

HOW MIGRATION CAN WORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

THE ISSUE:

Widespread poverty and lack of well-paid jobs cause many Moldovans to look for better opportunities abroad. An estimated 1/4 of the working age population in Moldova is involved in permanent or circular migration. Emigration has produced negative social effects on children and older persons left behind, in particular in rural areas. Returning Moldovan emigrants face challenges in finding well-paid jobs based on their skills acquired abroad or repatriating their social benefits, as well as difficulties in participating in elections. On the other hand, remittances have helped to empower segments of previously disadvantaged groups, reduce poverty, enhance schooling of children and boost local business. Women migrants remain a vulnerable group, as predominantly being involved in domestic work, and being exposed to domestic and sexual abuse, violence and discrimination.

Moldova is also a country-of-arrival of persons in need of international protection. The number of foreigners finding refuge in Moldova has been on the rise since 2012, mainly due to Syrians and Ukrainians fleeing persecution or generalized violence. Despite increasing conformity of domestic law with international standards, the quality of protection and assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees, as well as state budget allocations for these areas, remain below the real needs. While the exact number of stateless persons in Moldova remains unclear, certain legal gaps and bureaucratic obstacles stand in the way of proper enforcement of the national statelessness determination procedure.

Moldova is also a country of arrival for migrant workers and irregular migrants. As yet, policy and law frameworks securing the rights and integration of third-country migrants are under-developed. While many third-country nationals have successfully integrated and are making durable contributions to Moldova's future, some face obstacles including rigid or exclusionary rules, hostile bureaucratic practices, and in some cases xenophobia. Development policies do not yet sufficiently foster immigration as a key component for Moldova's future development.

KEY FIGURES:

1. According to border crossing data, > 720,000 Moldovans were abroad at end 2012; 300,000 were absent for longer than 12 months.
2. Half of migrants are women.
3. In 2012 more than 22% of Moldovan households were benefiting from remittances, while in 2008 this share has registered a maximum value of 26.4%; in rural areas 29.5% vs 22% in urban.
4. 19.4% of young people are abroad for work or looking for work.
5. Over 70% of returning Moldovan emigrant workers aren't helped by their new skills in finding a job.
6. As of 31 July 2014, 287 recognized refugees and beneficiaries of humanitarian protection and 89 asylum-seekers residing in Moldova.
7. As of 30 June 2014, 2,012 individuals were documented as stateless in Moldova.
8. The number of labour permits issued to immigrant workers is on the rise, accounting for 842 in 2011, 972 in 2012 and 1067 in 2013.
9. 40% of Moldovans would not accept a "person of another race", and 55% would not accept a Muslim as a neighbour.

PROGRESS MADE:

- PARE 1+1, a government-owned remittances investment program, continues and has attracted so far 2.4 EUR millions of remittances into migrants' small businesses.
- In 2012, the Government established the Bureau for Relations with Diaspora, responsible for coordinating diaspora policies and programs and for developing a continuous dialogue with Moldovan diaspora in order to engage it in the country's development. The Diaspora Strategy 2025 under development should provide a coherent policy framework.
- 2014–2016 Action Plan supporting the reintegration of Moldovan citizens returned from abroad

was approved. An exercise for mainstreaming migration into development strategies started.

- Moldova has signed labour migration and bilateral social security agreements with more than 10 countries of destination of Moldovan emigrants, fostering the protection of their rights and the portability of their social entitlements.
- Moldova's national asylum legislation is largely in line with international and European standards. The Law on Integration of Foreigners entered into force in 2012.
- In 2012, Moldova acceded to the 1954 and 1961 UN Statelessness Conventions and is one of the few countries in the world having a statelessness determination procedure, largely in line with international standards.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE? / HOW TO ACHIEVE IT?

Development challenges have generated significant outflow of Moldovan citizens which impacts the sustainable development of the country. At the same time, little attention to date has been paid to the role of immigration policy for Moldova's development. Migration can be turned into a development enabler. Towards this goal, the authorities can integrate the migration and development agendas in a systematic and evidence-based fashion, on the understanding that both emigrants and immigrants are potentially important actors in the country's progress. Recommendations in detail include:

- Promote quality sex-disaggregated data on migrants to ensure evidence-based and gender-sensitive policy making;
- Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;
- Introduce diaspora and migration impact analysis for Ex-ante and Ex-post public policy impact analysis, including from a gender perspective;
- Maximize the potential of remittances for development by formalizing transfer channels through extension of rapid money transfer systems to the national postal offices and by diversifying savings instruments;
- Develop frameworks that (a) facilitate the reintegration of returned emigrants on the labour market, in mandatory health insurance and social security schemes and in the education system; (b) offer access to investment programmes and enhanced entrepreneurial skills.

- Continue to advocate pre-registration of Moldovan nationals voting abroad, thus facilitating their participation in the democratic process in Moldova.
- To ensure in-country recognition of emigrants' and immigrants' skills acquired abroad, establish the mechanism for the validation of informal and informal learning.
- Foster the permanent and/or temporary return of highly-skilled emigrants (scientists, practitioners and graduates) through dedicated programmes and/ or diaspora networks, harnessing knowledge transfer.
- Building on positive examples of bilateral labour migration and social protection agreements, further pursue dialogue with other countries of destination of Moldovan emigrants and ensure their enforcement.
- Ensure adequate state budget allocations for the asylum and integration areas based on the needs of growing numbers of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees in Moldova.
- Improve the quality of protection and assistance to those in need of international protection, particularly by organizing specialized Trainer of Trainer programmes in central and local government.
- Review and amend the Law on Citizenship, to ensure all categories of non-citizens can seek and achieve integration in a manner securing their rights, as well as Moldova's development needs.
- Remove arbitrary obstacles to integration, including access to internal and personal ID documents. Improve the quality of assistance to asylum-seekers, refugees and beneficiaries of humanitarian protection, by facilitating their access to social services, local integration programmes and simplified naturalization procedures.
- Consider a comprehensive administrative amnesty to adequately address the situation of *in-situ* stateless persons.
- Make durable progress in addressing xenophobia and related forms of intolerance. Address proactively the image of women migrants in society and media, debunking myths and showing the contribution they make to development.

Sources:

- 1-2: Extended Migration Profile of the Republic of Moldova (2007-2012), *not yet published*;
- 3: Labor Force Survey, Bureau of National Statistics, 2012;
- 4: Return migration and the socio-economic development of the Republic of Moldova, ILO Moldova, 2014.
- 5: Bureau for Migration and Asylum, Mol
- 6: Ministry of Information Technology and Communications
- 7: <http://bma.gov.md/content/6472>
- 8 : IMAS-Inc., Barometrul Socio-Politic 2012, Sondaj la Nivel Național, Septembrie 2012