Executive Summary prepared by the SCMI Secretariat. See full text at the following link

An Assessment of Circular Migration Potential of Georgian Workforce in the EU was carried out with the initiatiave and order of the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) within the framework of the EU funded project "Support to Sustained Effective Functioning of the SCMI". The study aims at identifying the countries and occupations in the EU countries, that are suitable for development of circular migration schemes from Georgia.

Circular migration is an important aspect of cooperation between the EU and Georgia. As a form of legal migration, which benefits the recipient and sending countries, as well as the migrants, circular migration is deemed as a rather effective means for alleviating the risk of illegal migration and improving economic situation in the sending and receiving countries. Given these advantages, development of circular migration schemes to the European countries is high on the Georgian political agenda. However, this topic is still new. Georgia has only one completed and another ongoing project in this area[1]. In order to develop circular migration schemes from Georgia it is crucial to select strategic partner countries in the EU. Making this selection requires answering the following questions: a) which professions/vocations are demanded in the 27 EU member states? b) what is the profile of Georgian workforce? and c) which professional groups in Georgia have high potential for temporary labour migration in the EU member states? In order to answer these questions an analysis has been carried out using official statistical sources and labour market reports/studies both in the EU and in Georgia. State strategies and other relevant material has been studied as well. Based on the findings recommendations have been elaborated for policy-makers in Georgia.

Main Findings

EU member states are in dire need of qualified workers. The demand for labour force differs between the member states, however, common patters can be observed as well. Namely, there is an acute shortage of engineers, craftsmen, ICT and healthcare professionals across the EU. In the field of healthcare the demand is primarily concentrated on nurses, however, many countries are looking for qualified doctors with various specialization as well. Demand for certain vocations within the hospitality sector can also be found in number of member states. In terms of qualifications EU counties are primarily looking for people with vocational or higher education in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) field.

The demand for workers with vocational education should be particularly emphasized. While this kind of labour force is needed in almost all member states, some of them (Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Finland, Sweden and Croatia) have an exclusive focus on them. On the other hand, there is just a handful of countries (Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark and Luxembourg), which are only looking for highly qualified professionals. In other countries the demand for professionals is mixed.

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[1] The first project "Strengthening the development potential of the EU Mobility Partnership in Georgia through targeted circular migration and diaspora mobilisation" implemented from 2013 to 2016 and was implemented by Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM/GIZ) on the German side and the Public Service Development Agency (PSDA), the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia and the Georgian Small and Medium Enterprises Association (GSMEA). The second project "Temporary Labour Migration of Georgian Workers to Poland and Estonia" was implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in cooperation with the MoH from 2015 to 2017 and continues now within the framework of the EU funded project "Sustaining Border Management and Migration Governance in Georgia" (2017-2020).

16 out of 27 member states produce the official "labour shortage lists", which represent the list of occupations that are most demanded. In majority of these 16 countries the labour shortage lists are devised explicitly with the perspective of attracting labour immigrants with relevant background and qualifications. Apart from defining the shortage lists, the member states use other mechanisms of managing labour migration. Namely, in all the countries operate so called Labour Market Tests, which implies the responsibility of the employer prior to the recruitment of third country migrant to send the vacancy to the public employment service (PES). The employer can only proceed with hiring the third country citizen if the vacancy has been announced by PES and it was not filled by national of the respective member state or other member's states. On top of this certain countries use quota system (defining quotas for entry of third country migrants) and point-based systems (in this case potential migrant has to pass the test and accumulate minimum required score to qualify for the entry into the country).

Just like in the EU, STEM professionals are in huge shortage on Georgian labour market. The largest group of Georgian labour force has qualifications in the broad field of social sciences, which is least demanded in the EU member states. Nevertheless, detailed analysis of the Georgian labour force reveals some matching opportunities. Following groups of professionals have been examined in Georgian context: engineers, ICT professionals, healthcare professionals, technologists, mechanics, transport professionals, craftsmen and specialists in the hospitality sector. Assessment of the level of qualification of these professionals is beyond the scope of this study, however, existing data suggests that qualification problems exist for all of them. Respectively, the judgement about their migration potential is based on their availability in quantitative terms.

Craftsmen, hospitality sector workers and drivers have been identified as a primary target for inclusion in circular migration schemes. Number of professionals working in these areas greatly outnumber the number of individuals who are formally qualified for these jobs. This indicates that there is a high demand for such professionals in Georgia and job seekers (irrespective of their formal qualifications) flock into these sectors to find jobs. Respectively, they have accumulated considerable working experience and informal knowledge and can be retrained in a fairly short period of time according to the requirements of European employers.

Engineers, which have been identified as a second largest group in terms of formal qualifications in Georgia, have primarily received education in soviet times, which puts the correspondence between their qualifications and modern requirements under question. Unlike the first group of professionals discussed above, presumably, they would require much more extensive training to be employable in their sectors again. Certain occupations like nurses and food technologists are in high deficit in Georgia. Respectively, they should not be considered for circular migration. As for the ICT professionals and 11 doctors, they represent highly qualified professionals, who could find employment abroad without state support. In terms of the three occupational groups identified as a priority for migration following EU countries should be targeted first: Austria, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Finland, Sweden, Poland, Malta and Croatia.

Recommendations

Recommendations presented in this study are focused on four main areas. First of all, it is of crucial importance to continue regular monitoring of the labour demand in the EU member states. This function can be fulfilled by respective unit within the Department of Labour and Employment Policy at the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. Based on the analysis of general situation, demand for labour in the countries of high interest should be further explored. The public employment services of the respective countries

should be contacted and a matching study should be carried out, to understand the exact profile of workers required in these states. Secondly, further and deeper analysis of the Georgian workforce should be continued. Priority should be given to the group of specialists identified as having high potential for migration. Furthermore, it is of critical importance to improve the system of recognition of non-formal learning in Georgia, which would allow to formalize the qualifications of the vast number of workers in the priority areas. This on the other hand, would help them prove their credentials to the potential employers in the EU.

Successful implementation of the circular migration schemes requires involvement of private sector. They can have two primary functions: first of all, industry representatives can support state authorities in identification of the gaps on the Georgian labour market and conducting the matching analysis. Secondly and most importantly, agreements could be made about employment of the returning migrants. This would be a triple win situation benefiting the returned migrants, employers and the state.

Last but not least, circular migrants need certain kind of social security. For instance, their temporary employment in the EU member states should not disrupt their participation in the pension scheme in Georgia or any other contributory social security scheme. This issue should be reflected in the intergovernmental agreements to be made in the field of circular migration in the future.