

Migration to the EU: Some Aspects of Georgian Population Attitude and Baltic States Experience

TAMAR MERMANISHVILI

Faculty of Economics and Business, Tbilisi State University, 1 Chavchavadze Avenue, Tbilisi, Georgia

Email: tak.mermanishvili@gmail.com

Migration is one of important aspects of modern global world development, that includes many interrelated factors such as political, economic, social, cultural, etc. With recent trends, international migration is on the rise. Georgia has experienced a significant outflow of population caused by a sharp economic decline since the collapse of the Soviet Union in early 90s of 20th century. Many Georgian citizens migrated to the EU as labour migrants. After gaining the visa-free regime with the EU in 2017, the migration of Georgian citizens to the EU has increased. The reasons for emigration and immigration in Georgia do not differ from the rest of the world and are mainly caused by economic nature. The article presents the analysis and conclusions based on recent data gained by means of the sociological survey, which proves that the attitudes of Georgians towards migration mainly coincide with the approaches of Baltic States' citizens.

The survey results confirm that the experience of the Baltic States is valuable for Georgia. The outcomes demonstrate that it is more productive for Georgia to encourage the circular migration, which means promoting the employment of Georgian workers in the host countries, and later to support and facilitate their subsequent return to Georgia in order to apply the work experience and skills acquired abroad in Georgia.

Keywords: EU migration, labour migration, Georgian migration

INTRODUCTION

Migration is one of important aspects of modern global world development, which includes both positive and negative aspects, as well as many interrelated factors such as political, economic, social, cultural, etc. Migration is not just a recent phenomenon that is the result of global processes. On the contrary, this process has been a part of world history since the beginning of humanity. The phenomenon of migration was irreplaceable for human history, culture and civilizations.

Generally, it is rather challenging to precisely predict the factors that inspire migration flows due to the uncertainty in terms of economic, political and social developments. Therefore, conclusions and judgments shaping migration policy have to be based on current circumstances and situations. However, it is still more likely that economic migration is

prevalent. A certain category of people migrates for reasons related to family and education. In addition, there are contrasting causes of migration, such as forced and tragic causes, like armed conflict, political persecution, environmental catastrophe, and more. Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) make up a relatively small percentage of migrants, and yet their issue is topical among contemporary global problems.

With recent trends, international migration is on the rise. The number of international migrants worldwide is 272 million (World Migration Report 2020), where almost two-thirds are labour migrants. This figure is a very small percentage of the world population (3.5%), which means that the vast majority of people globally (96.5%) live in the country of origin. However, this figure is already higher than some forecasts for 2050, which was 2.6% of the world population or 230 million. For this reason, it is difficult to accurately predict the scale and pace of international migration, as migration is closely linked to acute events such as acute instability, economic crisis or conflict, as well as long-term trends like demographic change, economic development, and social and cultural changes.

Thus, the main reasons for migration are mainly related to socio-economic, political, educational and family reunification. In 2019, the reasons for migration of people with a residence permit in the EU (a total of 13,763,319 people) were as follows: family – 38%, job – 17%, asylum – 9%, education – 4% and other reasons for 32% (European Commission 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS ON MIGRATION

More than a hundred years ago, at the end of the 19th century, the German scientist Ernst Ravenstein (1885) was the first who scientifically analysed the phenomenon of migration and developed 'Laws of Migration', which were published in the influential journal named *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*. According to his work, the laws of migration are as follows: 1) movement between countries is constant; 2) most migrants do not travel long distances from their hometown; 3) countries differ significantly in the level of economic development; 4) migration is slow over time; 5) some emigrants return; 6) long-distance migration is conditioned only by the desire to get to industrialised countries and cities; 7) the population living in villages and towns is more oriented towards migration than the population living in urban areas; 8) due to a large flows of migrants, the population of megacities is growing; 9) development and strengthening of migration are accompanied by the development of the transport sectors, trade and industry processes of the countries; 10) women are more likely to migrate than men; 11) economy is considered to be the main reason for migration. Ravenstein's laws generated a remarkable number of empirical studies and many of his hypotheses were confirmed (Grigg 1997; McKinsey 2017; Taylor 2017; Esipova et al. 2018; Kerwin 2020; Chamie 2020).

Later the American scientist Everett Lee (1996) modified Ravenstein's idea to create the migration framework that includes factors related to migrants' area of origin and factors related to migrants' destination, as well as interventional barriers and personal factors. In this model, positive and negative factors were used to determine the attractiveness and unattractiveness of the countries of origin and destination. According to Lee, each place has its positive and negative factors. Positive factors are circumstances that affect people staying in the country, or attract people from other areas, while negative factors, on the contrary, cause to repel them. For instance, a high unemployment rate at the place of origin is a 'Push' factor and a high wage at the destination area is a 'Pull' factor (Lee 1966). The push factors are

factors related to the countries people leave and include factors such as poverty, poor living conditions, fear of political persecution, poor health care, loss of wealth, and natural disasters. The pull factors are the opposite of the push factors – they attract people to a certain place. Typical examples of pull factors are the following: more jobs, better living conditions, land and agriculture, political and/or religious freedom, higher education and welfare systems, better means of transportation and communication, better health care, stress-free environment and security.

Another important theoretical model of migration is ‘The Gravity Model of Migration’, developed by William J. Reilly (1929). This model is used in empirical analysis to study the spatial determinants of migration. The model emphasises the spatial aspect of migration flows. According to this model, migration is directly correlated with population size and is inversely proportional to the relationship between the origin and the destination region.

Studies and researches on international migration emphasise the importance of kinship and friendship networks in shaping and sustaining migration (Massey et al. 1987; Boyd 1989; Fawcett 1989). It is widely known that networks based on kinship friendships and community ties form a coherent structure of the migrant population.

In recent years, demand on the quantitative forecast of future migration flows and the measurement of migration dynamics has increased. Such forecasts are important for building the institutional capacity to anticipate expected migration flows and trends and prepare to respond to them accordingly. A significant work on this topic has already been done. To this end, quantitative assessments of the key factors that cause and encourage migration and their modification in relation to the level of countries’ economic performance as well as different characteristics of migration are studied (Migali et al. 2018). Many studies are dedicated to the problems that deal with the possible influence of migration on the EU member states’ population taking into consideration some demographic aspects, such as aging and labour resource efficiency (Disney et al. 2015; Migali et al. 2018; OECD 2016). Forecasting possible migration flows is quite problematic as the projection should estimate possible influences of many interconnected factors such as political, economic, cultural, social, demographic, environmental, psychological, technological, etc. These factors are influencing migration in different and unpredictable ways. Another difficulty arises from the problem that often it is hard to estimate in numbers the factors that clearly have a qualitative nature. On the other hand, often data on migrants are not accurate due to the problems of illegal migration or a different definition of migrant’s status that vary according countries. Hence, these difficulties cause the projection of diverse migration trends (OECD 2016). Therefore, policy-makers should take into consideration this uncertainty while developing policy on migration (Disney et al. 2015). Accordingly, qualitative approaches should be used in forecasting migration flows, where these uncertainties will be taken into account and considered as a key element in assessing expected trends.

GEORGIA’S MIGRATION PROFILE AND SIMILARITIES WITH THE BALTIC STATES

Georgia has experienced a significant outflow of population caused by a sharp economic decline since the collapse of the Soviet Union in early 90s of 20th century. Many of them migrated to the EU as labour migrants, though the reasons were numerous. Currently, Georgia is in an active phase of the implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU, which was signed in 2014. Hence, a more active and more intensive cooperation is underway that contributes to country’s present development and facilitates to unlock country’s economic

potential, which eventually supports Georgia to meet the required criteria for membership (Silagadze, Zubiashvili 2015; Bedianashvili 2016; Sepashvili 2018). Therefore, migration outflows might change in coming years.

It is interesting to compare Georgia with the Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as the similarities can be used to explain and in some cases to predict migration developments that might occur in Georgia; or the Baltic experience can be used to avoid negative consequences. Especially if we take into consideration that the Baltic States are already EU members, that is the ultimate goal for Georgia's foreign and domestic policy.

The Baltic countries are relevant to be compared to Georgia for several reasons. First, all of these countries are approximately the same in terms of the size of territory, population and main macroeconomic indicators (see Table 1 below). On the other hand, these countries and Georgia, as former Soviet countries, have the common soviet legacy in terms of legislative, cultural, social, economic and political historical background that lasted for the period of the second half of 20th century for the Baltic States and nearly 70 years for Georgia in 20th century.

Table 1. Key country indicators

Country	Size	Gini Index (2021) (World Population Review)	Population (Mln) (World Population Review)	GDP (ppp) per capita (2020) (Current International \$) (WB)	2021 Projected Real GDP (% change): (IMF)
Georgia	69,700 km ²	36.4	3,9807	14,863	3.5%
Lithuania	65,300 km ²	37.3	2,690	34,316	3.2%
Latvia	64,589 km ²	35.6	1,867	27,754	3.9%
Estonia	45,339 km ²	30.4	1,325	32,865	3.4%

Source: IMF, WB and WPR.

On the other hand, Georgia is in an active process of European integration, and has to path the way, which the Baltic States had already gone through to become the members of the EU. Currently, the Baltic States are the members of the EU. This aspect gives the Baltic State experience more value to Georgia to learn lessons that the Baltic States had already had and have clearer understanding for future possible developments.

In early 90s of 20th century, when Georgia gained independence, the country fell into the deep economic crisis due to the political turbulences in the country and in the region. This situation was also the same in the Baltic Region. The worsened economic and social conditions forced population to migrate. Unfortunately, this process took a huge scale and caused a demographic decline and massive migration (Tukhashvili 2018).

The reasons for emigration and immigration in Georgia do not differ from the rest of the world and are mainly related to economic, social and political changes. In this regard Georgia can be compared with the Baltic States which are characterised by a high level migration rate, that affects the demography of these countries towards the declining of the number of population. A significant outflow of the population from the Baltic Region was observed during the Soviet period, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union and relatively opening

the border to the rest of the world, the emigration has increased (Gečienė-Janulionė 2018). After the Baltic States became the members of the EU in 2004, which meant a free movement of people within the EU borders, the emigration from the Baltic states increased and rose markedly after the 2009 global economic crisis. As it is noted (Birka 2019), the Baltic States are characterised by a high emigration rate causing reduction and aging of the population. This situation leads to an approaching demographic crisis. United Nation's report estimates that by 2050 the population in Latvia will decrease by 22%, in Lithuania by 17% and in Estonia by 13%.

Georgia has gone through a long, difficult and comprehensive process before it was granted the visa-free regime with the EU in 2017. The process started on 30 November 2009, when Georgia and the European Union signed the joint declaration 'Partnership for Mobility' in Brussels, and at present the citizens of Georgia are granted the visa-free regime to enter the territory of the European Union/Schengen zone which is in force since 28 March 2017. From that date, any citizen of Georgia who holds a biometric passport can travel to the EU/Schengen area without a visa for a maximum of 90 days in any 180 days. Since this year, there has been an increase of Georgian citizen's migration to the EU. During 2017 and 2018, there were 580,608 visits from Georgia to EU (MoI 2019). Given the small size of the Baltic States, a significant number of Georgian citizens chose the Baltic States for immigration, compared to the rest of the EU. According to the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, in 2017–2018, the largest number of citizens (10,781 people) visited Lithuania, slightly less (9,066 people) Latvia and a relatively small number visited Estonia (2,189 people) (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. Number of visits from Georgian borders to the EU countries

	2017	2018	Total
Germany	55,722	86,688	142,410
Italy	27,003	56,476	83,479
Greece	28,482	43,214	71,696
Spain	11,318	31,695	43,013
France	9,795	31,585	41,380
Poland	15,304	29,483	44,787
Hungary	9,196	15,551	24,747
Austria	5,376	12,896	18,272
Check Republic	3,467	12,377	15,844
Cyprus	7,513	11,347	18,860
Netherlands	5,407	8,901	14,308
Lithuania	4,392	6,389	10,781
Belgium	2,234	6,195	8,429
Latvia	3,129	5,937	9,066
Switzerland	1,639	4,160	5,799
Romania	683	3,629	4,312
Sweden	1,454	2,898	4,352

Table 2. (Continued)

	2017	2018	Total
Portugal	845	2,001	2,846
Bulgaria	737	1,536	2,273
Estonia	705	1,484	2,189
Denmark	529	1,318	1,847
Croatia	282	835	1,117
Malta	422	807	1,229
Finland	233	681	914
Norway	253	616	869
Slovakia	94	584	678
Luxemburg	127	359	486
Slovenia	126	299	425
Iceland	66	114	180
Liechtenstein	4	3	7
Not shown	3,961	52	4,013
Total	200,498	380,110	580,608

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, mia.gov.ge

METHODOLOGY OF SURVEY

As we have already mentioned, the prediction of migration flows is important to politicians and the public to develop appropriate and relevant approaches to migration policy. Hence, qualitative aspects have the utmost significance in forecasting migration flows, as they represent a key element in assessing expected trends and, accordingly, in shaping migration management. Therefore, the Author initiated an experimental study to reveal the main tendency and trends that could further be used as a basis for more comprehensive survey.

The Author of the article conducted a sociological survey to reveal and determine the main reasons for Georgian population migration to the EU. A special questionnaire was developed by involving and consulting the Georgian experts and scientists working on migration. The questions were applied to determine the Georgian population's willingness, attitudes to migration and the problems they face. The survey was based on a random selection method and conducted using digital means of communication (social media, Facebook, Instagram, web platforms, phone interviews, etc.) to meet the COVID-19 Pandemic restrictions and bans on personal meetings. Based on the survey, the main trends of attitudes in Georgia regarding the phenomenon of migration to the EU were studied and assessed. The survey also paid special attention to potential migrants. The survey was implemented in the period of January–May 2021. As the study was experimental and the Author faced pandemic restrictions, a relatively small number of respondents (136 respondents) participated in the survey. 60% of the respondents are female, 98.5% are Georgians, 97% have high education and 97% have working experience in their native country.

MAIN RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents were asked relevant questions about their intention to migrate, since the purpose of the study was to find out how many Georgian citizens want to migrate to the EU and why. While answering, 66% of respondents are against the migration and just 34% are willing to immigrate to the EU countries. However, among the respondents, 31% of women and 39% of men wanted to emigrate. Consequently, the analysis of emigrants in the gender context allows us to conclude that the desire to emigrate is more prevalent in men than in women. Meanwhile, among them who are willing to immigrate, just 51% desired to immigrate to the EU member states. The main destination countries, which were preferred by the respondents, were Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland, Britain, Italy and Spain.

Georgian respondents were also asked the question what they consider to be a problem causing migration in their own country ('what are the problems in your home country that oblige you to migrate? (please, list)'), to which we received the following answers: low wages, a high unemployment, a sense of injustice and insecurity, education and employment prospects, a low quality education and income, fewer development opportunities, a low and inadequate pay and faulty service areas, poor political, social and economic circumstances, stressful and unfair environments, underestimation of knowledge and experience, and problems of self-realization. The survey on the reasons of migration from the Baltic states (Włodarska-Frykowska 2017) points to unemployment as the main reason for migrants that pushes them to leave their native countries and seek for a better job with a higher remuneration and a better life abroad. It is worth mentioning that the survey showed that the level of education of migrants varied and in some cases they were the so-called 'white collar workers' with higher education or the so-called 'blue-collar workers' with a certain working experience and skilled. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reasons for migration are approximately the same for Georgians and for the citizens of the Baltic States.

The majority of Georgian respondents, 40%, think that they will have problems and contradictions in the case of migration, while 31% think that there will be no problems or obstacles and 29% do not know (Figure). Just for some food for thoughts, the *Economist* (The Economist 2018) pointed that approximately 60% in the EU feel comfortable in social interactions with immigrants. This showing is 50% for Lithuanians, 41% for Latvians and 40% for Estonians. Meanwhile, the survey conducted by the Eurobarometer in the Baltic Region in 2019 revealed that the Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians regarded immigration as an important challenge

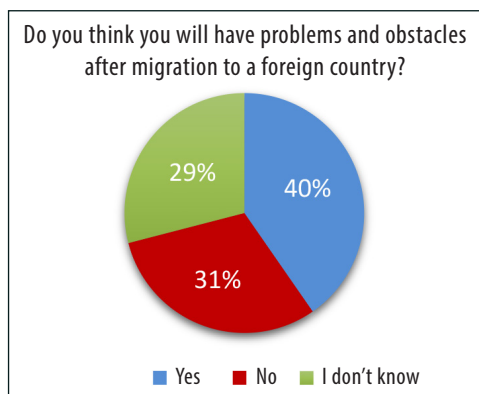


Figure. Respondents' assessment of emigration-related problems (survey results)

for the EU. This opinion was articulated by 52% of the Estonian respondents, 46% of the Latvian respondents and 41% of the Lithuanian respondents. The survey conducted in Lithuania (Janušauskienė 2018) points that, in general, people in Lithuania are keen to put first the negative consequences of migration rather than opportunities.

This data indicates that there is some hostile attitude towards migrants in the EU countries that is fairly estimated and predicated by Georgian respondents pointing on possible problems in the case of migration.

72% of the respondents know what kind of barriers they may face in the case of migration, while 28% do not know and 53% are more or less familiar with the legislation of the country they want to migrate to, 34% are not familiar with it, and 14% have relevant information about the legislation.

In order to reveal the main reasons for migration, additional questions were given to the respondents ('What is the main purpose for migration to foreign countries? (please, list)'). 58% of the respondents pointed that the main purpose was education, for 40% seeking for a better life condition was the primary goal and for 7% of respondents job opportunities offered abroad were attractive to migrate.

The analysis of respondents' responses reveals that the expectations from the emigration ('What do you expect from the immigration? Please specify: 1) material provision; 2) accumulation of experience; 3) gaining education; 4) other (please specify if needed)') are the following: 37% look for material provision, for 32% of the respondents it is accumulation of experience, for 28% of the respondents it is education, and 3% did not specify their expectations. 46% of the total number of respondents think that information about jobs or the services of job agents is desirable for making an emigration decision. The majority of respondents (67%), who wish to emigrate, believe that it would be beneficial for them to have information about jobs (job base) in the host country, or to use the services of an on-the-job agent.

The respondents were asked about their desires in the entering country in the case of migration ('What do you regard as important to have in the hosting country? Please specify: 1) appropriate economic conditions; 2) access to job base; 3) legal support; 4) working agents; 5) other (please specify if needed)'). 46% of them wish to have appropriate economic conditions, 32% access to job base, 14% legal support and 8% working agents in the destination country.

At the end of the survey, we asked the respondents if they would return home after solving their problem in the case of migration ('Will you return to your home country after your problem will be solved while immigration?'), and 86% from the total number of respondents answered in the affirmative, 10% did not know and 4% did not intend to return home. However, it should be noted that 71% of those wishing to immigrate think that they will return from emigration.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey data analysis proves that the attitudes of Georgians towards migration mainly coincide with the approaches of Baltic States' citizens. Thus, the experience of the Baltic States has an important value to Georgia to learn lessons that the Baltic States had already had and support Georgia to have clearer understanding for future possible developments.

The conducted experimental study is not enough to formulate the comprehensive national policy on migration, though it provides substantial information about the topics and trends for further research. Nevertheless, certain conclusions can be done based on the gained information.

The survey results showed that the majority of respondents (86%) planned to return to their homeland in the case of problem solved or fulfillment of their goals. This situation is important for the development of the national country strategy on migration, because citizens returning from abroad intend to use their acquired knowledge and work experience in the homeland. Therefore, it is necessary to create financial motivation for returning migrants in Georgia and thus promote the realisation of the knowledge gained by them in new business ideas or production processes. Financial incentive schemes may include preferential loans for starting a new business, or small grants for the purchase of certain production equipment or tax breaks.

Emigration should be encouraged through the promotion of circular migration, which means promoting the employment of Georgian workers in the host countries and their subsequent return to Georgia in order to apply the work experience and skills acquired abroad in Georgia. This circumstance will contribute to the development of existing industries and the introduction of innovations, as well as the development of innovative approaches. It is possible to give impetus to the development of new industries, which may eventually become a contributing factor to the economic development of the country.

In order to facilitate circular migration, it is desirable to establish the appropriate legal support, which includes signing of relevant agreements and treaties with the host countries, which will ensure the protection of labour rights of Georgian migrants and provide them with appropriate socio-economic conditions.

It is advisable to create a job database in the host countries and to set up an Employment Agent Service for Migrants to help migrants leaving Georgia to find a suitable employment abroad.

It is important to expand the opportunities for education abroad, which also includes internships in foreign companies to bring the acquired knowledge and theoretical approaches to practical application because of working in host country companies. This circumstance will increase the efficiency of studying abroad and will bring much more benefits to both those receiving education abroad and host foreign companies.

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TAMAR MERMANISVILI

Migracija į ES: kai kurie Gruzijos gyventojų požiūrio aspektai ir Baltijos šalių patirtis

Santrauka

Migracija yra vienas iš svarbių šiuolaikinio globalaus pasaulio vystymosi aspektų. Ji apima daug tarpusavyje susijusių veiksnių: politinių, ekonominių, socialinių, kultūrinių ir pan. Pastaruoju metu tarptautinė migracija auga. XX a. pabaigoje Gruzija išgyveno didelę migracijos bangą, kurią sukėlė staigus ekonomikos nuosmukis žlugus Sovietų Sąjungai. Daugelis Gruzijos piliečių persikėlė gyventi į ES kaip darbo migrantai. 2017 m. įvedus bevizį režimą su ES, Gruzijos piliečių migracija dar labiau išaugo. Emigracijos ir imigracijos priežastys Gruzijoje nesiskiria nuo likusio pasaulio ir jas daugiausia lemia ekonominiai tikslai. Straipsnyje pateikiama analizė ir daromos išvados, pagrįstos naujausiais sociologinės apklausos duomenimis. Jie įrodo, kad gruzinų požiūris į migraciją iš esmės sutampa su Baltijos šalių piliečių nuostatomis.

Apklausos rezultatai patvirtina, kad Baltijos šalių patirtis Gruzijai yra vertinga. Tikslinga skatinti apykaitinę migraciją, vadinasi, motyvuoti gruzinų darbuotojų įsidarbinimą priimančiose šalyse, vėliau remti ir palengvinti jų grįžimą į Gruziją, gimtojoje šalyje pritaikyti užsienyje įgytą darbo patirtį ir įgūdžius.

Raktažodžiai: ES migracija, darbo migracija, Gruzijos migracija