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### **Current Migration Tendencies of Moldova Population towards the European Area**

*Svetlana CEBOTARI, Carolina BUDURINA-GOREACII,  
Ion XENOFONTOV*

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# Current Migration Tendencies of Moldova Population towards the European Area

Svetlana CEBOTARI<sup>1</sup>  
Carolina BUDURINA-GOREACII<sup>2</sup>  
Ion XENOFONTOV<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

*The new economic and political realities faced by the Republic of Moldova, at the moment, generates the change of the forms and directions of migration flows. In this way, today, we can assert that Moldova has become one of the major states whose population migrates to work to Europe. Labor migration, certainly, is a direct consequence of the big differences in living conditions and remuneration between the Republic of Moldova and Western Europe. This often becomes a challenge to both regional security and the security of Europe as whole.*

*In this article the causes, tendencies and effects of labor migrations from the Republic of Moldova are examined, and also the structural characteristics of the new migration wave, and the migrants' major destination countries, with a particular emphasis on the European space.*

## Keywords:

*Migration, Republic of Moldova, society, study, knowledge of languages, cultures, traditions, technologies, new ideas.*

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<sup>1</sup> Svetlana CEBOTARI – Ph.D. in political sciences, Associate professor, Faculty of International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences, Moldova State University, Email Address: svetlana.cebotari@mail.ru, Phone no. +373 068977695.

<sup>2</sup> Carolina BUDURINA-GOREACII – MA, lecturer, Faculty of International Relations, Political and Administrative Sciences, Department of Applied Foreign Languages, Moldova State University, Email Address: carolina.budurin@gmail.com, Phone no. +373 06095490.

<sup>3</sup> Ion XENOFONTOV – Ph.D. in history, Institute of Encyclopaedic Research, Academy of Sciences of Moldova, Email Address: ionx2005@yahoo.com, Phone no. +373 069214846.

## **Introduction**

The issue of migration has become unquestionably important in the Republic of Moldova during its development as an independent state. The process of transition and restructuring of the national economy influenced largely and changed the situation on the labor market both at the national level and international one. For several years, Moldova's economy has changed consistently, where the state doesn't manage to meet the demands of society. Private sector development, stopping and dismantling of large state companies, that provided a big part of the population with jobs, directly led to the emergence of unemployment (Pîntea, 2000:146).

As a consequence, one of the most remarkable phenomena, that characterize the labor market situation in Moldova, refers to international migration of labor. In recent years this phenomenon has grown enough, becoming one of the most discussed and analyzed phenomena by mass-media, scientific researches and policy makers in the country (Vaculovschi, 2001:138-147).

## **Theoretical perspectives**

However, the analysis of this phenomenon requires the identification of root causes that led to its emergence and development. In this context, researcher A. Krauze highlighted the following main causes:

- Establishment of an independent Moldovan state. As a result of the Soviet Union collapse, the economy of the republic has lost a number of basic features for a successful operation and development of integrity and own prosperity, leading the country in a deep economic crisis. Geopolitical changes in the post-Soviet space reflected also upon the migration processes in Moldova. Migration of internal type within USSR gradually turned into migration between former independent soviet states.
- Establishment of the Moldovan state of an open and democratic type. Development of the Republic of Moldova as an independent and democratic state was accompanied by

the liberalization process of exit and entry procedures in the country, which contributed to the active inclusion of the state in world migration processes. However, it should be noted that Moldova's transformation into an open society contributed to the emergence of new migration features. Like other former soviet states, Moldova collided with such forms of migration, as well as legal and illegal transit migration. Illegal migration is becoming fairly widespread, which entails the creation of socio-economic and political complex transformations.

- Establishment of a Moldovan democratic state based on the market economy. Democratic transformations performed on the economic, political and social current system in post-Soviet space can not give a positive effect in the short term, which also led to the worsening crisis situation existing here, worsening the situation of the population. The economic crisis and decreasing productivity, inflation, rising unemployment, decreasing social spending have influenced the development of migration situation in Moldova (Krauze, 2000:83).

Thus, as a result of conducted surveys on labor migration from Moldova, it was shown that the main factors which determine the departure abroad of Moldovan citizens, in order to find a job, are of socio-economic nature. The main cause refers to difficult material situation of migrant family, the lack of a job, lack of sufficient financial resources for a decent living or to solve different problems related to everyday food, medical treatment, education of children, buying a house etc. (Moşneaga, Moraru, Rusnac, 2009:90-134).

Currently there are several estimates of the number of Moldovan migrants left to work abroad. Also there are considerable differences between official and unofficial data regarding the number of went people abroad. Thus, population census conducted in the period of 5-12 October 2004 presented that about 273 thousand were abroad during the time of performing the document (Cheianu-Andrei, 2007:260). One of made estimates of the International Organization for Migration study "Remittances and Migration in Moldova - 2006" (Moldova, 2006:3) indicated the number of working abroad at the time of the study, which

was about 252 thousand people, unofficially saying that migrants would be over than 1 million of them. However, the latest official data of the National Bureau of Statistics presents the number of population at working abroad in the fourth quarter of 2010 was 316,800 persons (an increase from an annual average of 2009 which was 249, 9000 persons) (Biroul, 2011).

According to conducted researches, long term Moldovan migrants come from different social strata and from both urban (25%) and rural areas (75%). Moldovan migration is directed primarily to two regions, the *European Union* (mainly Italy and Portugal) and *Community Independent States* (Moscow, St. Petersburg in the Russian Federation and the Ukraine). A specific feature of Moldovan migration is the high level of agglomeration of people in places of migration. The vast majority of migrants are in some regions of destination, more than ten cities hosting about three quarters of the total number of migrants from Moldova (Lücke, 2007:17).

### **Types of international migration in Moldova**

There can be identified three types of international migration in Moldova:

- 1) *Short-term* international migration particularly in CIS countries.
- 2) *Long-term* international migration, predominantly in the European Union.
- 3) *Legal long-term* international migration to the U.S. and Canada.

Distribution of migrants by host countries reveals that most migrants work in Russia (47%). Leaving a large number of migrants to the Russian Federation is caused by relatively small travel costs, visa-free entry, knowledge of Russian language and others. Mostly in this country men worked, especially from rural areas (72.9% and 64.6% of the total number of them). The average length of stay in Russia was 1.8 years.

On the other hand, in the European Union (EU 27), where the access is much more difficult, because of the costs and visa, there are working about 40% of migrants. The share of women migrants and those in cities is significantly higher than that of men and those from rural areas, the average length of stay were also higher, 2.7 years (Migrația, 2008:6). Among EU countries the most popular destination is Italy. According to the National Statistics Institute of Italy, on 31

December 2007, in Italy there were 68,660 citizens of the Republic of Moldova (Institutului, 2011). However, in the fourth quarter of 2007, Labor Force Survey conducted by National Bureau of Statistics has estimated a total of 61 800 people working in this country for 15 years and over. The share of women migrants in Italy is 70.1%, being exceeded only by Israel (86.6%) and Turkey (81.5%). Italy currently hosts about 26% of the total number of Moldovan migrants. Compared with migrants from Russia, the EU is older-migrants have a higher educational level also before going abroad, many of them had a job. This can be seen that destination countries for Moldovan migrants are mainly: Russia (47%) and Ukraine (2%), Turkey (3%) and Israel (3%) and within the EU countries: Italy (26% ), Greece (3%), Portugal (3%), Spain (3%), Romania (1%), Germany, France (2%), Czech Republic (1%), England (1%) and others (8%).

Moldovan migrants have place of residence, mostly, in the capital or other large urban centers in countries of migration. In Russia, the mainly cluster of migrants consists in Moscow (75.6%) and ST. Petersburg (10.7%). In Italy, Moldovan migrants cluster is located in northern cities like Rome, Milan, Padua, and Bologna (42.9%). In France, 69.6% of Moldovan migrants live in Paris. However, in Portugal, Czech Republic, Spain, Greece and Romania, the process of urbanization is the opposite, given the fact that most migrants are not concentrated in certain cities (De Zwager, 2010:4).

Numerical data on the number of Moldovan migrant workers in Europe are rather limited due to lack an adequate system of registration of migration flows. Available research results provide some quantitative estimates of tendencies in migration processes Moldovan workers to Europe:

Researches from Czech Republic estimate that in this country there are about 2,000 Moldovan workers. Meanwhile, the Security Service and Information from Moldova report no less than 40,000 Moldovan migrants are employed in the this country.

According to German authorities in this country about 31,400 Moldovan people work there. Most of them are employed in the construction sector in eastern Germany.

Moldovans make up most of the group of foreigners sent to Poland from Germany as a result of illegal attempts to cross the border (over 1,000 persons per year).

More than 10,000 of Moldovan migrants were sent back from Portugal, Spain, Turkey and Israel during the period of the last two years.

The Federal Visa and Immigration in Stuttgart says over 55,000 migrant workers from Moldova in the Schengen area. Most migrants are illegally there, with the validity of the visa expired, and often are taken on record in courts of law because they practice illegal activities (such as theft). However, available data are incomplete, being collected before the EU member states to launch the unifying migration control system by introducing systems EURODAC (Sleptova, 2003:21-22).

More recently, in the general pattern of migration from Moldova there were observed the following tendencies and changes: - from the CIS region to EU region; - from short-term and seasonal migration, to the long-term migration. These tendencies and changes seem to be a trend towards diversification of countries of destination and a movement from lower income countries to higher income ones. This creates opportunities and potential for enhancing impact of developmental of migration, especially in terms of increased flows of remittances or remittances flows more stabilized and resistant that have less probability to transfer uncertainty or economic risk in the country of origin. Longer migration also has the potential to result in greater impacts of development (Consolidarea, 2010:1). As a result, we find that the European vector of labor migration from Moldova becomes a leader before the CIS space, as the feasibility to achievement of migrant plans in the CIS lost in its value compared to the European area. However, it should be noted that the procedure of emigration to the EU includes in itself a very complex and expensive process. Thus, the majority of Moldovan citizens immigrate to European countries through economic agents, who possess the right to work in international tourism, which actually deals with the illegal recruitment of citizens to work abroad. Providing only services by opening a visa for a country, these economic agents require considerable amounts of money, obtaining in this way illegal income. Every citizen of Moldova, who plan to work abroad, pay services to economic agents in this area an amount not less than 200 dollars (Moşneaga et al, 2000:33). Most Moldovans enter legally in EU

countries, with a Schengen visa, even if this visa is often of a tourist type. Cases of illegal entry are very few. Violations of law don't occur during entry into the European state, but during a stay in this state. However, the deportation of Moldovan citizens across Europe leaves no hope of turning back (Moşneaga, 2000:122). So, we highlight the following legal channels for migrants crossing the Moldovan border, which target direction towards the European space: a) legal employment abroad by signing a labor contract with an entrepreneur; b) the legal passing of boundaries a residence permit and work legally in EU countries. Official data of Western countries on legalization of Moldovan citizens allow us to talk about a number of 100-150 thousand people. Thus, no fewer than 150,000 people have been legalized at the beginning of sec. XXI only in Italy, Greece and Portugal; c) crossing legally the border on a tourist visa. Purchasing through a travel agency, visa for an EU country, Moldovan migrants arrive in the country of destination legally. However, after a certain period of time (often in a short term), they remain in its territory illegally, d) crossing legally the borders through a legal passport, in particular EU Member State (Moşneaga, 2000:247).

Romania is among countries that have offered Moldovan citizens the opportunity to obtain another citizenship. Several thousand citizens of the Republic of Moldova took advantage of this opportunity in late 2000 and early 2001. This trend has caused dissatisfaction to the Government of the Republic of Moldova. According to informal sources of information, more than 200,000 people in Moldova have Romanian citizenship. However, after Romania's EU accession (1 January 2007), the Ministry of Justice presented to the Ministry Foreign Affairs and European Integration a project regarding changing the Law on Romanian citizenship. The European Community expressed concern over proposed amendments to the law, being aware the fact that a significant proportion of Moldovan citizens applying for Romanian citizenship and falling under the revised law, would not be required to hold a visa to stay in Romania. Thus, these individuals, although as Romanian citizens and European citizens, would not be in the territorial jurisdiction of Romania and that will not be able to be "controlled".

Currently, Romania, as an EU member state introduced a visa regime for Moldovan citizens, this regime being a flexible one. Thus, Moldovan migrants enter in Romania, having a legitimate personal



passport and a legally visa, obtained from Romanian diplomatic mission. They are trying to migrate from Romania to Western Europe, using for this purpose the western or south border of Romania or green border, through various illegal means. Usually, Moldovan migrants try to enter the territory of EU, passing illegally the Romanian-Hungarian and the Romanian-Serbian border. More recently, it began to be used also the Romanian-Bulgarian border. Used routes are: Republic of Moldova - Romania - Hungary - Italy; Republic of Moldova - Romania - Hungary - Austria - Slovenia - Italy; Republic of Moldova - Romania - Bulgaria (Pop, 2009:74-95).

If we try to analyze labor migration in Moldova, it has to be noted the fact that Moldovan migrants have different age categories, covering a range of 16-61 years, where the overall average is 35.1 years. Thus, the average age of Moldovan migrants is higher than the overall average and is practically the same for both genders. In particular, Israel is the state which holds the largest number of migrants in an age before. A different situation is in Western countries such as France, Germany, Benelux, etc., where the average age of migrants is much smaller. These states are target countries for younger people, who often try to combine work with higher education. Also, it is important to be mentioned the significant difference between the average age of men and women who are employed in Italy. The higher average age of women is mainly determined by the nature of practiced work - care and baby-sitting - that is, activities that require some experience in this field (Ghencea, Gudumac, 2004:45). Among Moldovan migrant workers are often encountered and elderly people in the category. However, it is noticed that the chosen destination for migration in labor goal determine the gender difference among immigrants. Thus, it was found that Moldovan men go to work mainly in construction to the Russian Federation and other CIS states, and also to EU countries such as Czech Republic, Portugal, France, United Kingdom etc. In contrast, women prefer more European countries as destinations, including Italy, Belgium, Germany, etc. in order to work in the social services (Moldova, 2009:76). Therefore, statistical data provided by Eurostat shows that in 2010 it was recorded totally difference of gender of Moldovan migrants within the EU Member States, for example in the Czech Republic it was recorded about 6311 Moldovan men and of 3591 women, Portugal: 11 754 men

and 9051 women, 526 men and 488 women. States of a greater number of women: Italy with 69.407 women and 36 193 of men, Germany with 7483 of women and 5716 men etc. (Population, 2001). These data show different migration tendencies of population of Moldova in the European area.

Regarding their educational level, migrant workers are primarily qualified specialists, people with secondary or incomplete higher studies (Moşneaga 2000:120). However, in the context of analysis of migration tendencies in Europe Moldovan population we find that to the EU countries go mainly people with higher education level. Thus, the group of countries, where the number of migrants with a university level and post university education form more than 50% is made up of: England by 75%, Spain - 69%, Italy - 67.9%, Germany, Israel - 66.7%, Czech Republic - 54.5%, Ireland - 50%. This situation occurs because: university education raises the level of social requirements of the individuals that society can not meet. At the same time, the high level of human capital makes them more vulnerable people in Moldovan labor market conditions, because at present the market is more interested in workers with a low level of human capital (Rusnac, Moşneaga, Ţurcan, 2007:86,107). All these circumstances drive Moldovan citizens with a high human potential to leave its territory in search of better social possibilities. European area often proves to be adequate solution to their requirements, because especially to the European market, mainly, with higher education there are moving migrants from Moldova, the desire to solve economic problems. In this way, we can assume that, at least in the near future, the number of people with higher education level will remain quite high among Moldovan migrants. However, a significant part of Moldovans with high qualification are subjected to professional "disqualification" when they migrate, often being employed in low skill or unskilled work. Intellectual exodus from Moldova is not necessarily a gain for countries of destination, but rather an intellectual waste for migrants. However, highly skilled Moldovan migrants earn more than the lower-status jobs abroad, than would be possible if they would have careers in their homeland.

In the case of Republic of Moldova the main force of migration processes consist of the difference in salaries. Moldovan economy was substantially influenced by money sent from abroad (Branăşco, 2010:88-

90). International Monetary Fund has defined this type of money, that are registered in three different compartments of the balance of payments, namely compensations of employees, worker remittances and migrants transfers, through a single period of "remittances" (OECD, 2006:140). Thus, we should mention the fact that, our country's dependence on remittances from abroad is among the largest in the world. The World Bank has placed Moldova in the third place in the world after the share of remittances in GDP, which in 2008 it was 31%, surpassed only by Tonga with 38% and Tajikistan with 50% (Migration, 2010:2). The volume of cash transfers from abroad made by Moldovan banks was equivalent to 957.93 million dollars in 2009 and decreased by 32% (445.74 million dollars) compared to the previous year. The National Bank of Moldova data (NBM) show that from January to October 2009 about 83% of total remittances were made through the International Express Transfer system. In October 2009, the share of transfers in U.S. dollars was 53.8% (against 49.7% in October 2008), while the euro recorded a 39.4% share (compared to about 42.3% in the same period of last year). Since August 2008, the value of remittances began to gradually reduce itself on the base of global recession (Pavel, 2009:5). It should be noted that Moldovan migrant workers' remittances to the country of origin is achieved through various ways, as both official and unofficial channels. According to the International Monetary Fund, 59% of money transfers came to Moldova through official channels and have their origin from EU countries, 26% - of the CIS states, and 15% - from other countries (International, 2005:10). Thus, we find that official channels of remittances are especially preferred by Moldovan migrants who are in such countries as Portugal, Spain (65.3% of remittances), France, Germany, Belgium and the UK (47.7%), Italy (42.9%), Greece, Cyprus (33.3%), which represents the vast majority of reached remittances on the territory of Moldova. Meanwhile, 80.1% of Moldovan migrants who work in the CIS territory choose informal channels of money transfer to Moldova (Moşneaga, Teosa, 2006:7-34).

It should be noted that remittances significantly affect the development process of hosting state. Regardless of national variations, the amounts involved are important, because remittances can be saved, invested or spent for covering domestic consumption. Each mode of use involves different consequences. For example, the impact of investment

and economies can be observed at the macro level, while the impact on consumption is visible only at the micro level, all these involving however multiplier effects in economy (Peixoto, Fonseca, 2008:169-193). Thus, according to the World Bank data, among the largest receiving remittances as part of GDP (Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania), Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina have spent more than 25 % of remittances in order to ensure household expenditures (Migration, 2007:64-65). These prove the fact that a considerable part of the money brought from abroad are not invested in Moldova to help the country's economic development at the macro level, but are spent on micro-level needs. However, these resources stimulates in some extent and investment, which inevitably contributes to the economy development (Gorelova, 2003:40-46).

### **Consequences labor migration**

Labor migration to the European area brings a number of consequences, both positive and negative ones. As a consequence not only of poverty, but also of a democratization result of young state, of internationalization and its integration to Europe, migration processes along with the progressive development of international trade, represented the main levers for strengthening the transparency of state. So, once with turning back to Moldova, even for a short stay, migrants bring with them trends, international practices, knowledge of languages, cultures, traditions, technologies and new ideas, that contribute to society development, and to reducing mental differences between Europe and the Republic of Moldova (Moşneaga, 2001a:108-111). Regarding the economic effects, they can be positive in the short term, but, they are, at the same time, negative in the distant future. This is because of so called "brain exodus". For the Republic of Moldova, as a donor country, it results in a major devastation of labor market and general labor disqualification, which in turn, does not favor long-term economic development at all. Exodus of qualified labor force, prevents, so in a large extent, the economic development and domestic science. However, labor migration negative affect relations between donor and recipient countries of labor migrants. Most migrant workers from Moldova are in the destination country illegally, they violate the law, either overcoming

visa or working without permission. Given into consideration the large number of Moldovans in some countries, like Italy, Portugal, Czech Republic, Greece, etc., it can be assumed that there is less chance for Moldovans to be welcomed and respected by the locals, especially if we refer unemployed persons. Besides the serious disturbances that create migrant workers of hosting country, there appear problems of criminal issues, including theft, increase of crimes, drugs and women trafficking. However, language barriers and illegal situation make integration of migrant workers in foreign environment to be very difficult. All these factors undermine the image of Moldova and its citizens. (Moşneaga, Rusnac, Țurcan, 2003:63-78).

### Concluding remarks

All these factors demonstrate the complexity character of the actual migration trends of the Moldovan population to the European space and the need to solve many problems and negative consequences arising from migration flows. Thus, cooperation between Moldova and EU in labor migration domain is a very important component for the development of good neighborly relations between the two parties.

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