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# MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN THE CIS REGION

The fall of the "Iron Curtain" and the dissolution of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) entailed fundamental changes in the size and structure of migration flows affecting the successor states as well as Western Europe. As a consequence of the formation of 15 newly independent states, 12 of them form the Commonwealth of Independent States – CIS, 60 million citizens of the FSU were now living outside their "ethnic homelands". Furthermore, the transformation from command to market based economies entailed the loss of millions of jobs, aggravated social cleavages to a formerly unknown extent, and forced large parts of the population(s) to seek for better economic opportunities outside their home countries. The resulting migration potential would have asked for the swift development of migration strategies and an accompanying build-up of migration management systems. However, the far-reaching transformation processes of the economic, political and social systems left only little room for serious efforts in developing the necessary legal and administrative structures in the field of migration. The lack of such systems together with specific peculiarities of migration in the CIS region lead to the evolvement of large-scale irregular migration flows, that not only affected the CIS countries but spilled over to the territory of the European Union as well. Being increasingly confronted with the negative consequences of unregulated migration, CIS countries have started to adapt their migration management systems in line with international standards. Related efforts are in an initial state and much work remains to be done. Strong cooperation and involvement of the Member States of the EU will be needed to enable the CIS countries to successfully carry out this difficult and demanding task.

**A** result of the last round of Enlargement of the European Union, the EU and the successor states of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) now share common borders. The CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States)<sup>1</sup> is a priority area of the Union's European Neighbourhood Policy – ENP (European Commission 2003, 4). The

main objective of the ENP is to put both the Member States of the EU and the new neighbouring countries in a position to benefit from the 2004 enlargement with a view to increased stability, security and prosperity. However, more than fifteen years after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union (FSU) the economic, social



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## VOCABULARY:

**dissolution:**  
Auflösung, Zerstörung, Zerfall

**Former Soviet Union (FSU):**  
ehemalige Sowjetunion

**successor states:**  
Nachfolgestaaten

**Commonwealth of  
Independent States (CIS):**  
Gemeinschaft Unabhängiger  
Staaten (GUS)

**to aggravate:**  
erschweren, verschärfen  
verstärken

**peculiarities:**  
Eigenheiten, Eigentümlichkeiten

**Enlargement of the  
European Union:**  
Erweiterung der  
Europäischen Union

and political problems emerging in connection with the formation of the new states have not been fully overcome. Irrespective of relative political stability, living standards remain low in most of the CIS countries, unemployment levels are high and the resulting lack of economic opportunities leaves large parts of the population without prospects. In addition to these factors the facilitated access to information and means of transport and the strong images of "the good life" spread by media and modern communication technologies result in a high migration potential to the growth areas of Central and Western Europe and in the region.

*For the coming years an increase in migration flows within, from and through the CIS can be expected.*

These flows will continue to affect migration reality in Western Europe for the years to come.

The fall of the "Iron Curtain" and the dissolution of the FSU at the beginning of the 1990s not only opened a new chapter in the political history of Europe but also formed a turning point in European migration. The decades before had foremost been characterised by regular labour migration from South and South-Eastern Europe to Western Europe on basis of the "guest-worker-programmes" and subsequent immigration for the purpose of family reunification. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the "Iron Curtain" constituted an insurmountable obstacle for the majority of potential migrants from the FSU, it did not completely cut off migration flows from the country to the West. Between 1950 and 1992 a total of about 1.7 Mio people emigrated from the FSU, mainly members of ethnic and religious minorities or individuals that were exiled from or left the

country for political reasons (Fassmann/Münz 2000, 26). During this period emigration of Soviet citizens was based on bilateral agreements between the FSU and the respective countries of destination and thus largely under the control of the states involved. Spontaneous emigration of Soviet citizens or transit migration of other nationals through the territory of the FSU formed an absolute exception (Fassmann/Münz 2000, 46). This picture changed significantly after the fall of the "Iron Curtain" in 1989/90, when the lifting of travel restrictions made migration subject to individual choice instead of state policies.

*The opening of borders suddenly made the prosperous Western European countries accessible to migrants originating from the CIS or transiting through the region.*

Notwithstanding the fact that the expected "invasion from the East" did not take place, East-West-Migration became one of the prevailing trends of migration to Western Europe and continues to do so at present.

## **1. MIGRATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN THE CIS COUNTRIES**

Many of the challenges and opportunities originating from the geographical proximity between the Member States of the EU and the CIS countries are closely linked to migration policy issues. On the one hand lawful migration and movement of persons are inevitable preconditions to enable the EU and the CIS countries to mutually benefit from the labour force potential and professional skills existing on either side. On the other hand possible openings also imply a wide range of challenges, which have to be met in order to

### **VOCABULARY:**

**guest worker programme:**  
Gastarbeiterprogramm

**family reunification:**  
Familienzusammenführung

**proximity:**  
Nähe

**inevitable:**  
notwendig, zwangsläufig

allow for the actual facilitation of the crossing of common borders.

International migration is a highly complex process, referring to different types and forms of movements, spanning different geographical areas, comprising both legal and illegal forms of border-crossings and residence, short-term, circular and long-term migration processes. Migration cannot be fully controlled by governments, at least not in a globalized world where economic, social and cultural interactions and dependencies between states are of constantly increasing importance. Taking into account the natural limitations to migration control the term migration management has prevailed in the international debate. Though there is no commonly accepted definition of migration management and its components, the series of policies that were developed during the 1990s to meet the migration-related challenges of that time form the statutory, institutional and procedural framework of migration management systems (Council of Europe 2000, 13). These policies refer to legal or regular migration (labour migration and family reunification), entry control (border management), the prevention of illegal or irregular migration, the fight against trafficking in human beings and human smuggling, protection (asylum), return and readmission.

***The promotion of integration of foreign nationals lawfully residing on the territory of the respective receiving countries has been added as another main priority of migration policy in the recent past.***

Migration management in the CIS countries proved to be particularly difficult mainly because of two reasons: On the one hand the far-reaching transformation pro-

cesses of the economic, political and social systems left only little room for serious efforts in building up the necessary legal and administrative structures in the field of migration. On the other hand the break-up divided the FSU into fifteen independent states separated from each other by borders that had transformed from internal administrative to international borders. This not only disrupted traditional trade channels, but also created large-scale minorities on the territories of the newly founded states and turned previously internal movements into international migration. The need to maintain the historically grown economic and social ties, while at the same time having to meet the requirements of migration management in an international environment, poses specific problems for all CIS countries.

## **2. MIGRATION SITUATION IN THE CIS REGION**

The first thing that has to be noted when analysing the migration situation in what is commonly referred to as the "CIS region" is that despite their joint heritage, the CIS countries are facing fundamentally different realities in the field of migration and migration management. The attractiveness of a specific country for migrants is the result of the interplay of a number of factors, comprising *inter alia* the political and economic situation in countries of origin and destination, the proximity or distance of countries of origin and destination, the geographical position of a "target country" on prevailing (regular and irregular) migration routes, the existence of ethnic communities and networks in the country of destination and/or en route, but also legal and practical aspects of the respective migration regimes. The actual impact of these individual factors and their interplay on the total size of migration to a country is difficult to measure. Neverthe-

### **VOCABULARY:**

**facilitation:**  
*Erleichterung*

less, a number of distinct factors that influence the migration situation in the CIS countries shall be outlined in the following, namely the disparities in economic development and prosperity, the existence of ethnic minorities within the respective territories of the CIS countries, and the permeability of the borders between them.

## 2.1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE CIS COUNTRIES

The disintegration of the FSU and the subsequent economic transformation processes struck the newly formed states in a two-fold way. All CIS countries had to deal with the radical changes the transition from command to market economy brought about. Moreover, these radical changes had to take place in the framework of emerging national economies that had been deprived from a unified economic management system, a common territory, as well as common internal and external markets (Egorov 2000, 7). The transition processes affected the successor states of the Soviet Union in different ways resulting from the CIS countries' diversity in "size, level of development, historical background, and social and political structure."

### VOCABULARY:

*disparity:*  
Verschiedenheit

*permeability:*  
Durchdringbarkeit

*GDP (Gross Domestic Product):*  
Bruttoinlandsprodukt

*Speed and success of the reform processes have been unequal among the CIS countries, with the Central Asian countries facing even more difficulties than the European CIS countries.*

Nevertheless, all successor states were struck by economic decline, "the cumulative loss of output and incomes during 1991–2001 was equivalent to about three years of GDP of the FSU. (Simai 2006, 4)." One of the key issues of the economic transformation process is the ongoing re-

structuring process of the labour market(s), which has affected individuals differently according to gender, class, educational and professional background, ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship. Female and agricultural occupation showed the biggest decline, and many industrial jobs were shifted to low-paid jobs or the informal sector. Still, economic transition also created opportunities. The different starting positions of the respective national economies and varying degrees of success with regard to economic reform found their expression in significant disparities in economic power among the CIS countries. In 2005 Russia's economy was eleven to seventeen times bigger than the ones of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Yearly growth rates provide a similar picture, between 2001 and 2005 the Russian economy grew a 117% compared to Armenia's 42% and Kyrgyzstan's 30% at the lower end of the scale. Over the same period Uzbekistan's economy declined with a negative growth rate of 23% (IMF 2004). Contrary to economic development the poorest countries of the region, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, are the only CIS countries expected to have growing populations over the next 30 years, whereas in other parts of the CIS population decline will take on dramatic

Source: IMF 2004

Country		CIS average*
Russia	227	100
Kazakhstan	173	100
Belarus	158	100
Turkmenistan	135	100
Ukraine	133	100
Azerbaijan	95	100
Armenia	68	100
Georgia	59	100
Moldova	48	100
Kyrgyz Republic	42	100
Uzbekistan	38	100
Tajikistan	24	100

\* 4,544 US dollars

**GDP per capita in CIS countries 2005**

proportions. According to estimates the population of Ukraine will have declined by 39.6% until the year 2050, the population of Georgia by 38.8%, Russia's population will shrink by 28.3% (Antonov 2000, 52).

## **2.2. ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE CIS COUNTRIES**

As a consequence of the dissolution of the FSU large populations found themselves in the position of "new" ethnic minorities in the Newly Independent States. It is estimated that about 60 million people on the territory of the FSU reside outside their "ethnic homelands" (Papademetriou 1999, 78). Ethnic Russians formed the biggest group in this respect; in 1989 about 25 million Russians were living outside the Russian Federation, about 50% of them in Ukraine and Belarus, more than 30% in the Central Asian countries and Kazakhstan, about 7% in the Baltic republics, about 4% in the Caucasus countries, and about 2% in Moldova.

*Thus, the "Russian diaspora residing on the territory of the successor states formed the largest foreign majority in Europe" (Kopnina 2005, 28).*

On the other hand, the Centre for Russian Studies counted a total of 92 different ethnic groups residing on the territory of the Russian Federation for the year 2002 (CFRS 2006).

It is estimated that since the early 1980s more than 3 million persons in the CIS region were forced to leave their respective (new) home countries due to ethnic, political or military conflicts, again the majority of them (about 1.5 million) ethnic Russians. Though migration in the recent past has shifted from forced migration "as a result of strong political and economic

push factors" (Ivakhnyuk 2006, 2) to migration of a more voluntary nature, the existence of large-scale minorities alongside titular majorities still represents an important factor contributing to further migration in the region.

## **2.3. PERMEABILITY OF STATE BORDERS**

The disintegration of the Soviet Union changed the status of internal administrative borders to external international borders. Thus, the permeability of the new state borders between the CIS countries has to be seen against the background of the abovementioned aspects. Despite the fact that these borders now divide independent states, there is still a high degree of economic and social interaction between areas and regions that previously were part of a common state. Consequently the CIS countries pursued rather liberal entry and visa policies towards other CIS citizens. To quote only one example, Russia permitted entry of citizens from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Moldova on basis of 15 different identity documents. Combined with the practical problems resulting from the enormous length of the new external borders – with almost 7,000 km the border between Russia and Kazakhstan is the longest land border in the world – the liberal visa and entry policies allowed for easy access to CIS countries' territories and facilitated irregular migration. In general, it is the former internal borders of the Soviet Union that constitute the main challenges in the area of border control and security rather than the (former) external borders. The delimitation and demarcation of external borders pose problems for all CIS countries and although a number of international agreements on this issue have been signed, the implementation of these agreements remains a challenge. The numerous regional

### **VOCABULARY:**

**Belarus:**  
Weißrussland

**delimitation:**  
Abgrenzung

**demarcation:**  
Abgrenzung, Grenzziehung

Source: ICMPD 2005

Country	Other CIS nationals	per cent	Country	Other CIS nationals	per cent
Armenia	Russian n.a. n.a.	0.5 - -	Moldova	Ukrainian Russian n.a.	13.8 13.0 -
Azerbaijan	Russian Armenian n.a.	1.8 1.5 -	Russia	Ukrainian Belarusian Moldovan	3.0 0.8 0.7
Belarus	Russian Ukrainian n.a.	11.4 3.4 -	Tajikistan	Uzbek Russian n.a.	25.0 3.5 -
Georgia	Azeri Armenian Russian	6.5 5.7 1.5	Turkmenistan	Uzbek Russian n.a.	5.0 4.0 -
Kazakhstan	Russian Ukrainian Uzbek Uzbek	30.0 3.7 2.5 13.8	Ukraine	Russian Belarusian Moldovan Russian Tajik Kazakh	17.3 0.6 0.5 5.5 5.0 3.0
Kyrgyzstan	Russian Ukrainian	12.5 1.0	Uzbekistan		

#### Ethnic minorities in the CIS countries (2004)

conflicts since 1991 lead the CIS countries to perceive the issue of borders as a matter of sovereignty and external security rather than of migration control (ICMPD 2005, 195).

### 3. MIGRATION FLOWS TO, THROUGH AND FROM THE CIS COUNTRIES

The large scale of migration flows between the CIS countries characterises the region as one of the world's biggest migration systems. The term migration system refers to a group of countries comprising a main receiving region, which might include a number of countries, and a set of specific sending countries linked together by an intense exchange of goods, capital and unusually large flows of migrants (Zlotnik 1992, 35). Large (then internal) migration flows took place within the boundaries of the FSU already in the late 1980s. With its dissolution those flows rapidly grew in scale. Nevertheless, during this period migration in the successor states was to be characterised as "internal circulation with some international spill-over" (Salt 2003, 18), underpinning that the larger part of migration movements took part within the region itself. As outlined above, the CIS

region shows significant disparities in terms of economic power, growth rates, demographic development and labour market demands.

***The high-growth areas on the territory of the FSU are faced with declining populations whereas the growing populations of the Central Asian and the Caucasus countries lack of job opportunities.***

Thus, Russia and Kazakhstan have developed to "migration magnets" for the citizens from neighbouring countries (most notably Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Moldova), but also for migrants from the "Far Abroad" (Patzwald 2004, 4).

#### 3.1. THE PROBLEM OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION TO THE CIS REGION

The need for labour migration is widely acknowledged among CIS authorities and stakeholders. Moreover, due to the common political, cultural and linguistic heritage the social integration of labour migrants originating from the region does not pose specific problems. However, the better part of labour migration flows in the region takes place in form of irregular migration. The main reason for this phenomenon lies in the long lasting absence of migration management within and between the CIS countries. The legal basis as well as the administrative infrastructure (labour-related entry and residence policies, labour market services, public or private job agencies) remained underdeveloped or did not exist at all. The actual admission policies with regard to labour purposes and work permits proved to impose too many bureaucratic hurdles, financial

#### VOCABULARY:

**to underpin:**  
(unter)stützen, untermauern

**hurdle:**  
*Hürde*

burdens and tedious procedures on employers and labour migrants (ICMPD 2005, 273). Consequently, "illegality" of migrants many times emerged only after an initial legal entry because of the insufficient administrative capacities to process the caseload within the statutory periods. The ineffective management of labour migration led to a significant shift towards illegal forms of foreign employment. Due to the hidden nature of the phenomenon, the real size of irregular migration cannot be measured. Approximately 90% of illegal immigration flows within the CIS region originate from other CIS countries; the remaining part is mostly attributed to migrants from the "Far Abroad", more specifically South East Asia, notably China, Viet Nam and Korea (Heleniak 2002, 10).

According to official estimates, there are currently 5-15 million irregular migrants residing on the territories of the CIS countries, 3-5 million of them on the territory of the Russian Federation as the region's main country of destination. The illegal residence status of this group of migrants has an important side effect. The fact that these migrants are already "mobilised" and that their legal and practical situation in the CIS countries does not necessarily prompt them to stay, they also represent a large pool of potential onward migration to Western Europe. The CIS countries are not only important countries of destination but also important transit countries for regular and irregular migration flows.

### **3.2. THE PROBLEM OF IRREGULAR TRANSIT MIGRATION THROUGH THE CIS REGION**

It is a commonly acknowledged fact that the CIS region is one of the most important transit areas of irregular migration to the Member States of the European Union, be it self-organised or by the use of profes-

sional human smuggling networks. Two of the three main irregular migration and smuggling routes to Western Europe span the territories of the CIS countries. The so-called Central and Eastern European route originates in Russia, Belarus or Ukraine, passes either through Belarus, Poland, the Czech Republic or through Ukraine to Slovakia or Hungary and on to the Schengen area (Austria or Germany). The so-called Baltic route leads from Russia via the Baltic States to Poland (with sub-routes going to the Scandinavian countries) and from there on either directly to Germany or via the Czech Republic to the Schengen area. In reality the nature of irregular migration and human smuggling is more complex than simply following pre-observed migration routes.

*Like its regular counterpart,  
irregular migration links  
source countries, transit  
countries and countries of  
destination in form of  
migration systems.*

It takes advantage of existing legal and practical opportunities (density of external and internal control, legal and informal job opportunities, existence of ethnic communities and networks etc) a specific country along the route might offer. It is organized around major transit points or "migration hubs" along the way that offer favourable conditions for irregular migrants to organise their onward journey as well as for professional human smugglers to organise their operations. Moscow, Kiev and Minsk occur repeatedly as stages that have been passed during irregular migration processes that reached their final destination in Member States of the European Union. At the same time the CIS countries have developed to main barriers for irregular migration movements.

### **VOCABULARY:**

**tedious:**  
*langwierig, mühsam*

**to prompt:**  
*veranlassen, anregen*

***Entering CIS countries often proves to be a lot easier than overcoming the tight control regimes at the borders to the West.***

Under the present condition of "asymmetric borders" along the outlined routes, many irregular migrants find themselves "stuck" mainly in the Western CIS countries, which initially should only function as stages on the journey to the West (Ivakhniouk 2004, 17). To quote only one example, according to estimates more than "300,000 transit migrants from Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Ethiopia and other countries have got stranded in Russia and Ukraine" over the last years (Ivakhniouk 2006, 3). It can be assumed that these groups of migrants still intend to leave the CIS countries and to reach their initial destinations in Western Europe if corresponding opportunities emerge.

**VOCABULARY:**

**disregard:**

Missachtung, Vernachlässigung

**stock:**

Aufkommen

**state-of-the-art:**

modern,

auf dem neuesten Stand

**to hinder:**

hindern, verhindern

Nevertheless, a good legal basis is contrasted with a lack of administrative and operational structures to put it into practice. Border control is one of the main problem areas. However, despite the serious efforts, mainly put by the more prosperous CIS countries, border control is far from Western European standards, clear-cut responsibilities are missing as well as interagency cooperation. The lack of state-of-the-art technical equipment and the enormous length of the borders pose additional problems. But it is also political reasons that hinder effective border control. The close relationship between Belarus and the Russian Federation for instance envisages no border or customs control at the common border. This openness resulted in significant irregular migration flows between the two countries as well as onward to Western Europe. The liberal visa policies of the CIS countries versus each other account for much of this trend.

***In general, visa policies in the CIS are at an early stage of development and the understanding of the visa system as an instrument of migration control is not fully developed yet.***

**4. THE BUILD-UP OF MIGRATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN THE CIS**

Issues related to migration were considered as being of subordinate priority during the transition period in the aftermath of the dissolution of FSU. The disregard for the importance of the topic, the lack of resources for the development of related legal and administrative systems and the peculiarities of migration flows in the region resulted in large stocks of irregular migrants residing on the territories of the CIS countries. Being increasingly confronted with the negative consequences of unregulated migration, CIS countries have invested a lot to improve the quality of migration management systems over the last years. All CIS countries have developed the necessary legislative basis in line with international standards and agreements.

The same refers to the administrative structures and procedures for issuing work and residence permits. The inefficiency of these procedures leads to the paradoxical situation that in spite of the acknowledged need for foreign labour force, many labour migrants find themselves pushed into irregularity since they cannot fulfil unrealistic administrative requirements.

**5. CONCLUSIONS**

More than 15 years after the dissolution the successor states of the FSU face serious challenges in the area of migration ma-

nagement. This not only calls for the further development of comprehensive migration management systems and strategies in the CIS region, but also for enhanced co-operation between the CIS countries and the Member States of the EU. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of migration flows take place in the region, the large number of "people on the move" inside the CIS also represents a huge potential for onward migration to the territory of the EU. The quantitative proportion between "internal" and "external" migration flows in the CIS might shift even more towards the EU, depending on the accessibility of Member States territories, the establishment of migrant networks and emerging job opportunities on regular and irregular labour markets. It is in the interest of the EU to support the ongoing restructuring processes of migration management in the region, even when taking into account that this process will be leng-

thy, require substantial financial means and will not suffice to fully stop irregular migration flows from the CIS.

This article aims to shed light on the present structure and dynamics of migration flows in the CIS region and the challenges these flows impose on the migration management systems of successor states of the Former Soviet Union as well as on the Member States of the European Union. The article is based on the findings of the project on the "Redirection of the Budapest Process towards the CIS countries to prevent irregular migration within, from and through the region", carried out by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in the years 2004-2005.

<sup>1</sup> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

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