

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF ARMENIAN REPATRIATION<sup>1</sup>**

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**Introduction.** Sociological research among 500 families in Armenia was carried out by us in all 12 regions of Armenia, in total in 33 cities; including 301 in Yerevan, 36 in Masis, 11 in Gavar, 10 each in Gyumri, Vanadzor, Hrazdan and other cities. The task of the sociological study was to find out whether the relatives who left them intended to return to their homeland, various answers were received. In fact, only 10% answered that their relatives were going to return in the near future. Another 13.8% expressed hope that they would return sometime in the future. However, the majority of respondents (63.2%) noted that they have no intentions to return, and most likely never will again. Comparative analysis showed that the reasons why they left Armenia are fully correlated with the conditions of their possible return. This is, first of all, the improvement of socio-economic conditions in the country and the availability of work, as well as guarantees of peace and the absence of the threat of war.

For comparison, we note that in 2019, the Armenian Institute in London conducted the “Armenian Diaspora Survey 2019”, within which 3,000 Armenians were interviewed in Argentina, Canada, Lebanon and Romania. When asked if they were going to move to live in Armenia, 4% answered that they were determined to return to their homeland in the near future (2% in Argentina, 3% in Canada, 12% in Lebanon and 3% in Romania), another 23 % answered that they would like to return if circumstances change in Armenia [1].

*Repatriation potential of the resource of the Armenian diaspora.* Today we live in different socio-political conditions, and in a favorable situation, many of the Armenian diaspora in Russia may well return to their homeland. All groups of our respondents stated that repatriation is possible if there are several basic conditions: the security of the population, the economic development of the country and the availability of jobs. But even having a good repatriation resource, the authorities of the republic should be able to

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provide all these conditions and return people to their homeland. So far, Armenia has not been able to limit the annual migration out of the country.

After all, 7-8 million Armenians scattered around the world may well provide a fairly solid repatriation resource of 1-1.5 million people. But for this it is necessary, first of all, to improve national legislation, develop and implement special state programs for repatriation. Initially, the new Armenian government made grandiose statements about encouraging repatriation and creating new jobs. In 2020, a state program of primary support was approved, aimed at the reintegration of citizens returning to the RA. It consists of two components: counseling assistance and housing rent compensation. The reintegration program is implemented by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FrontEx). Since January 2022, 17 people have received rent compensation under this program. These are mostly voluntary repatriates from Ukraine who moved to Armenia due to the military situation. The total number of those who received assistance under this state program for 3 years amounted to 105 people<sup>1</sup>.

The project of the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN) in Armenia is currently being considered, as well as the development of the EU4Impact project and a new return project to be launched in the near future. It will also be implemented in Armenia for a period of 3 years with the potential to support up to 375 families annually. Of course, these measures are absolutely not enough to organize a large-scale repatriation program for the Armenian diaspora. The RA Ministry of Diaspora Affairs should have dealt with this matter. However, the new government of the republic abolished this ministry, and instead appointed a chief commissioner for diaspora issues under the government of the republic. But he was not very successful in the task of consolidating the Armenian diaspora.

*New trends and problems in the migration situation.* Nowadays, certain changes have taken place in the dynamics of people leaving and coming to Armenia. The flow of visitors from Russia has increased. The Ukrainian crisis, sanctions against Russia and partial mobilization forced many Russian citizens to leave the country [4]. Since the beginning of hostilities, a fairly large flow of immigrants to Armenia has formed. Migration from Russia has changed qualitatively, not only Armenian repatriates come, but also highly qualified specialists in the field of information technology, as well as private entrepreneurs and businessmen.

Their arrival is mainly for political reasons, here the main role was played by sanctions. Armenia should be interested in the work of highly qualified specialists. This

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<sup>1</sup> The 13th forum of organizations dealing with reintegration issues was held. <http://migration.am/news/488?lang=hy> [Date of access: 05/27/2022].

will also have a positive impact on the potential of Armenia if the RA government actively works in this direction and creates appropriate conditions, especially in those areas that are most conducive to the development of the economy. The creation of appropriate conditions will also help to avoid a massive exodus of these specialists when sanctions against Russia are eased.

The number of people who came from Russia in 2022.

- According to expert estimates, 90,000 Russian citizens arrived in Armenia.
- 938 registered as individual entrepreneurs.
- Another 268 have registered LLCs [2].

The reasons for the increase in emigration from Russia to Armenia during the period of sanctions are as follows:

- the possibility of entry on internal Russian passports;
- recognition of Mir bank cards;
- direct flights;
- Development-friendly IT legislation.

In the IT sector, the income tax rate is 10%, for comparison: for other areas, income tax is 21%.

During January-June 2022, 9,917 foreigners received Armenian citizenship. While for the whole of 2021, only 3,448 people received Armenian citizenship [4]. They move to Armenia for economic reasons. IT companies are sometimes moved by entire offices, along with their families. This is a kind of economic migration in modern conditions with signs of the so-called digital nomad (digital nomadism). In the West they are called "digital nomads". These are people who do not depend on the geographical place of work and carry out their activities, constantly moving around different countries of the world. They work using laptops, phones and the Internet, working "from a distance". According to the Minister of Economy of the Republic of Armenia, "dozens, if not hundreds of IT companies" have filed applications to transfer their activities to Armenia. Many of them are ready to stay and work in Armenia if everything goes well for them [3].

Especially in the context of the sanctions applied to Russia, in order to coordinate migration flows, the Armenian government should play a key role in the formation of appropriate procedures that allow legislative and organizational solutions to the problems of emigration, the formation of organizations, and the reduction of unemployment. Without state coordination and support, it is difficult to coordinate migration flows aimed at economic growth.

The development strategy of the Armenian economy should be based on the development of export potential in the few available growth points. Armenia's access to

foreign markets is hampered by information, production, infrastructure and personnel obstacles, to overcome which it is necessary to use all possible means of regulating foreign trade and all opportunities for integrating into the world economy, allowing Armenian manufacturers to achieve economies of scale.

***The Government of Armenia should, in particular:***

- deepen cooperation with the EAEU member states;
- take the necessary steps to realize the opportunities for the Union countries of the free trade zone in Meghri;
- intensify cooperation with partner countries of the region, providing the most favorable conditions for Armenian products to access these countries.

The Government of the Republic of Armenia needs to continue work on creating an appropriate legal framework for international economic cooperation, raising and strengthening the international prestige of Armenia, and taking steps to deepen cooperation with landlocked countries to solve problems with transit.

***Conclusion.*** We have to admit that labor emigration in Armenia is actually often treated as a way to alleviate tensions in the domestic labor market and increase the inflow of financial resources from the diaspora. There is a complex global problem here, caused by a deepening gap in birth rates and incomes of the population between different countries and regions of the world. The main condition for remigration is not only the creation of new jobs with decent wages, but also the mitigation of the stratification of society, the elimination of injustice, corruption, the creation of a legal and social society. In an open economy such as Armenia, an increase in the output of domestic producers is possible if they can compete with foreign producers. To do this, it is necessary to use modern technologies, equipment and materials. The inflow of foreign direct investment into the economy should also be stimulated. An additional channel for stimulating the improvement of technologies is the growth of exports of finished products. Modernization of the economy is closely interconnected with the state of foreign trade.

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### **Gevorg POGHOSYAN, Ashot TAVADYAN** **Socio-economic potential of Armenian repatriation**

*Key words: repatriation, diaspora, economy, growth strategy.*

The article presents the results of socio-economic studies of the repatriation resource of the Armenian diaspora. New trends in the migration situation have been studied. The reasons for the increased flow of immigrants to Armenia are indicated. The idea is substantiated that the current migration situation is a unique chance for Armenia to improve its demographic and economic situation. High-priority tasks for streamlining migration flows under the sanctions, taking into account Armenia's membership in the EAEU, have been identified. The results of the conducted sociological researches can help increase the efficiency of using the potential of the Armenian diaspora in the socio-economic development of Russia and Armenia.