persons applying during a given year, and recognition rates jointly, the following observations can be made (see table 21): France and Germany as destination countries have a similar profile with an established and growing group of refugees, Poland with its large number of applicants but mostly otherwise closed cases appears to be a transit country. Greece stands out due to its large number of unprocessed applications on the one hand and the high share of rejections on the other hand. The above-average recognition rate in the Russian Federation and fluctuating refugee numbers over time would require a closer look in order to identify the specifics of the refugee population (possibly ethnic Russians) and the procedures. Among the top 10 countries (regarding the number of persons filing an application in 2012), the Russian Federation is the only non-EU/EFTA country and the only country that neighbours Georgia.

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<sup>29</sup> Referred to in table 21 by UNHCR as complementary protection status.

**Table 21. Asylum applications, refugee status determination and overview of Georgian refugees in 2012**

Country of residence	Number of refugees	Asylum seekers (pending at end of 2012)	Level of application procedure <sup>1)</sup>	Persons applied during year	Decisions during 2012					Total recognition rate (%) <sup>2)</sup>
					Positive decisions (convention status)	Positive decisions (Complementary protection status)	Rejected	Other-wise closed	Total number of decisions	
France	2,391	1,137	AR + FI + RA	3,995	110	42	2,393	-	2,545	6.0
Poland	14	339	AR + FI + RA	3,577	-	-	654	2,966	3,620	0.0
Germany	2,202	1,163	NA + RA	1,430	4	3	262	394	663	2.6
Greece	31	4,409 <sup>3)</sup>	FI	893	-	3	1,116	502	1,621	0.3
Sweden	170	193	FI	748	-	1	158	194	353	0.6
Switzerland	85	201	AR + FI	715	2	2	26	659	806	13.3
Belgium	26	120	FI + RA	497	4	5	496	57	562	1.8
Russian Federation	1,404	177	FI + TA	450	182	-	353	-	535	34.0
Austria	819	326	FA	300	27	31	321	37	416	8.9
Netherlands	117	139	FI	226	-	2	233	-	235	0.9
<b>Total<sup>4)</sup></b>	<b>9,261</b>	<b>8,931</b>		<b>14,094</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>6,779</b>	<b>5,296</b>	<b>12,708</b>	<b>7.1</b>

1) Level: NA=New Applications; FI=First Instance decisions; AR=Administrative Review decisions; RA=Repeat/reopened Applications; FA=First instance and Appeal; TA=Temporary Asylum.

2) Total recognition rate: Recognised plus Other positive divided by total of Recognised, Other positive and Rejected.

3) Own estimation; the number of asylum seekers pending for Greece and the total differ accordingly from table 20.

4) In countries with more than one level in the procedure (first instance, appeal, etc.), the figures for both procedures have been added up. As a result, appeal cases may have been counted more than once (once at first instance and once on appeal).

A dash ('-') indicates that the value is zero or not available.

Sources: UNHCR, 2013: 103, 111f, UNHCR, 2014a, own calculations

## 8. Migration and Development

### 8.1. Introduction

The field of Migration and Development has been gaining interest for several decades now across the world and Georgia has not been an exception. Development, in the context of migration, is mentioned in the Migration Strategy of Georgia for 2013-2015, however, there is no specific chapter dedicated to this topic. Taking into consideration the migration processes and changing trends, the growing understanding of the positive impact of migration and the general wish to enhance this positive impact and mitigate negative effects, the Georgian government should face this challenge and engage more deeply in analysis of the links between migration and development in Georgia.

Prior to discussing the current state of affairs with regard to migration and development in Georgia, it is useful to recap what the migration and development debate is all about, particularly as in Georgia the impact of migration is often measured solely in terms of remittances, while other potential impacts on long-term development are not analysed, or are even neglected. As Haas (2007) indicates, there is a lack of debate on the meaning of development in the context of migration; that is why frequently more attention is dedicated to income indicators, rather than the impact of migration on society.

The debate on how migration affects development mainly concentrates on the potential positive effects of remittances and skills transfer. However, some sceptics argue that migration could result in brain drain, leaving fewer opportunities for development, while at the same time remittances contribute to increased consumption, thus driving prices up and affecting the purchasing power of the wider population negatively.

The report *Development on the Move: Measuring and Optimising Migration's Economic and Social Impacts in Georgia*, prepared by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers and the International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (Tchaidze & Torosyan, 2010) indicates that even though the impact of migration seems to be rather mixed in terms of development, the overall effect is still positive. This overall positive effect can be explained by several findings of the study. Remittances represent a substantial income for the country. In addition, remittance recipients in rural Georgia are less likely to have family members in poor health. Emigration itself positively affects employment, reducing the number of unemployed in the country. Yet at the same time, receiving remittances does not affect employment chances for family members left behind, compared to non-remittance recipients.

This chapter will embark on assessing the evidence with regard to migration and development and will look at migration and development from various angles, covering the existing empirical evidence concerning the impact on the Georgian economy and society.

### 8.2. Economic Aspects of Migration and Development in Georgia

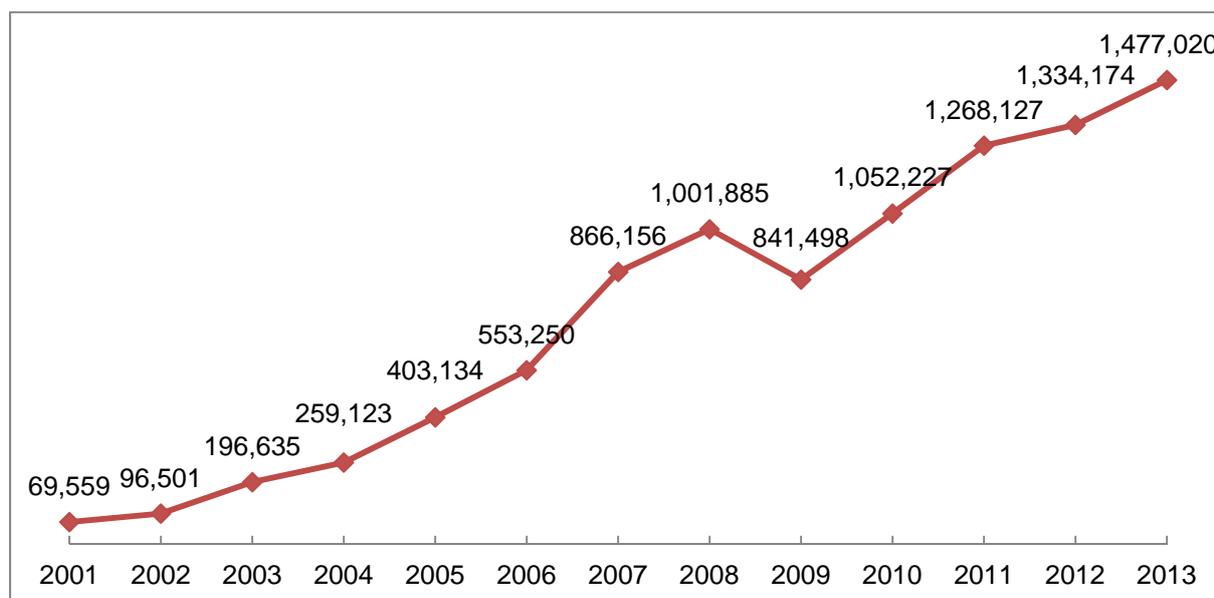
Economic prosperity is considered one of the measures of development, and understanding the effects of migration on economic factors is essential. Moreover, economic prosperity and migration seem to be mutually reinforcing – if we consider that migration supports development in the sending country, and that people require substantial financial resources in order to migrate, this means that if people emigrate and support the development of the sending country through remittances and other means, recipient household income and the economy overall will be positively affected. This in turn leads to more people being financially capable of emigrating, thus re-starting/continuing the development cycle.

In the context of Georgia, understanding the economic impact of migration is particularly interesting, as 73% of Georgian migrants abroad and 61% of returned migrants indicated financial pressure at home as a main cause of emigration (Tchaidze & Torosyan, 2010). It is estimated that approximately 8-11% of the Georgian population has emigrated abroad for labour motives (Labadze & Tukhashvili, 2013). Remittances have been dubbed a lifeline for households in Georgia and one of the reliable sources of foreign currency for the country; however, understanding the real impact, looking at official data as well as data collected through different surveys, can be valuable.

### 8.3. Effects of Remittances on Development

Unlike major remittance-receiving countries, where remittances constitute up to more than 50% of GDP, Georgia cannot be considered a remittance-dependent country, since the share of remittances in GDP during the last years has been less than 10%, and in 2012 constituted 8.4% of Georgian GDP (MRA, 2013a: 64). Although in absolute terms the amount of remittances sent to Georgia has been increasing quite steadily during the last decade – from 70 million USD in 2001 to almost 1.5 billion USD in 2013 (graph 4), this did not result in a comparable increase in share of GDP, since starting from 2004, Georgia has experienced economic growth, and the Georgian GDP also increased from around 3.2 billion USD in 2001 to 16.1 billion USD in 2012 (GeoStat, 2014a).

**Graph 4. Remittance inflow to Georgia in US Dollars (thousands)**



Source: National Bank of Georgia, 2014a

Since 2000, the amount of remittances to Georgia has increased by a factor larger than 23. This steep increase in the volume of officially transferred remittances can be partly explained by the improvement and development of the banking sector in Georgia – also in rural areas, from where a significant share of emigrants originates – as well as the proliferation of money transfer organisations. As well as this, Georgians started to migrate to countries where they could mainly rely on and use official money transfer services rather than unofficial money transfer channels. At the same time, competition between money transfer organisations resulted in a gradual decrease in transfer fees and the improvement of services, thus making using official money transfer organisations more appealing among emigrants. As a result, some remittances which had previously been sent via informal channels were sent via the formal banking system.

As graph 4 shows, the only period when the amount of remittances decreased in Georgia was in 2009, presumably as a result of the Global Economic Crisis. But even then, remittances demonstrated a remarkable recovery capacity and already slightly exceeded 2008's amount in 2010.

The mean annual growth of remittance inflows was larger than 30% between 2001 and 2013. Particularly high growth rates can be observed in the years 2001 to 2007, with mean annual remittance inflow growth rates reaching 48%. This can be partly attributed to the fact that prior to the early 2000s, the majority of remittances, particularly from the Russian Federation, were sent through unofficial channels (not covered by data from the National Bank) and considering that over 50% of remittances was coming from the Russian Federation, this would be left mostly unaccounted for. There are a few studies discussing the changes which happened in the business of remittance "formalisation". As Zurabishvili (2012) suggests, this formalisation can partly be attributed to the rapid development of the banking sector in Georgia, and the diversification of money transfer companies,

reducing the costs of remitting and bringing companies geographically closer to remittance recipients (i.e. opening new branches in rural areas), and thus improving accessibility.

Not surprisingly, the countries with the highest concentration of Georgian emigrants are also the countries from where the biggest shares of remittances are sent. Georgian emigrants in the Russian Federation still send the biggest share of remittances. However, relative to the shares of remittances from other countries, the share from the Russian Federation has slowly been decreasing. Consequently, the share of remittances from other countries such as the USA is increasing.

In the period between 2000 and 2013, the top three remitting countries were the Russian Federation, the USA and Greece (see table 22), which are also among the main countries of interest for Georgian emigrants. However, it is worth noting that sending countries have been diversifying; this trend has been particularly observed after 2009, when the share of remittances from the Russian Federation fell by 9% (from 63% to 54%) and the share of remittances coming from Western countries increased. This can be considered a positive sign in terms of remittance-sending patterns and diversification, particularly as the findings by Gerber and Torosyan (2010) suggest that emigrants residing in the USA and Western Europe are more likely to remit.

**Table 22. Remittances to Georgia, 2000 to 2013**

Sending country	2000-2004		2005-2008		2009-2013	
	Remittances (in thousand USD)	% of total	Remittances (in thousand USD)	% of total	Remittances (in thousand USD)	% of total
Russian Federation	229,860	34	1,787,477	63	3,210,029	54
USA	132,986	19	281,621	10	367,665	6
Greece	22,347	3	105,595	4	666,438	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>685,088</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,824,424</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,973,046</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: National Bank of Georgia, 2014a

The diversification of sending countries can be considered a positive development, as remittance recipients will be less exposed to a possible shock in any single economy. As Melkadze (2012) indicates in his thesis, evidence shows that remittances to Georgia are highly sensitive to unemployment rates in the remittance-sending countries (a 1% increase in unemployment causes a 1% decrease in remittances from that country).

To understand the **impact of remittances** on the Georgian population, it is essential to understand their use. As Gugushvili (2013) notes, since the 1990s until today, around 80% of remittances have been spent on consumables, thus implying that the greatest economic effects of remittances should be expected in the retail and manufacturing industries. These two industries, along with financial intermediation and construction are considered to be the biggest contributors to economic growth in Georgia from 2000 onwards. Referring to the argument of development sceptics that spending on consumables drives inflation, interestingly, no such effect on inflation was observed in those years when remittances were growing substantially in Georgia. This in turn can be attributed to a combination of factors: in the years when the inflow of remittances was increasing, the Georgian currency was strengthening against the US Dollar, thus reducing the purchasing power of dollar-denominated remittances. At the same time, despite the appreciation of the Georgian Lari, importers did not reduce the price of imported products acquired in the foreign currency. Under such circumstances, one would expect the demand for consumables to more or less remain the same; however, remittances helped smooth the effect of currency appreciation and there was no reduction in the price of imported goods (which make up a substantial part of all consumables in Georgia). To further show the impact remittances can have on economic growth, Gugushvili (2013) refers to the study by Atamanov et al. (2008), which concludes that without remittances, private consumption and the GDP growth rate would have decreased by 25% and 13% respectively in 2004.

When it comes to the characteristics of the remittance-receiving and non-receiving households, as Gugushvili (2013: 14) states, a certain pattern can be observed: “Once again, the probability of receiving remittances is negatively associated with residency in rural areas. If non-recipient rural households make up 46.3 percent of the overall settlement distribution, the rural settlements’ share among recipient households is 37.1 percent”. At the same time, there are more young (18-24 years) than old (50-64 years) remittance receivers; among remittance receivers, the share of well-educated individuals is higher than among non-receivers.

Remittance recipients in Georgia act similarly to remittance recipients worldwide, i.e. spend a large share thereof to cover everyday expenses, rather than making investments in various types of production – so called ‘productive’ investments (EBRD, 2007; Zurabishvili, 2008; IOM, 2009; Zurabishvili & Zurabishvili, 2013). However, when it comes to expenditure, quite a big share is spent on education and health, which could be considered an investment in human capital, and which is not less important than the so-called ‘productive’ investments. Regarding investments *per se*, money is mostly invested in real estate (purchase or repair). In some cases, the real estate investments are made not in the original place of emigration, but in the capital city, Tbilisi. Investments in start-ups, in the development of existing businesses, or in agriculture are rather rare (EBRD, 2007; Zurabishvili, 2008; IOM, 2009). This is partly due to the lack of investment opportunities in the receiving communities, or lack of business skills among the migrants and remittance-receiving household members (IOM, 2009).

In Georgia, as in many remittance-receiving countries, remittances do have a short-term poverty-alleviating effect – households receiving remittances tend to be less indebted and to have a better economic situation than households not receiving remittances (Zurabishvili, 2008; IOM, 2009; Gugushvili, 2013; Zurabishvili & Zurabishvili, 2013). However, if the remittance sender or the remittance-receiving household are unable to ensure the inflow of income from sources other than remittances, when and if the remittances stop, the household may end up in the same economic situation as before the emigration of the family member. Remittances do play an important role in stimulating consumption and trade, as well as in the construction sector (Gugushvili, 2013), as a result of their multiplier effect. However, as is the case worldwide, their development potential remains a topic for further research.

Remittances, besides being substantial contributions for the receiving households, are also a source of foreign currency. This becomes even more important considering Georgia’s growing negative trade balance. Remittances, denominated in foreign currencies, have represented on average 20% of net external trade (National Bank of Georgia, 2014a; GeoStat, 2014b), thus helping to smooth the impact of foreign currency shortage.

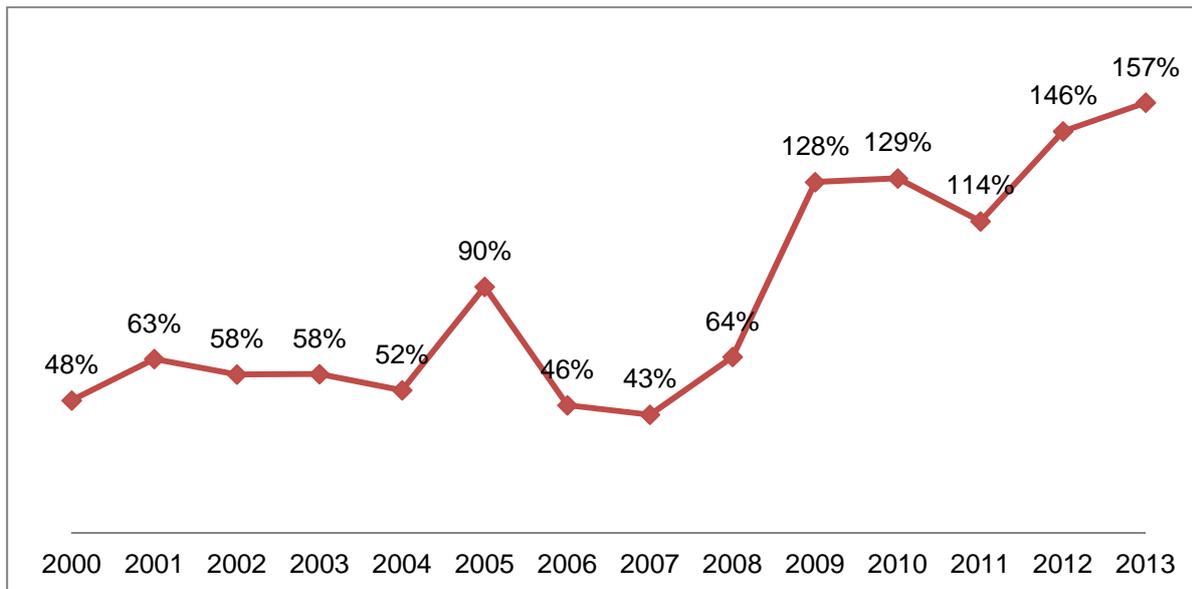
Remittances are not the only source of foreign currency and financial income. The media and politicians have both debated the importance of **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** to the economy, while remittances have not been mentioned with the same merit. Between 2008 and 2009, remittances have outgrown FDI in absolute terms (see graph 5). After the 2008 war and the financial crisis, both remittances and FDI contracted. However, remittances quickly rebounded, while FDI has been left lagging behind.

At the same time, FDI can have a long-term impact on development, while remittances – due to the nature of their spending – can show effects more quickly, thus having a multiplier effect on the economy and contributing to higher growth rates.

As Gerber and Torosyan (2010) suggest in their study, remittances mostly have a positive effect on the economic situation of families. Moreover, they indicate that remittances foster social capital formation, as people in Georgia tend to support other non-remittance recipient households. They conclude that remittances have encouraged emigrants to maintain ties with the country of origin. The study also indicates that the overall effect of migration on development is positive; particularly on long-term economic development.

Georgia, besides being a sending country, has been receiving a larger number of immigrants since the early 2000s. An increase of outward remittances might be due to remittances sent by immigrants to their home countries and/or Georgian households supporting family members (e.g. students) abroad. Even though the **outflow of remittances** is rather low and fluctuates compared to inflows, the trend still shows growth over a decade; outward remittances increased almost fifteen-fold between the years 2000 and 2013.

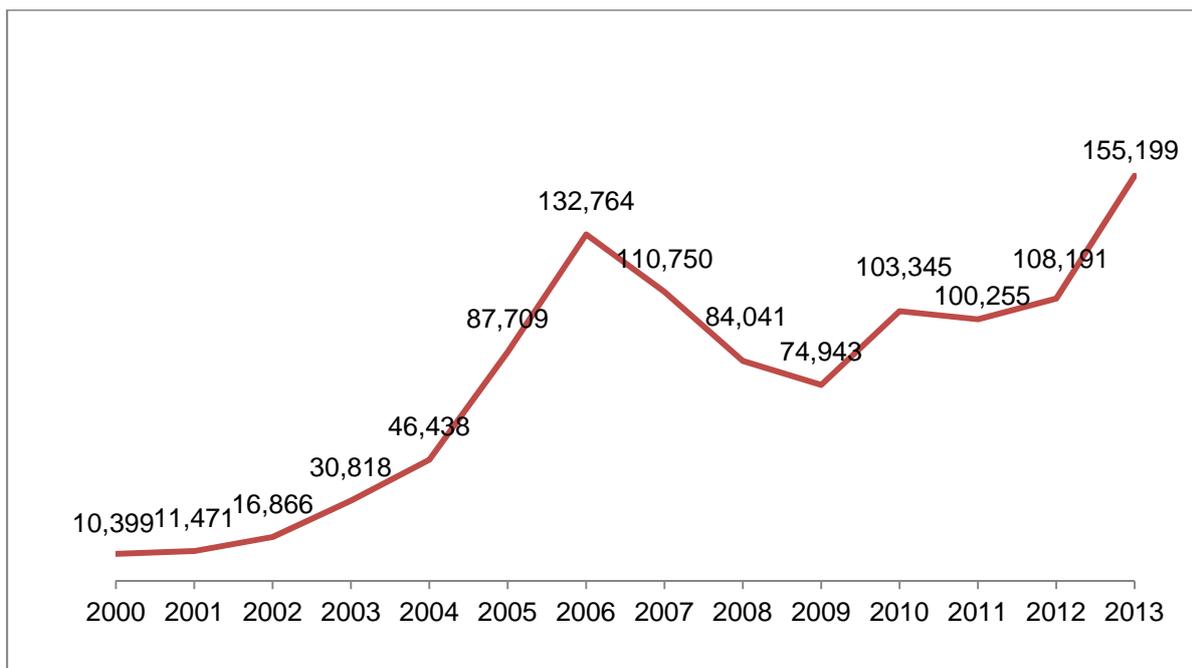
**Graph 5. Remittances as a percentage of FDI**



Source: GeoStat, 2014c, National Bank of Georgia, 2014a

As can be seen in graph 6, outward remittances developed in three phases. The first phase can be observed in the years 2001-2006 with an average growth of 55% per year, followed by a phase of three years of decline in outward remittances (on average by 17%), rebounding again in the years from 2009 onwards (the third phase) with a 21% mean annual growth. An interesting picture emerges when looking at the destination countries for remittances, the Russian Federation being both the primary remittance-sending and -receiving country, followed by Ukraine and Greece between 2000 and 2013 (see table 23). The contraction in outward remittances in the years 2006-2009 is mainly attributable to a decline in remittances to the Russian Federation (not shown).

**Graph 6. Outward remittances in US Dollars (thousands)**



Source: National Bank of Georgia, 2014a

**Table 23. Remittances from Georgia, 2000 to 2013**

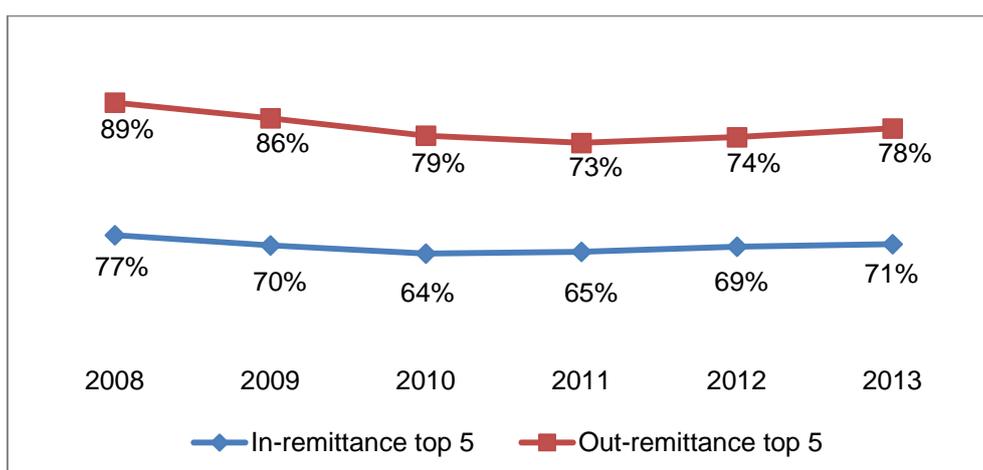
Receiving country	2000-2004		2005-2008		2009-2013	
	Remittances (in thousand USD)	% of total	Remittances (in thousand USD)	% of total	Remittances (in thousand USD)	% of total
Russian Federation	48,447	42	226,273	54	183,778	34
Ukraine	8,940	8	44,366	11	90,339	17
Greece	1,755	2	4,940	1	55,698	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>115,992</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>415,304</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>541,934</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: National Bank of Georgia, 2014a

Understanding the impact of outward remittances requires further data on remittance senders (e.g. how many of them are immigrants), however, due to Georgia's open door policy, data on the purpose of visit and stay of foreign citizens in Georgia remain unrecorded, making it difficult to trace the sources or the impact of outward remittances on the local economy.

The growth of remittances, besides directly affecting the economy, is also expected to affect the money transfer business and due to pressure from remitters, the cost of money transfers is likely to decrease. The National Bank of Georgia provides data on both inward and outward remittances, by **transfer systems**, thus providing an opportunity to understand market concentration. Data from 2008-2013 shows that the number of the most frequently used money transfer companies operating in Georgia has gone up from 13 to 15, however, the data on market share indicate that the market for money transfers is rather concentrated, with the five top companies accounting for over 70% of market share in 2013 (see graph 7). Differences in market share do exist between inward remittances and outward remittances, with the market for inward remittances being slightly less concentrated. This difference can be attributed to the higher pressure for remittance senders to Georgia to diversify money channels, which can also develop in the same manner for outward remittances.

**Graph 7. Market concentration for remittances, 2008-2013**



Source: National Bank of Georgia, 2014b

As is the case worldwide, the amount of **unofficially transferred remittances** to Georgia remains a subject of speculation and estimation, but there is no doubt that despite the development of banking services and the relative decrease in money transfer fees, some remittances are still delivered to their

recipients using unofficial money transfer channels. Not surprisingly, a study conducted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in 2006 in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova confirmed that in the case of all three countries, quite a significant share of remittances was sent in an informal way, through friends or couriers (EBRD, 2006, 2007). In the case of Georgia, this share of unofficially sent remittances was about one-third of all money transfers.

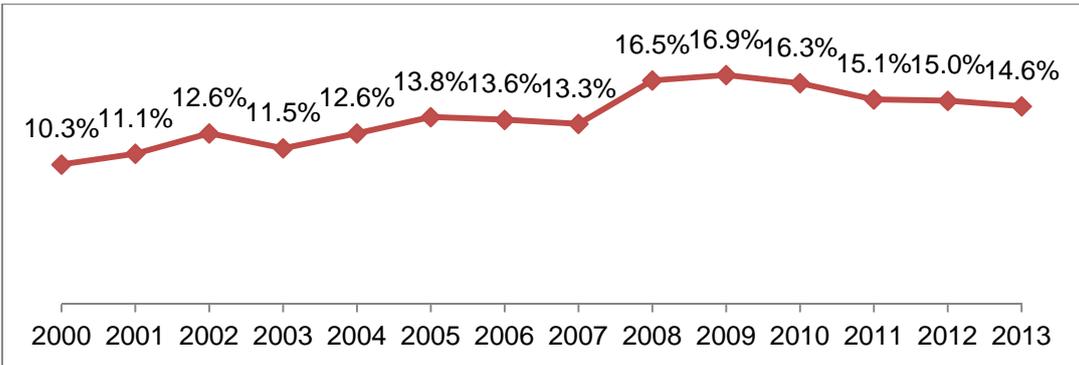
Another study conducted in a small migrant sending community in Georgia, Daba Tianeti, in 2006 and 2008 demonstrated that the share of remittances sent via unofficial channels decreased within two years from 57% (in 2006) to 27% (in 2008) (IOM, 2009: 19f). As illustrated by these studies, the decrease was mainly caused by the fact that between 2006 and 2008 the local bank branch acquired the necessary equipment to be able to process the money transfer operations, and thus the inhabitants of the community did not need to travel to Tbilisi or a nearby district centre in order to be able to receive remittances.

### 8.4. Migration, Development and Unemployment

The contribution of migration to unemployment has been a debated topic in Georgia. Developmentalists argue that emigration has helped to keep unemployment rates lower and that it positively affects the employability of migrants as well as their family members, while sceptics argue that remittances have made family members left behind reluctant to accept unattractive jobs. The unemployment rate is naturally expected to decrease with labour emigration, due to persons previously resident in Georgia and unemployed departing for employment, thus reducing the number of unemployed in the country.

Graph 8 shows the unemployment rates from 2000 to 2013 and indicates growing unemployment rates from 2000 to 2009 and a continuous decrease since 2009. From 10.3% in 2000, the unemployment rate increased steadily to 16.9% in 2009 – with temporary counter movements in 2003 as well as from 2005 to 2007. The sharpest increase is visible from 2007 to 2008, likely to be attributable to the war over South Ossetia (due to destruction and displacement). From the peak in 2009, the rate had gradually declined to 14.6% by 2013. In the absence of comprehensive data on immigration and emigration before 2012 (see section 7.1.), analysis of the correlation between the unemployment rate and emigration flows is not possible.

**Graph 8. Georgia’s unemployment rate, 2000-2013**



Source: GeoStat, 2014d

Expert opinion refers to a two-way impact of migration on employment. Gerber and Torosyan (2010), citing data obtained from the Georgia on the Move dataset, point to evidence that remittances facilitate urban unemployment. This reinforces the opinion of other experts who note that remittance-receiving family members who are left behind become more selective when seeking jobs, as they can cope with a longer period of unemployment because of the financial safety provided through remittances. Citing the same data set as Gerber and Torosyan, the *Development on the Move* report indicates that remittances do not seem to have a significant impact on labour force participation (Tchaidze & Torosyan, 2010). Moreover, having a family member abroad is viewed as a more positive development in terms of unemployment, as they are expected to be employed elsewhere, as

compared to returned migrants. It is frequently suggested that remittance recipient families are reluctant to accept unattractive jobs, as they usually have more stability in terms of income. Thus, the argument that the emigration of a family member is related to a lower likelihood of remaining family members being employed does not seem to be valid based on the *Development on the Move* study, which concludes that there was no significant impact observed on employability when compared to the non-migrant families.

To conclude, an understanding of the positive impact of migration on unemployment can be partly achieved by the simple arithmetic of deducting labour force who has emigrated for labour purposes from the number of unemployed persons left behind. The lack of a further positive impact, particularly in terms of remittances, could be, as noted by Gugushvili (2013), due to the skills mismatch in the Georgian labour market, which cannot be alleviated by remittances in any direction in the short run. That being said, it would be interesting to look at the impact of migration on skills formation to understand the long-term impact on the labour market.

### 8.5. Migration and Skills Formation

Skills mismatch is considered one of the causes of unemployment in the Georgian labour market. Taking this into consideration, one of the positive effects of migration is that emigrants are able to acquire and develop skills in demand in their country of origin. In Georgia, there is a long-standing debate over whether emigration has substantially drained Georgia of skilled people. In light of the high unemployment rate in Georgia, brain waste (also due to de-qualification) would be the consequence, if people do not emigrate. Looking at brain drain and brain waste as alternatives from this perspective, (temporary) brain drain might be the better solution.

Remittance recipients spend on average 66 GEL more on education (Tchaidze & Torosyan, 2010) than households which do not receive remittances; however, there is no evidence that they acquire skills which could help them find employment in the local market. Moreover, as Chankseliani (2013) indicates in the study, even though absolute expenditure on education has increased, the relative share of household expenditure has remained at 4% throughout 2001-2011. The same conclusions are made by Dermendzhieva (2011) when analysing data from the Caucasus Barometer from the early 2000s.

The study *Development on the Move* (Tchaidze & Torosyan, 2010) has found differences in education and skills acquired while in emigration based on the distinction of rural and urban residential areas. Skills development is most widespread among emigrants from the capital and less likely among emigrants from other urban areas or rural areas (see table 24). There is also a difference in the type of skills obtained abroad, tertiary education and work-related skills being the most prominent among emigrants from the capital, while work-related skills dominate among emigrants from other urban and rural areas. These differences may be the result of the varying profiles and education backgrounds of emigrants, as well as potentially more opportunities for and better informed decisions by emigrants from urban areas, particularly the capital, as compared to emigrants from rural settlements.

**Table 24. Skills obtained during emigration according to type of settlement**

Skills type	Rural area	Urban area (excluding Tbilisi)	Tbilisi
Work-related skills	10%	25%	25%
Tertiary education	1%	8%	27%
Primary & secondary education	2%	6%	4%

Source: Tchaidze & Torosyan, 2010

The European Training Foundation (ETF) carried out a survey of returned migrants in 2011/2012 which showed that the key reason for emigration for all education levels was a better quality of life – be it in terms of higher pay or finding employment (see table 25).

**Table 25. Reason for emigration by level of education**

Reason	High education	Intermediate education	Low education
To improve standard of living	42%	38%	53%
Have no job/cannot find one	30%	42%	32%

Source: European Training Foundation, 2013

With regard to brain waste, another set of interesting findings are provided by the ETF survey. It indicates that having emigrated, people with the highest education are less likely to find a job which corresponds to their educational level than people with lower education, which indicates brain waste in the highest educated group (see table 26).

Working in a position which actually required a higher education level may indicate the acquisition of new skills, assuming this entails the necessity to develop skills either on the job or by undertaking further education parallel to work. However, the share of returned migrants reporting this is rather small (1% to 3%).

**Table 26. Type of work performed by level of education**

Statement	High education	Intermediate education	Low education
I worked below my education level	69%	40%	13%
My work and education level corresponded fully	23%	54%	83%
My work normally required more than the education level I had	2%	1%	3%

Source: European Training Foundation, 2013

Returned migrants who are employed are paid higher salaries compared to non-migrants (Tchaidze & Torosyan, 2010), which might indicate the development of valuable skills. However, to understand the impact of migration on skills formation, understanding the local labour market and the particular skills which have been developed while abroad is essential.

The composition of age groups is also very interesting in terms of skills formation. An IOM study (2003) indicated that labour migrants from Georgia are younger than the general population. 41% of emigrants are under the age of 30. Germany is one of the key destination countries for young emigrants, where they can both study and work. This can be of dual benefit: improved income and skills gained (academic as well as practical).

With regard to brain drain/brain gain, the survey carried out by GeoStat in 2008 showed that most emigrants are working-age educated people (GeoStat, 2009). This does not necessarily indicate that brain drain has occurred. One of the key problems of the Georgian labour market is the lack of match between skills and market demands. Brain waste is thus unavoidable, through being unemployed or being employed in a different sector, causing de-qualification or a change in skillset.

Labadze and Tukhashvili (2013) argue in their report that despite fears about brain drain, migrants are acquiring more skills abroad and once these skills are developed and opportunities in the local markets are available, opportunities for return will arise. They also cite as an example the fact that key figures in the government, NGOs, etc. are people who have received a Western education. This may appear as a very positive impact of emigration on development. However, this may in fact be widening the gap and reinforcing the lack of fairness in the local job market, as returned migrants are preferred to non-migrants due to their foreign education. The study *Labour Market and Return Migrant Reintegration in Georgia* (Tukhashvili et al., 2012) showed that 21% of returned migrants indicated that working abroad played a major role in the successful development of their careers after returning.

A discussion about the inflow of foreign labour to meet the demand of specific skills is basically impossible, as there are no data available on the number of labour immigrants, their skills and occupations in Georgia.

## **8.6. Migration, Development and Inequality**

One of the key indicators of the development of a society is the reduction of social inequality, which is relatively large in Georgia. This part will analyse economic inequality and how migration can affect it positively or negatively. Remittances provide a significant source of revenue for a large number of households in Georgia (see section 8.3.). However, remittances do not necessarily help to even out inequality. As Gugushvili (2013) indicates, younger and wealthier people are more likely to receive remittances than older and poorer people. Gugushvili highlights that this growing gap caused by remittances has been reflected in social policies since 2004, which have concentrated on the poorest and the elderly population.

Regions of Georgia with a higher number of emigrants experience lower poverty rates, compared to regions with a lower number of emigrants. This can be explained by the fact that emigration is related to the availability of financial resources to emigrate in the first place. Therefore, regions from which a larger population has emigrated were already better off initially compared to regions from where people did not manage to emigrate. Therefore, emigration and remittances can contribute to increasing inequality. Moreover, as Gugushvili (2013) notes, remittances even contribute to increased inequality within regions, as remittance recipient households are better situated compared to non-recipient households. The same is argued by Goff and Salomone (2013: 16), who state that the “recent evolution of migrant composition towards a higher share of skilled workers, coming mostly from the richer households, could prevent the potential poverty-reducing effect of remittances and induce an increase in income inequality”.

## **8.7. Social and Cultural Aspects of Migration and Development in Georgia**

The economic aspects of migration and development have been identified as essential as they can lead to economic prosperity. However, the social and cultural aspects of migration and development require separate attention, particularly as economic development alone does not automatically or necessarily translate into positive developments on the social front. Wellbeing cannot be determined solely by increased income but, as Haas (2007) notes, wellbeing is rather increased freedom of choice and participation in public debates. He also cites Sen (1999), who goes even further, arguing that the litmus test for development theorists is not the growth of income *per se*, but the increase in the capabilities of people to control their own lives and even though economic development can have a direct influence on the latter, it is not automatic.

## **8.8. The Impact of Migration on Overall Health and Population Ageing**

Healthcare is one of the largest social expenditures governments have to finance. Expenditure increases when a population ages and preventive measures in the health sector are not taken. Remittance recipient households have higher healthcare expenditures (on average 221 GEL per year) compared to non-remittance recipient households (Tchaidze & Torosyan, 2010). Yet the impact of household healthcare expenditure is not uniform in Tbilisi and the rest of the country. Remittance recipients in Tbilisi are more likely to be in poorer health than remittance recipients elsewhere. This can partly be explained by the higher healthcare costs in Tbilisi, however, further data is required in order to ascertain as to what extent the differences can be attributed to the differences in healthcare costs.

Chankseliani (2013) indicates that the greatest impact of remittances can be observed in healthcare, as the relative expenditure on healthcare has gone up from 6% to 12% of household budget from early 2000 to 2012. This can be attributed to the increased cost of healthcare due to privatisation, leaving substantial room for the positive impact of remittances on development in terms of health.

The study by Labadze and Tukhashvili (2013) indicates that the majority of labour emigrants are in an irregular state in the destination country, and therefore do not have access to healthcare. The study refers to another work by Tukhashvili et al. (2012) which indicates that 82% of the emigrated population had left healthy and only 52% of the returned population reported that they were healthy upon return. Two-thirds of the people interviewed required medical treatment while abroad, 10% of those received hospital treatment, 24% received ambulatory care, 42% resorted to their own remedies and 19% were not able to afford any kind of treatment at all.

Migration can substantially affect population ageing and the future prospects of Georgia's development. The majority of emigrants fall into the reproductive age category. As the IOM study (2003) indicated, due to the expectation that the emigration of Georgian youth would remain constant, the projection foresaw an increase in the proportion of the pension age population in Georgia by 2010, resulting in further pressure on the economy. These predictions are supported by demographic indices, according to which Georgia is categorised as a highly developed country, while according to economic parameters it is an underdeveloped country. That being said, the impact of migration on population ageing can be considered negative. However, comprehensive research is still needed in order to understand the return of emigrants as well as immigrant flows into Georgia.

### **8.9. Migration and its Impact on Changing Values**

Evidence shows that migration does not have a uniform impact on changing values, and the impact depends on the country of emigration as well as gender, as the *Development on the Move* study has shown. Returned female migrants (86%) are less likely to keep traditional gender roles and are more likely to support gender equality than women who have never migrated (72%) (Tchaidze & Torosyan, 2010). This can be considered a positive effect of migration, particularly in light of the recent outcry over violence and massive discrimination against women in Georgia. Having said that, the opposite (and smaller) effect has been observed among male migrants, with 60% of returned male migrants supporting gender equality as compared to 64% of non-migrant males.

The same study has indicated another interesting trend with regard to shifting values: migration seems to have a positive impact on democratic development. However, the study has shown that the selection of the country of destination has an impact on values. People who have emigrated to Western countries are more critical and outspoken with regard to the democratic situation in Georgia, as compared to people who have emigrated to the Russian Federation or other former Soviet countries. This finding, coupled with the diversification of emigration towards Europe, could be an indication of more positive developments with regard to values and emigration.

## 9. Internal Migration

### 9.1. Introduction

In the past three decades, internal migration in Georgia was pushed mainly by internal conflicts and wars, natural disasters, and economic, educational, and other drivers. High internal migration in the early 1990s was related to the conflicts in the two break-away regions and the resettlement of IDPs. According to the 2002 census data, 463,000 persons changed their residence during the period 1992-2001. Up to 35 percent of them were people displaced by the conflicts (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012). The number of persons displaced due to ecological disasters is estimated at around 37,000. Although in the case of IDPs Georgia has elaborated an intervention strategy and set up an institutional framework, when it comes to ecomigrants, the issue is rather neglected despite their numbers being quite large. Neither public institutions, nor international or national non-governmental organisations have been consistent in addressing the problem. Hence, today, ecomigrants in Georgia do not have a legally recognised and defined status.

This chapter first reviews the regulatory framework and current state of persons displaced internally because of conflicts, and then discusses the problems associated with definition of the status of ecological migrants. It also analyses rural-urban migration trends in Georgia covering the period after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

### 9.2. Internally Displaced Persons

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and Georgia's Declaration of Independence, secessionist efforts resulted in violent conflict involving what were then the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic and the South Ossetian Autonomous District. The conflicts in these regions resulted in 10,000 casualties and over 300,000 displaced persons. Abkhazia and South Ossetia unilaterally declared independence and have since been under control of *de facto* authorities (Amnesty International, 2010; UNHCR, 2009). Those displaced during the fighting between 1990 and 1992 are today referred to as the first wave of Internally Displaced Persons<sup>30</sup> in Georgia.

The war between Georgia and the Russian Federation in August 2008 in South Ossetia resulted in a second wave of displacement, uprooting almost 192,000 people. Reports were documented about threats to ethnic Georgians and an apparently targeted policy of forced displacement (Amnesty International, 2010). Around 26,000 Georgians have been unable to return to South Ossetia, also due to many homes being destroyed in deliberate attacks.

Today there is a larger group (around 200,000 IDPs) from the conflicts in the 1990s, largely from Abkhazia and now living in bordering regions, who have not been able to return to their homes for more than 20 years, and a smaller group of around 26,000 IDPs from South Ossetia, mostly settling in Gori. Authorities in the two break-away regions have refused to allow returns (except for the district of Gali in Abkhazia) for concerns over "upsetting the ethnic balance" and security (IDMC, 2014a). The Russian Federation and three other states<sup>31</sup> have recognised both regions as independent states, while the European Parliament has recommended recognising both Abkhazia and South Ossetia as occupied territories<sup>32</sup>.

The most recent figures provided by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC, 2014b) total up to 211,600 IDPs in Georgia as of May 2014. This estimate is based on the official government statistics of 246,600 persons, adding at least 10,000 persons displaced within South Ossetia (during the 1991-1992 and 2008 conflicts), but deducting 45,000 persons who have returned to Abkhazia. According to these numbers, IDPs constitute 5% of the resident population in Georgia. Considering

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<sup>30</sup> Internal Displacement is a situation where "persons or groups of persons [...] have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border" (Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2).

<sup>31</sup> Nicaragua, Venezuela and Nauru (Amnesty International, 2010)

<sup>32</sup> European Parliament resolution of 17 November 2011 containing the European Parliament's recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the negotiations of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (2011/2133(INI)).

that the number of registered IDPs provided by MRA has increased to 259,000 (as of September 2014) (MRA, 2014c), the current overall figure is more likely to be around 224,000 IDPs in Georgia. In addition to this, an unknown number of persons have been displaced within Abkhazia. Of all the countries where UNHCR was assisting IDPs at the end of 2013, Georgia ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in terms of size of IDP population (UNHCR, 2014c). (It ranked 16<sup>th</sup> when the IDMC estimate is applied.)

A ruling by the Georgian Constitutional Court in June 2013 stated that all those displaced by military conflict should qualify as IDPs, not only those from the Occupied Territories, which led to an amendment of IDP legislation in March 2014 but only a minor immediate increase in numbers (IDMC, 2014a).

### 9.2.1. Regulatory Framework for IDPs in Georgia

The Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons (March 2014) regulates the legal status of IDPs, grounds and rules for recognition, granting and suspension of IDP status, legal, economic and social guarantees as well as rights and obligations<sup>33</sup>. When the first version of the law was passed in 1996, it introduced some privileges and protections, including a modest cash assistance, protection against arbitrary eviction from collective centres, and the counting of periods of displacement for the calculation of pensions (UNHCR, 2009). The main functions with regard to the situation of IDPs in Georgia are delegated to the MRA.

The 2007 State Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons aimed at ensuring a dignified and safe return for those who had returned to their place of residence spontaneously and securing appropriate living conditions and integration into public life for those still displaced (Chelidze, 2013b). The Strategy covers issues from poverty, unemployment, and housing, to health, education, and representation. The first version of the accompanying Action Plan for the implementation of the State Strategy (adopted by the government in July 2008) was made obsolete by the events of August 2008. An updated Action Plan was adopted in May 2009, focusing on housing solutions and socio-economic integration (UNHCR, 2009). The latest version of the Action Plan (2012-2014) lists long-term solutions for accommodation, reduction of state dependency and integration of vulnerable IDPs into state social assistance programmes as the main areas of work (MRA, 2013b).

Georgia's domestic legislation on IDPs has been criticised for not meeting international human rights standards in the areas of registration, legal status, access to social benefits, agricultural lands, and protection from arbitrary and illegal eviction (UNHCR, 2009).

The UN General Assembly has passed two resolutions on the status of IDPs and refugees in Georgia, recognising their and their descendants' right to return to their homes voluntarily, safely, and in a dignified and unhindered manner, and stressing their property rights. The first resolution of May 2008<sup>34</sup> referred to those displaced from Abkhazia (and was immediately rejected by the *de facto* authorities in Abkhazia, and the Russian Federation) (UNHCR, 2009), while the resolution of September 2009<sup>35</sup> also referred to South Ossetia.

### 9.2.2. The Socio-economic Situation of IDPs

IDPs are among the most vulnerable groups in Georgia today (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012). Living conditions are precarious, housing is often inadequate, many of them are struggling with unemployment, insufficient income, lack of proper access to healthcare and children are facing difficulties in education. Return perspectives are faint, and integration into society has not been fostered until recently.

Half of the IDP population live in private accommodation, the other half in accommodation provided by the government (so-called 'collective centres'). Most of these centres are desolate, lacking appropriate privacy and space, access to water, sanitary standards or necessary insulation. Those in private accommodation face similarly low standards (UNHCR, 2009; Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012).

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<sup>33</sup> Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted from the Occupied Territories of Georgia, 1 March 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 15 May 2008. A/RES/62/249.

<sup>35</sup> Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 9 September 2009. A/RES/63/307.

Efforts have been undertaken by the government to acquire houses for IDPs and provide property titles for their current accommodation. After the conflict in 2008, the government reacted quickly and provided housing for those displaced. Yet some of these settlements are situated in remote areas lacking infrastructure (Amnesty International, 2010).

Forced evictions of IDPs from private and state-owned buildings in Tbilisi were carried out in 2010 and 2011, affecting more than 1,500 individuals who were neither given sufficient notice nor information on alternative housing (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012). Those evicted were brought to the accommodation of their choice – 39 families were provided with state-owned housing outside Tbilisi. Those resettled reported a lack of basic utilities and sub-standard housing conditions.

Since the 2008 war, Georgia has received international aid with the purpose of accommodating and integrating displaced persons, and the government has declared its intention to also address the concerns of IDPs from Abkhazia, although recently-built settlements for the displaced are in remote areas with weak infrastructure and little employment opportunities. During 2013, 1,500 families were allocated new housing units and around 1,400 families registered ownership of their accommodation in collective centres, yet some 50,000 persons still needed housing assistance (IDMC, 2014a).

A survey among IDPs carried out in 2008 showed that one in six households regarded itself as extremely poor and reported a constant shortage of food (Nadareishvili & Tsakadze, 2008, as cited in Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012). Another sixth reported being hardly able to afford sufficient meals and almost half of the households stated that their income or harvest only enabled them to provide for food. Social benefits and pensions are the main source of income for IDPs, one out of four households even gave social benefits as the sole source of income. The average amount of benefits per household was 135 GEL, or 62 Euro per month (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012). More than two out of three displaced persons are unemployed.

The health status of IDPs compares unfavourably to that of the general population, with poverty, poor living conditions and malnutrition contributing to higher health risks. In addition, the uncertainty of their livelihoods and, above all, the traumatic experiences of violence, displacement and destruction result in a range of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and stress disorders (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012; Amnesty, 2010). Some reports seem to inadequately frame this as passivity, lack of self-reliance, or dependency. Lack of access to medical services is another contributing factor.

Today, only one-third of the displaced are satisfied with efforts undertaken for long-term resettlement (Chelidze, 2013b). The MRA is currently in the process of developing a livelihood strategy for IDPs (IDMC, 2014a). As long as chances for safe return are low, the immediate and medium-term needs of displaced persons need to be provided for, especially the improvement of social and economic conditions (including, but not limited to, housing) and integration into the labour market.

### **9.3. Ecological Migrants**

Since the 1980s, natural disasters and environmental concerns have been increasingly pushing Georgia's highland population to resettle. Given the continued and uncontrolled use of natural resources, this trend is not expected to change or slow down in the near future. Land degradation, agricultural use of higher hillside land, deforestation, natural tectonic change and climate change aspects are going to remain major sources of natural disasters in Georgia. The latest report of the Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN, 2013a) identifies earthquakes, landslides and mudflows, floods, and snow avalanches as the main natural disaster risks in the country.

Some of the major waves of resettlement seen in the past three decades were in 1987, from Svaneti to the Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions, and in 1989, from mountainous Adjara to Kvemo and the regions of Shida Kartli, Kakheti and Javakheti. The populations of both regions suffered from heavy winter snow which led to large-scale landslides. More than 10,000 families were resettled in these two instances alone. Periodical smaller scale ecological disasters have forced thousands of other families to displace or live in life-threatening conditions. More than 3,000 settlements (mostly in the mountains) and roughly 400,000 families have been endangered to varying degrees since 1980. Some of these families have to be resettled; others have lost their agriculture land and/or need assistance in repairing their houses. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Environment, providing full assistance would cost on average 100-150 million US Dollars annually (Green Alternative, 2008).

Additionally, some of the families had to resettle independently, without state assistance and never had an incentive to register with any state agency due to the absence of support programmes. Hence,

the estimates of total number of ecomigrants in the country available from the MRA or other sources do not account for such cases.

In the early years of Georgia's independence, ecomigrants were often resettled to ethnic minority regions that sometimes led to altering the demographic balance on the ground. Given the absence of any type of integration and adjustment programmes, these communities were predestined for social tensions and conflicts (Lyle, 2012). In 2005, however, Georgia ratified the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for Protection of National Minorities which outlaws official policies and measures that change the demographic picture in the regions populated by ethnic minorities. The abovementioned practice stopped after Georgia ratified the Framework Convention, but no comprehensive policy to tackle the issue of ecomigrants either on a practical or a legislative level has been elaborated since then.

A number of comprehensive reports have been published on the topic of persons displaced in Georgia due to ecological factors. One of the most recent reports was compiled by the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia (2013) – *Human Rights Situation of Persons Affected by and Displaced as a Result of Natural Disasters/Ecomigrants in Georgia*. The report covers extensively the legislative and social aspects of ecomigration in Georgia and concludes with specific recommendations for the MRA, the parliament and the government of Georgia. The CENN has also compiled a comprehensive report titled *Ecomigration in Georgia. Background, Gaps, and Recommendations* (2013a), which analyses ecomigration in a global context. The report studies conditions and push factors of ecomigration in Georgia from the environmental and socio-economic angles and compares the Georgian approach with international best practices and legislation. In the report, the CENN also provides specific recommendations on how the Georgian government can and should deal with defining the problem and assisting victims.

A monograph by Tom Trier and Medea Turashvili, published by the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) in Caucasus, *Resettlement of Ecologically Displaced Persons* (2007) covers the history of ecomigration up until 2006 and summarises recent trends and challenges. Relatively recent policy developments in the field are analysed in an ECMI working paper by Justin Lyle (2012).

### 9.3.1. Regulatory Framework for Ecomigrants in Georgia

The first steps in regulating the status and allocating protection for ecological migrants were taken in 1998, when Presidential Ordinance No. 67<sup>36</sup> on ecomigrants established a special commission to monitor the process and trends in the field. A few more attempts were made in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but they did not contribute to the improved regulation of the field. The government's new programmes failed partly because of the widespread corruption and weak institutional set-up at the time of implementation and partly because none of the initiatives or actions were comprehensive enough (Lyle, 2012).

Despite the scale of the problem, as of 2014, there is no clear definition of the term 'ecomigrant' and no legal framework for regulating their resettlement and assistance programmes. However, it has been agreed that the MRA is in charge of monitoring the trends of ecomigration within Georgia and developing an effective management system (the MRA Regulations, Article 7.3). The MRA's responsibilities also include forecasting future natural disaster risks, the resettlement of ecomigrants, the creation of a database, and the development of adaptation and integration programmes for the displaced and host communities. Within the current set-up, the Organic Law of Georgia on Local Self-Governance tasks local authorities (self-governance leaders, such as "Rtsmunebuli" and "Gamgebeli") with monitoring the numbers and conditions of ecomigrants (Article 42.4.f).

In 2013, Ministerial Order No. 123 established a Commission for the development of a new law on the legal status, rights, and socio-economic protection of persons displaced due to ecological reasons. The Commission includes representatives from the MRA, international donors, and local non-governmental organisations<sup>37</sup>. It is noteworthy, that the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resource Protection is not part of the group elaborating the new law, even though it is the sole state agency

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<sup>36</sup> The ordinance has been invalid since 2005.

<sup>37</sup> The members of the Commission are representatives from the MRA, the UNDP, the Danish Refugee Council, the Swiss Development Agency, Georgia's Ombudsman Office, the Fund for Social Programs, the Young Lawyers Association of Georgia, the Caucasus Environmental NGO Network, "Borjgali", the UNHCR, and IOM.

responsible for monitoring geologic and ecologic developments and for forecasting expected environmental risks. The draft law developed by the Commission did not pass the parliamentary hearings in late 2014 and was sent back to the MRA for revision. No further developments have since been observed in this direction.

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, adopted in 1998, list victims of natural disasters among internally displaced persons. However, the Principles are a normative act and do not create legal obligations for any state. IOM, on the other hand, does not place ecomigrants under the IDP category. Its definition is as follows: “environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons, who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or chose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad” (IOM, 2008a: 15). The MRA website currently groups the data on ecomigrants under the migration section, not under that of internally displaced.

In 2006, the MRA developed four categories for assessment of the conditions of ecomigrants’ needs. These categories are still used today, they are: (1) House destroyed, (2) House damaged, (3) House damaged but restorable, and (4) Only lands/surroundings of the house destroyed. Only families under category 1 were considered urgent cases for allocation of entitlements.

### 9.3.2. The Current Situation of Ecomigrants

The official data available on ecological migrants today are of very poor quality. The main state bodies collecting data on ecomigrants are the MRA and the self-governance bodies. GeoStat is currently not collecting any data related to ecomigrants and their socio-economic conditions. A number of environmental NGOs, particularly the CENN and “Borjghalo”, are running short-term initiatives to study the needs of ecomigrants in different regions, but these initiatives have resulted in sporadic data on the selected settlements only. The CENN has also launched a visualisation project mapping the root causes of ecological migration<sup>38</sup>.

In 2014, the MRA announced an open call for families who needed state assistance in resettlement. 210 families applied, but the state had the resources to accommodate only 33 (houses already purchased in 2013). This year, based on the information published on the MRA website, the Ministry will be able to deliver up to 70 houses. 40 houses will be purchased with financial support from the Swiss Development Agency and up to 30 houses will be funded from the state budget. The Commission established at the MRA will determine how the available housing options will be distributed among the applicants. Clearly, not everyone’s needs are going to be met. Compared to past years (216 houses purchased in 2006; 187 houses in 2007; 44 houses in 2008; and 127 in 2009<sup>39</sup>), the budget for housing acquisition has shrunk significantly; while in 2010 and 2011 no budget was allocated for housing of ecomigrants at all (Lyle, 2012).

In the period between 2004 and 2011, a total of 1,064 families were resettled with state assistance; about 37,000 families were still in need of assistance by 2012. 11,000 of these families needed urgent assistance i.e. fell under the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> categories (Lyle, 2012, see also section 9.2.1.). The MRA reports that 1,113 houses were purchased for ecomigrants in total, although the years are not specified. The majority of these houses are in the Kvemo Kartli (Tsalka and Tetrtskaro) and Kakheti (Akhmeta) regions<sup>40</sup>.

There was an attempt to create a comprehensive database of ecomigrants in 2006. The MRA started collecting information on the conditions and needs of already displaced families and new settlements at risk. Local authorities undertook a significant share of data collection and assessment on the ground. The results of the project were widely criticised because of the incomprehensive assessments. Houses were categorised based on visual observations, not professional examination by geologists (Trier & Turashvili, 2007). The MRA soon halted the project. Although some updates are regularly made to the existing database, it is far from being the comprehensive database initially

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<sup>38</sup> See Geportal of Natural Hazards and Risks in Georgia. <http://drm.cenn.org/index.php/en/>.

<sup>39</sup> The low number of houses purchased in 2008 (44 houses) can be explained by the financial crisis and unexpected financial burdens created by the 2008 War, including a high number of new IDP waves.

<sup>40</sup> Statistics provided on the website of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, *Houses Purchased by the MRA in the Past Years*; retrieved from <http://mra.gov.ge/geo/static/4161>.

envisaged. Table 27 below shows that the majority of first and second category cases are in the Imereti region, and that overall, about a quarter of all households that need either resettlement or assistance to repair their housing/land, are concentrated in the Imereti region.

**Table 27. Number of families displaced due to ecological disasters by region, as of 1 September 2010**

Region	1 <sup>st</sup> Category House destroyed. Urgent	2 <sup>nd</sup> Category House damaged. Urgent	3 <sup>rd</sup> Category House damaged. Repairable	4 <sup>th</sup> Category Surroundings of the house destroyed	Total
Samtskhe-Javakheti	692	72	1,254	8	2,026
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	85	84	476	132	777
Guria	318	458	996	895	2,667
Imereti	1,818	2,642	8,753	668	13,881
Kakheti	123	59	568	161	911
Shida Kartli	798	643	1,279	69	2,789
Kvemo Kartli	35	11	236	-	282
Racha-Lechkhumi, Kvemo Svaneti	522	789	2,299	1,179	4,789
Samegrelo, Zemo Svaneti	376	811	1,487	692	3,366
Adjara	190	481	577	2,468	3,716
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,957</b>	<b>6,050</b>	<b>17,925</b>	<b>6,272</b>	<b>35,204</b>

Source: Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation. Data requested by the CENN in September 2010.

In 2012, the MRA conducted a pilot assessment project in the Dusheti district of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region. The results of the project were assessed rather positively by monitoring NGOs, but it ended up being a one-time effort. The CENN also tried to update the 2006 database. It requested information on environmentally displaced persons from all local authorities, but the results were unsatisfactory. Not all municipalities were able to provide the information and those who could, were unable to ensure the data was up to date or accurate (Getiashvili, 2014).

If lucky, ecomigrants receive one-off assistance in resettlement. There are no continuous social or economic support programmes or integration policies assisting new ecomigrants to adjust to the new environments and new communities. Some of the major problems faced by these persons, as reported by grassroots organisations, are the absence of a legal status for ecomigrants, unclear ownership rights of the housing provided by the state, and the lack of agricultural land in the areas of resettlement (Green Alternative, 2012). Additionally, social tensions and confrontations with host communities often prompt ecomigrants to return to their home regions. The shortage of agricultural land, together with cultural and ethnic differences (especially in ethnic minority regions), are among the main causes of tension between ecomigrants and receiving communities (Trier & Turashvili, 2007).

#### 9.4. Rural-Urban Migration

Rural-urban migration trends have been rather understudied in Georgia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although data on internal migration are collected by the relevant state authorities in Georgia, unfortunately, they are not complete, and the level of reliability is not high either. Internal migrants, other than IDPs, ecomigrants, or recipients of social assistance, have no incentive to register the change of residential address since it is usually not tied to taxes they pay. Besides, people often maintain their registrations at their prior registration address (different from their factual place of residence), even though they have lived there for years and may not consider moving back to their home communities at all. And although Georgian nationals do have a legal obligation to register a new address, regardless whether it is for temporary or permanent residence, the sanction for not fulfilling this obligation does not serve as an incentive to register.

The Public Service Development Agency under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia is the main administrative body that is responsible for residence registrations of the individuals. The voters' list,

compiled by the Central Election Commission (CEC) prior to every election and based on the data provided by the PSDA, is a relatively reliable source of registration by residence. As an additional measure, a number of international and local election monitoring organisations, political parties, and individual citizens also make an effort to verify and update the list. However, due to the abovementioned reasons, actual changes of residence cannot always be reflected in the voters' list. Hence, there is no precise and reliable data available to estimate what is the level of rural-urban migration in order to analyse its potential impact on the economic development, infrastructure and social cohesion.

As a result, the only available mechanisms to collect data on internal mobility are surveys and the national census. The latest available census data (when drafting this report) are from 2002 and the results of the recent 2014 census should become public in 2016, which means that there are only estimates and assumptions for the period in-between (2002-2014). The latest census data available for comparison covers the years between 1990 and 2001. This is the period when internal migration was strongly influenced by the changing socio-economic and political system in the country. The rather high level of urbanisation of the pre-independence years declined quickly in the early 1990s. Economic hardship and internal conflicts in the early years of independence not only stagnated urbanisation, but instigated a reverse movement too. Several researches mention that there was a noteworthy movement from Tbilisi and other urban areas to rural settlements (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili, 2012: 8). According to the 2002 census data, by that year 27.4 percent had changed their residence and 92 percent of those who changed moved within the country. Mobility between the urban areas had a bigger share (32.2 percent) than between rural areas (17.9 percent). Migration from rural to urban areas started to increase in parallel with the improvement in the economy, but reached its highest point soon after 2003, in the aftermath of the Rose Revolution. As of 2014, the mobility rate is believed to be rather stable (Badurashvili & Nadareishvili 2012: 9).

The Integrated Household Survey (IHS) carried out by GeoStat on a quarterly basis allows monitoring of internal mobility by asking respondents whether they have changed their address and if yes, where did they move from and when.

Data extracted from the 2013 IHS suggest that internal mobility in Georgia is quite high. One out of ten respondents reported that they had migrated during the 5 preceding years; 3 percent had migrated in the preceding year alone. On the other hand, around 45 percent said that they had never changed their address. Mobility was highest within the same region, varying between 61 and 86 percent of those who had migrated. 14 to 36 percent of those who migrated had moved from one region to another; and only 1 percent of all respondents had migrated from abroad (see table 28).

**Table 28. Internal Migration in 2013**

Time of migration	Number of respondents	% of all respondents	Within same region		From another region		From abroad	
			Number of respondents	row %	Number of respondents	row %	Number of respondents	row %
Less than 1 year ago	1,361	3.4	1,084	79.6	226	16.6	51	3.7
1 to 3 years ago	1,565	3.9	1,142	73.0	391	25.0	32	2.0
3 to 5 years ago	855	2.1	518	60.6	308	36.0	29	3.4
More than 5 years ago	18,235	45.7	15,587	85.5	2,471	13.6	177	1.0
Never migrated	17,910	44.9	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,926</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>18,331</b>	<b>45.9</b>	<b>3,396</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>0.7</b>

Sources: Integrated Household Survey, GeoStat, 2013b, own calculations

Economic opportunities, the availability of well-paid jobs and educational opportunities are the three main driving factors of migration from rural to urban areas. Since Georgia's economic activities are mostly concentrated in the capital and the highest quality education is offered by the universities in

Tbilisi, it has become the main destination of internal migrants. According to IHS data, 26 percent of the total population of Georgia lives in the capital.

The civil registry database suggests that on average 10,000 persons move to Tbilisi every year. Surprisingly, both the civil registry records and the IHS dataset show that a significantly high number of persons “move” from urban to rural areas. There could be at least three reasons, however, why this dataset does not reflect the reality:

1) Registration of a change of permanent address is required in Georgia, but this is not enforced; very few people follow the procedure willingly. Those who do register usually do so because they have been deregistered from their old addresses during voters’ list verification or other procedures. Therefore, these figures do not reflect all those individuals who changed address without notification. Yet another issue to consider is that registrations may take place years after the change of address actually happened.

2) Changes in temporary address are not registered anywhere, while internal mobility, especially in the case of educational migrants, is usually considered temporary.

3) People in urban areas usually have better access to and a better understanding of registration procedures, while a big chunk of houses and agricultural land in rural areas are not registered at all. This could be the reason why mobility within urban areas seems so much higher than that within rural areas.

**Table 29. Number of changes of registration address (2009-2013)**

<b>Internal mobility</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
To Tbilisi	7,204	10,635	10,082	11,334	9,803
To other urban	5,510	5,007	6,840	12,333	13,515
To urban areas	7,992	9,361	10,037	14,997	14,822
To rural areas	6,872	5,252	7,541	12,359	11,579
Within urban	4,722	6,281	6,885	8,670	8,496
Within rural	644	464	482	1,074	918

Source: Public Service Development Agency. Data requested in October 2014.

The average urbanisation rate estimated by GeoStat is 1 percent, but taking into consideration the shortcomings of GeoStat's data collection methodology, the urbanisation rate is, presumably, much higher. IHS data also suggest that the annual mobility between regions is on average less than 1 percent, but this indicator is not an equivalent of urbanisation.

## 10. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 10.1. General

Migration processes in Georgia are developing dynamically from the point of view of composition and directions of inflows/outflows and migration management. During the last several years, immigrants from quite diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds have started to arrive in Georgia for both short- and long-term purposes. This development logically calls for respective adjustments in the existing migration policy regulations in order to accommodate the needs of immigrants, and to ensure that the local population is ready to accept them in their communities.

Besides summarising the major trends and describing the current migratory situation in Georgia, the present report also covers some of the issues that are rarely dealt with by the academic community or policymakers – such as immigration to Georgia and internal migration<sup>41</sup>. Unlike immigration, which became evident only recently, internal migration has been evolving constantly in the country; although very little attention from either the policymaking point of view or from academic research has been addressed to this issue. Clearly, not being able to account for rural-urban migration might have quite important implications, on the one hand, leading to the depopulation of certain regions, and, on the other, to the overpopulation of others.

Finally, taking into account the fact that access to migration-related data in Georgia is limited, firstly due to the overall lack of consistent and detailed statistics in general and secondly due to the shortage of high-quality socio-economic research, this report takes a critical stand on existing data and knowledge gaps are highlighted throughout this document.

In this chapter, the major suggestions and recommendations for improvements are summarised: first, in the fields of policy and research; and secondly, according to all relevant chapters of this study. The major directions for recommended improvement both for migration policy and for migration research in Georgia follow below.

#### 10.1.1. Policy

Although migration policy and migration management in Georgia are well-developed and regulated through several major policy documents and implemented effectively, there are a number of important issues that if added to the existing migration policy discourse would contribute to the creation of a well-balanced national migration policy.

First, specific policy provisions need to be elaborated to facilitate successful **integration of immigrants** within Georgian society. State institutional policy mechanisms need to be in place in order to ensure that immigrants coming to Georgia who stay long-term have opportunities to establish effective connections with the receiving society. This, to a certain extent, refers also to the improvement of state integration mechanisms aiming at return migrants and IDPs.

Another issue that needs to be addressed on a policy level is **internal migration** in general, and the issue of ecological migrants in particular. So far, despite the *de facto* existence of several waves of ecological migrants within the country, no policy has been developed to address the provision of systematic institutionalised assistance for this group, leaving them in an institutional and legal limbo.

**Labour migration** regulation remains a challenging issue for Georgia on both sides: regulation of foreigners' work in Georgia and regulation and monitoring of employment of Georgians migrants abroad. In this regard, approval of the labour migration legislation alone will not change the situation, and significant capacity building of the involved institutions should take place.

The Migration Strategy of Georgia for 2016-2020, which is currently in the drafting process, has the potential to respond to and acknowledge these issues so as to contribute to improved migration management in Georgia. The strategy should also include priorities with regard to measuring the impact of policymaking (e.g. the new Aliens Law in force from September 2014) on immigrant flows (i.e. after the mentioned changes). This will further strengthen the **evidence-based migration strategic planning**.

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<sup>41</sup> In terms of internal migration, only IDPs, and to some extent ecological migration issues, are currently in the focus of researchers' and policymakers' attention.

### 10.1.1. Research

The present report highlights several major aspects hindering high-quality migration research in Georgia, be it fundamental social research or applied policy research. On the one hand, the lack of interest in migration studies is caused mainly by the limited research opportunities in general. On the other hand, until now there has not been a single academic programme at a Georgian university on migration studies, and hence there is little academic expertise for undertaking high-quality research in the field. A step forward in this direction was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Tbilisi State University and the SCMI aimed at strengthening cooperation between academia and state institutions.

Although international and internal migration has become quite widespread in the country, there is no single state/public or research institution that systematically collects migration-related statistics. Hence, the data is scattered among various state/public or academic institutions, is often difficult to acquire, and more importantly, data collection methodologies differ, which makes analysis even more difficult. A unified migration analytical system, which is currently being developed with the active participation of the SCMI, should solve this problem for state agencies, however, to what extent the research communities will have access to the statistical data collected by this database is still under discussion.

GeoStat, the national statistics office, could assume the role of a major provider of migration-related statistics, if relevant capacity increasing activities are directed toward improving its migration data collection methodologies and data analysis capacities. Alongside this, an annual migration study, which could collect data both on international and internal migratory trends, is needed in order to analyse dynamics, patterns and trends in the longitudinal perspective. The methodology of the study could be developed in collaboration with international experts taking into consideration the existing migration data collection challenges in Georgia. However, Georgian social research organisations and representatives of research communities including MA and PhD students should also be given the opportunity through targeted research grants to undertake research in migration studies. In this respect, a **migration research foundation or centre** could be established in collaboration with a consortium of Georgian universities and the involvement of international research organisations which could undertake large-scale migration research projects in the country and build up an inventory of migration research data open to all interested parties for further in-depth research and analysis. As identified in this report and specified below in more specific recommendations, areas for research could be immigrant integration, labour market research, reintegration of internal migrants, developmental effects of remittances, and migration policy analysis.

Support to improve high-quality academic education in the field of migration is still much needed. Despite the development of a Georgian language migration textbook by the ENIGMMA project in collaboration with the SCMI, Georgian academia, and the ICMPD team aimed at social science and humanities students, universities still lack access to Georgian language translations of seminal works in migration research. Hence, a migration research foundation, along with providing support to applied research activities, could also contribute to the translation of classical works in migration issues into Georgian.

Being a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon, a systematised approach to studying migratory trends is essential for the development of solid theoretical knowledge and fact-based migration policy. In this respect, the present report contributes to the improvement of quality of research, analysis and policymaking in the country by critically addressing various areas in migration studies in Georgia and providing recommendations and solutions to keep migration policies up to pace with the existing realities.

## **10.2. Chapter Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **10.2.1. Immigration**

During the last decade, Georgia started to gradually transform from an emigration and transit country to a country of both emigration and immigration. Importantly, immigrants started to arrive in Georgia not only from neighbouring countries, but also from more distant regions, which did not have close cultural or economic ties with Georgia before, thereby bringing diversity to a country which has not experienced noticeable immigration inflows in the recent past. Immigrants come to Georgia with a variety of aims: to study, work, invest, seek international protection or establish their families in the country, partly attracted by the liberal immigration regime active until 1 September 2014. However, immigration is not yet a priority area for the Government, therefore, some gaps have been identified and improvements are needed:

- A comprehensive immigration policy, covering not only the legal status of immigrants in Georgia, but also their integration, needs to be developed. The policy needs to set the institutional framework which will define the steps and approaches to facilitate the successful integration of immigrants.
- GeoStat, in cooperation with the institutions responsible for foreigners' integration and civil society, should develop an immigrant integration measurement methodology, to collect data and analyse both immigrants' quality of life and their integration patterns.
- Social research institutions and academia need to devote more research to the study of immigration and immigrants in Georgia, which is largely missing. This would contribute to the elaboration of an evidence-based immigration policy. Further, implementation of the significant migration legislation changes which came into force in September 2014 should be closely followed in order to measure the impact of these changes on immigration processes in Georgia (e.g. the change from the liberal visa policy to a more regulated visa issue procedure, requirements for residence, etc.).
- It is recommended to have more rigorous monitoring of the implementation of the asylum seeker registration and status determination procedures and the causes for negative decisions so as to provide evidence for future policymaking and planning.
- Further, an independent and continuous assessment of the implementation of existing asylum determination procedure is lacking. Such an assessment could be implemented by the civil society organisations which should get broader access to the information on asylum procedures in Georgia.
- The asylum decision-making process requires collection, documentation and analysis of the information on countries of origin (COI). This also refers to expulsion decisions with regard to the full respect of the principle of non-refoulement by Georgia. Therefore, the COI unit established at the MRA and its activities should be strengthened.
- The monitoring of refusal cases at the border is recommended, in particular when aliens come from unsafe countries such as Iraq – which accounted for the majority of refusals in the first 6 months of 2014, in order to make sure that these persons are not denied access to the asylum procedure.

### **10.2.2. Integration and Reintegration**

As mentioned above, there is no single comprehensive policy document on migrants' integration in Georgia which discusses and analyses the challenges faced by foreigners in their integration process and proposes measures to overcome these challenges. The institutional framework for implementation of integration has yet to be established in Georgia.

With regard to the reintegration of Georgian returnees, as stated in numerous reports and surveys, the main challenge remains integration into the local labour market. Labour market analysis in Georgia is implemented only fragmentarily, as is the available skills inventory. All this makes reintegration of returnees more complicated.

Finally, the Government should pay more attention to the public perception of immigrants in the media, including all types of migrants – newcomers, persons granted protection and returnees. Avoidance of

stereotyping and the creation of a positive image of migrants will support their inclusion and integration into Georgian society.

In more detail, the following recommendations can be made:

- Integration issues should be included in the general immigration policy document, establishing the priorities for the Georgian state with regard to integration of foreigners, as well as creating an institutional framework for integration. As a next step, integration indicators have to be developed for monitoring the integration process of immigrants and return migrants and barriers to their inclusion. This is needed to ensure development of evidence-based policymaking in the integration field.
- Fundamental research on immigration to Georgia is needed in order to launch a dialogue on the needs of integration and inclusion and the benefits of immigrants and return migrants. Such research, if regularly updated, would also show the efficiency of the state efforts in facilitating foreigners' integration, as well as monitoring and assessing the general trajectories of integration and reintegration processes in the country.
- The SCMI and institutions responsible for integration should intensify state cooperation with the media with regard to the perception of foreigners and returnees in Georgian society in accordance with Georgian anti-discrimination legislation. Responsible state institutions, media representatives and civil society should work together on the creation of a positive image of immigration and avoidance of stereotyping. The Georgian media, in cooperation with the state institutions responsible for migration management and integration, has to play a key role in combating xenophobia, stereotyping and hate speech, and thus support integration and inclusion.
- Awareness raising on the available integration and reintegration activities and measures should be increased.
- A comprehensive labour market analysis and an inventory of available and missing skills should be implemented on a regular basis, and include general information on Georgia and the specific situation in the various regions. The results of this analysis should be used already in the pre-departure information for potential returnees in order to support them during the reintegration process.

### **10.2.3. Emigration**

Taking into consideration the existing migration statistics which need further improvement and scrutiny, and the data gaps outlined in the respective chapters of this report, estimations of the stocks and flows of Georgian emigrants should be carefully investigated and cross-checked with other sources. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that migration from Georgia today is directed toward a variety of receiving countries which provide better economic opportunities and quality of life than Georgia. A future increase in the flows of legal emigrants from Georgia can be expected, due to the development of migration networks in recent years, which facilitate further emigration and make the process easier and more affordable.

The following major conclusions stand out:

- According to UN estimates of international migrant stocks, around 740,000 emigrants (born in Georgia) were living abroad in mid-2013, more than half of which were resident in the Russian Federation (436,000), with one out of seven living in the EU (109,000).
- The large population loss during the 1990s appears to be largely attributable to sizeable ethnic emigration as well as the exclusion of the occupied territories from population statistics, with only a fraction of this loss being made up of ethnic Georgians emigrating (126,000 between 1989 and 2002). In order to interpret the more recent population decline since 2002, revised population data based on the 2014 census are needed.
- While overall statistics about annual immigration and emigration exist for Georgia, including a breakdown by citizenship, no information is available about countries of origin or destination. The direction and size of migration flows can therefore only be estimated.

- In 2013, there were around 6,700 recognised refugees and 11,600 asylum seekers from Georgia worldwide: small numbers compared to the number of IDPs in Georgia and emigrants from Georgia. France, Greece and Germany are the main countries of residence for refugees and asylum seekers.

There are also institutional challenges that need to be addressed in order to be able to collect more detailed data which can be used for further analysis or policymaking.

The development of a migration statistics methodology needs to be adapted to Georgian realities. This refers not only to GeoStat, but to social research centres, civil society organisations, and academia as well.

With regard to emigration, the following recommendations are proposed:

- National Migration Statistics should be expanded to include the variables country of birth and country of origin/destination, in addition to gender, age and citizenship.
- A regular migration barometer survey should be conducted for the provision of high-quality and reliable data on migration intentions, motives, migration networks, transnational relationships, and experiences of return migrants, and should also include relevant indicators for immigrants.
- A unified population register should be established, which requires all residents to register and where immigrants would have to register in case they plan to stay in the country for a certain period of time (e.g. more than three or six months). Similarly, deregistration would be required for all residents if they plan to leave the country for a certain period of time.
- A regulation on the work of employment agencies employing Georgian migrants abroad should be introduced and the work of such agencies should be permanently monitored. This would support the protection of the rights of Georgian emigrants and prevent labour exploitation cases.
- Regular and continuous awareness raising about the risks of irregular migration and/or irregular employment should be strengthened.

#### **10.2.4. Links between Migration and Development**

Substantial knowledge gaps about the profile of immigrants in Georgia remain the main obstacle to analysing the impact of immigration on development in Georgia: their skills, education, occupation and long-term perspectives in the country. It is also essential to understand the needs of the labour market in Georgia, so as to fully comprehend the impact of skills formation and changes as a result of migration and its impact on the labour market. Next to nothing is known about how immigrants settle in Georgia, how/whether they integrate and whether immigration is affecting Georgian culture, language and other aspects of social life. In addition, more data are needed on the Georgian diaspora and expats, their capabilities (financial, skills and influence in the host countries), so that their long-term impact on Georgia's development can be evaluated.

Therefore, more attention needs to be paid to the long-term development impact of migration through collecting and analysing data on skills development and transfer, investments in health and education, the impact on social equality in the country of origin, and also to social cohesion, inclusion and a welcoming atmosphere in the receiving societies.

Despite the availability of several studies that investigate the role of remittances in Georgia, existing analyses rarely provide opportunities to grasp trends since most of these are cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. The major gaps in this area are linked with data, with research capacities, and with policies and institutions that can facilitate the channelling of remittances into consumption that can bring better results for migrants and their families.

In detail, the following policy recommendations can be made:

- The profile of immigrants in Georgia and Georgian emigrants should be researched in detail and regularly updated: their needs, long-term perspectives, skills and education. The results of this assessment should serve as a basis for the measuring of the impact of immigration and emigration on Georgian development.

- The situation of the Georgian labour market should be assessed regularly and measured against the immigrants' and emigrants' (who might also be potential returnees) profiles mentioned above. In this way, the possible skills mismatch can be evaluated and prevented by proposing professional orientation measures at schools, through pre-departure assistance to possible returnees, and the attracting of immigrants with certain skills.
- Collection of longitudinal data on remittances and on the usage of remittances is needed in order to analyse their macro/micro developmental effects. To do so, a data collection methodology needs to be developed, and GeoStat, together with the National Bank of Georgia should be in charge of the data collection and analysis. Remittance variables could also be included in the migration barometer study, or in a regular GeoStat survey.
- In order to understand the role of remittances on the macro and micro levels, it is important to employ various types of sociological, statistical and economic/econometric analysis. This should become a regular task for GeoStat, the National Bank of Georgia, and institutions involved in the SCMI, including its Secretariat. Cooperation with academia and the involvement of civil society should also be ensured.
- There is no specifically tailored approach from the private sector or governmental agencies to emigrants and remittance-receiving household members aimed at the provision of particular banking services for remittance senders/receivers or the creation of specific funding opportunities for start-ups for applicants willing to invest remittances in businesses. As the experiences of other remittance-receiving countries demonstrate, the existence of special banking or financial policies aimed at remittance-receiving households can contribute to their more responsible and successful usage, therefore contributing to the sustainability of the economic and social well-being of remittance-receiving households, as well as creating a more welcoming environment for possible returnees.
- An in-depth analysis of the impact of the piloted circular migration schemes should be implemented in Georgia. Organised circular migration as a new migration form in Georgia needs to be researched in order to establish the benefits for all sides involved, but in particular for migrants, their family members, and the Georgian economy. Only after such an analysis should new and permanent circular migration schemes be developed and further facilitated by the state.

### 10.2.5. Internal Migration

Internal migration has been constantly evolving in the country; however, it has drawn very little attention from either the policymaking point of view or from academic research. Only the issues of IDPs and, increasingly, ecological migrants, are in the focus of policymakers and the state institutions responsible for implementation of this policy. However, in-depth analysis of rural-urban migration can prevent important implications such as the depopulation of certain regions and the overpopulation of others. As a result, the analysis and inclusion of internal migration in migration-related strategic planning can support positive developments in the internal labour market and even more efficient implementation of immigration, integration and reintegration policies.

The following recommendations are proposed in the area of internal migration:

- The immediate and medium-term needs of internally displaced persons need to be provided for, particularly with regard to the improvement of social and economic conditions (including, but not limited to, housing) and integration into the labour market. This can also be included in the livelihood strategy for IDPs which is currently under development.
- A definition of the legal status of environmentally displaced persons as well as a sustainable mechanism for their protection is currently lacking and should be developed. The legal instruments (laws and by-laws) drafted in this area should be evidence-based, i.e. reflect the real situation of the ecomigrants and include short- and long-term forecasts.
- The development of an adequate mechanism to register ecomigrants, track their movement, and assess risks associated with their housing is desirable.
- Data on internal migration are needed and should be collected by an official body (e.g. GeoStat). Analysis of this data should be used for assessment of labour market needs, inventory of skills in Georgia, regional development perspectives, investment priorities, etc.

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Note: All URLs last accessed on 28 Jan 2015 except where otherwise stated.

## 12. Annex

### 12.1. Tables

**Table 1: Agreements and Protocols between the EU and Georgia**

Legislation	Type	Date of Signature
Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on protection of geographical indications of agricultural products and foodstuff	Bilateral	14/07/2011
Common Aviation Area Agreement between the European Union and its Member States and Georgia	Bilateral	02/12/2010, has not entered into force yet
Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the status of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia	Bilateral	03/11/2008
Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, to take account of the accession of the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union	Bilateral	27/06/2007
Agreement between the European Union and the Government of Georgia on the status in Georgia of the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and his/her support team	Bilateral	12/05/2006
Agreement between the European Community and the government of Georgia on certain aspects of air services	Bilateral	03/05/2006
Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the status and activities of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Georgia, EUJUST THEMIS	Bilateral	03/12/2004, has not entered into force yet
Protocol to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part and Georgia, of the other part, to take account of the accession of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Malta, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Slovenia and the Slovak Republic to the European Union	Bilateral	30/04/2004
Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part - Protocol on mutual assistance between authorities in customs matters - Final Act - Joint Declarations - Exchange of Letters in relation to the establishment of companies - Declaration of the French Government	Bilateral	22/04/1996

**Table 2: Emigrants, immigrants and net migration by citizenship and gender in 2014**

	Emigrants			Immigrants			Net Migration		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
Georgia	69,855	29,634	40,221	49,706	20,659	29,047	-20,149	-8,975	-11,174
Russian Federation	5,424	2,359	3,065	9,692	4,468	5,224	4,268	2,109	2,159
Turkey	2,395	610	1,785	4,672	1,055	3,617	2,277	445	1,832
Armenia	2,821	1,137	1,684	3,856	1,543	2,313	1,035	406	629
Azerbaijan	1,254	557	697	2,163	988	1,175	909	431	478
Ukraine	762	343	419	1,552	795	757	790	452	338
Iraq	333	72	261	1,777	286	1,491	1,444	214	1,230
USA	690	254	436	883	346	537	193	92	101
Greece	371	160	211	997	452	545	626	292	334
Iran	392	108	284	825	250	575	433	142	291
Other	4,338	1,590	2,748	5,923	2,337	3,586	1,585	747	838
Unknown	69	22	47	115	44	71	46	22	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>88,704</b>	<b>36,846</b>	<b>51,858</b>	<b>82,161</b>	<b>33,223</b>	<b>48,938</b>	<b>-6,543</b>	<b>-3,623</b>	<b>-2,920</b>

Source: GeoStat, 2015c

**Table 3: Population Change in Georgia, 1989-2015**

Year	Population (1 Jan) <sup>1)</sup>	Births	Deaths	Natural increase	Immigration	Emigration	Net migration <sup>2)</sup>
2015	3,729,500 <sup>b</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-
2014	4,490,500	60,635	49,087	11,548	82,200	88,700	-6,500
2013	4,483,800	57,878	48,553	9,325	92,500	95,100	-2,600
2012	4,497,600	57,031	49,348	7,683	69,100	90,600	-21,500 <sup>b</sup>
2011	4,469,200	58,014	49,818	8,196	-	-	20,200
2010	4,436,400	62,585	47,864	14,721	-	-	18,100
2009	4,385,400	63,377	46,625	16,752	-	-	34,200
2008	4,382,100	56,565	43,011	13,554	-	-	-10,200
2007	4,394,700	49,287	41,178	8,109	-	-	-20,700
2006	4,401,300	47,795	42,255	5,540	-	-	-12,100
2005	4,321,500	46,500	43,000	3,500	-	-	76,300
2004	4,315,200	49,600	48,800	800	-	-	5,500 <sup>b</sup>
2003	4,342,600	46,200	46,100	100	-	-	-27,500
2002	4,371,500	46,600	46,400	200	-	-	-27,800
2001	4,401,400	47,600	46,200	1,400	-	-	-32,600
2000	4,435,200	48,800	47,400	1,400	-	-	-35,200
1999	4,469,800	48,700	47,200	1,500	-	-	-36,100
1998	4,504,900	51,500	47,300	4,200	-	-	-39,200
1997	4,558,400	54,000	47,600	6,400	-	-	-59,900
1996	4,674,500	55,000	48,000	7,000	-	-	-123,100
1995	4,794,200	56,300	49,100	7,200	-	-	-127,200
1994	4,929,900 <sup>b</sup>	57,300	50,300	7,000	-	-	-142,700 <sup>e</sup>
1993	5,345,800	61,600	57,500	4,100	-	-	-140,900 <sup>e</sup>
1992	5,467,400	72,600	55,100	17,500	-	-	-139,100 <sup>e</sup>
1991	5,453,300	89,100	52,400	36,700	-	-	-22,600 <sup>e</sup>
1990	5,424,400	92,800	50,700	42,100	-	-	-13,200 <sup>e</sup>
1989	5,400,800	-	-	-	-	-	-

Sources: GeoStat, 2015a, b, e, Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, 2006

'-' = no data available; most values rounded to nearest hundred (as in sources)

Figures in italics to be revised according to 2014 census results

1) Population since 1994 given without Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. The population size for both regions combined in 1994 has been estimated at 279,000 (see Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, 2005: 33).

2) Net migration calculated as balance of border crossings since 2004 (crossings during a year, without reference to length of stay between 2004 and 2011; and crossings during the reference year, the preceding and following year since 2012, defining an emigrant as a person moving abroad for at least 6 months and 1 day and an immigrant as a person moving to Georgia for at least 6 months + 1 day), based on expert estimates before 2004.

b Breaks in time-series

e Own estimates based on differences between population number, births and deaths (see also Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, 2005: 33)

## 12.2. Definitions

### 12.2.1. National Definitions of Migrants

#### **GeoStat definitions (GeoStat, 2013c)**

In 2012, it became possible to receive migration-related information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs that was collected based on UN recommended methodology: a person is considered an immigrant if s/he has crossed the Georgian border and spent at least 6 months and one day in the country within the following 12 months in Georgia (this can refer to a cumulative sum of several entries) while Georgia is not the country of her/his permanent residence, i.e. s/he spent at least 6 months and one day outside Georgia in the preceding 12 months.

An emigrant is a person who has left Georgia for at least 6 months and one day within the 12 months following departure from Georgia (this can refer to a cumulative sum of several periods abroad) while Georgia is her/his permanent place of residence, i.e. in the 12 months prior to departure Georgia s/he spent at least 6 months and one day in Georgia.

### 12.2.2. International Definitions of Migrants

#### **UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration (UN DESA Statistics Division, 1998)<sup>42</sup>**

An *International migrant* is defined as any person who changes his or her country of usual residence.

*Country of usual residence*: The country in which a person lives, that is to say, the country in which he or she has a place to live where he or she normally spends the daily period of rest. Temporary travel abroad for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage does not change a person's country of usual residence.

#### **EU Regulation on Community statistics on migration and international protection (862/2007/EC)<sup>43</sup>**

Article 2, 1.

(a) 'Usual residence' means the place in which a person normally spends the daily period of rest, regardless of temporary absences for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage or, in default, the place of legal or registered residence

(b) 'Immigration' means the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least twelve months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country.

(c) 'Emigration' means the action by which a person, having previously been usually resident in the territory of a Member State, ceases to have his usual residence in that Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least twelve months.

(f) 'Immigrant' means a person undertaking an immigration

(g) 'Emigrant' means a person undertaking an emigration

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<sup>42</sup> UN DESA Statistics Division. (1998). Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration. Revision 1. UN Doc. ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/58/Rev.1, §§ 32, 37.

<sup>43</sup> Council Regulation 862/2007/EC on Community statistics on migration and international protection, 2007 O.J. L199/23.

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**International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2015**