

Student Potential Migration from Georgia

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Due to the profitable geopolitical location and pleasant natural and climate conditions, it should be stressed that Georgia has never been characterized as a country with intensive external migration processes; whilst there was no particular need for people to go abroad to improve their living conditions. During the Soviet period ethnic Georgians tended to remain in Georgia, more than 95% of them lived on the own territory, but other Caucasian ethnics already in that time used to live in different Soviet republics.

Social-economic crisis of the beginning of 1990s has caused unprecedented scales of emigration. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the citizens of independent Georgia had chance to travel abroad without any of the artificial impediments of the past. In the period between two population censuses, 1989 and 2002, due to emigration Georgia has lost more than one million of citizens that consists a fifth of its population. There is no exact statistics regarding migratory streams in Georgia. According to the data of the Department of Statistics, the negative net migration of the population of Georgia (1990-2006) is about 900 thousands and the highest migration rates appeared during the years 1990-1993, but according to experts, the negative net migration is 1171 thousands and the high migration level came in the years 1992-1996. The main reason for such different evaluation is the worsening of the registration of migrants.

The main motivation of emigration is to escape economic hardship and to improve living conditions. As there are hardly any legal opportunities for labour migration from Georgia, these migration processes are basically irregular. Migrants

leave Georgia with the assistance of relatives and friends, travel agencies, private recruitment agencies, student exchange programs. The majority of emigrants who have left country on a legal basis, usually become irregular due to the abrogation of emigration rules of recipient countries.

According to the data of the census (2002), migration flows are mainly directed towards seven countries: Russian Federation, Greece, Germany, USA, Ukraine, Israel, Turkey. But today the main directions of emigration have been changed. According to the census 78.4 % of emigrants go abroad to improve their economic conditions. 57.6 % of emigrants are men, 41.3 – women. 81.1 % of emigrants are able to work. Among the women emigrants 67 % are at the reproductive age. 57.0 % of emigrants are married. 31,1 % of emigrants are with higher education. Emigration caused imbalance of the sexual-age structure and demographic aging of the population of Georgia. Migration processes have caused extreme decrease of reproductive functions of emigrants. In 1990-2006 due to the emigration processes Georgian population has reduced nearly by 20 %. But emigration has also some positive consequences: remittances of migrants to their families are often the only source of income for families. Remittances essentially increase the national income and help to stabilize the rate of exchange. Labour migration reduces the loading of labour markets of the country.

Another positive side is that the young people who have received western education and working experience at certain level positively participate in the developing economic, political and social processes in Georgia.

Due to economic reasons the emigration disposition is still high in the population of Georgia, especially among families whose members have become labour migrants abroad. Their possible emigration will worsen the demographic situation of Georgia. In order to show the future tendencies in migration processes we have held demo-sociological research.

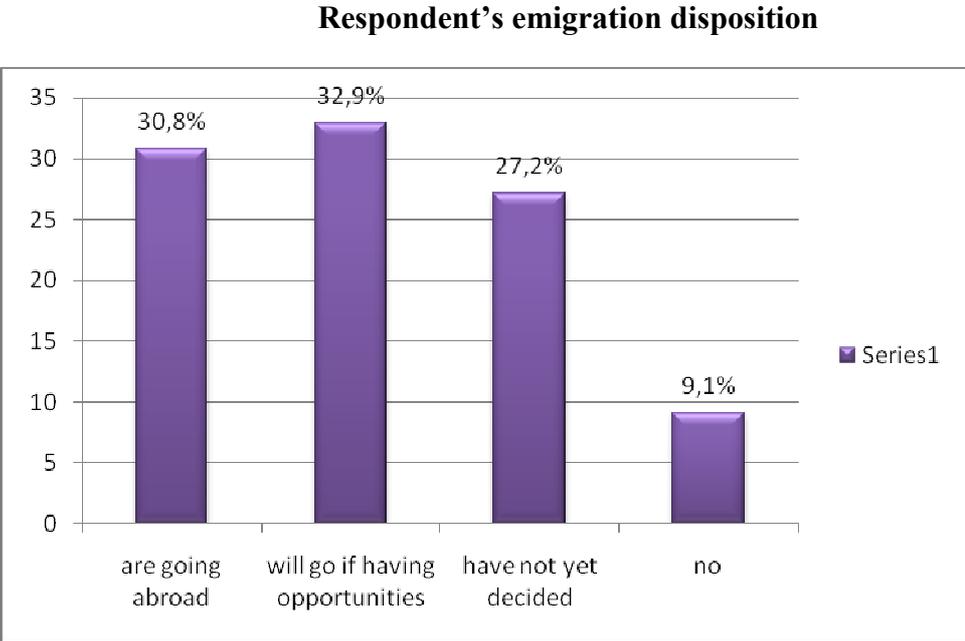
In 2008 we have interviewed young people (students - 550) in Tbilisi to show the trends of the youth possible depart; to investigate migration disposition of the

youth; causes, scales and main trends of the potential external migration of the youth, the possibility and desire of returning of the potential young migrants at home.

The questionnaire contains the questions about the emigration of the family members of the respondents on the one hand and the questions about the respondents' possible departure abroad on the other hand.

As for the emigration of the family members, the respondents indicate that the main reason of their emigration were hard social-economic conditions, hardship and desire to find a job abroad. 66,7 % of emigrants departed because of these reasons, 8,0 % of emigrants was motivated by the purpose of study, 2,8 % because of political situation existing in Georgia, and 8,0 % of emigrants had no perspective in Georgia. Their migration flows are directed towards Russia – 33,3 %, Greece – 21,3 %, Ukraine – 12,1 %, other European countries – 11,1 %, USA – 9,3. 59,2 % of respondents are sure that their family members will return in Georgia by all means. But desire and respondents' opinion about remigration doesn't always coincided with reality. The evidence of such condition is that about 65 % of emigrants have not returned yet in the last 10 ten years and there is less possibility that they will return in the nearest future. It is expectable that part of them will settle forever abroad. 6,5 % of emigrants think that they will not return. Although this is not a large figure, it indicates about the deplorable tendency.

Figure 1.



The research of potential students' emigration revealed that the emigration potential is quite high. The half of the youth (about 63,7%) is ready psychologically for going abroad and they will depart if they have any possibility and chances. Among the potential migrants females prevail males. The most categorically were the students till 20 years old. Their migratory disposition is the highest among the respondents of this age. 46,3 % of them indicated that will emigrate abroad.

Migratory disposition is higher among the single population (about 57%). But it should be indicated that every the fourth student doesn't intend leaving the country and 1/3 of them categorically refused to emigrate.

The respondents (from above mentioned 46,3 % of potential emigrants) are going to emigrate as soon as they complete their study (25,6 %). 34,2 % will emigrate as soon as they have opportunities.

The main reasons of potential migration are: - social-economic hardship. This reason indicated more males than females; Another reason is desire to study abroad. 25 % of students want to study abroad, both study and work is indicated by 43 % of students. Mainly females noted this reason. So, more frequently young women will refer migration in order to study and to work, but young men will refer mainly labour migration. One of the important reason is desire to live abroad (12%).

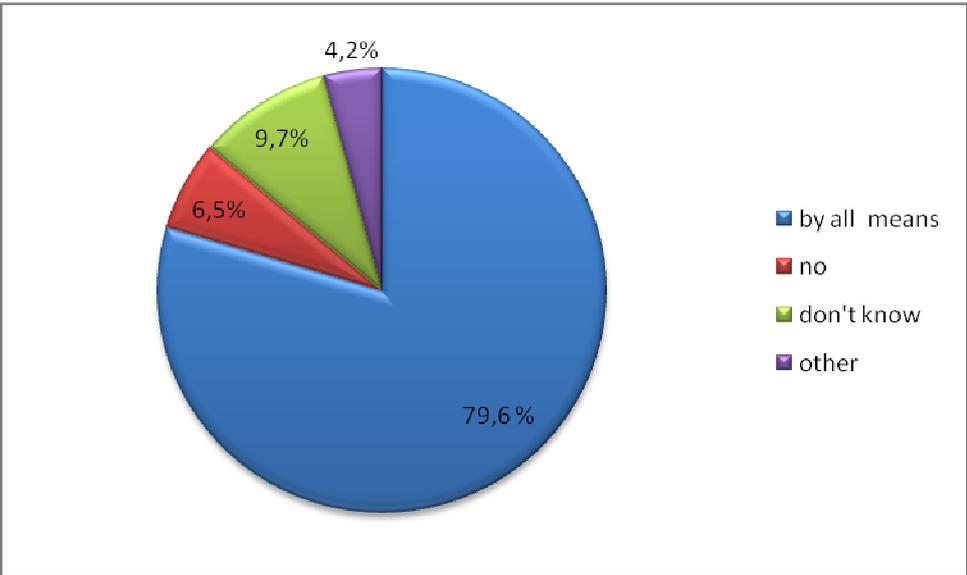
The majority of potential migrants are oriented towards USA (23,1), Germany (16,8%) and mainly to other European Countries. Only 6,0 % of the respondents indicated Russia. The distribution of potential migrants corresponds with the distribution of actual migration figures according the country. This can be explained by the observation that the living standards of family members abroad significantly determine the direction of future potential migration flows.

The majority of potential migrants from Georgia, at present and in the near future, are oriented towards temporary migration. For both potential temporary and permanent migrants, the main reasons for migration besides educational purposes are economic situation, problem in the field of employment. For a large share of potential emigrants, the decision whether to stay in a specific country depends on how well they settle. The respondents (79,0%) indicated that in case of emigration they would

return home by all means. But desire doesn't always coincided with reality. If the current economic situation in Georgia continues for many years, the temporary migration will become permanent. About 6,5 % of students in the case emigration think that they will not return in Georgia. 9,7 % don't know what they will do (Figure 2). They are in an uncertain condition. Such tendency is not enviable.

Figure 2.

The answers of the respondents to the question: “Are you going to return to Georgia in the case of emigration?”



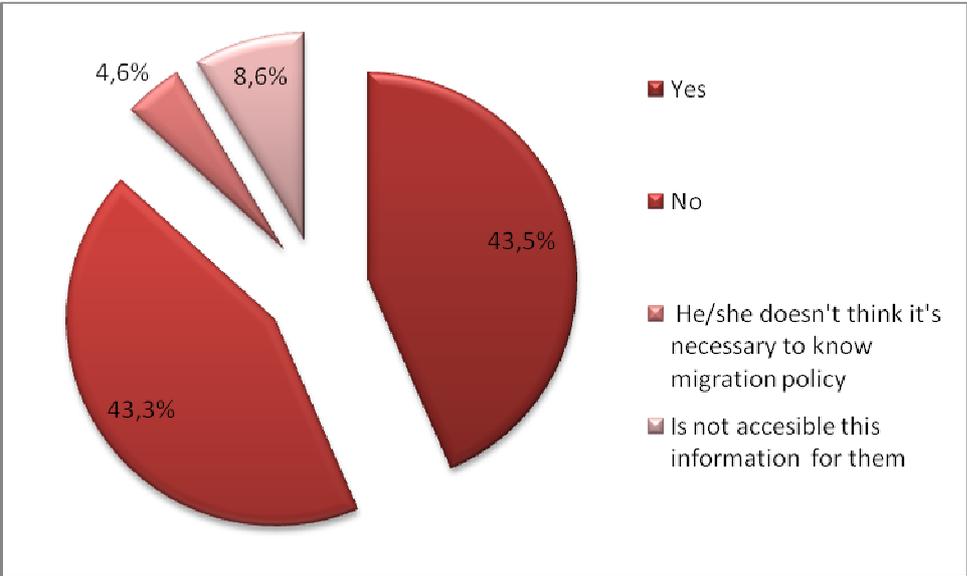
If the respondents emigrate, we can expect their re-emigration in 2-3 years (21,5%), 18,7 % will return in 4-5 years. After six, ten and more than ten years are going to return about 7,4 % of potential emigrants, that is disturbing, because young people at the most productive ages will be abroad and they will not participate in the demographic development of Georgia. It's obvious that the young people going abroad in order to improve living conditions, are unlikely to create families and rarely have children. About 46,1 % of emigrants don't know their re-emigration period.

The survey showed that the migration is constant, will continue and migrants are prepared to return to Georgia only if certain pre-conditioned are met. The majority of them 39,1 % will stay abroad until they finish studying, 14,5 % - till improve economical condition, 9,4 % of potential emigrants in the case of emigration will not return unless social-economical conditions are not improved in Georgia. So the main pre-conditions for returning are of an economic nature.

43,5 % of potential emigrants are not acquainted with the possibilities of going abroad, they have no information about the migration policy of recipient countries, 8,6 % have not possibilities of accessing this information and 4,6 don't think that it's necessary to know (Figure 3). Such indifferent attitude towards this issue will negatively impact on their future departure. Due to absence of such information many of them will become victims of trafficking and work under enslaving terms. Discriminated situation of Georgian emigrants is determined exactly by this condition.

Figure 3.

The answers of the respondents to the question: “Do you know migration policy of the recipient country?”



It should be indicated that the demographical situation of Georgia is not profitable due to a declining birthrate, but the most is due to emigration. We think that the results of the research have the forecasting meaning and they show us if the demographic situation improves or worsens more in the future.

On the one hand, we may consider youth potential emigration as a positive phenomenon if it doesn't last for a long time, if it has returnable nature, takes place in a legal way and the purpose of leaving corresponds to the existing real situation in a recipient country. But on the other hand in case of non-returning of youth, country

will experience direct economic and demographic losses that results in the fall of labour potential, their human capital will be devalued.

The survey showed that in the nearest future the majority of students is oriented towards temporary migration. Herewith, the reasons of as for temporary as everlasting migration besides study are hard economic situation and less payable jobs in Georgia. If social-economic conditions doesn't improve in Georgia, the number of people wishing going abroad will increase and their finally re-emigration decision will be dependent on the improvement of situation in Georgia.

Negative net external migration will be characteristic of Georgia in 2010-2025 and perhaps for the next period when the population of Georgia will shrink again. Such prognosis is offered by UN and Georgian experts. We also think so because the emigration disposition is still high in population of Georgia.

The government should focus on creating vacancies, that at the same time will facilitate the return of emigrants as well as the decrease of the further migration flows.

It is necessary:

- to legalize labour migration.
- to prepare the regulatory draft of the labour migration.
- to develop inter-state agreements regarding legal employment, including contract system, that could secure social and labour rights of emigrants.
- Georgia should work towards ratifying conventions of the UN and ILO that provide the international legal basis for the regulation of labour migration.

Finally we should not forget that migration in the case of its effective management will be considered as a positive phenomena in the development of Georgia.

The research is mainly based on different quantitative and qualitative resources, including demo-sociological researches, on the research held in Tbilisi in 2008 by the author of this article, statistical yearbooks and surveys, the First National Population

Census of Georgia 2002, and the information data provided by Georgian and foreign experts.

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