

4.2 Georgia: Migration, a main risk towards sustainable demographic future

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4.2.1 Introduction

During the era of the Soviet Union the external migration in its classical meaning was negligible in Georgia since there were no population flows outside of the USSR in any direction. However, Georgia took part in inter-republican migration processes that could be considered as external migration. According to the official statistics since 1960 Georgia has predominantly become a country of emigration. In this specific year the out-migrants exceeded in-migrants by 16,800 people. Until 1990 the largest number of out-migration was recorded in 1975 – 25,500, while during the period of 1976-1990 an average negative balance comprised 17,600 people annually. However, due to a quite significant natural growth of population Georgia never experienced the population decline before the independence.

After the collapse of the USSR Georgia found itself in a completely new geopolitical and socioeconomic situation (Gachechiladze, R. 2011). As a transitional country from the South Caucasus and Middle East to Europe and Russia it became an emigration generating and immigrant recipient as well as a transit migration country. Unfortunately, Georgia did not succeed in evolutionary transformation of its political and economic space under the new circumstances. The dramatic and turbulent events such as the abrupt cut of economic links with the former Soviet republics and their enterprises a rapid deconstruction of the industrial sector, a loss of access to all the former Soviet markets, a hyperinflation and an abrupt separation from Soviet Ruble monetary zone accompanied by civil tensions and political unrest inside the country including ethno-political conflicts in two provinces – Abkhazia and South Ossetia had caused tragic collapse of the country almost immediately after the independence. The consequences of these processes were reflected in the patterns and trends of external migration as well.

4.2.2 General demographic trends and the role of international migration in Georgia

After the independence Georgia has undergone the most dramatic and intense decline of economy compared to the other countries of the post-socialist space. The decline was well reflected in the worsening of the major economic indices: from 1990 to 1994 GDP

produced in Georgia diminished almost 5-fold; in 1994 the total industrial product declined to a level of 1958, and total agricultural product to a level of 1945. Whereas in 1990 more than 0.5 million people were employed in the industrial sector (Chikava, L. 1997) 10 years later this number reduced to the tenth which actually means a deindustrialization of the country. (Gachechiladze, R. 2011). A significant part of the population remained unemployed. In 1990 an average monthly rate of inflation reached a 1.7%, in 1992 a 21.3%, and in 1994 a 56.3% (Archvadze, J. 1997). In 1994 the GDP per capita reduced to 500 USD, while before the break-up of the USSR it was as high as almost 6,000 USD – the highest among all the Soviet republics.

In the mid-1990s the process of differentiation of the population by income reached its peak: an income of the top 10% of population (i.e. the richest with the highest income) exceeded a 50-fold of that of bottom 10% (i.e. the poorest with the lowest income). Such a deep unbalance should be considered as somewhat extraordinary and troublesome since even a proportion of 10:1 is considered very critical by experts as. As a comparison in the late 1980s this balance was slightly more than 5:1 (Archvadze, J. 1997).

The above-described socio-economic circumstances have made definite impacts on demographical figures: population number and absolute number of births have significantly decreased; death rate has increased; the process of population aging has increased intensively and emigration from the country has reached frightening dimensions.

According to the data of the National Statistical Service of Georgia (Geostat) the process of population decline was permanent between 1992 and 2004 (see table 1). In the specified period the total population number declined by almost 20%. Such a decline took place mainly among population of active reproduction (20-29 years) and of active working age groups (15-64). Noticeably, the degree of realization of the fertility potential declined from 36.6% in 1989 to 25.5% in 2002 (Meladze, G. 2007).

In the recent years (2008-2012) the country experienced a slight population growth though it turned to decline again in 2013, fixing the total population number of 4,483.8 inhabitants.

Table 1. Dynamics of population number in Georgia during 1990-2013

Years	Population number ('000)	Years	Population number ('000)	Years	Population number ('000)
1990	5424.4	1998	4504.9	2006	4401.3
1991	5453.3	1999	4469.8	2007	4394.7
1992	5467.4	2000	4435.2	2008	4382.1
1993	5345.8	2001	4401.4	2009	4385.4
1994	4929.9	2002	4371.5	2010	4436.4
1995	4794.2	2003	4342.6	2011	4469.2
1996	4674.5	2004	4315.2	2012	4497.6
1997	4558.4	2005	4321.5	2013	4483.8

Source : Geostat

* Without population of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions since 1994 and 1993, respectively.

In spite of the increase of birth rate in the particular years a tendency of general decline is characteristic for the entire period between 1990 and 2012 (see fig. 1).

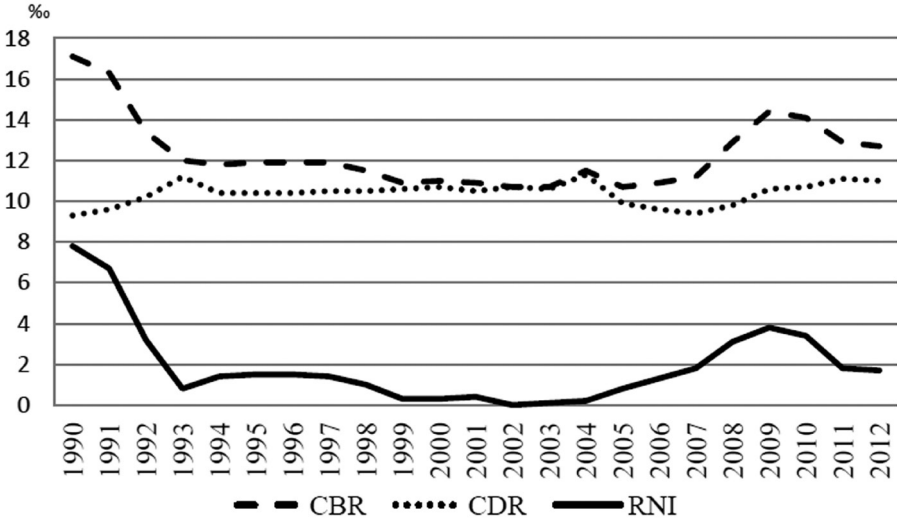


Figure 1. Dynamics of birth, death and natural increase rates in Georgia during 1990–2012

A drastic decline of crude birth rate was permanent during 1990–1994 when its value fell by 5.3 points. The number of the newborn in 2003 was half of that in 1990. However, in the years 2005–2009 a significant increase of absolute number of newborn was fixed, which caused an increase of crude birth rate by 3.7 points and counted at 14.4‰ in 2009 – the highest index since 1991. A part of Georgian society associated this fact with a positive impact of governmental socio-economic policy, and, even more strongly, with an incentive activity of the Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia Ilia II in 2008 who declared his willingness to baptize personally every third child and all the further ones if the family wishes it. Such suggestions may be acceptable to a certain extent but to explain significant birth growth only by the above-mentioned reasons does not seem convincing enough to us. Moreover, no comprehensive pro-natal policy has been carried out. The real reason of such growth should be rather searched in a complex and peculiar demographic system: in the specific years an impact on birth rate increase should be explained by structural changes among women in reproductive ages (Meladze, G. 2013). The highest proportion of newborn children in Georgia can be observed among mothers of the ages between 20 and 24. The increase in number of births has been observed since 2006 when women born in the period of 1982–1986 reached the age 20–24. Unfortunately, the potential of the above mentioned demographic wave is about to exhaust soon; consequently, its impact on natality will diminish and a decline of a number of births can be expected in the nearest future. Actually a process of birth decline has already started and the data presented in fig. 1 reveals exactly such a tendency since 2010.

In the meantime death rates have shown a tendency of growth in the recent years. In 2012 crude death rate counted at 11.0‰, one of the highest during 1990–2012.

The process of decrease of birth numbers together with a wide-scale emigration from Georgia strongly determines a growth of population aging index. In 2008 Georgia ranked 14th among the 25 demographically most aged countries worldwide (Kinsella, K. and Wan, H. 2009). According to Geostat data in 2013 the proportion of people of 65 and above this age in the population amounted to almost 14%.

As a consequence of negative demographic processes the natural growth of population has decreased significantly. During 1999–2004 the rate of natural increase was close to 0, and in 2002 was 0. This index was quite low also in 2013 making up only 1.7‰ (see fig. 1).

The tendencies seem equally pessimistic regarding the migration of population. As a result of acute socio-economic crises and instable political situation, a significant number of Georgian citizens have decided to leave the country forever, temporarily or for unknown period in order to secure their livelihood and that of their families. Because of extremely irregular and unreliable statistics regarding migration flows in 1990s, data published by the official statistical institution seems to us and to most experts, quite unrealistic (Meladze, G. 2002 and 2004). For instance, according to the official statistics in 1997 the negative migration balance in Georgia comprised only 500 persons. Such a situation has forced experts and scholars to apply alternative data sources and launch population/sociological polls when studying migration. From the second half of the 1990s there have been several publications (Meladze, G. and Tsuladze, G. 1997; Gachechiladze, R. 1997; Gugushvili, T. 1998) the results of which might be considered somewhat realistic. According to them a negative migration balance in years 1990–1997 counted from 620,000 to 1 million people, while the official statistics reported just about 219,800 emigrants from Georgia in the same period. For adjusting/rectifying migration data, after the population census of 2002 Geostat undertook a complicated process of data correction which resulted in fixing more realistic figures (see table 2).

Table 2. Net migration in Georgia, 1990–2012

Year	Number ('000)	Rate (per 1000)	Year	Number ('000)	Rate (per 1000)
1990	-13.2	-2.4	2002	-27.8	-6.4
1991	-22.6	-4.1	2003	-27.5	-6.4
1992	-139.3	-25.8	2004	5.5	1.3
1993	-140.9	-27.4	2005	76.3	17.5
1994	-142.6	-29.3	2006	-12.1	-2.8
1995	-127.2	-26.9	2007	-20.7	-4.7
1996	-123.1	-26.7	2008	-10.2	-2.3
1997	-59.9	-13.2	2009	34.2	7.8
1998	-39.2	-8.7	2010	18.1	4.1
1999	-36.3	-8.2	2011	20.2	4.5
2000	-35.2	-8.0	2012	-21.5	-4.8
2001	-32.6	-7.4			

Source : Calculations by the authors, based on Geostat data.

According to this statistics the peak of emigration occurred in the period of 1992-1996 when during an only 5-years period the negative migration balance from the country comprised 673,100 persons. As a comparison, in the 32-years period between 1960 and 1991, the negative migration balance in Georgia was only 474,500. The migration balance remained negative during 1997-2003 but its rate declined significantly.

A breakthrough in migration processes was observed in 2004 when for the first time after 1960 the number of visitors exceeded that of out-migrants by 5,500 persons. The next year, 2005, showed a 14-fold increase in positive migration balance, counting at 76,300 people. Such change in migration directions may be explained by an impact of the 'Rose Revolution' of 2003 on emigrant Georgians' hopes about promising perspectives of socio-economic development and possibilities of decent employment in Georgia. Such an attitude/perception of the situation pushed some of them back home. However, the trend of positive migration balance was soon replaced by fluctuation; e.g. in 2006-2008 Georgia the balance was negative again reversing to positive in 2009-2011, and negative by 21,500 people in 2012.

An explanation of such ups and downs in migration flows since 2004 might be explained by a fact that, despite certain economic improvements in the country a systemic breakthrough in enhancement of economic and production sectors was not achieved because of the inconsistency of governmental actions and a lack of well elaborated policy. A government policy of 'modernization' was neither clearly identified and oriented on final goals, nor based on solid in-depth economic calculations and analyses (Saqartvelos ekonomikuri transformacia, 2012).

Among the several reasons of out-migration from Georgia the main one is unemployment. According to Geostat the level of unemployment grew by 2.4 points between 2004 and 2010, and comprised 15.0% in 2012. However, experts assessed unemployment level much higher fixing 32.4% for the same year 2012 (Latsabidze, N. and Tsartsidze, M. 2013).

Affected by the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 and the world economic crises Georgia entered a phase of economic recession. The war caused tremendous economic loss expressed in dramatic reduction of growth rates/indices. In 2008 GDP growth comprised only 2.1%, compared to 12.3% of the year before (2007). The war caused significant ecological damages and aggravation of social background. A number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) rose almost by 160,000 people, and the government became obliged to provide them urgent social aid and newly built houses.

It is remarkable that Georgia is predominantly an importing economy (volume of import 5-times exceeds export), and thus its production system is weakly integrated in the world economic system. Interestingly enough, such an economic underdevelopment helped Georgia to overcome the global economic crises more easily compared to more developed countries. In addition to this, Georgia has received significant monetary aid of 4.5 billion USD, from the international community and financial institutions for reconstructing war damages and stabilizing economy. This donation appeared very efficient for stabilizing the national currency – Georgian Lari (GEL) and for keeping growing economic trends.

Due to the above-described circumstances the fixation of positive migration balance in years 2004, 2005, 2009-2011 causes certain doubts. These doubts are strengthened

by studies of UN experts who report on a negative average of annual external migration balance comprising 30,000 persons in Georgia in the years 2005–2010. The same source indicates even higher negative average annual migration balance during 2000–2005 counting at 62,000 persons. These average figures obviously are deviated from migration rates in the particular years but they clearly indicate that apparently a balance of external migrations stayed negative during the whole period. Interestingly, the studies and assessments of Georgian experts (e.g. Tsuladze, G., Maglaperidze, N., and Vadachkoria, A. 2012) prove the same fact.

According to the UN experts in 2005-2010 among all the post-Soviet countries Georgia had the highest negative average rate of external migration; it comprised -11.5 per 1000 persons (see fig. 2).

The latest Geostat data reports on a negative migration balance in Georgia equals to 21,500 people. In our opinion, taking into consideration the quite unattractive socio-economic conditions with no perspectives in the country retaining of negative trends in external migration can be expected in coming years.

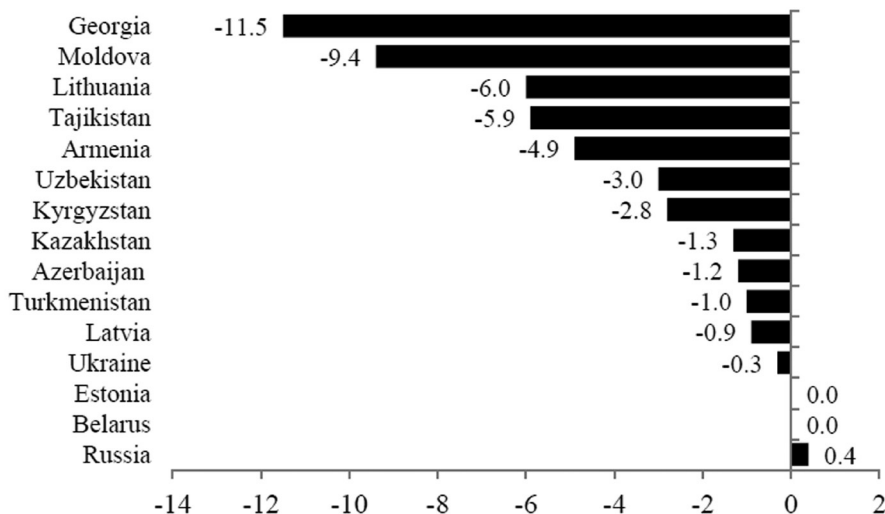


Figure 2. Average annual rate of external migration (per 1000 persons) in the ex-Soviet countries in 2005–2010

4.2.3 Main receiving and sending countries, role of V4 or EaP countries in international migration of Georgia

After the independence migration rates and its geography have undergone dramatic changes; significant shifts occurred in age, sex and social composition of migrants.

According to the first and only population census in independent Georgia, launched in 2002, the largest group of emigrants has moved to Russia (64.5%) which was mainly

determined by geographic vicinity, by traditional links with Russian population, by the ability to communicate in Russian language and understanding the way of life of local population. A proportion of emigrants to Greece was also significant (16.4%). Other attractive countries for Georgian out-migrants were: Germany, USA, Ukraine, Israel, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Spain and France respectively. The listed 10 countries concentrated almost 96% of all Georgian emigrants. As far as the Visegrad group (Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary) and Eastern neighbourhood countries are concerned (Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova), their total share comprised 2.3%. (see fig. 3).

Based on the Geostat research of 2008, vectors of emigration have significantly changed since 2002. Although emigration to Russia has dramatically decreased (to 40.2%) to be explained possibly by the introduction of visa regime from Russia since 2000, the latter anyway retained leadership among all other countries in receiving Georgian emigrants (see fig. 3).

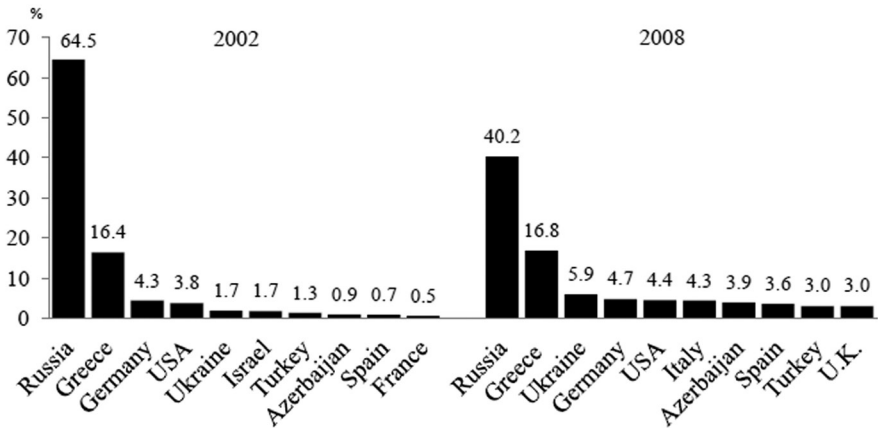


Figure 3. Distribution of emigrants by the countries of destination

After Russo-Georgian war of 2008 the relations between Russia and Georgia further aggravated; Georgia left CIS, cut diplomatic relations with Russia and the visa regime became extremely tough. Actually, Georgian citizens lost their right to enter Russia without special permission. Nowadays, people who wish for some reason to enter Russia but are not allowed to do so, usually use Belarus as a transit country because the latter has visa free regime with both Russia and Georgia.

In the meantime a share of emigration from Georgia increased to Ukraine, Turkey and Azerbaijan. A role of western European countries like Italy, Spain and UK has also become increasingly important. In 2008 a share of Georgian emigrants to the top 10 European countries and USA comprised 36.8%, compared to 25.7% in 2002. A share of Visegrad countries rose up to 6.9% in 2008 which is 4.6 point higher than in 2002. Until recently the Czechia was an exception among Visegrad members in terms of receiving emigrants from Georgia (0.3% of all emigrants), while Ukraine is the leader among the Eastern partnership countries – 5.9%.

Ukraine seems to have partially replaced Russia as an attractive destination for Georgian emigrants especially after tightening a visa regime. In addition, Ukraine for its geographical position is often used by illegal Georgian migrants for entering the European countries. In 2012 10.3% of all illegal emigrants from the former Soviet countries, who stopped at the Ukrainian border, were Georgian citizens.

Since 1990s radical changes in sex composition of external migrants from Georgia have been observed. Georgian emigration during the Soviet period mainly consisted of men migrating to Russia and Ukraine in order to be employed in seasonal or construction works, which lead to reinforced gender norms placing the responsibilities for economic provision upon men and the responsibilities for domestic provision upon women (Hofmann, T. and Buckley, C. 2011). A public opinion of that time did not appreciate women's participation in emigration on the basis of traditional Georgian values.

However, after the independence triggered by grave socio-economic circumstances and total unemployment a share of women out-migrants grew steadily. Interestingly, the society does not consider such a situation as deviation any more. "The number of Georgian women emigrating to Greece, Germany, and USA is significantly higher than that of men..." (Labour Markets and Employability, 2011).

According to the all Georgian population census of 2002 a proportion between men and women emigrants was 58.7% vs 41.3%, and it slightly changed by 2008 – 56.6% vs 43.4%, proving the growth of a share of women.

The above-mentioned census reported that 12.2% of all emigrants were children of age under 15, whereas a study of 2008 revealed a drastic decrease of this age group in external migrations (see tab. 3). This should be explained by a fact that in the 1990s Georgians used to leave the country with the entire family and this trend apparently has seriously diminished. During the recent years people have tended to leave the country for working, studying or for other purposes alone, without families.

Table 3. Composition of Georgian emigrants by age groups

Age group	2002			2008		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
<15	12.2	11.0	13.9	5.5	7.0	3.5
15–49	72.9	75.5	69.1	77.1	78.5	75.3
50–64	11.4	10.9	12.1	15.4	11.8	20.0
65+	3.5	2.6	4.9	2.1	2.7	1.2

Source: For 2002 – calculations by the authors, based on Saqartvelos mosaxleobis 2002 tslis pirveli erovnuli sakoveltao agtseris shedegebi. 2004;

For 2008 – Geostat

One should negatively assess a fact that between 2002 and 2008 significantly grew (by 8.2 points) a share of emigrants in working ages (15-64 years), comprising 92.5% in 2008. This fact primarily reveals serious problems in the employment sector of Georgia.

Noticeably, in 2008 a share of men emigrants in working age comprised 90.3% of all emigrants, and that of women – 95.3%; the identical rates in 2002 were consequently 86.4% and 81.3%. Hofmann and Buckley (2008) rightly explain this fact: "the shift in migration destinations towards countries with a higher demand for female work force, such as Europe, Turkey, and Israel marked a significant change with regards to gender and Georgian emigration".

As for the emigrants aged 65 and older, their share in migrations has always been insignificant.

According to the 2002 census data, the major part of emigrants was comprised by persons with higher or unfinished higher education (29.0%) and completed secondary education (32.6%). The study of 2008 phenomena proves that the share of these educational groups has further increased, consequently up to 33.1% and 41.0% (see tab. 4). At the same time the share of people with professional education slightly decreased (by 0.7 points) and, more significantly, the same is true for people with education status lower than secondary.

Table 4. Composition of emigrants by educational level

Education level	2002			2008		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
Higher and unfinished higher	29.0	29.7	28.0	33.1	30.6	36.3
Professional school	15.1	14.8	15.5	14.4	11.9	17.7
General secondary (completed)	32.6	33.9	30.7	41.0	45.0	35.8
Lower than general secondary	20.4	18.8	22.7	7.8	8.5	7.0
Illiterate	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.7	1.1	0.3
Unknown	2.8	2.7	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9

Source: For 2002 – calculations by the authors, based on Saqartvelos mosaxleobis 2002 tslis pirveli erovnuli sakoveltao agtseris shedegebi. 2004;

For 2008 – Geostat

As far as the educational status of emigrants by gender is concerned in 2002 the difference between male and female population was not significant regarding people with higher and professional education, while the number of women with lower educational status greatly exceeded the same group of men. The situation had somewhat changed by 2008 – a share of men with higher and uncompleted higher education slightly increased (by 0.9 points), while a share of women in the same status group grew drastically – by 8.3 points, and, as a consequence, a share of the latter in this educational group comprised 36.3% exceeding the share of men. A share of emigrant men with professional education decreased between 2002 and 2008 while that of the women increased. Noticeably, a share of both gender groups decreased among emigrants with low educational status.

The official statistics of UNHCR provides a valuable source on asylum seekers for analysing vectors of out-migration flows. According to this source in 1991 for the very first time 8 Georgian citizens applied for asylum to the Czech government; in the early-1990s Georgian emigrants usually used Czechia as a transit country to settle Austria and Germany.

UNHCR reports that during 2000-2012 the number of asylum seekers from Georgia to Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland was permanently high. Since 2004 the number of asylum seekers to Greece has also increased (see tab. 5).

Table 5. Number of asylum seekers from Georgia* in 2000–2012

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Austria	34	597	1921	1525	1744	955	564	400	514	975	370	261	300
Belgium	1227	481	313	302	211	256	232	156	222	327	336	347	386
Cyprus	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	759	886	336	352	122	73	41	17	10
Czech Rep.	103	1290	678	319	200	52	41	45	39	33	5	6	6
Denmark	149	34	44	29	32	10	16	6	25	17	15	19	75
France	373	1067	1554	1726	1563	772	283	177	376	471	1354	1646	2546
Germany	801	1220	1531	1139	793	480	235	183	233	560	664	471	1298
Greece	1	0	8	48	323	1897	428	1559	2241	2170	1162	1121	893
Hungary	27	29	91	205	288	114	175	131	165	116	76	21	12
Ireland	55	97	103	133	130	151	171	174	180	88	53	15	18
Latvia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	17	**	**	176	106
Lithuania	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13	7	n/a	235	202	296
Netherlands	291	298	216	116	73	213	156	66	64	412	587	189	n/a
Norway	70	205	284	180	82	15	11	**	19	47	85	49	109
Poland	71	92	39	30	47	40	16	14	54	4182	1083	1442	2960
Slovakia	0	27	58	582	985	244	209	134	112	98	66	32	42
Spain	170	99	74	55	43	38	19	14	62	36	48	12	9
Sweden	59	166	439	537	403	183	134	204	211	359	291	280	748
Switzerland	179	273	687	756	731	397	287	221	389	536	531	281	614
U.K.	235	135	225	150	150	125	80	60	85	95	75	41	28
USA	230	196	178	169	146	87	61	42	84	123	58	72	39

Note: * In the countries, listed in the table, more than 100 persons applied for asylum during the specified period.

** 1-4 persons.

Source: UNHCR

The analysis of the table reveals that the Czechia was a main destination for Georgian asylum seekers in 2000-2002, which was replaced by Slovakia in 2003-2007, and Hungary in 2008. Since 2009 up today Georgian asylum seekers in Poland began to prevail and

in 2012 its share in Visegrad countries comprised 98% (see fig. 4). This shift is determined by the decision of the Polish government to ease from 1st January 2011 start-up of employment procedures for the citizens of Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. All in all, from 2000 to 2012 16,900 Georgian citizens requested asylum to Visegrad countries, out of which 59.5% applied to Poland, 16.6% – to Czechia, 15.3% – to Slovakia, and only 8.6% – to Hungary.

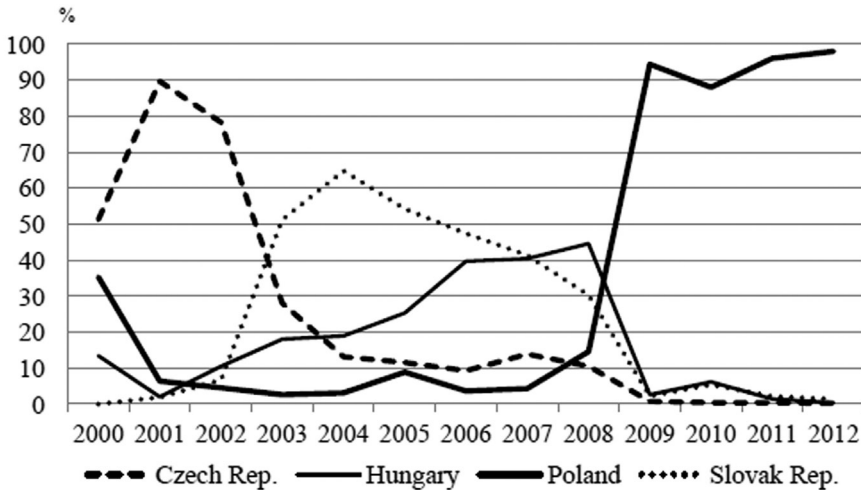


Figure 4. Asylum seekers from Georgia to Visegrad countries in 2000–2012

4.2.4 Special characteristics influencing international migration in Georgia

The hope of the Georgian society in the first years of independence that national economy would grow systematically and there will be a smooth transition towards market system has not met the expectations. In reality, due to the events described above in the introduction, the collapse of Georgia had started almost immediately with the independence and lasted for 5 years. Some experts prove that it was the most overwhelming and deepest crises among all the Eastern European and former-Soviet republics. Statistics illustrate the depth of the crises (see tab. 6) demonstrating that real GDP in 2000 made only 29% of real GDP in 1990. A significant part of economy has moved to shadow sectors.

In 1990-1993 GDP index fell annually on average by 28%, and considering ppp (purchase price parity) per capita, it reduced from USD 4,433 to USD 1,437. After the strong economic fall of 1990-1994 there was a short period of relative recovery in 1995-1998 when the income of population, salaries and pensions grew, small and medium business started to work and unemployment decreased. However, the global currency crises negatively affected the situation in Georgia –the pace of growth reduced and up to 2004 Georgia developed at low speed. Anyway, there was some progress in economic development: if

Table 6. The transition recession in post-Soviet and Visegrad countries

Country	Consecutive years of output decline	Cumulative output decline (percent)	Real GDP, 2000 (1990 = 100)
Central Southern Europe and the Baltics	4	23	107
Czechia	3	12	99
Hungary	4	15	109
Poland	2	6	144
Slovak Republic	4	23	105
Armenia	4	63	67
Azerbaijan	6	60	55
Belarus	6	35	88
Estonia	5	35	85
Georgia	5	78	29
Kazakhstan	6	41	90
Kyrgyz Republic	6	50	66
Latvia	6	51	61
Lithuania	5	44	67
Moldova	7	63	35
Russian Federation	7	40	64
Tajikistan	7	50	48
Ukraine	10	59	43
Uzbekistan	6	18	95

Source: Schulze, C. 2002.

in 1994 the volume of economic production in Georgia comprised only 18.7% of the 1990 level, in 2003 it grew up to 73%; which is, however, still lower than pre-independence rate.

The economy of Georgia didn't prove to be viable and resistant to outside shocks when the currency crises occurred in Russia in 1998 and in Turkey in 2000; both seriously damaged Georgian economy as a result of inconsistent macroeconomic government policies (Saqartvelos ekonomikuri transformacia. 2012), incomplete financial reforms and non-transparent financial system supportive to corruption. It is noteworthy that in 1999 the Transparency International ranked Georgia as low as the 84th on a list of 99 countries according to the Corruption Perception Index.

Poverty reached its peak in 1994 comprising 80%; afterwards it gradually reduced. According to the official data it reached 60% in 1995 and 46% in 1997. In the following years poverty level showed a slight annual increase reaching 52% in 2002 (Ekonomikuri ganvitarebisa da sigaribis dadzlevis programa. 2003).

It is worth mentioning that, according to official statistics hyperinflation three times higher in Georgia than the average level in the post-Soviet countries, and recession had not affected significantly unemployment level. This fact was explained by workforce moving to agricultural sector. Whereas in 1990 a share of agricultural employees comprised 26%,

in 2003 this figure grew up to 51%. However, the main reason for such an increase was definitely the land reform which granted small land parcels (up to 1.25 ha) to hundreds of thousands of families who automatically became recorded as self-employed in agriculture. Curiously, the total share of self-employed among all employed population made up 70%.

In reality the lack of mechanization, the unavailability of fertilizers, seeds and other materials for agricultural production together with the inaccessibility of credits and the predominantly subsistence character of farming on tiny land parcels didn't allow the majority of farmers to generate sufficient income from their land. Consequently, many of them gave up agricultural activities and have "joined" the unemployed population, while others preferred to emigrate from the country.

As Georgian legislation distinguishes self-employed (who is considered as employed in general) from the unemployed in the observed period unemployment rate officially was recorded as low as 11-14%. In the meantime, between 1990 and 2003, mostly because of unemployment, more than 1 million citizens left Georgia cardinally changing ethnic composition of the Georgian population.

According to the 2002 population census Georgians comprised the largest share (60.9%) of emigrants among all ethnic groups followed by Armenians (11.1%), Azeris and Greeks (7.7% each).

For in-depth description of migration process usually Emigration Intensity Index (EII) is used; it shows the number of representatives of particular ethnicity migrated per 1,000 persons of the same ethnic group. In case of Georgia the highest emigration intensity was fixed for Greeks, which 2.7-times exceeded EII of the second-ranked Jews. Quite high index was fixed also for Ossetians (see fig. 5). Although migration data contains serious shortcomings (Tsuladze, G. 2005), we assume that the general trends are correctly reflected in this statistics.

During 1989-2000 the population of Georgia has undergone dramatic changes regarding its ethnic composition. Except for Georgian and Azeri population all other ethnic groups showed decrease in terms of both absolute and relative numbers. Significant reduc-

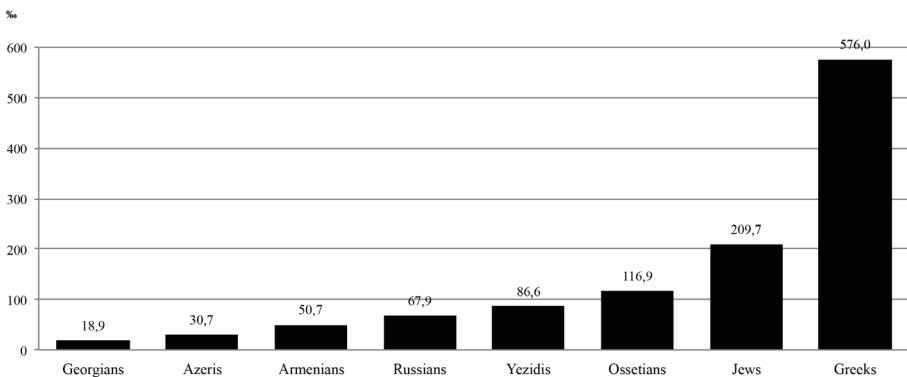


Figure 5. Distribution of emigrants by ethnicity and EII in Georgia, based on the 2002 population census

tion was observed among Greek, Jewish and Russian population. Although an absolute number of Georgians also decreased, their share, due to more dramatic reduction of other ethnicities (in relative terms), grew up to 84%. Such a high share of Georgian ethnicity in the population of the country has never been recorded by the population censuses since the very first one in 1897. Also for the first time, Azeri population became the second largest ethnic group in Georgia (see tab. 7).

Table 7. Ethnic composition of the population of Georgia, according to 1989 and 2002 population censuses

Ethnicities	Number of population		%	
	1989	2002	1989	2002
Georgian	3787.4	3661.2	70.1	83.8
Abkhaz	95.9	3.5	1.8	0.1
Ossetian	164.1	38.0	3.0	0.9
Armenian	437.2	248.9	8.1	5.7
Russian	341.2	67.7	6.3	1.5
Azeri	307.6	284.8	5.7	6.5
Greek	100.3	15.2	1.9	0.3
Jew	24.8	3.8	0.5	0.1
Others	142.5	48.5	2.6	1.1
Total	5400.8	4371.5	100.0	100.0

Source: Saqartvelos mosaxleobis 2002 tslis pirveli erovnuli sakoveltao agtseris shedegebi. 2004

Geography of out-migration of the population of Georgia, who predominantly travelled to Russia in the 1990s, has significantly widened and diversified. Emigration of persons of Russian ethnicity was mainly determined by the economic collapse in Georgia; most of them were employees in the industrial sector, and after stoppage of most of the industrial enterprises the majority of them decided to return to their historical homeland in search of new job opportunities. Another significant factor for emigration of Russians was the inability of the large majority of them to speak any other language than Russian. Already in 1989 the population census showed that 74.1% of the Russians in Georgia spoke only Russian language (Saqartvelos mosaxleobis erovnuli shemadgenloba. 1991), and after the independence of Georgia, in spite of the fact that the Georgian language was declared as the only state language the majority of Russian ethnic origin failed to study the official national language. This circumstance obviously served as an additional ‘push factor’ for emigration of Russians from Georgia.

In the meantime the main destination of Azeri emigrants was Russia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. For economic reasons most Armenians also choose Russia to emigrate to, while Greeks and Jews preferred returning to their historical homelands. Many of those Ossetians who resided in Tskhinvali region (former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast) fled to Russia in the early-1990s pushed by ethno-political conflicts, while others, living in the villages of the eastern Georgia, stayed in the country.

In the recent years, as a consequence of the global crises, the working and living conditions of migrants seriously deteriorated in many countries; it became extremely hard to find an occupation with decent remuneration abroad. These circumstances forced many migrants to try to look after better conditions in other countries or return home. Unfortunately, Georgian statistics do not provide official data about return migrants. There is another source – Geostat study of 2008 that reports on 39.5% of return migrants to Georgia because of family reasons, 11.5% because of expiration of work contract, and 7.4% due to accomplished studies abroad.

It should be emphasized that financial situation of return migrants has deteriorated dramatically. Due to unavailability of working places and quite low salaries in Georgia, return migrants have faced difficulties in adapting to local conditions and in integrating into the mainstream society which, in turn may push them to emigrate again.

Based on his researches Tukhashvili claims (Tukhashvili, M. 2013) that 39% of returnees plans and prepares for a new trip abroad, 27% considers such an option realistic, and 34% do not plan to leave Georgia again.

In order to regulate problems existing in the field of migration, since 2003 IOM has assisted Georgian citizens who want to return home voluntarily from EU countries. The assistance package covers free travel, provision of temporary accommodation, support for starting up small businesses, provision of professional assistance and health aid. Up to day 1,600 Georgian citizens have acquired such assistance for reintegration.

Since 16th December 2010 a project „Targeted Initiative for Georgia” has been in progress, aiming at ‘supporting of Georgian returning migrants and implementation of EU-Georgia readmission agreement’. The project is supported by EU and involves 15 institutions from 9 countries (Belgium, Czechia, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Sweden) and IOM. Together with Georgian representatives of IOM and members of local government structures, efforts are being made to enhance processes in the field of external migrations in Georgia. The project is led by the Ministry of Interior of the Czechia, and its total budget counts at 3,020,000 Euros. In the framework of this project on 13th May 2011 in the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia a Mobility Centre was established. The Mobility Centre has registered 1,159 returnees by now, of which 232 have returned under the readmission agreement, 342 – forcibly, and 585 – voluntarily. This number includes 2 migrants from Switzerland and 4 from Norway who according to the bilateral readmission agreement operating as a part of the Georgia-EU readmission agreement (Chelidze, N. 2013).

The above-described and similar measures (such as projects, programs, ad-hoc events, etc.) might help smoothening the problems existing in the sphere of external migrations in Georgia; however, it could hardly cardinally change the situation. The official statistics of 2012 reported 21,500 negative migration balances from the country: it is most likely that the first measure to stop and reverse this threatening process should be the creation of working places in the economic sector of the country and securing employment for a large number of people. This is the primary task of the State, on the one hand and of the local businesses on the other.

4.2.5 Brief migration policy review

The situation of Georgia in the geographic region, which is characterized by tense and unstable political processes calls for an urgent and intensive monitoring and control of migration flows and management of migration processes in the country.

From the beginning of the 1990s the Georgian government attempts were made to put migration processes in legal frameworks. In 1993 several laws were adopted: 'Georgian law on immigration' (abolished on 1st June 2006), 'Georgian law on emigration' (abolished on 1st February 2009) "Georgian law on temporary entrance, stay and leave for foreigners" (abolished on 1st June 2006). Laws on "Rules on leaving and entering Georgia by Georgian citizens" and "On Georgian citizenship" have undergone multiple changes over the time.

In the Decree of the President of Georgia of 17th November 1997 a conception of migration policy was approved. Although this document defined quite well the purposes and principles planned to introduce an efficient management system of migration process no positive outcomes have been achieved.

The regulation of migration processes is one of the important obligations for Georgia on the basis of the cooperation with EU countries. In this respect the signing of the "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement" between Georgia and 15 EU countries in 1999 was a very important step. In chapter 8 of this agreement measures of control and prevention of illegal immigration is discussed and emphasized. For successful implementation of this agreement the enforcement of European Union Action Plan of European Neighbourhood Policy from 2006 was extremely important as this document defines cooperation priorities between EU and Georgia.

Per request of the Georgian government, IOM in 2007 conducted an assessment of migration management in Georgia. The detailed analysis showed that the existing migration management policy needed strong improvement as 'the current migration realities and trends are at times not adequately covered by the existing legislation of Georgia'... Additionally '... the legal provisions need to be defined in a clearer manner, and, advisably with an enhanced orientation towards EU requirements. These issues call for strong leadership and comprehensive policies supported by appropriate legislation and by-laws, an effective, trained and equipped migration management administration as well as efficient practices' (Review of Migration Management in Georgia. 2008).

Based on the proposal of Euro commission of 16th May of 2007, a program "Partnership for Mobility" was initiated. By the decision of EU Council of 5-6 June 2008, Georgia was nominated as a partner country, and on 30th November of 2009 in Brussels a joint declaration "Partnership for Mobility" was signed. The mentioned declaration was an important document for Georgian citizens for getting legal residence and work in the EU countries. On top of this, it addressed to such important issues as: migration management, readmission, diaspora, reintegration, document security, creation of unified migration database and data exchange with EU, labour market and recognition of professional qualification. In the framework of this declaration the cooperation between Georgia and

EU officially started on 16th February 2010. 16 countries of EU together with Euro commission, expressed their willingness to actively cooperate with Georgia.

The initiative “Partnership for Mobility” helps Georgian citizens in EU countries also by means of „Circular migration”, which envisages legal employment in Europe for a certain period, training and provision of educational opportunities, and eventual return to Georgia. In case of efficient implementation of this program it would promote the mobility of Georgian population, on the one hand, and the integration process between Georgia and EU on the other. As far as the current situation is concerned Georgia signed an agreement on circular migration with France in November 2013. According to the agreement it will be possible to employ legally up to 500 Georgian citizens in France. Additionally it includes an exchange and qualification improvement of up to 150 students and young specialists. In the near future it would be necessary to arrange similar agreements with those countries which are hosting the large numbers of Georgian emigrants (e.g. Russia, Greece, Ukraine, Germany, UDSA, Italy, Turkey).

On 13th October 2010 a Governmental Committee of Migration Issues was created aiming at regulating different acute problems of migration management. The commission is chaired by the Ministry of Justice and co-chaired by the Ministry of Interior. The Committee acts as a platform for discussing current problems regarding migration. The Commission is analytically and administratively supported by a Secretariat that is created in the Agency of State Services Development of the Ministry of Justice recommended and supported by the EU. Several thematic groups are elaborating approaches and strategies concerning reintegration, problem resolution of persons without citizenship, and migration policies. The Commission involves advisors from international agencies active in Georgia and NGOs which provide an additional consultancy.

On 11th March 2011 between Georgia and EU an agreement on visa facilitation and readmission was enforced. It simplifies mobility of the Georgian population with EU countries.

Just recently, on 13th March 2013 the Migration Strategy of Georgia was approved. Its adoption reveals a political will of the Georgian government to better regulate migration processes in the country, and therefore, this achievement must be welcomed. Noticeably, it is the first official strategic document in the field of migration since 1997; it might help a more efficient management of migration processes, as well as the fulfilment of international obligations (Georgia and migration. 2013).

The purpose of the Migration Strategy is an improvement of migration management in terms of providing national security, preventing illegal migration and trafficking, securing rights of migrants and their social defence, and assuring efficient use of positive consequences of migration for socio-economic development, respectively. It aims at implementation of the best international practices for setting up viable national migration policy, and strengthening mutual beneficial international cooperation in the field of migration. The strategy emphasizes the necessity of implementation of a liberal visa regime in the country in order to attract additional foreign investments it wishes to enhance tourist infrastructure and to assure sustainable economic development of the country. At the same time the challenges coming with dramatic increase of number of migrants and risks of uncontrolled migration should be eradicated.

The objective of the Georgian government according to the Migration Strategy is to fully meet demands and interests of the Georgian population regarding migration and to secure interests of international community. It considers gender equality, guarantees involvement of civil sector, academic stratum and other stakeholders in decision-making. The principal objective of the Strategy is a further approximation and integration of Georgia into Euro-Atlantic structures.

It is noteworthy that the Strategy declares recognition of education acquired abroad by emigrants for full-scale reintegration of Georgian citizens in the mainstream society.

The President of Georgia, several ministries and the Governmental Commission on Migration Issues take responsibility for successful implementation of the Migration Strategy.

Citizenship regulations wish to prevent uncontrolled and chaotic in-migration and to support the implementation of desirable migration policies.

Hence, in spite of obvious difficulties and shortcomings the migration policy in Georgia gradually improves. The legal acts adopted during the recent years will help (and has already helped) putting migration processes into legal framework by legalizing migrations and integrating returning migrants in the society. The aspiration of Georgia to harmonize its environment with EU regarding migrations is a part of Georgian Euro-integration policy that has still a long way to go, but already brings some positive results that is crucial for socioeconomic development of the country in the long-run.

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