

## 4.3. Moldova: country of mass labor outmigration

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### 4.3.1 Introduction

Moldova is a country in Eastern Europe, bordered by Romania to the west and Ukraine to the north, east, and south. The territory is 33.8 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, of which about 4.0 km<sup>2</sup>, is under the control of the unrecognized Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR), internationally known as Transnistria.

According to official figures, the population amounted to 3.56 million at the beginning of 2014. In addition, about 0.51 million people were estimated to reside in the territory of Transnistria. Thus, the total population, according to official figures, is about 4.07 million. However, the number of the actual population residing in the country may be much smaller if we take into consideration the volume of migration flows.

Migration processes have a huge, mostly negative, impact on the socio-economic and demographic situation in Moldova. A mass exodus of the active population leads to the degradation of the human potential of the country due to brain drain and brain waste as well as to the decline and ageing of the population. The loss of young, educated and enterprising professionals has become a serious obstacle to the further progressive development of the national economy and business expansion initiatives.

The aim of this report is to assess the extent and characteristics of migration in Moldova and their impact on the socio-economic situation in the country.

### 4.3.2 General overview of demographic and migration trends in Moldova

Moldova has been characterized by a natural population decline over the past 15 years. In the first half of the 2000s, the number of deaths, on average, exceeded that of natural births by 4-7 thousand annually. Over the last 2 years, there has been a positive change in the unfavourable demographic trends and the country might be approaching the level of simple reproduction of population.

The National Strategic Program on Demographic Security reveals the following negative demographic trends in recent years:

- The population annually declined by about 8.0 thousand people on average and tends to reduce further (Table 1);

- A sharp drop in the birth rate and the fertility rate, which will continue due to the smaller population of childbearing age and the tendency to delay childbirth to a later age;
- The high mortality rate compared to that in developed countries;
- The reduction of the number of young people in the population and the growth of the elderly population, especially in rural areas;
- The number and share of the working-age population is declining and will continue to decline further;
- A significantly reduced number and share of the economically active population in the total population (National ... 2011: I.1).

Table 1. Resident population (as of January 1), thousands of people

Years	Moldova <sup>1</sup>	Transnistria <sup>2</sup>
1989	4,335.4 <sup>3</sup>	680.9
2000	3,644.1	597.9
2001	3,635.1	589.8
2002	3,627.8	580.5
2003	3,618.3	571.6
2004	3,607.4	562.0
2005	3,600.4	554.4
2006	3,589.9	547.5
2007	3,581.1	540.6
2008	3,572.7	533.5
2009	3,567.5	527.5
2010	3,563.7	522.5
2011	3,560.4	518.0
2012	3,559.5	513.4
2013	3,559.5	509.4
2014	3,557.6	505.2

<sup>1</sup> Data (except for 1989) of the National Bureau of Statistics on settlements administered by the official authorities of the Republic of Moldova.

<sup>2</sup> Data of the State Statistics Service of the PMR on settlements administered by the authorities of the PMR.

<sup>3</sup> Data for 1989 refer to the Soviet census and are presented for the whole country.

Besides the demographic decline, figures in the economy also reveal serious problems: the GDP in 2012 amounted to \$12.36 billion, which is 9.2% of the GDP of Slovakia and 1.5% of the GDP of Poland. The GDP per capita, which is \$3,500, is the lowest in Europe.

#### 4.3.2.1 Basic forms of migration processes

Population loss due to migration is the main cause of the decline of the population of modern Moldova. It negatively influences both the age structure of the population and the labour force indicators. In the Soviet period, Moldova was attractive for migrants from

other parts of the Soviet Union, primarily from Russia and Ukraine. The socio-economic crisis, which hit the country during the collapse of the Soviet Union, was not overcome after gaining independence in 1991, which led to the loss of the country's former attractiveness for migrants and continues to serve as the main push factor for active age Moldovans. Over the years of the independence of the Republic of Moldova, mass emigration has become an integral part of the social and socio-economic spheres of the state. The following types of migratory movements can be observed:

**Ethnic migration.** The first surge of ethnic migration occurred at the beginning of the 1990s. When the strict Soviet migration restrictions were annihilated, Germans and Jews left the country for their historical homelands. This resulted in a sharp decline in the proportion of these ethnic groups in the total population of Moldova. Throughout the whole period, Russian speakers have been leaving for Russia and Ukraine. At the same time, the reverse movement (Moldovan diaspora residing permanently in the former Soviet republics resettling in Moldova) has not been observed. Since the 2000s, Moldovan residents have been leaving for Russia on repatriation assistance programs undertaken by the Government of the Russian Federation. Also a growing number of Moldovans with Romanian identity have been leaving for Romania. The share of the Roma population in the total population of Moldova is small – just over 12 thousand (or 0.4%, according to the census of 2004). The ethnic Roma migration factor is not significant in Moldova.

**Forced migration.** It appeared during the armed conflict of 1992, when large-scale military actions took place in Bender and Dubăsari District. There were about 100,000 refugees: to Ukraine (61 thousand people, of whom more than 30 thousand were children), to Russia (17,346), to Belarus (859), and to the non-CIS states (about 20,000 people). After the hostilities had ended, many refugees returned to their permanent residence. 51,289 people (including 28,746 children) were registered as internally displaced persons in the Republic of Moldova (Mosneaga, V. 2. 2013: P. 1).

**Commercial (shuttle trading) migration.** It was prevalent in the first half of the 1990s as a form of periodic visits of merchants (shuttle traders) of varying duration, mainly to Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Poland, and Romania, with the aim to trade with goods.

**Educational migration.** Since the late 1990s, a growing number of young Moldovan citizens have been leaving the country to continue their education abroad. Many of them do not return to their home country after finishing their studies.

Research shows that in many cases educational migration does lead to permanent emigration. Often students not only pursue their studies abroad because of the desire to enrich their knowledge with the experience and achievements of other countries but, in numerous cases, educational migration is an exit strategy from the country of origin where there is a shortage in jobs and everyday life circumstances and expectations are far behind those in other countries (Ursachi, M. 2008: p. 9).

The universities of the Republic of Moldova have signed cooperation agreements with foreign universities. In accordance with the contractual terms, students going abroad for a few years are obliged to return home. However, when they experience life abroad and receive grants that are significantly higher than the salaries in Moldova, they often decide not to return. In other cases, students return to Moldova after the expiry of the

contract, a few years later, however, they leave again as soon as an opportunity turns up (Strengthening ... 2010: p. 46).

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova assists young people to pursue higher education abroad (first of all, by providing information). Most young people leave for Romania, which annually provides ample educational quotas for residents of Moldova (5,500 in 2013). In addition, places for undergraduate and graduate studies are provided by Turkey, the Czechia, Slovakia, Greece, Bulgaria, Poland, and several other European countries. The outflow of students and teachers from Moldova on academic exchange programs is expanding. On the other hand, a reverse flow of students coming to Moldova for education is very limited.

Russia and Ukraine also provide educational quotas for Moldovan residents, focusing on the population in Transnistria. The Ministry of Education of the PMR is directly involved in the distribution of the educational quotas of these countries among the students of the region.

UNESCO data show a high proportion of Moldovan students studying abroad. Among the countries with the largest number of students from Moldova are (according to 2011 data) Romania (cca. 5.5 thousand), Russia (cca. 3.6 thousand, 2009 data), Italy (cca. 1.6 thousand), France (cca. 0.9 thousand), Ukraine (cca. 0.9 thousand, 2012 data), Germany (cca. 0.6 thousand), Bulgaria (cca. 0.5 thousand), and the United States (cca. 0.4 thousand). The number of Moldovan students pursuing higher education in the Visegrad Group countries is small. In 2011, it amounted to 167 students in the Czechia, 88 in Poland, 41 in Hungary, and only 8 in Slovakia.

Labour migration. Labour emigration started to grow in the second half of the 1990s and especially after the financial crisis of 1998. This wave of mass migration was a response to extreme poverty and is still a response to the opportunities offered by the foreign labour market (Strengthening ... 2010: p. 11). The phenomenon of labour migration is a serious problem for the country, involving various social strata and affecting all aspects of life in Moldovan society, including the economy and demography.

Data referring to the period 2005-2010 analysed for the EMP Report show a consistently high annual migration outflow of Moldovan citizens, denoting the involvement in migration of an estimated 25-33% of the working-age population at any given moment during the reference period (Extended ... 2012: p. 26).

#### 4.3.2.2 Push factors of migration

IOM experts believe that the economic situation (poverty, lack of adequate employment opportunities, and low wages) in the country is the main push factor for migrants from Moldova (Extended... 2012: p. 26). The deindustrialization of the Moldovan economy and, as a consequence, a reduction of job opportunities as well as the erosion of the social infrastructure (education, health care and housing), and the deteriorating quality of services and a reduction of their availability especially in villages and small towns, may also be noted as push factors. For example, the so-called “optimization” of the school network carried out by the government has led to the closure of a number of schools, especially in rural areas.

Potential migration, interpreted as “a common desire to migrate in the future” is considered high among the population of Moldova, which is substantiated in the results of different case studies. For example, in a study conducted in 2007 it is noted that 44.2% of the population (mostly young, educated people) wish to emigrate, primarily to the EU (Strengthening... 2010: p. 17).

The results of the sociological research conducted by CBS AXA in 2008-2009 showed that this is still an ongoing trend: people continue dreaming about going to work abroad. Moreover, in times of economic crisis these aspirations get a boost (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 2).

The crisis of 2008-2010 showed that there is no mass return of Moldovan labour migrants. Surveys conducted in rural areas by the research centre CASE-Moldova (in July-November 2008) and by CBS AXA (in December 2009) showed that migrant workers are not going to return even if there is a sharp reduction in their wages in the host countries. They will try to continue sending money to their relatives in Moldova (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 2).

In times of economic crisis the migration potential is increasing: every third respondent intends to seek work abroad or does not know how to overcome economic difficulties (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 12).

Pull factors for Moldovan citizens abroad are higher living standards, broader opportunities for personal development, and the availability of social networks created by successful migrants (relatives, friends). In addition, low-cost and visa-free travel as well as a familiar linguistic environment and common cultural values stimulate migration towards CIS countries (Strengthening... 2010: p. 14-15).

### 4.3.3 Migration policies in the Republic of Moldova

The current topicality of the problem of mass-migration encourages the authorities of Moldova to explore different measures aimed at minimizing the negative effects of this phenomenon and the use of migration for the benefit of the country. Nevertheless, for a long period of time the migration policy was not among the priorities of the authorities of the republic.

The policy of Soviet authorities encouraged active internal migration within a large Soviet state in order to use labour resources as efficiently as possible. In the 1960-1980, favourable living conditions and a large number of jobs as a result of the strong economic (primarily industrial) development of Moldova contributed to the active involvement of migrants from other republics of the Soviet Union (mainly Russia and Ukraine).

At the beginning of the 1990s, after Moldova gained independence, migration inflows of non-Moldovan emigrants were often subject to severe criticism. However, the socio-economic crisis caused by the disintegration of the USSR made the notorious problem of “excessive” migration flows irrelevant. Moreover, migration outflow expanded rapidly, initially in the form of ethnic migration and eventual repatriation of the Jewish, German, and Russian population, and then in the form of labour migration.

Initially, the problem of emigration did not concern the Moldovan establishment, as they saw it as a tool to reduce the severe ethnic and social tensions within the country (Mosneaga, V. 4. 2,012. P. 3). Furthermore, the growing volume of remittances from abroad was considered by the authorities as a tool to fight poverty, partly compensating for the low efficiency of the state's social policy.

However, subsequently, the increasing internal problems caused depopulation and imbalances in the labour market, and pressure from international organizations and the EU institutions urged authorities to take active measures in the field of migration. In recent years, Moldova has made some progress in various aspects of the state migration policy.

Currently, the most important legislative acts (Ciumas, T. 2011) regulating migration in the Republic of Moldova are:

The law "About the Mode of Foreigners in the Republic of Moldova," according to which the competent authority regarding foreigners is the Office for Migration and Asylum. It regulates the rules of residence and registration of foreigners in the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

The law "About Labour Migration" was elaborated in accordance with the main international conventions of the International Labour Organization. The document regulates the temporary labour of immigrants, the conditions for granting, renewal, and revocation of the right to work and the right of temporary residence, as well as the conditions of temporary employment for citizens of Moldova abroad.

Moreover, the migration policy pursued by the Republic of Moldova is reflected in various national policies, plans and programs that cover sectors that are important for the state. Some of these include the National Strategy for Employment Policies for 2007-2015, the National Strategy in the Field of Migration and Asylum (2011-2020), the National Strategic Program on Demographic Security of the Republic of Moldova (2011-2025), etc.

The priorities of the state policy in the field of migration outlined in the strategic programs are the following:

1. Stimulation of return migration. Creating the conditions needed in order to ensure the positive aspects of this process;
2. More efficient management of migration at the level of government agencies, including improved monitoring of migration flows;
3. Ensuring the rights of Moldovan migrants abroad and improving their social status. Strengthening ties with the Moldovan diaspora.

#### 4.3.3.1 Return and reintegration of migrants

The state (with the participation of the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organization and other international organizations) is implementing a set of measures, including: the promotion of the use of remittances as investment in the economy, the expansion of economic opportunities for young people; informing Moldovan citizens on promising opportunities in the national labour market, etc.

A number of programs in this direction have been announced: the Action Plan for the Return of Moldovan Labour Migrants from Abroad, the Program for Attracting Remit-

tances in the Economy “PARE 1 +1”, the National Program for Economic Empowerment of Young People (PNAET). V. Mosneaga provides a list (Mosneaga, V. 2013: p. 4-5) of major projects in this domain that are being implemented jointly with international organizations: the project “Strengthening Moldova’s Capacity to Manage Labour and Return Migration” by the Swedish Public Employment Service (SPES); the project “Effective Management of Labour Migration and Skills in Moldova” implemented by the ILO, the project “Supporting the Implementation of Migration and Development Component of the EU-Moldova Mobility Partnership” (SIMP), implemented by the IOM, the project “Supporting the Readmission Agreements Concluded by the European Union with Moldova, Russia and Ukraine,” the project “Supporting Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements between the EU and Moldova and Georgia” (REVIS), and some others devoted to the issue of voluntary return and reintegration. The Moldovan Ministry of Education in collaboration with the European Training Foundation continues its work on creating a mechanism for the recognition of the skills of migrants on the basis of a national concept and validation of informal / formal training (the project “Development of the System of Vocational Education and Training”) (Mosneaga, V. 2013: p. 4-5).

The need to integrate the migration policy into the development strategy of the country is reflected in the strategic document entitled the EU-Moldova Mobility Partnership.

However, these efforts have not led to perceivable results, primarily due to the continually difficult socio-economic situation in the country. In addition, experts point out the weak information component and the incomplete transparency of state institutions working in this area. The vast majority of migrants are not familiar with the migration policy of the Moldovan state and its activities regarding the return and reintegration of migrants (Mosneaga, V. 2013: p. 5).

#### 4.3.3.2 Cooperation with the diaspora

Establishing cooperation with the diaspora and associations of Moldovans abroad are considered to be important at national level. For these purposes, certain activities were outlined within the framework of the Action Plan in support of emigrants from the Republic of Moldova (Moldovan diaspora) for the 2006-2009 period. Those are the National Action Plan for 2008 for the protection of Moldovan citizens abroad, the Action Plan for national-cultural and social support to the Moldovan diaspora in 2012-2014. To improve cooperation with the Moldovan diaspora, the Moldovan Government established the Bureau for Relations with the Diaspora within the State Chancellery (November 2012) (Mosneaga, V. 2013: 5).

Meanwhile, experts agree that Moldovan diplomatic missions abroad are not used by Moldovan migrants efficiently. Moldovan citizens usually turn to these missions with problems with official documents that can be solved only through these institutions. Migrants often accuse diplomatic services of lack of transparency in their work, corruption, and an unprofessional attitude towards their citizens (no fixed prices for services, lack of payment receipts, sale of labour contracts or even false documents, extortion) (Strengthening ... 2010: p. 28).

#### 4.3.3.3 International cooperation

Moldovan authorities are working on the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with countries that receive Moldovan migrants. The signing of international agreements in the field of labour migration and protection of migrants' rights is thought to be a significant step in this direction.

In 1994, the Republic of Moldova signed with other CIS countries a Cooperation Agreement in the field of labour migration and social protection of migrant workers. On the basis of this agreement, Moldova has signed bilateral agreements regulating the labour activity and social protection of citizens working abroad with Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Belarus. The agreements signed with Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine contain almost the same provisions: work based on contracts and work permits, potential limitations in the employment of foreign workers due to changes in the national labour market, the provision of basic social rights; recognition of degrees and broad interpretation of compensation in case of health damage or death (Ciomas, T. 2012: 3).

Moldova is one of the first countries with which the European Union signed an agreement on mobility and return migration (2008).

An agreement on labour migration, along with the protocol for its implementation, was signed with the Government of Italy in 2011. A similar contract with the Russian Federation is expected to be signed in the future, as the text of the agreement was endorsed by the two governments in 2013.

#### 4.3.3.4 Improved monitoring and accounting of migration flows

The existing methods of collecting data on migration flows are being improved in the Republic of Moldova. The Expanded Migration Profile has been elaborated on the initiative of the IOM. It contains a list of key variables that will contribute to a better understanding of migration processes and their impact on the demographic and socio-economic development of the country. These variables include socio-economic conditions of the state, demographic characteristics, market characteristics, information on the number and types of migrants, migration flows, illegal migration, diaspora and remittances. Using the Expanded Migration Profile will help experts fill the existing gaps in data collection.

Since 2012, the National Bureau of Statistics has been conducting a modular study entitled Labour Migration within the framework of a survey on labour force.

#### 4.3.3.5 Human trafficking

The government will intensify its efforts to combat human trafficking. Since 2012, the Republic of Moldova, demonstrating its commitment to implement international standards and practices to combat human trafficking, has been undertaking its activities in this field in accordance with international principles known as the four P's, i.e. Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership (Mosneaga, V.3. 2013: p 4).

The prosecution and punishment of organizers of human trafficking are becoming systematic and widespread. The training given to law enforcement officers involved in combating human trafficking is improving. The scale of psychological, legal, and social assistance provided to victims is expanding. Activities aimed at informing the public



about the dangers of this type of crime are being carried out with the help of international agencies and non-governmental organizations.

At least ten Moldovan ministries and agencies are currently involved in various aspects of international migration. In addition, most of the local branches of international organizations, as well as a number of public organizations and foreign embassies regularly participate in programs related to international migration (Ganta, V. 2012: p. 1).

Despite these successes, an overall migration strategy, with a well-articulated national policy, an improved legal framework and effectively functioning state institutions, is still to be elaborated in Moldova.

### 4.3.5 Assessing the scale of migration

The current emigrant record data provided by the statistical services of the Republic of Moldova (Table 2) and Transnistria (Table 3) do not reflect the real picture of the outflow of the population. These sources record only 3-7 thousand emigrants annually leaving Moldova and nearly 2 thousand emigrants who left Transnistria in 2012.

The data provided by the population census that took place in 2004 separately in Moldova and Transnistria indicate a significant proportion of people who were temporarily absent at the time of the census. In Moldova, this figure constituted 273.1 thousand, or 8.1% of the population of the country. In Transnistria, this figure amounted to 36.3 thousand, or 6.5% of the population of the region.

Temporary labour migration in the Republic of Moldova is poorly covered in statistical accounts. There are significant discrepancies between official statistical data and expert estimates of the scale of migration and its characteristics. This is largely due to the fact that the majority of migrants stay in destination countries illegally, and some even gain illegal entry.

Citizens of Moldova, because of the existing visa regime, can legally travel to Russia, Ukraine, and other CIS countries. However, a significant number of them do not register their stay. According to some estimates, 60% of Moldovan citizens are staying illegally in the territory of the CIS countries (Strengthening ... 2010: p. 18).

Moldovan migrant workers rarely cross the border of the European Union illegally. As a result of tightening EU border controls, Moldovans use more acceptable and safer ways of labour migration. These are citizenship of EU countries (Romania, Bulgaria, and other countries), tourist visas, family reunification, and employment contracts (Mosneaga, V. 2012.3: p. 4).

Data concerning labour contracts cannot be considered accurate, either. They only provide a partial picture of temporary labour emigration and reflect only specific flows of labour migrants. This is due to the fact that only an insignificant number of migrant workers sign work contracts before travelling abroad. The vast majority of migrants go abroad independently and find jobs in destination countries by themselves (Chudinovskih, O. 2011: p. 17). In addition, the number of labour agreements signed between Moldova and the EU remains small.

Table 2. Emigrants by country of destination, persons<sup>1</sup>

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Left the Republic of Moldova, total	6827	6685	7172	6988	6663	4714	3920	3062
of them to:								
Poland	5	8	4	3	4	2	3	–
Czechia	9	27	24	40	77	57	43	56
Hungary	–	–	4	1	–	1	–	3
Slovakia	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
<b>V-4, total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>59</b>
Germany	373	253	253	195	264	220	179	218
Austria	15	42	13	1	10	15	22	21
Romania	15	8	4	5	11	15	14	9
Bulgaria	5	2	4	14	26	19	9	8
Netherlands	3	2	8	–	12	12	2	11
Ukraine	2057	2350	2663	3163	2952	2227	1827	1360
Belarus	184	222	187	122	125	100	74	48
Georgia	–	7	–	–	2	4	2	–
<b>EP (Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia), total</b>	<b>2241</b>	<b>2579</b>	<b>2850</b>	<b>3285</b>	<b>3079</b>	<b>2331</b>	<b>1903</b>	<b>1408</b>
Russia	3310	2890	3110	2663	1866	1162	858	772
Kazakhstan	19	22	20	14	31	33	27	29
USA	568	612	695	588	899	523	538	245
Israel	220	201	140	137	278	232	204	198
Canada	20	18	12	5	10	5	6	6
Australia	3	–	1	–	1	1	–	2
Other countries	21	28	34	38	97	91	114	79

<sup>1</sup> Data of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.

Table 3. Migratory movement of the population of Transnistria, persons<sup>1</sup>

Years	Arrived	Departed	Migration growth (migration loss)	Years	Arrived	Departed	Migration growth (migration loss)
1990	36029	32926	3103	2002	11360	16797	–5437
1991	30359	29095	1264	2003	9457	15418	–5961
1992	21478	32242	–10764	2004	8597	12793	–4196
1993	22658	21539	1119	2005	8364	11660	–3296
1994	18326	20184	–1858	2006	7418	10908	–3490
1995	14513	22777	–8264	2007	6996	10826	–3830
1996	12416	23139	–10723	2008	6883	10226	–3343
1997	14707	20311	–5604	2009	6366	9083	–2717
1998	14507	17239	–2732	2010	6544	8606	–2062
1999	13669	16820	–3151	2011	7260	9531	–2271
2000	12081	17448	–5367	2012	2157	4136	–1979
2001	12000	18090	–6090	2013	2245	3952	–1707

<sup>1</sup> Data of the State Statistics Service of the PMR. In 1990-2011 including internal migration.

The report of the International Organization for Migration contains data provided by the Border Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, according to which approximately 720 thousand people were abroad as of December 31, 2010. This number includes about 285 thousand people who were abroad for more than a year, another 245 thousand who were abroad for a period of 3 to 12 months, and another 90 thousand who were regarded as tourists on the grounds that they were abroad for less than 3 months (Extended ... 2012: p. 28).

World Bank experts estimate the number of Moldovan emigrants at 770.3 thousand, representing 21.5% of the population (Migration ... 2011: p. 191).

The numbers published by the mass media range from 340,000 to 1 million migrants (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 1).

#### 4.3.5.1 Spatial features of Moldovan emigration

The current statistical data (Table 2) indicate the predominance of the eastern vector (Ukraine, Russia) of migration aspirations among residents of Moldova. However, they represent only the tip of the iceberg of Moldovan emigration and do not give a clear picture of the geographical distribution of Moldovan migrants. The analysis of the 2004 population census data on the temporarily absent population by host country seems to provide a more objective picture (Table 4).

*Table 4.* Temporarily absent population, by country of the current location and duration of absence, by sex and area, persons<sup>1</sup>

<b>Country</b>	<b>persons</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>persons</b>
Total	273056	Belgium	660
Russia	153356	Austria	505
Italia	53010	Canada	387
Romania	10515	Belarus	356
Portugal	9467	Poland	234
Ukraine	8582	Switzerland	215
Turkey	8228	South Korea	174
Greece	5584	Netherlands	142
Spain	3868	Serbia	121
France	3504	Kazakhstan	119
Israel	2633	Sweden	81
Germany	1906	Hungary	67
Czechia	1786	United Arab Emirates	64
UK	1399	Slovenia	61
Ireland	1235	Australia	53
USA	1184	Other countries	823
Cyprus	855	Not stated	1184
Bulgaria	698		

<sup>1</sup> Data of the 2004 Census of Moldova

These data highlight Russia as a major host country for migrants from Moldova. According to the Moldovan census in 2004, the temporarily absent Moldovan population staying in Russia constituted 153.4 thousand people. Experts believe that the Moldovan labour diaspora, taking into account those who have stayed in Russia for more than five years, even if they are not registered, reached 240-270 thousand people in 2008 (Ursachi, M. 2008: p. 10). Russia's share in the reception of all Moldovan migrants is estimated at 58-63% (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 1-2).

Ukraine is also one of the most attractive countries for Moldovan migrants, even though it is less attractive than some EU countries.

Italy hosts 14-19% of the Moldovan migrants (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 1-2). According to the 2009 data listed by experts, out of 167 thousand Moldovan migrants legally staying in the EU, 53.6% were registered in Italy. The total number of Moldovan citizens (including illegal immigrants) in the territory of Italy is estimated to be between 132 and 200 thousand (Moraru, V. 2012: p.105).

Other EU countries attracting a large number of Moldovan migrants are Romania, Portugal, Greece, Spain, France, and Germany. Among the Visegrad countries, only the Czechia hosts a relatively large number of migrants from Moldova: according to estimates 10 thousand Moldovans worked there in 2007. Poland, and to an even lesser extent, Hungary and Slovakia attract only a small number of Moldovan migrants.

Outside the CIS and the EU, the largest number of migrants from Moldova goes to Turkey, Israel, and the United States.

Moldovan migrants are actively involved in circular migration. Sociological studies indicate that this type of migration is popular among rural residents, heads of households, men having secondary and special education, for whom labour migration abroad is seasonal and is only a secondary form of employment. Meanwhile, the long stay of Moldovan migrants in EU countries is due to the visa regime and high costs of the trip. An average stay or a labour trip in the CIS (especially Russia) lasts for about 7 months, while in the EU it is twice as long, i.e. 15 months. It often encourages the no-return character of migration (Mosneaga, V. 2012. 3 p. 1).

Experts (Strengthening ...2010: p. 12) currently identify three types of international migration in Moldova:

- short-term international migration, mainly to the CIS countries;
- long-term international migration, mainly to the countries of the European Union;
- legitimate, long-term international migration to the United States and Canada.

Most recently, the following trends and changes have been identified in the general structure of Moldovan migration: they are shifting from the CIS towards the EU, from short-term seasonal migration towards long-term stays, and there is increasing migration to the United States and Canada (Strengthening ... 2010: p. 12).

#### 4.3.5.2 Demographic characteristics of emigrants

The ethnic migration factor had a significant impact only in the early periods of the migratory movement of the Moldovan population in the 1990s. Now ethnic and linguistic

factors do not determine the migratory behaviour of the population of Moldova. Instead, it is rather the social network, made up by successful relatives, fellow villagers, and friends, that plays an increasingly important role in choosing the country of destination in international labour migration (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 17). The Gagauz, the vast majority of whom speak both the Russian and Gagauz languages, prefer to migrate to Russia and Turkey. Ethnic Moldovans and Romanians are also often bilingual and it allows them to adapt more easily in the CIS, where the Russian language is widespread, as well as in countries such as Italy, Portugal, and Spain, where Latin-based languages are spoken.

Various age and sex groups in the country are involved in international labour migration. The most active are the young and the middle-aged people (more than 70% under the age of 40 and almost 40% under the age of 30). The average age of a migrant worker from Moldova is 35-36 years (Mosneaga, V., 2012: p. 17).

Looking at the age distribution of migration flows, the highest tendency to migrate is observed in the age group of 25–34, which corresponds to 33.4% of the total migration outflow (Extended...2012: p. 147).

Male workers predominate in the total number of migrants from Moldova, although the proportion of women in international labour migration is increasing year by year. It rose from 30% to 37% in the period from 2001 to 2009 (Chesnokova, N. 2011: p. 2).

Male migrant workers are employed in the construction, transportation, manufacturing and agricultural sectors. Migrant women work in the service sector, trade, care for the elderly, the sick or children, as domestic workers or in the sex industry (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 18). The employment opportunities of migrants largely determine their sex structure across countries. Thus, the number of men working in Russia, engaged primarily in construction is 3 times as big as the female population. Meanwhile, the proportion of women migrant workers in Italy, primarily engaged in the service industry, is 70%. This percentage is only higher in Israel, where the proportion of female migrant workers is 86.6%, and in Turkey, where female migrant workers constitute 81.5% (Chesnokova, N. 2011: p. 2).

Other examples of the gender division in receiving countries are Ukraine, France, the Czechia, and Portugal being attractive for male migrants and Spain and Greece for female migrants (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 1-2).

The profile of Moldovan workforce shows that most migrants have secondary vocational or general secondary education (25.5% and 25.6% of all immigrants in 2010, respectively) (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 19).

According to IOM experts, most Moldovan migrants (64.17%) are persons with secondary education, while those with primary or no education constitute less than 1%. IOM experts also note that migrants with higher education account for 10.7% of the total, while their share in the labour force is 22.7%. These data suggest that skilled workers have better labour market opportunities in terms of job search (Extended ... 2012: p. 147).

The studies show that the majority of migrants (70.7%) come from rural areas of the country. This causes serious local social problems. The growth of the share of rural migrants (59.4% in 2000) gives a clear indication of the decline in employment in agriculture (Extended ... 2012: p. 147). The phenomenon of settlements without working-age men is

becoming common, as it was during the world wars. However, in some villages, particularly in the south, there is another dangerous phenomenon, namely the very low number of working-age women (Moraru 2012).

The origin of migrants affects the geography of their destination. Those who go to the EU predominate among migrants from Chisinau, while those who leave for the CIS countries predominate among migrants from other regions of Moldova.

Experts (Strengthening ... 2010: p. 13) have composed a general portrait of Moldovan migrants. They are:

- young people: most of the migrants (79%) are between 18 and 44 years old;
- family people: they constitute 71%, although the scale of family reunification remains relatively low (21%);
- more educated people: 28% of all migrants are university graduates, 63% have general secondary or secondary vocational (technical) education.

#### 4.3.5.3 Immigration

Immigration flows to Moldova, unlike emigration, are more adequately assessed by the state services of the country. The dimensions of registered legal immigration (Table 5) increased slightly in recent years and in 2012 exceeded 3 thousand people, which is comparable with the statistical data on Moldovan residents leaving the country (Table 2).

These data indicate that since 2011 the number of migrants arriving from the EU has exceeded the traditionally prevailing flow of migrants from the CIS. This is primarily due to the growth of migrants from Romania, which accounts for almost half of the foreigners coming to Moldova (Table 6). Such an increase in the share of Romanian migrants can be explained by the fact that Moldovan citizens who also have a Romanian passport use the latter while crossing the Moldovan-Romanian border.

The proportion of migrants from the Visegrad countries is very small, most of them being citizens of Poland.

Among the countries that do not belong to the EU or the CIS, there is a significant influx of citizens of Israel, Turkey, and Syria.

The overwhelming majority of registered migrants from the CIS come from two countries: Ukraine and Russia. Their numbers have fluctuated in recent years from 800 to 1,000 people. However, the accuracy of data regarding migrants coming from the CIS countries, with which Moldova has a visa-free regime, is much lower than that of the data on migrants arriving in Moldova from the EU and other countries holding visas. This clearly explains the existing discrepancy in the data on the number of migrants in Moldova.

IOM experts estimated the total number of foreigners (including stateless persons) dwelling in the territory of Moldova at the end of 2010 at 20,099 people, or less than 0.5% of the total population of the country (Extended ... 2012: p. 30).

World Bank experts estimated the number of immigrants in Moldova at 408.3 thousand people, or 11.4% of the total population (Migration ... 2011: p. 191).

We can assume that IOM experts base their assessments on recorded migration flows, while World Bank experts take into account the number of citizens of foreign countries (primarily Russia, Romania, Ukraine, and Bulgaria) residing in Moldova.

Table 5. Distribution of immigrants by nationality, persons

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total,	2056	1968	2070	2749	2010	2512	2704	3093
of them:								
EU-28	337	403	453	694	513	670	808	957
post-Soviet countries (without Baltic states)	731	734	864	1119	829	835	807	877
Other countries	988	831	753	936	668	1007	1089	1259

Table 6. Distribution of immigrants by nationality in some countries, persons<sup>1</sup>

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>V4, total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>61</b>
of them:								
Poland	9	10	14	19	18	24	38	50
Czechia	3	3		2	1	6	10	4
Hungary	2		1		3	4	5	4
Slovakia	2	5	3	1	2	3	1	3
<b>EaP, total</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>451</b>
of them:								
Belarus	16	31	27	36	16	24	27	17
Georgia	15	10	16	23	16	28	26	31
Ukraine	393	354	394	579	436	375	384	403
Romania	111	171	197	353	186	309	360	445
Israel	94	72	56	183	278	482	455	407
Turkey	462	443	462	514	224	287	266	337
Russia	168	182	256	300	230	294	240	305
Syria	101	43	31	36	34	34	34	65
Bulgaria	86	75	48	45	28	43	21	25

<sup>1</sup> Data of the National Bureau of Statistics of Moldova

Experts draw attention to the lack of data on internal migration in Moldova (Vladişescu, N. 2012, p. 1). Data from the first half of the 1990s and from the 2004 census indicate that the preferred direction of domestic migration is from villages and small towns to Chişinău and, to a lesser extent, to other important regional centres of the country such as Tiraspol, Bălţi, Bender, Ungheni, and Cahul.

#### 4.3.6 Special characteristics of migration processes in Moldova

Migration processes largely determine the socio-economic and demographic features of the country in the future, provoking serious problems, but also creating conditions for development.

Among the most important directions of the impact of migration should be noted:

**The impact of migration on the labour market, the phenomenon of brain drain and brain waste.**

Despite the low official unemployment rate (about 2%), there is a significant portion of Moldovan labour which is not registered at employment centres. These people find livelihood in the shadow economy or go abroad in search of jobs (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 11). The analysis of the labour market in Moldova in recent years reveals a permanent decrease in the main employment indicators. The survey by the National Bureau of Statistics conducted on the workforce shows a decrease in the economically active population, the employed population, and also in the number of employees. The economically active population declined by more than 300 thousand people from 2001 to 2008 (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 11). The desire to escape from poverty encourages the migration of people who have a job, but are not satisfied with the wages, working conditions and prospects for professional growth. This leads to the fact that the national economy is being deprived of young, highly skilled and enterprising professionals.

Over the last twenty years, the health care system has lost more than 40% of trained health workers, many of whom have left Moldova for good, so, as a result, Moldova suffers from a severe shortage of health workers in rural areas. The education system in Moldova for many years has been experiencing an acute shortage of teachers, mainly in primary and secondary schools. Many young teachers prefer to go abroad in search of work, as in their home country they are offered low wages, while in other countries they can earn much better salaries (Strengthening ... 2010: p. 22-23).

This extent of mass labour migration leads to the fact that the country has to face a chronic shortage of specialists. There are cases when due to the lack of qualified personnel industrial projects have to be terminated and foreign investors lose interest in the Moldovan economy (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 19).

The phenomenon of “brain drain” leads to the loss of the teaching and research capacity of Moldova in various fields, including physics, mathematics, computer science, chemistry (Strengthening ... 2010: p. 46).

It is often the case that professionals who have left their jobs in Moldova and moved abroad are forced to do low-skilled work (for example, in construction or services), losing their previous professional skills. This phenomenon can be called “brain waste”.

**Demographic imbalances. Negative social consequences of migration**

The fact that a significant part of the working-age population leaves the country leads to the accelerated ageing of the population. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the proportion of people over 60 years of age in the total population was 13.3% at the beginning of 2006. By the beginning of 2013, it had risen to 15.3%. However, over the same period, the proportion of children (under 15 years of age) decreased from 18.3% to 16.1%. These alarming data forecast an excess of the elderly population over children in the total population of the country in the near future.



Children and the elderly are the two age groups that suffer first from the negative effects of mass migration (Luecke, M. 2011, Sandu, V. 2011). Experts citing the National Bureau of Statistics report that in 2011 18% of the total number of Moldovan households consisted only of the elderly, i.e., adults aged 65 or older, and had a poverty rate of 30%. 36% of the households are formed by retired people (the current retirement age in Moldova is 57 years for women and 62 for men). Their poverty rate is estimated at 28% (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 23). The number of children who are brought up in families where one or even both parents are migrant workers is growing. These children are in the care of elderly family members. Experts' data reveal that the number of school-age children abandoned by their parents who have left to work abroad reached 177 thousand (1/4 of all students) in 2006 and 200 thousand in 2007 (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 22).

Another serious negative consequence for the country is human trafficking for the purpose of forced labour, sexual exploitation, begging, as well as the sale of human organs. According to the Global Index of Slavery, Moldova ranks 6th among countries with the highest prevalence of slavery in 2013. The number of Moldovan citizens who are forced to slavery is estimated at 32-35 thousand people (The Global... 2013: p. 54). Moldovan migrants most often become victims of forced labour in Russia, Ukraine, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Greece, Lebanon, Italy, Spain, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

### **Remittances**

The biggest visible benefit from migration that Moldova currently enjoys is the earnings that migrant workers are transferring home to their families. In addition to remittances, migrants' savings also play an important role in Moldova (Strengthening ... 2010: p. 5).

According to the National Bank of Moldova, the volume of remittances sent to the country by migrant workers in 2012 exceeded 1.5 billion USD (more than 65% came from Russia), which is closing in on the highest amount so far, which was over 1.6 billion USD, achieved in 2008. Since 2005, the ratio of incoming remittances to the GDP has been more than 30% (in 2006 – more than 38%). The World Bank data show that in 2010 Moldova ranked second in the world of countries which are dependent on remittances (Migration... 2011).

The Trans-Dniester Republican Bank estimates the amount of money sent to the Transnistrian region from abroad by its residents in 2012 at nearly 200 million USD; more than 85% of these funds came from Russia. Besides, an average of 1.5% of money transfers came from Turkey, the USA, Ukraine, and Israel. The ratio of remittances to the regional GDP was assessed by experts of the Trans-Dniester Republican Bank at 18.3%.

The analysis of the structure of the household use of funds received from abroad shows that most of the money coming from migrant workers to poor households is spent on food. Only a small fraction is spent on services such as education, health care or starting a business (Mosneaga, V. 2012: p. 8).

### **Diversity of citizenship of the Moldovan population**

In accordance with the recommendations of the UN and international practice, the main criterion for the assessment of the number of migrants working abroad is their citizen-

ship. However, the use of this criterion comes up against certain difficulties in the case of Moldova. This is due to the large number of Moldovan citizens having dual (and sometimes triple) citizenship. This important factor has not received adequate attention in studies on migration, but has a significant impact on the nature of migration processes in Moldova.

The legislation of Moldova allows its citizens to have dual citizenship and does not prevent persons with dual citizenship from holding various public offices. Public opinion in general does not simply accept persons with multiple citizenship, but the acquisition of citizenship of another country is recognized as an achievement providing a great social advantage.

In such circumstances, Moldovans massively seek citizenship of other countries, often in order to facilitate travel abroad as migrant workers.

This factor complicates the procedure of recording migration flows. At the moment, it is not possible to produce an accurate record of all persons residing in the territory of the country only on the basis of their citizenship. This is largely due to the fact that foreign diplomatic representatives in Moldova often avoid providing information on the number of citizens in the consular register. By using various sources, none of which claim to be complete, it is possible to make an overall assessment of persons with foreign citizenship residing in Moldova. The latest population census revealed a significant discrepancy between the officially listed population of 3,383.3 thousand (October 2004) and the number of citizens registered in 2004 by the State Register of the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications (based on identity cards with an identification number), which is 2,334.6 thousand.

N. Chesnokova, a specialist of the National Bureau of Statistics, attributes the discrepancy to the fact that the state register did not include the majority of children aged 8-15 who did not have identity cards of the new type. However, we can assume that among the inhabitants of the country there are a significant number of person whose Moldovan citizenship is not documented or has been lost as a result of acquiring citizenship of another country. A source referring to a collaborator of the Consular Department of the Russian Embassy in Moldova reports that at the end of 2012 more than 210 thousand citizens of the Russian Federation were registered with the consulate, from which about 170 thousand were living in Transnistria. This number is significantly higher than the number of Russian citizens who are registered at the consulates of Russia in Ukraine and Belarus taken together.

There is no clear information about the number of Russian citizens registered at the consulate in Moldova as to how many of them continue to remain in the country how many have left as migrant workers. Meanwhile, many Russian citizens residing in Moldova fail to obtain a residence permit or any other form of official registration from the Moldovan authorities (this phenomenon is widespread in Transnistria).

In addition, some Russian citizens residing in the territory of Moldova are not registered with the consulate but have an internal Russian passport, bearing their registration at a certain address in the territory of Russia. Among such people, there are a large number of elderly people who receive a Russian pension but live in Moldova (Russian pensions are much higher than pensions in Moldova).

The process of obtaining Russian citizenship by residents of Moldova continues to be significant. In 2012, Russian citizenship was granted to 4,336 people.

The Romanian legislation in 2009 simplified the procedure for granting Romanian citizenship for citizens of the Republic of Moldova. Now it can be granted to descendants of Romanian citizens who resided in the territory of Moldova until 1940, which applies to the vast majority of the population. In order to obtain Romanian citizenship, it is no longer necessary to pass a mandatory Romanian language test administered during the naturalization application interview, which also allows Russian-speaking citizens to obtain a Romanian passport. The process of naturalization allows the retention of other (previous) foreign citizenship and permanent residence outside of Romania.

Many Moldovan citizens with a Romanian passport, which gives them the right of visa-free entry into the EU, do not state their Romanian citizenship for the same reason, underlining that they are citizens of the Republic of Moldova. They believe that the Moldovan passport does not raise such suspicion with the residents of the EU countries as the Romanian passport does (Mosneaga, V. 2012. 2 p. 13). The actual number of Romanian citizens permanently residing in the territory of Moldova is incalculable.

The Ukrainian Ambassador to Moldova, S. Pyrozhkov reported that about 90,000 Ukrainian citizens permanently residing in the Republic of Moldova, mostly in Transnistria, were registered with the consulate of the Ukrainian Embassy in 2008. It is unknown how many of these people actually live in Moldova, and how many of them have migrated from Moldova. Among citizens of Ukraine, as well as among citizens of Russia, there are a high proportion of persons who have not registered their status with the administrative services of the Republic of Moldova. In 2010, the Bulgarian government introduced amendments to the Citizenship Act, thereby simplifying the procedure for obtaining citizenship, which is granted to individuals who can confirm their Bulgarian origin with documents. Such persons in Moldova include Bulgarians (65.7 thousand, according to the census of 2004), a large group of Gagauz (147.5 thousand, according to the census of 2004), as well as persons not included in the aforementioned groups, but who can document the ethnic Gagauz or Bulgarian origin of at least one of the parents.

Obtaining a Bulgarian passport is also often seen by residents of Moldova as an opportunity to leave the country more easily for various purposes, including labour migration.

A source citing data provided by the Vice-President of Bulgaria M. Popova reports 5,705 immigrants from Moldova who received Bulgarian citizenship in 2012. The total number of Moldovan citizens who have been granted Bulgarian citizenship is estimated at more than 20 thousand..

In order to ensure their status abroad, Moldovan citizens are actively seeking citizenship of other countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal, the USA, Canada, Israel, Germany, etc.) through marriage, relocation programs, and naturalization.

### **Transnistrian section of the border**

An important factor influencing the dynamics of migration flows and the accuracy of their accounting by the state services of the Republic of Moldova is the fact that there is an extended section of the border with Ukraine (454 km) under the control of the unrecogni-

zed PMR. The authorities of the unrecognized republic, based on the existing legislation, independently carry out different types of border control.

Moldovan authorities are planning to open several points of migration control (regional offices of the Bureau of Migration and Asylum of the Republic of Moldova) along the boundary with the Transnistrian region.

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