Status of Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration at National Level for the IMRF

Republic of Armenia

Contents

1. Introduction and Methodology

The Republic of Armenia was among the 152 Member States to vote in favour of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) at the United Nations General Assembly on 19 December 2018. The Republic of Armenia welcomed the GCM's comprehensive approach to the governance of migration and accordingly participated in the first voluntary review of the GCM, which was conducted between 27 July and 25 August 2020, and is fully participating in reviewing the status of implementation of the GCM ahead of the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) in May 2022. The Republic of Armenia is also in the process of applying to join the Champion Countries Initiative[1].

The Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (from now on referred to as the Migration Service), as the primary body responsible for migration policy development, was responsible for the implementation of the National Voluntary Review. The Migration Service was in turn supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission in Armenia who appointed an international consultant to review the status of implementation of the GCM. The review was implemented between 11 February 2022 and 28 February 2022.

The review was prepared through online consultations and desk-based research. The review included consulting the reports of government and non-governmental stakeholders of relevance to achieving the GCM objectives. Different stakeholders including different government actors and structures, and non-governmental actors were consulted with respect to developments in the policy and practices of the Government of the Republic of Armenia as they relate to the 23 objectives outlined in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). To ensure a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to the Voluntary National Review, following the vision and guiding principles of the GCM (paras 8 to 15), the following actors were consulted:

- The Migration Service (Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure) (n=2)
- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (n=3)
- Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs of the Prime Minister's Office of the Republic of Armenia (n=3).
- United Nations Country Team, Republic of Armenia (n=9)
- Caritas Armenia (n=1)
- Repat Armenia Foundation (n=1)

In total, 19 people were involved in the consultations. Consultation interviews focused on capturing: 1) the main policy development since the last GCM review; 2) planned policy reforms

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[1] https://migrationnetwork.un.org/champion-countries

that may support GCM implementation in the future; 3) challenges faced; 4) resource requirements. In future reviews, a more extensive list of stakeholders may be involved in the review process through the organization of roundtable discussions on different aspects of GCM implementation. The review focused primarily on policy developments since the submission of the country's first National Voluntary Review in September 2020[2] although some references are made to developments before this date to contextualise said developments.

The National Voluntary Review for the Republic of Armenia has been structured following the indicative outline for Member States to review the status of implementation of the GCM at national level, in preparing for the IMRF, provided by the United Nations Network for Migration.

2. Policy and Enabling Environment

The migration policy of the Republic of Armenia has faced several tests and challenges in recent years. The challenges were conditioned not only by Covid-19 pandemic, but also by the war of aggression unleashed against Nagorno-Karabakh people by Azerbaijan, which threatened not only global peace and security, but also led to a regional humanitarian crisis, and mass displacement. Gross violations of human rights, including in armed conflicts, are among multiple and complex factors leading to forced displacement of people. As a result of this aggression more than 91.000 Armenians were displaced from their homes, 88 % of whom were women and children. These people had to leave their homes to escape mass atrocities.   More than 40,000 people were deprived of their homes and property, vital infrastructure was destroyed, including schools and hospitals. Many of those people have become victims of repeated forced displacement, since they first had fled ethnic cleansing committed by Azerbaijan in the 1990s. During the recent aggression these people were displaced again, while still facing the consequences of the humanitarian crisis. The accommodation for displaced population remains among the most pressing issues.

Snap elections were held in June 2021 which led to the reinstatement of Nikol Pashinyan as a Prime Minister. Next to the above-mentioned challenges, international restrictions on movement in relations to the COVID-19 pandemic led to economic and social challenges, in particular for seasonal migrants from Armenia, their families and communities, as well as for migrant workers residing in the Republic of Armenia. The situation in Ukraine will likely also impact the Republic of Armenia, with an estimated half a million ethnic Armenians in Ukraine, and more than two million in the Russian Federation. While these challenges have clear impacts on efforts to implement the commitments of the GCM in the Republic of Armenia, they also create opportunities to further develop and refine the approach to migration policy, as this report documents. Before reviewing the GCM objectives in turn, the remainder of this section presents a brief overview of the current policy environment.

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[2] https://migrationnetwork.un.org/resources/armenia-gcm-voluntary-national-report-regional-review-europe-and-north-america

The main Government body in charge of migration-related policy in the Republic of Armenia is the Migration Service of Armenia, which continues to operate within the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures. Planned government reforms that would have seen the Migration Service move to a new Ministry of Interior in 2021 have faced delays owing to the war and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, plans to create the new Ministry of Interior were approved by the Government in April 2021. This will see the Migration Service and the Police Passport and Visa Department brought under the same ministry. The Government have approved plans to have at least 50 percent of the staff for the new Ministry hired by 2023, but many other aspects of the reform are still to be determined. Many other agencies are also involved in migration-related issues such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its Consular Department; The Ministry of Labour and Social Issues; the National Security Service (NSS), particularly the Border Guard troops; the Police; Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Health, Police Passport and Visa Department and others. Coordination between these various agencies continues to be a challenge in policy development and implementation. However, with the new reforms, it is anticipated that a Migration Council will be established, headed by the new the Ministry of Interior to support better collaboration and coordination between different actors with a migration related mandate.

In recent years, the further development of migration policy in the Republic of Armenia has been highly prioritised by the Government as reflected in the 2020-2050 Armenia Transformation Strategy; the National Security Strategy of Armenia[3]; the 2021-2026 Programme of the Government[4]; the new state migration concept (adopted in May 2021)[5]. Significantly, the Program of the Government of the Republic of Armenia 2021-2026 devotes a section (Chapter 4.2) to migration identifying a number of key priorities (Box 1)[6].

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[3] National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia: A Resilient Armenia in a Changing World, July 2020, Available here: https://www.gov.am/en/National-Security-Strategy/
[4] Program of the Government of the Republic of Armenia 2021-2026, Annex to RA Government Decree No 1363-A Of August 18, 2021
[5] Conceptual Framework of the Republic of Armenia for the State Management of Migration, 2021
[6] The first time that the Government Programme included a dedicated chapter on migration was in 2019.

Since 2000, the Republic of Armenia, migration policy and practice has been guided by a National Concept for State Regulation of Migration. The migration concept has been revised several times to respond to changing circumstances[7]. It was revised in 2004, in 2010[8] and in 2017 and was in the process of being revised during the first NVR, with its finalisation and adoption occurring in the current reporting period, in May 2021[9]. The new Conceptual Framework for Migration and Action Plan for 2021-2022 identifies that the 'emergency management of migration is strictly necessary not only to respond to an already existing situation, but also to prepare for anticipated new challenges[10]' and, as further discussed below, the Government of the Republic of Armenia has taken steps to further improve its migration policy through devoting more attention to preparedness.

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[7] One of the key changes in the 2010 migration concept compared to the 2000/2004 concepts was the inclusion of return and readmission. Where the earlier Concept had focused on emigration, owing to high levels of emigration from the Republic of Armenia in the post-Soviet period in the 1990s, by 2010, the focus had shifted to repatriation. With the changing migration dynamics in the country, the new revised migration concept, devotes attention to immigration as well as to the linkages between migration and development and emergency management.

[8] "Concept Paper on the Policy for the State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia" adopted by the Republic of Armenia Government Protocol Decision N51 on 30 December 2010

[9] Conceptual Framework of the Republic of Armenia for the State Management of Migration, 2021

[10] Ibid. (p.14).

A draft version of the revised Migration Concept was reviewed during the first NVR[11] to assess its alignment with the principles and objectives of the GCM. In the process of conducting this second review exercise, the finalised Migration Concept was again assessed (see Annex 1). The concept is well aligned to the objectives of the GCM and a number of other international commitments:

> 'This Conceptual framework shall contribute to delivering on Armenia's international commitments assumed under the agreements between Armenia and the European Union on visa facilitation, on readmission of persons residing without authorization; within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees and the 1967 Protocol on the status of refugees[12]'.

While the nine strategic goals of the concept have remained largely the same, the revised concept expands the scope of ambition with regards to the strengthening of migration management in Armenia line with the GCM. Some notable changes include:

- Stronger emphasis on gender-equality.
- More focus on evidence-based policy, including through improving evaluation mechanisms and ensuring adequate resources for implementation.
- More specific objectives relating to increasing the impact of migration on sustainable human development.
- Particularly in the context of the increased number of displaced persons, a more concrete approach to increasing the level of preparedness to respond to migration crises.

The conceptual framework will be the basis through which four programmes will be developed. Each programme will be approved by Resolution of the Government, and will contain "an evidence-based, needs-based and gender sensitive action plan[13]" and an evaluation strategy. The programmes include the following:

1) Regulation of integration and reintegration issues (submitted to government for approval in December 2021).
2) Management of migration flows (drafting will begin after institutional reforms).
3) Emergency management of massive inflows of forced migrants (draft currently with stakeholders for comments, due to be submitted to the government at the end of March 2022).
4) Stimulation of repatriations (drafting will begin after the approval of the Law on Repatriation).

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[11] https://migrationnetwork.un.org/resources/armenia-gcm-voluntary-national-report-regional-review-europe-and-north-america
[12] Conceptual Framework of the Republic of Armenia for the State Management of Migration, 2021 (p.6)
[13] Conceptual Framework of the Republic of Armenia for the State Management of Migration, 2021 (p.39)

3. Progress on GCM objectives

The principles and objectives of the GCM are well integrated into Armenia's policy and practice. The Migration Concept well reflects the GCM principles (see Annex 1). Owing to the migration context in the country, and recent events, however, some objectives are naturally prioritised (such as those relating to addressing and reducing vulnerabilities (objective 7); return and reintegration (objective 21), diaspora (objective 19), and integration (objectives 5, 15 and 16). The remainder of this section highlights some key development as they relate to the various objectives of the GCM, with more space devoted to elaborating on areas where noteworthy developments have occurred in policy and practice.

Objective 1 Data and Evidence

The Republic of Armenia has been working on improving its migration data capacities for a long time, although acknowledges that much work still needs to be done in this area, particularly with respect to the sharing of data across different government ministries to ensure the goal of developing evidence-based action plans as outlined above can be realized.

The first Extended Migration Profile for the Republic of Armenia (2013-2017) was published in 2019[14]. The second Extended Migration Profile for the Republic of Armenia (2018-2022) is currently being developed although has faced delays owing to some internal discussions regarding the review process. Since the last review of GCM implementation, the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia (ArmStat) has, however, produced two migration snapshots (2018 and 2019) in cooperation with IOM. The latest Migration Snapshot of the Republic of Armenia (2019) was published in December 2021[15]. The Migration Snapshot 2020 is due to be published by the end of 2022.

A process of nationalizing the SDGs in the field of Migration and Development began in 2016. A multi-stakeholder workshop was organized, which brought together over 60 participants from government and non-government organizations, IOs, and UN Agencies. The process identified five priority targets and proxy indicators were developed and partially adopted by the Government[16]. The UN has since established the SDG Task Force with the participation of ArmStat and the Prime Minister's Office which led to the launch of a National SDG Reporting Platform using the 'Open SDG' Platform. The website is live and can be accessed through the

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[14] Migration Service of the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures (2019) Republic of Armenia: Extended Migration Profile 2013-2017, prepared in accordance with Point 4 of the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 44 of 19 October 2017
[15] Armstat (2021) Migration Snapshot of the Republic of Armenia (2019) Available here: https://armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=2436
[16] SDG Implementation Voluntary National Review (VNR) Armenia 2018: Report for the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

ArmStat website[17]. On the site, data is available on the 'percentage of returned migrants who undertook paid work during the last 7 days' (10.7.2.a) (2015-2018) and the 'proportion of individual asylum applications granted' (10.7.2.b) (2015-2019). Data sources for the 'recruitment cost borne by employees as a proportion of yearly income earned in country of destination' (10.7.1.) and the 'number of countries that have implemented well-managed migration policies' (10.7.2) have still not been defined, and no progress has been made on developing other indicators of relevance to migration[18].

The launch of the new Work Permit System as of 1 January 2022 holds the promise of more regular and updated data on the immigrant population in the Republic of Armenia (see Objective 5 Availability and Flexibility of Legal Pathways for more information of the system). For example, in the first two months of 2022, 142 applications were made through the system, of which 60 have been approved, eight have been declined or terminated by the applicant, and 74 are currently being processed. The most common countries of origin among successful applicants thus far are Iran, India, Indonesia, South Korea, and the Philippines (see
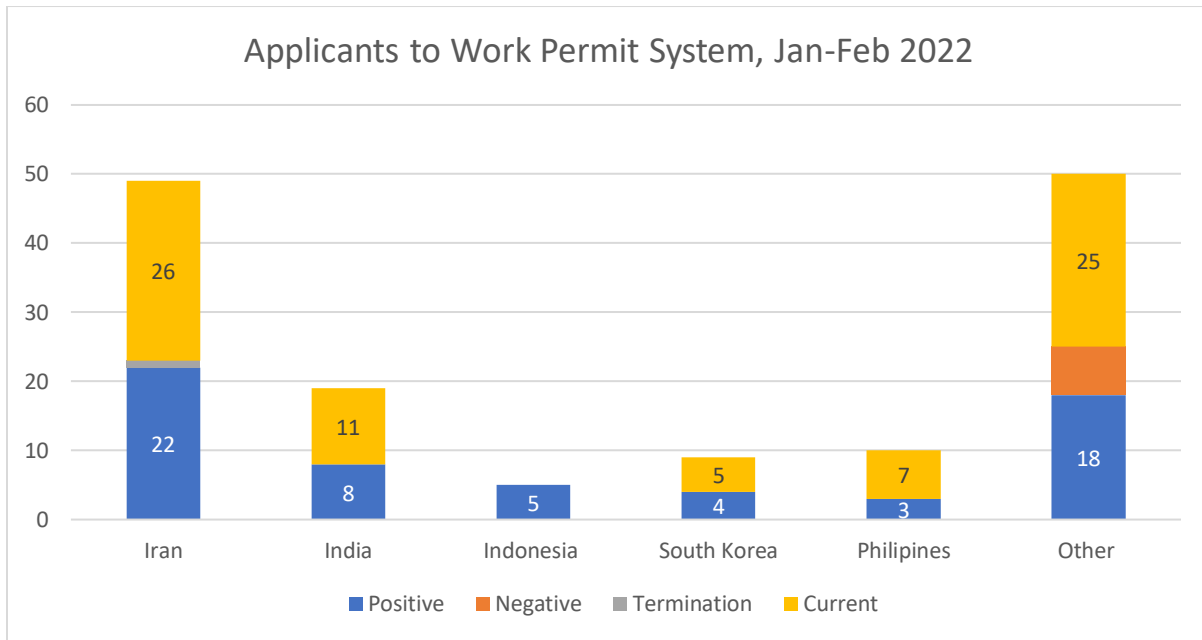
Figure 1).

Figure 1 Applicants to Work Permit System, Jan-Feb 2022

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[17] https://sdg.armstat.am/
[18] Including Target 8.8 (labour rights), Target 10.c (remittances), Target 16.2 (human trafficking), and Target 4b (scholarships).

Applicants to Work Permit System, Jan-Feb 2022

Source: Migration Service

Objective 2 Adverse Drivers and Structural Factors that Compel People to Leave their Country of Origin

As noted, one of the ambitions of the Republic of Armenia is to increase its population as outlined in the 2020-2050 Armenia Transformation Strategy. Part of this requires addressing the underlying factors that have driven migration from the country. While emigration slowed after the revolution in 2018, and again largely halted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and immigration has increased, Armenia continues to have a negative net migration rate. The Government is actively examining the relationship between demographic trends and migration patterns. With the support of UNFPA, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs are currently examining ways to reduce brain drain through the development of concrete policy recommendations based on an analysis of demographic trends.

Objective 3 Accurate and Timely Information

The Republic of Armenia has placed significant emphasis on the provision of information at all stages of the migration cycle. This includes a network of Migrant Resource Centres (MRC), including a mobile MRC that provides information to potential migrants, information campaigns to address the risks of irregular migration, as well as labor migrants are informed on changes in the migration legislation of the countries of entry, and this is especially relevant and timely in the case of Russian Federation. Targeted campaigns have also been run to address specific vulnerabilities associated with migration. For example, IOM initiated a multi-media information and communication campaign on the prevention and detection of HIV/AIDS among urban labour migrants and mobile populations, received more than 150,000 engagements on social media and

contributing to improved results with regards to UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets for Armenia[19]. iMigrant was announced in 2018 with the information component of the project fastpacked owing to the COVID-19 situation. The system has proved useful in identifying people and informing then about COVID-19 related initiatives in the past years.

Information provision has also played a key role in the return stage of the migration cycle. As further elaborated under Objective 21 Return, Readmission and Reintegration, information provision has been a core part of the 'State Program of Primary Support to the Reintegration of Citizens Returning to the Republic of Armenia (including forced returnees) which was adopted by government decree on 19 March 2020[20]. Returnees are provided with information on the legal framework, lists of health-care providers, social assistance frameworks, the pension system, information on compulsory military service, customs exceptions, documentation challenges (passports, dual citizenship). An updated version of the Guide for Reintegration and Returnees in Armenia was published by IOM in July 2021. In addition to this, an information desk for Armenian Return Migrants was established at "Zvartnots" International Airport from 1st December 2021 that is established in the framework of the ERRIN-Armenia Gov-to-Gov Project. An information leaflet is currently provided to return migrants, although there are also plans to digitise these materials using a QR code posted around the airport that allows returnees to access updated information to support in their return to Armenia. The Return and Reintegration Division of the Migration Service also has a telephone hotline for anyone requiring assistance. An online information system (#backtoarmenia) for citizens (as well as dual citizens) who intend to return to the Republic of Armenia has also been launched[21]. The IOM developed on-line platform MigApp providing country specific information to migrants was adapted to include information on Armenia. Awareness about MigApp is proactively shared with migrants, including via banners at the arrival section of the "Zvartnots" International Airport.

Objective 4 Proof of Legal Identity and Adequate Documentation

Although the process towards the implementation of biometric identity and travel documents in Armenia has been underway for several years[22], many citizens are still in possession of non-biometric passports. The Police of Armenia are currently actively rolling out plans to replace non-biometric passport with biometric passports. One action in this regard is the limitation of the validity of non-biometric passports to two years[23]. Currently, however, there is no mention of biometric passports on the 2022 draft state budget, which may hinder the realisation of this goal. IOM has also provided support to the Government in Identity Management, by 'developing the general terms and conditions, and drafting a contract for Biometric Passports and Nationals ID

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[19] United Nations Armenia (2021) UN Country Team in Armenia: Country Results Report 2020, p.62.
[20] The State Program of Primary Support to the Reintegration of Citizens Returning to the Republic of Armenia (including Forced Returnees, Approved by the Decision N 336-L of 19 March, 2020 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.
[21] http://www.tundarc.am/
[22] https://www.iom.int/news/iom-supports-government-implementation-biometric-identity-and-travel-documents-armenia
[23] https://news.am/eng/news/670232.html

Cards for the tender dossier in line with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards'[24]. The Government of the Republic of Armenia also provides citizens of Armenian with return certificates to facilitate their return to the country (See Objective 21 Return, Readmission and Reintegration for more information).

Objective 5 Availability and Flexibility of Legal Pathways

While the State Employment Agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has issued work permits since 2018, a Law adopted in 2021 and Government Decree[25] adopted in December 2021 saw this responsibility transferred to the Migration Service. The transfer was accompanied by the development of a new system to manage the issuance of work permits. The Work Permit system[26] seeks to establish a transparent process for immigrants seeking to live and work in the Republic of Armenia. In the past, a migrant worker would have to first receive a work permit before applying to the Passport and Visa Department of the Policy for their residence permit. The new system integrates these functions with a view to enhancing interagency cooperation. The system was presented and discussed at a number of multistakeholder meetings, including with employers, to already anticipate potential implementation challenges prior to its launch on 1 January 2022[27]. Over time it is expected to make the procedure more straightforward for all parties involved and improve the availability of data on immigration to the Republic of Armenia (see Objective 1 Data and Evidence).

At the regional level, the Republic of Armenia became part of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) since 2015. The EEU allows the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour between its Member States[28]. Given the scale of labour migration from the Republic of Armenia to the Russian Federation, in particular, membership in the EEU has facilitated the easier movement of labour migration from the Republic of Armenia.

While the initiation of the visa liberalisation dialogue (VLD) with the EU remains a priority for Armenia, as stated in the 2021-2026 Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia[29], there has been little progress since the last NVR report in 2020. The Republic of Armenia has organized 11 official visits to EU countries, which has led to the resolution of many operational challenges.

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[24] United Nations Armenia (2021) UN Country Team in Armenia: Country Results Report 2020, p.48.
[25] Decree of the Government of the Republic of Armenia # 670-L of 30 April, 2020 On Approving the Program for the Introduction of an Electronic Management System to Issue Foreign Nationals Work Permits and Register Employment Contracts Concluded With Foreign Nationals
[26] http://itis.am/work-permit
[27] https://www.1lurer.am/en/2021/09/08/New-system-of-work-permits-for-foreigners-to-be-introduced-in-Armenia/55190
[28] Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Russian Federation
[29] Annex to RA Government Decree No 1363-A pf August 18, 2021, Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia (2021-2026)

Objective 6 Fair and Ethical Recruitment/Decent Work

The Government of the Republic of Armenia has recognised the important of fair and ethical recruitment in its Migration Conceptual Framework including the goal of "strengthening supervision over private employment agencies[30]" although no concrete actions have been taken in pursuit of this objective. The Republic of Armenia has ratified the ILO Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) but not ILO's Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181). The Republic of Armenia has signed some Bilateral Labour Agreements to facilitate labour migration including Georgia (1993), the Russian Federation (1994), Ukraine (1995) and Belarus (2000) and most recently with Bulgaria (2018[31]). Labour migration is also facilitated through the Armenia's membership in the EEU.

Objective 7 Address and Reduce Vulnerabilities

On 30 June 2021, UNHCR reported a total population of concern in the Republic of Armenia of 46,460, a number which has reduced significantly since the height of the war when over 91,000 people were displaced.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has assisted in the provision of support to those displaced during the war and continues to do so. For example, in 2021/2022 support is being provided to help the approximately 1000 persons who are still in shelters to move into more suitable accommodation. The role of the social worker has also been stressed to help individuals create individualised support plans to help with, for example, finding suitable accommodation, or employment. As part of broader reforms, efforts to provide unified social services, will include migrant populations, particularly those who are vulnerable for instance, those with disabilities, children, and the elderly.

These efforts have also been supported by non-governmental actors. With the support of Reach and People in Need, a Rapid Needs Assessment was conducted among 160 displaced households from Nagorno-Karabakh across four *marzes* in addition to 4 site key informant interviews and 39 household surveys at 8 collective centre sites (out of 27) between 10 and 20 October 2020 which revealed vulnerabilities relating to accommodation and medical assistance[32]. As a result, IOM provided food and hygiene items to vulnerable groups in affected communities in Armenia to respond to the risk of Covid-19 spreading among refugee-like populations including 2,450 PPEs[33]. The iMigrant portal (elaborated under Objective 3 Accurate and Timely Information) was also used to expand conduct rapid social needs assessment to target vulnerable migrants, including

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[30] Conceptual Framework of the Republic of Armenia for the State Management of Migration, 2021
[31] https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/agreement-between-bulgaria-and-armenia-regulation-labour-migration_en
[32] REACH Rapid Needs Assessment of Displaced Population from Nagorno-Karabakh, 10-20 October 2020, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/83324
[33] United Nations Armenia (2021) UN Country Team in Armenia: Country Results Report 2020, p.22.

seasonal migrants unable to leave the country due to the pandemic, to improve their access to both state and non-state services[34].

Objective 8 Missing Migrants

There is nothing significant to report under this objective, as none of such cases have been reported.

Objective 9 Smuggling

The Republic of Armenia ratified the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on 1 July 2003[35]. The revised articles in the New Criminal Code - Article 469 on the Illegal crossing of the state border and the Article 470 on Organizing illegal migration are already in force. One of the main developments relating to smuggling is the forthcoming development of a Migration Flow Management Programme which will be developed after the creation of the Ministry of Interior.

Objective 10 Trafficking

Since the submission of the first NVR, the Government of Armenia has taken several steps to tackle trafficking resulting in the country being upgraded in the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIPS) report from the Tier 2 Watch List in 2020 to Tier 2 in 2021[36]. Until 2017, Armenia was reported as a Tier 1 country but owing to some institutional changes, saw its rating decrease to Tier 2 in 2018 and then to the Tier 2 Watch List in 2019. Key reasons for the reported improvement include the identification of more victims and the investigation of more suspects, the development of training manuals for the police, a new law providing more protections for children, the allocation of significantly more resources to an NGO shelter, and the reactivation of the Health and Labour Inspection Body (HLIB), which had been dormant since 2014. The TIPS report concluded that the government had maintained prosecution efforts, increased protection efforts, and increased prevention efforts. Areas for improvement include a legal amendment to mandate labour inspectors to be able to conduct unannounced visits, including to non-legal employers, improve access to justice for victims of trafficking, developing standard operating procedures for screening victims, more training for investigators, prosecutors, and local employment agencies, and more resources for the reintegration of trafficking victims. In August 2021, Armenia joined the Blue Heart Campaign[37], joining 34 other states to support a global campaign against human trafficking[38]. The 6th National Program for 2020-2022 on the Fight Against Trafficking Human Beings and Exploitation and its implementation timetable was approved by the Government Decree on 4th of June 2020 N 909 – L. The Council on the Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings and

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[34] Ibid.

[35] https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-b&chapter=18#EndDec

[36] United States of America: Department of State (2021) Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2021

[37] https://www.unodc.org/blueheart/

[38] https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2021/August/armenia-joins-blue-heart-campaign-against-human-trafficking.html

Exploitation is a body comprised of the senior officials of stakeholder state bodies. The Council is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister and meets regularly to set policy directions. The Commission on Identification of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings and Exploitation is the sole body vested with the authority to recognize a person as a victim.

Objective 11: Border Management

In recent years, the Government has undertaken a process of modernizing the country's border crossing points. In our last NVR, we reported on the modernization of the three border crossing points with Georgia in the North and with Iran in the south of the country funded through loans from the European Investment Bank, a grant from the EU, and technical support from UNDP and ICMPD. The further development of border management will be support by the UN Country Team in Armenia. Output 6.4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Armenia (2021-2025) reads as follows: 'migration manged more humanely and orderly with enhanced regional connectivity'. The UN agencies assigned to this output are IOM, UNDP and UNODC, and the means of verification is 'the number of initiatives to promote connectivity and border management' with a baseline of three initiatives (2020) and a target of five by 2025. Next to this, UNHCR has also supported effective border management through retaining the services of the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS) to conduct regular and systematic monitoring of six border point. The Migration Service and the Human Rights Defender's office also worked together with UNHCR and ARCS to provide training for Border Guards on refugee law, practice, and procedures. IOM has also provided support to building the capacity of Border Guards by assisting in the development of a national training curricula which is in line with the European Union Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding, and mainstreams gender equality topics[39].

Objective 12 Certainty and Predictability in Migration Procedures

Relevant development relating to certainty and predictability in migration procedures have been reported under Objective 5 Availability and Flexibility of Legal Pathways and

Objective 11: Border **Management**. Overall it is anticipated that the planned institutional reforms and policy developments will support this objective. The digitalisation of these processes will also further support this.

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[39] United Nations Armenia (2021) UN Country Team in Armenia: Country Results Report 2020, p.48.

Objective 13 Migrant Detention only as a Last Resort

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia (2003) permits the imprisonment of people who enter the country irregularly[40]. However, this does not apply to asylum seekers. The Law of the Republic of Armenia on Refugees and Asylum (2008) makes provisions for a temporary reception centre for asylum seekers. The Armenian Ombudsman has called on authorities to use "alternatives to detention, echoing calls made by the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on 20 March (2018)"[41].

Objective 14 Consular Protection

Armenian citizens who reside in a foreign country for more than six months should register with an embassy or consular office. However, non-registration does not prevent Armenian citizens from availing of the support of the consular office. In 2021, the Republic of Armenia had embassies in 104 countries, 11 consulates[42] and 42 honorary consuls[43]. Many consular services are provided free of change such as the RA return certificate[44]. The consular services have played an important role in the protection of (ethnic) Armenians affected by events in countries, such as war in Syria, in the aftermath of the Beirut Blast on 4 August 2020, and at time of writing, for those currently residing in Ukraine[45].

Objective 15 Access to Basic Services for Migrants

As part of the envisioned institutional reforms, it is anticipated that the social functions currently associated with the Migration Service, will be transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. This will allow the better mainstreaming of migrant needs into the overall social welfare programme of the country. However, migrant populations, particularly populations in refugee-like situations, have been the recipients of targeted policies and support by government. For example, the government enabled access to education (public schools) for children in refugee like situations and provided financial support to vulnerable families with children to support their access to basic service. In some cases, this support has been supplemented by the support provided by international organizations and NGOs, such as UNICEF. In terms of identifying needs, the Education Management Information System (EMIS) has also been updated to allow better data, particularly on displaced children. Among other work, UNICEF has supported the Government of

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[40] https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/65062/61317/F1716776223/ARM65062.pdf
[41] https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2020/04/03/Armenian-ombudsman/2268074
[42] France (n=2), Georgia (n=1), Russia (n=4), Syria (n=1), United Arab Emirates (n=1), the United States of America (n=1) and Ukraine (n=1).
[43] Albania (n=1), Canada (n=1), Chile (n=1), Croatia (n=1), Denmark (n=1), Germany (n=5), Ireland (n=1), India (n=1), Israel (n=1), India (n=1), Italy (n-2), Jordan (n=1), South Korea (n=1), Kazakhstan (n=2), Luxembourg (n=1), Lithuania (n=1), Mexico (n=1), Moldova (n=1), Morocco (n=1), Mongolia (n=1), Netherland (n=1), Poland (n=1), Russia (n=3), Serbia (n=1), Slovakia, (n=1), Spain (n=1), Tajikistan (n=1), Thailand (n=1), Ukraine (n=3), Uruguay (n=1), and the United States of America (n=3)/
[44] Decision 1151-N of the Government of the Republic of Armenia of October 23, 2013
[45] https://news.am/eng/news/688791.html

Armenia by supporting the update of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) to allow better data, particularly on displaced children; provided electronic devices to support online learning and other school supplies, supported the expansion of classroom space in ten schools with the largest population of children in refugee-like situations, and provided targeted educational support and remedial classes. UNICEF also created ten pediatric mobile teams who were able to reach more than 10,000 children in refugee-like situation and from host communities. Support has also been provided to increase the capacity of the social service workforce (SSW) in the provision of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Around 12,000 displaced and host community children have been the beneficiaries of such support[46]. UNICEF Armenia also supplemented the cash support provided by the Government. Five thousand families received USD65 per child to "ensure access to basic services and address also the financial concerns of families in refugee-like situation with children[47]". In late 2021, the programme was repeated – this time with two payments of USD65, to families with children still residing in the country. During the pandemic, migrants residing in the Republic of Armenia were able to access free vaccinations and COVID tests.

Objective 16 Inclusion

Recent years have seen increasing immigration to the Republic of Armenia. Accordingly, the Government began the process of elaborating an integration policy in 2016[48] and a plan of action for its implementation. In 2019, responding to the increased immigration of foreign citizens, who had not been included in the 2016 policy, the government initiated the drafting of the '2021-2031 Strategy of the Migration Policy of the Republic of Armenia on Regulation of Integration and Reintegration Issues'. GIZ has assisted in development of the document by hiring two local and one international experts. The strategy has been drafted by an Interagency Working Group, headed by the Migration Service. The strategy outlines many goals, including reforms in the institutional framework for integration and reintegration as well as capacity building and competence development for staff involved in the process. The strategy also outlines goals relating to shelter and living conditions, rights and social assistance, access to health care and education, economic inclusion, cultural integration, and reintegration, and cultivating an accepting environment.

Objective 17 Discrimination/Public Discourse

As reported by the UNCT: "The RA Constitution provides general provision on prohibition of discrimination. However, there is no stand-alone law on non-discrimination in accordance with article1 and 2 (b) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) nor are there comprehensive legislation to provide legal safeguards to the

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[46] Information provided by UNICEF
[47] Personal correspondence with UNICEF Armenia
[48] Government Protocol Decree No. 28 on 21 July 2016 'The conceptual framework for the integration policy of individuals recognized as refugees and granted asylum in the Republic of Armenia, as well as of long-term migrants'

victims of discrimination. Since 2017 the Ministry of Justice started development of the draft law on "Ensuring Equality before the Law", which has gone through international expert review and public consultations with the civil society organisations. Adoption of the law is a key to ensure equal treatment of vulnerable groups in line with Armenia's international commitments in the field. Societal discrimination (specifically against LGBTI) and hate speech remains problematic and not sufficiently addressed[49]".

Objective 18 Skills Development/Recognition

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is currently negotiating a migration agreement with the United Arab Emirates which would focus on skills development in the informatics sector. Participants would train in the Republic of Armenia, travel to the UAE to work temporarily, and the return to work. Similar discussions are ongoing with Austria.

Objective 19 Diaspora

With an estimated diaspora of ethnic Armenians estimated at eight to ten million (approximately three times the current population of the country), the importance of the diaspora to Armenia requires little further elaboration. Mass repatriation of the diaspora is a strategic priority of the Government of the Republic of Armenia to address demographic challenges. The goal is to grow the population of the country to five million (population in 2021 was 2.96 million[50]) by 2050.

At the time of first NVR, we reported that a Law on Repatriation, which will provide a clear definition of a repatriate, and which was developed and supported by a multi-stakeholder Working Group was due to enter parliament in the fall of 2020. However, primarily due to the war, this process remains ongoing, with hopes of the law being approved at some point in 2022. Following its adoption, the envisaged programme on repatriation (outlined in section 2 of this report) will be drafted. A legal study was also commissioned by the High Commissioners office to identify laws and practices that present hindrances to the diaspora, and accordingly suggestions for other legislative reforms have been proposed to the Prime Minister. These include, for example, proving Armenian ethnicity through the provision of a baptism certificate. However, particularly for ethnic Armenians from countries such as Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, it can be challenging to obtain such documents. Another challenge relates to bureaucratic customs procedures. To address this challenge amendments of the related legislation were initiated in the Parliament.

Several actions have been undertaken to support objective 19 of the GCM. For example, 22 young adults were appointed as Diaspora Youth Ambassadors in 22 countries in September 2021. A

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[49] United Nations Armenia (2020) UN Common Country Analysis for the Cooperation Framework and the 2030 Agenda: Republic of Armenia
[50] Statistical Committee of the republic Of Armenia (ARMSTAT) (2021) The Demographic Handbook of Armenia 2021

mapping of the diaspora with a focus on its professional potential is also underway and should be published by the end of 2022. The Office of the High Commission for Diaspora Affairs is establishing a one-stop Repatriation and Integration Centre to support repatriates and their families in their return and later integration into the country which includes a range of services provided in multiple languages[51]. On 10 February 2022, a government decree[52] formalised a partnership between the Diaspora High Commissioner's Office and the Hovnanian Foundation[53] which provided the necessary financing to open the Repatriation and Integration Centre in Yerevan. The location is well known to the diaspora and is in an area which houses many other relevant organizations, such as Repat Armenia.

While somewhat disrupted by the war and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of the High Commissioner has also moved forward with the implementation of the iGorts programme. The programme was launched in 2020 and aimed to bring up to 100 diaspora Armenians to the country for a 12-month period to contribute to the improvement and development of state institutions, policies, and programs. The initial programme in 2020 attracted more than 800 applicants. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, 52 participants joined the programme in 2020, representing 19 different countries and working in 18 state institutions of the Republic of Armenia[54]. The Office of the High Commissioner reports that approximately 70 percent of the 2020 cohort are still in the Republic of Armenia, and several have been appointed to significant positions within the government. Some participants have since made the decision to repatriate and move their families to Armenia. Owing to the success of the programme, initially intended to run for 12 months, it was renewed in 2021. In 2021, 47 participants have joined (it was initially 48 but one participant was appointed to a position in the Ministry of Economy) representing 15 different countries and placed in 25 different state institutions. A new call for 2022 will be launched in March 2022.

While the engagement of the diaspora in Armenia is not a new phenomenon and is supported by a multistakeholder landscape, the pandemic and war both led to engagements with the diaspora. Diaspora born specialists also returned to the country to support those affected by phosphorus burns sustained during the war, along with rehabilitation and prosthetic specialists. Slightly more than 60 diaspora members returned to support through the government, although the true number is not known as many returned of their own accord, such as doctors from Russia and Georgia. Additionally, IOM helped to facilitate virtual exchanges between Armenian and diaspora doctors to discuss lessons learned and innovative treatment methods[55].

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[51] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKkr8AXcrWk&t=7s
[52] http://diaspora.gov.am/en/news/716
[53] https://www.hovnanianfoundation.am
[54] http://diaspora.gov.am/en/pages/136/igorts2020
[55] United Nations Armenia (2021) UN Country Team in Armenia: Country Results Report 2020, p.22.

Objective 20 Remittances/Financial Inclusion

Remittances continue to represent an important source of income for the Republic of Armenia, with an estimated 250,000 households reliant on remittances sent by family members working abroad[56]. In 2021, remittances represented an estimated nine percent of the Republic of Armenia's GDP[57]. Although the COVID-19 lockdown was relatively brief, there was a reduction in remittances from migrant workers. Accordingly, "returning labour migrants and persons experiencing loss/reduction in remittances due to the pandemic and associated mitigated measures" were identified as an 'at risk' population in the United Nations in Armenia COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan in September 2020. However, with the vast majority (almost 90 percent[58]) of Armenian labour migrants working in the Russian Federation, remittances flows are highly sensitive to the situation in the Russian Federation. For example, in 2014, the depreciation of the ruble led to a decrease of remittances from the Russian Federation by 38.5% (Figure 3). A weakening of the ruble in 2019 also led to small a reduction in the value of remittances. In the first half of 2021, remittances from the Russian Federation to Armenia rose by 22 percent compared to the first half of 2020. With the current economic sanctions, the Republic of Armenia, along with the other countries of origin of that have labour migrants in Russia, are likely to feel the impact of the depreciation of the ruble.

Objective 21 Return, Readmission and Reintegration

A key priority area for the government of the Republic of Armenia is return, readmission and reintegration. A Unit of Return and Reintegration was established within the Migration Service in 2019. The Government of the Republic of Armenia has 11 readmission agreements with 13 countries in force, of which 12 are European states[59]. Next to the agreement with the Russian Federation, two readmission agreements with other EEU countries are ready to be signed with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and the agreement with Belarus has been signed. Negotiations are ongoing with Georgia and Ukraine, and an agreement with Moldova is ready for signature. Draft agreements have also been sent through diplomatic channels to the Islamic Republic of Iran, India, Uzbekistan, and the Philippines. Implementation protocols (IP) are in force with France, Estonia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Benelux countries and Germany. IPs have been signed with Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania. Negotiations are underway with Sweden.

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[56] UNDP (2020) Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Outbreak in Armenian Communities, Armenia 2020
[57] Dilip Ratha, Eung Ju Kim, Sonia Plaza, Ganesh Seshan, Elliott J Riordan, and Vandana Chandra (2021) Migration and Development Brief 35: Recovery: COVID-19 Crisis through a Migration Lens." KNOMAD-World Bank, Washington, DC. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO
[58] UNDP (2020) Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Outbreak in Armenian Communities, Armenia 2020
[59] Latvia (2003), Kingdom of Denmark (2004), Republic of Lithuania (2004), Switzerland (2005), Federal Republic of Germany (2008), Bulgaria (2008), Sweden (2009), Benelux countries (2010), Norway (2010), Czech Republic (2011), and the Russian Federation (2011).

Between 2014 and 2020[60], the Republic of Armenia has witnessed an overall decline in the number of first-time asylum applications of Armenian nationals in the EU countries (from a peak of 7745 in 2017 to 1240 in 2020) and return decisions being issued in the EU. There has also been a corresponding increase in the number of effective return rates, resulting in an increase from a return rate of 21.3% in 2014, to 55.6% in 2019. Although the return rate reduced to 28.1% in 2020, this is largely due to returns put on halt during the COVID-19 pandemic with a corresponding decrease in asylum applicants.

In 2019, the Republic of Armenia introduced a Readmission Case Management System which facilitates submission of the readmission applications, transfer of information, application review as well as requests for travel documents. This helps in ensuring that people who return to the country are referred to support services provided by the government, but also other stakeholders as outlined below. Tracking return migrants can be difficult, however, and some returnees (an estimated 400 persons since the introduction of the case management system) enter the county with their passport and not their return certificate.

In the last NVR we reported the adoption of the first ever 'State Program of Primary Support to the Reintegration of Citizens Returning to the Republic of Armenia (including forced returnees) which was adopted by government decree on 19 March 2020[61]. The program includes information support and needs-based referrals based on a reception interview conducted by a staff member of the Migration Service. The programme includes a number of measures, including:

- o Information on the legal framework, lists of health-care providers, social assistance frameworks, the pension system, information on compulsory military service, customs exceptions, documentation challenges (passports, dual citizenship)
- o Referrals relating to health-care problems
- o Referrals of vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors and those with disabilities

The programme also includes a housing subsidy (60,000AMD) for six months as well as information and referral support and is targeted at Armenian citizens who have lived in another country for more than 12 months and who have returned through a readmission agreement or have been deported. Voluntary returnees including families with four or more children and person with disabilities also qualify for the support. Between March and December of 2020, 10 families (22 persons) benefited from the programme, and between January and September 2021, 21 families (66 persons) from Germany, Austria Sweden, France, Switzerland the Russian Federation

In the context of the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN), more than 1000 Armenian returnees benefited from individual reintegration packages. In addition to this, the second component of the ERRIN Armenia Government to Government Project on capacity

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[60] It is relevant to note that the numbers between 2014 and 2019 included the United Kingdom. The 2020 figures exclude the United Kingdom.
[61] The State Program of Primary Support to the Reintegration of Citizens Returning to the Republic of Armenia (including Forced Returnees, Approved by the Decision N 336-L of 19 March, 2020 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

building activities designed for the reintegration case managers of the Migration Service is currently being implemented.

Through this project, a Counselling and Referral Centre for Reintegration was established within the premises of the Migration Service. It currently hosts three local counsellors who provide support to returning migrants. Since the summer of 2021, a full-time psychologist has been working in the centre assisting returnees but also the staff of the centre. Capacity-building for reintegration programmes involves strengthening the skills, structures, processes or resources of key stakeholders so they can facilitate the sustainable reintegration of returnees.

As part of the capacity building, series of training for reintegration counselors on various topics are conducted for the capacitating and straightening of all actors involved in return and reintegration. In addition, phycological support provides to both staff working with returnees as well as with program beneficiaries.

In addition to this, an information desk for Armenian Return Migrants was established at "Zvartnots" International Airport from 1st of December, 2021 under the ERRIN-Armenia Government to Government Project. An information leaflet is currently provided to return migrants, although there are also plans to digitise these materials using a QR code posted around the airport that allows returnees to access updated information to support in their return to Armenia. The Return and Reintegration Division of the Migration Service also has a telephone hotline for anyone requiring assistance. An online information system (#backtoarmenia) for citizens (as well as dual citizens) who intend to return to the Republic of Armenia has also been launched[62].

Given the experience and knowledge accumulated in the field the Migration Service seeks to institutionalize the process of reintegration. One of the examples of this is the drafting the handbook for the reintegration case managers on counselling and referral mechanisms.

Return and reintegration services are also a key priority for the UN Country Team in Armenia. For example, in 2020, IOM supported the establishment of 100 micro-businesses in the provinces of Shirak, Lori and Tavush, creating166 jobs. Overall, in 2020 and 2021 IOM provided reintegration support to 735 returned migrants. Caritas Armenia is also actively engaged in supporting return and reintegration from several EU countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Given the multistakeholder landscape, the Migration Service of Armenia has coordinated a multistakeholder Return and Reintegration Quarterly Forum since 2018. The network currently has members from 9 international and local non-governmental organizations including IOM, ICMPD, OFII, Armenian Caritas, People in Need, the Armenian Foundation for Sustainable Development, along with several state agencies. Since 2018, 11 meetings of the forum have been convened, providing a platform for various actors to discuss operational challenges they encounter in the field, exchange experience, disseminate information and statistics, and generally

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[62] http://www.tundarc.am/

deepen the cooperation between different organizations providing reintegration support to Armenian citizens returning to the country. NGOs, such as CARITAS, speak highly of the Forum.

Another important project on the "EU for IMPACT Armenia EU for Increasing Migrants' Potential to Act for development of Armenia" (**EU4IMPACT**) aims to contribute the empowerment of Armenian labour migrants, returnees, and family members through mobilizing remittances and investing in local development and job creation in Armenia. Applicants shall be ready and agree to make their own investment in the amount equal to the requested grant. Duration of the project is 48 months (2020-2024).

The project will provide from 2000 to 10000 Euro grants for business establishment as well as help to acquire required knowledge and skills for proper, competent and professional business management. More than 120 applications were received and processed by the Project, all eligible applicants were accepted for initial trainings. After a certain shortlisting, remaining applicants will be accepted to the IRIS Academy and undergo the principal online business training.

Objective 22 Portability of Social Security

There is nothing significant to report under this objective.

Objective 23 Strengthen International Cooperation

The Government of the Republic of Armenia will also continue to actively participate in relevant activities as they relate to the implementation of the GCM, including through the sharing of knowledge and experience. The Government will send a delegation to the International Migration Review Forum in May 2022 and stands ready to participate in any other further national review exercises. Next to preparing an application to join the Champion Country Initiative[63], the Government of the Republic of Armenia is also preparing practices to submit to the UN Network on Migration's Repository of Practices[64]: 1) iGorts; 2) the government programme for returnees; 3) the readmission case management system.

4. Means of implementation

The Government of the Republic of Armenia values its partnerships with international organizations and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of its migration-related policies, and this support will continue to be important in the future. The Government appreciates the initiative of the Resident Coordinator to establish the UN Migration Network in Armenia. The

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[63] https://migrationnetwork.un.org/champion-countries
[64] https://migrationnetwork.un.org/hub/repository-of-practices/about

United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Armenia (2021-2025)[65] recognises the significance of migration to Armenia. SDG 10.7 is one of the 48 targets covered by the Cooperation Framework. Furthermore, safe, orderly, and regular migration is identified as one of the 11 desire changes/impacts and diaspora engagement is recognised as an enabler. Migration is recognised as a 360-degree phenomenon with attention placed on:

1) The drivers of migration (poverty, unemployment and lack of decent work opportunities including adequate social protection system, a lack of social inclusion, and climate related factors).
2) The vulnerabilities faced by migrants and their families and communities (including economic distress caused by reduced remittance income, and high HIV-infection rates, and with a gender focus).
3) The role of the Armenian diaspora as a key actor that can contribute to achieving sustainable development (including through involvement in the design and implementation of social protection programmes and green and sustainable economic initiatives (both financially and through knowledge exchange), and investment more generally.
4) The importance of migration governance to good governance including through 'strengthening border management institutions to foster cross border cooperation, trade and mobility' (p51) and though ensuring a whole of government and whole of society approach to the governance of migration.

The upcoming institutional reforms whereby the Migration and Citizenship Service will become one arm of the new Ministry of Interior will require significant resources. With the new functions that the Migration and Citizenship Service is receiving, such as those related to the issuance of Work Permits, training and capacity building for new and existing staff will be required, in addition to technological needs. The same is true for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with respect to the social functions relating to migrants that they will receive.

Resources are also required to ensure the sustainability of existing projects, programmes, and initiatives. For example, the 'State Program of Primary Support to the Reintegration of Citizens Returning to the Republic of Armenia (including forced returnees)' was able to provide support to 66 persons between January and September 2021, although ideally would be further expanded, given the capacity of the Migration Service is enhanced to allow it to do so. Budget allocations to the process of fully rolling out biometric passports will also be required. The hosting institutions of iGorts participants should also consider the long-term financing of participants that they would like to retain. Ensuring that funds are in place to monitor and evaluate these initiatives, and to roll-out practices that are working will require technical and financial support.

Covid-19 pandemic also pushed to accelerate the digitalization of migration management systems in Armenia, particularly the work permit system for foreigners, introduce new approaches in providing various services to migrants and refugees which also requires additional resources.

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[65] United Nations Armenia (2021) United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Armenia (2021-2025)

5. Next steps

All policy documents and strategies are in line with the objectives of GCM. Its principles and objectives are well integrated into Armenia's policy and practice, and this will continue in the future as the four programmes underpinning the Migration Concept are further elaborated, and institutional reforms implemented.

Accordingly, as the report has highlighted, several developments will be implemented in the coming months and years that will further contribute to implementing the principles and objectives of the GCM in the Republic of Armenia. Institutionally, the integration of the Migration and Citizenship Service as one arm of the new Ministry of Interior will further strengthen the Migration and Citizenship Service, and the transfer of social functions to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will support the greater integration of immigrants in the Republic of Armenia.

The Government will continue its efforts to improve coordination between various government agencies and to engage with relevant non-government actors in policy formulation and implementation, and to improve migration-related data in support of evidence-based policy. It will continue to proactively communicate updates about migration-related policy changes.

The Government of the Republic of Armenia will also continue to actively participate in relevant activities as they relate to the implementation of the GCM. The Government will send a delegation to the International Migration Review Forum in May 2022 and stands ready to participate in any other further national review exercises. Next to preparing an application to join the Champion Country Initiative[66], the Government of the Republic of Armenia is also preparing practices to submit to the UN Network on Migration's Repository of Practices[67]: 1) iGorts; 2) the government programme for returnees; 3) the readmission case management system.

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[66] https://migrationnetwork.un.org/champion-countries
[67] https://migrationnetwork.un.org/hub/repository-of-practices/about

Annex 1 Migration Concept Mapped to the GCM Principles (Table 1) and Objectives (Table 2)

Table 1 Assessing the 2021 Migration Concept using the Guiding Principles of the GCM

Guiding principle	Principle integrated	Explanation
People-centred	Yes	The Migration Concept focuses on the migrant as an individual. While not explicitly stated, the Migration Concept follows a people-centred approach because of its focus on the rights and needs of migrants, while balancing these with national security interest.
International cooperation	Yes	Strengthening international (and domestic) cooperation is Goal 8 of 9 in the Migration Concept. This includes cooperation at the bilateral, regional, and global level, particularly with countries that are either the destination for, or origin of migrants.
National sovereignty	Yes	National security is one of the four core values underpinning the conceptual framework.
Rule of law and due process	Yes	Importance is accorded to this principle in the management of irregular migration cases, in the improvement of border referral procedures, in the expulsion process including detention, and in return processes.
Sustainable development	Yes	The Migration Concept has been designed to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 6 of 9 is to increase the impact of migration on sustainable human development in Armenia. Objectives include measures to address brain drain, stimulating migration for the purpose of education, reducing labour migration, creating alternatives to labour migration, recognising, and supporting the contribution of Armenian migrants and the Diaspora, steering remittances towards development, fostering closer relations with Armenian communities abroad and stimulating international participation
Human rights	Yes	'Improvement of the protection of the rights and interests of various migrant groups is Goal 4 of 9 in the Migration Concept.
Gender-responsive	Yes	Gender is mentioned in the context of 1) capacity building (gender sensitivity) for staff of the border guards service; gender-sensitive actions plan to operationalise the four envisaged programs to develop migration policy; 3) data disaggregation.
Child-sensitive	Yes	The migration concept establishes the objective of improving border referrals and identifies unaccompanied minors as a target group and discusses young people in the context of youth migration and in data disaggregation.
Whole-of-government approach	Yes	A whole-of-government approach is one of three fundamental principles underpinning the conceptual framework. Strengthening international (and domestic) cooperation is Goal 8 of 9 in the Migration Concept. This includes the objective of strengthening cooperation between government agency through information sharing, the establishment of a system for migration crisis management, and the linkages between migration and sectoral policies. Increasing the level of coordination, uniformity, and effectiveness in the area of Migration Management is the ninth goal of the conceptual framework.
Whole-of-society approach	Yes	Cooperation is one of the three fundamental principles underpinning the conceptual framework which includes an acknowledgement that 'the effective implementation of migration policy requires cooperation between domestic authorities, international intergovernmental, as well as local and international civil society organisations...'. Goal 8 of 9 is the 'strengthening international and domestic cooperation in the areas of migration management' which includes actions relating to strengthening participation of international organisations and civil society structures of the Republic of Armenia

Table 2 Mapping the Objectives of the 2021 Migration Concept (2021) to the GCM Objectives

#	Goal	Objectives	GCM Objectives
1	*Enhancing interconnections between migration management and improvement of the demographic situation in Armenia and repatriation policies*	Encouragement of return and repatriation	21
		Assessment of the required volume of immigration flow and stimulation of flows deemed to be expedient	1, 2
		Assessment of the outflow impact and reduction of target groups outflow	1, 2
2	*Increasing the effectiveness of the fight against irregular and Illegal Migration*	Prevention of illegal border crossing	11
		Improvement of systems for the registration of residence of foreign nationals and the regulation thereof	1, 4, 9, 12
		Effective and humane management of irregular migration cases	9, 13
		Strengthening supervision over private employment agencies	6
		Fight against trafficking in human beings and their exploitation	10
		Reduction of irregular migration originating in Armenia	2, 5
		Fight against forging visas and documents in Armenia	9
3	*Increasing effectiveness in management of borders, entry, exit and the residence of foreign nationals*	Improving systems for identification of persons at the border	4, 11
		Improving the process of handing over persons at border crossing points onto the jurisdiction of other structures	7, 11, 12
		Review of functionalities of the BMIS from the viewpoint of management of migration flows and taking full advantage thereof	1
		Capacity building for the staff of the border guards service	11
		Introduction of migration management agenda into the process of review of visa policies	12
		Improving the policy of issuance and extension of entry visas to the Republic of Armenia	12
		Improvement of the system of granting residence status	11, 12
		Increasing access to information	3
		Improving the processes of readmission and return in Armenia	12, 21
		Improving the process of deportation	12, 13, 21
4	*Improvement of the protection of the rights and interests of various migrant groups, Improvement of the system of international protection*	Improving the protection of the rights and interests of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia in foreign countries	14, 22
		Protection of social and health status of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia in foreign states	14
		Improving the protection of the rights of migrants in the Republic of Armenia	15, 16, 17

		Improving the existing regulation of employment of foreign nationals in Armenia	6, 7, 10
		Legal and social protection of internally displaced persons and forcefully displaced persons (who are not eligible to apply for refugee status, namely citizens of the Republic of Armenia who had moved from Syria, persons who have moved to Armenia from the Republic of Artsakh)	7, 15
		Improvement of the system of international protection	12
		Strengthening quality control over and effectiveness of asylum procedures	12
5	*Reforming the organisation of integration of foreign nationals and reintegration of returnees in Armenia, as well as improving the environment for receiving foreigners in Armenia*	Increasing access to education, health and social support, and the protection of rights	15
		Cultural integration	16
		Reforming civic integration	16
		Support to employment and economic integration	16, 18
		Establishment of a receptive and hospitable environment in Armenia	16, 17
6	*Increasing the impact of migration on sustainable human development in Armenia*	Prevention of the brain drain and reduction of target groups outflow	2
		Stimulation of migration for the purpose of education and exchange of experience	18
		Reduction of labour migration	2
		Reduction of the negative impact of migration and decreasing risks thereof, creation of alternatives to traditional formats and directions (Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS))	2
		Revealing the intellectual and economic potential of migrants and the Diaspora and introducing mechanisms to apply said potential to Armenia's sustainable human development.	19
		Steering remittances received from abroad towards development:	20
		Fostering closer relations with the Armenian communities in foreign countries	19
		Stimulating international participation	23
7	*Increasing the level of preparedness to respond to migration crises*	Creation of a system for emergency management of migration	7, 23
		Emergency management of borders	11
		Creation of flexible systems for international protection of migration	12
		Creation of mechanisms for statistical accounting, monitoring and bilateral transfer of information	1, 23
		Creations of system for documenting, registering and referral of displaced persons	4, 12
		Ensuring infrastructure	7
		Creation of mechanisms for ensuring the security of persons and for providing emergency support	7

		Managing restrictions of international movement	5
		Expanding international cooperation around crisis management of mass influx	23
		Allocation of sustainable finances	7
8	*Strengthening international and domestic cooperation in the areas of migration management*	Expanding regional and global cooperation	23
		Closer bilateral cooperation	23
		Expanding cooperation with public administration structures	12
		Strengthening participation of international organisations and civil society structures of the Republic of Armenia	23
		Raising Armenia's role of Armenia within international platforms	23
9	*Increasing the level of coordination, uniformity, and effectiveness in the area of Migration Management*	Creation of institutional foundations for comprehensive management of migration	12
		Increasingly evidence-based formation and implementation of migration policy	1
		Increasing the efficiency of evaluation of migration policy results and impacts	1
		Improving the quality and increasing access to public services provided to various migrant groups	15
		Migration management capacity building	23
		Introduction of internal migration into migration management policy agenda	1
		Creation of mechanisms for ensuring availability of stable financial resources	19