



# The European Union’s “Support to Migration Policy Development and Relevant Capacity Building in Armenia” Programme

Եվրամիության «Աջակցություն Հայաստանում միգրացիոն քաղաքականության և համապատասխան կարողությունների հզորացմանը» ծրագիր

# Policy Brief Համառոտագիր



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Ծրագիրը ֆինանսավորվել է Եվրամիության կողմից



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International Center for Human Development  
Մարդկային զարգացման միջազգային կենտրոն



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Migration Agency of the Ministry of Territorial Administration of RA  
ՀՀ տարածքային կառավարման նախարարության միգրացիոն գործակալություն

# **R** reforms in migration management information system



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## **The management twins**

It is indisputable that the effectiveness of the migration policy is largely contingent on the proper and detailed statistics, describing the migration flows. At the same time, the effectiveness of the procedures of migration regulation and the quality of the provided services are conditioned by the adequate coordination of the information flows on migration and registration tasks.

## **The current system of registering migration flows**

The administrative registration of immigration flows in the Republic of Armenia is carried out by a number of agencies, each responsible for some specific aspects of the process. For instance, the Border Management Information System (BMIS) of the National Security Service (NSS) ensures both the collection of data on immigrants and the registration of those leaving the country. The Police are the agency that deals with the collection of data required for granting Armenian visas to foreign citizens, visa extension and residence permits both at the Armenian border points and on the Armenian territory. Data on granting RA entry visas to foreign citizens abroad are partly collected at the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its diplomatic missions and consulates. Data on granting citizenship to foreigners and those without such a status, as well as data on granting a residence status in Armenia are managed by the Police. The database on personae non grata in the Republic of Armenia is supervised by the National Security Service. The Migration Agency is responsible for the registration of and development of a database on those seeking shelter in Armenia and those having already been granted a refugee status. It is also responsible for the database on deportation of illegal migrants.

The major source of data on emigration flows in the Republic of Armenia is the Police regional departments of passport services, which are responsible for registration of the population and the tracking of the records. However, these services do not accurately reflect the real scope of the population movement, since a significant part of the population leaves the territory of the Republic of Armenia and resides in a foreign country for a comparatively long period without necessarily removing their respective data from the registration lists.

## **The European standards**

Logically, the migration statistics should be in compliance with the requirements of the statistics in general in Armenia. However, it should comply also with the internationally acclaimed standards of impartiality, reliability, objectivity, evidence-based validity, cost-effectiveness and privacy of data.

In order to develop statistical data on migration comparable to and in compliance with the European standards, introducing a reliable system of data collection is not enough. It is also necessary to develop common concepts used in the field of migration, largely approximating the current definitions to the ones found in Acquis. For instance, there already exist legal definitions of concepts, such as shelter, voluntary return, refugee, family and citizenship. Still, the major concepts of migration, including immigration and emigration, are not yet defined. The protection of private data on foreign citizens in Armenia is ratified by law. However, in the absence of a unified register of foreigners and the narrow circle of agencies with access to individual data restrict the effectiveness of migration regulation procedures and extend the duration of certain administrative procedures.

19 Sayat Nova  
Yerevan 0001  
Armenia

Tel.: +374 10 582638  
Fax: +374 10 527082

mail@ichd.org  
www.ichd.org

## **An information puzzle**

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Generally, notwithstanding the availability of discrete entry/exit data on foreigners in the above-mentioned agencies, a common statistical analysis of these data is absent. The current system of registration of those arriving to Armenia and those departing does not allow the Armenia's National Statistical Service to evaluate the structure and trends of migration flows in the country. The information on the change of the migration status of foreign citizens, including information on the expiration of the visa validity and the registration of foreign students in Armenia, is lacking. In particular, the National Statistical Service does not have direct access to the databases of the NSS, BMIS and the Police. Though the Government of Armenia has already initiated concrete steps towards developing and implementing an e-governance information management system on the Armenian borders, the system of administrative registration of migration is still ineffective; the above-mentioned administrative databases are not physically interconnected; the regular, timely and fast provision of compatible data through a unified system is yet missing and there is no opportunity to carry out a comprehensive data analysis. Moreover, the lack of interconnectedness of information databases, as well as the complete information on the movement of foreign citizens on the territory of the Republic of Armenia put the national security at peril.

## **Three apples**

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In order to work out, implement and monitor a migration policy in Armenia, as well as to increase the effectiveness of the procedures of migration regulation and finally, to complete the statistical data describing migration trends in the country, it is necessary to implement three essential steps.

First, it is necessary to ensure that the data collection and statistical methodology comply with the EU standards. In particular, it is necessary to define the major concepts in the field of migration and the general requirements for the statistical information on migration and the protection of individuals, as regards the automated processing of private data, in compliance with the EU aquis. Bi- and multi-lateral agreements on exchanging information on internal and international movements should be signed. Moreover, biometric documents on private data should be introduced and national reports and yearbooks on migration statistical data should be published.

Second, it is necessary to create a common electronic system of regulating migration data through

- working out a methodology of data collection, based on the statistical indicators on migration, data analysis and data exchange;
- introducing automated procedures for storing, exchanging and using migration data in electronic databases, as well as for coding and decoding the data;
- managing the databases;
- defining the scope of the responsibilities of the agencies dealing with a certain group of data and the scheme of restricted availability of information;
- working out data exchange regulations among the agencies involved;
- defining the surveillance mechanisms for the database management and the use of data.

Finally, it is necessary to improve the capacities of the agencies involved in the migration regulation processes: to define the responsibilities of the state agencies coordinating the data management process; restrict the rights to code and decode information to concrete state agencies and provide in-service training to the staff of this agency and the border security staff.

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