

FACT SHEET ON WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



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Situational analysis of women migrant workers (WMWs) from the Republic of Moldova

- In the context of the changes taking place in the Republic of Moldova and an increasing number of women migrants, the phenomenon of migration has become more critical in terms of the economic, social and political life of the country.
- Moldova is primarily a country of origin for migration, and to a much lesser extent a country of destination or transit¹. Regarding the latter, data from the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the EU (FRONTEX) shows that only an insignificant number of irregular migrants to the EU transit through Moldova. The country itself does not have clear, unified and gender segregated data regarding the number of seasonal, temporary or illegal migrants. Under the Association Agreement between Republic of Moldova and the European Union and the visa liberalization regime, travel procedures have been significantly simplified. Many Moldovan citizens hold dual citizenship, and migrate and obtain employment on the basis of Romanian documents. Moreover, due to the lack of control by Moldovan authorities over the Transnistrian region, it is very difficult to monitor cross border movements.
- The National Bureau of Statistics, in the Labour Force Survey, estimates that the number of Moldovan migrants is about 10% of Moldova's population. Women migrants make up 36% of all migrants and 44% of long-term migrants².
- The proportion of men who migrate is slightly higher than that of women. The situation in this domain has not changed significantly since 1995. Women migrant workers choose Italy, Greece, Israel, and Turkey while the men more often choose destinations such as the Russian Federation, Portugal, Romania and Ukraine. There is a clear gender division of jobs done by Moldovan migrants. More than half of Moldovan migrants work abroad in the construction sector (68% in the CIS and 29% in the EU). The second most common occupation abroad is in domestic services provided to private households, especially characteristic of migrants to EU countries (47.3%)³. Most of the women migrants are employed in domestic work and most of the male migrants work in the construction sector.
- Women migrants tend to be less mobile than men migrant workers, and they travel home less often than men. This is mainly due, firstly, to the nature of their work, compared to the seasonal work flows of men: where the highest number of emigrants is registered in the third quarter of the year, and the lowest in the fourth and first. A great number of labour migrants working in Russia return to Moldova during the winter because of low demand for labour in the construction industry. Secondly, the countries of destination and their status as informal/formal workers. Moldovan men can more easily travel to Russia (lack of visa requirements, knowledge of the language, and the low costs of travel and employment) as compared to a female migrant in an EU country.
- Data on education and occupation of migrants shows that many men working in Russia had the same occupation they used to have in Moldova (prior to migration they worked as drivers, electricians, mechanics and construction workers). Women migrant workers are generally better qualified than male migrants workers in terms of level of education and previous occupation), but there is less alignment of skills in the case of women abroad. Although in Moldova they have been employed as doctors, teachers, nurses or public servants, they often do a job that does not match their skills.
- As the data collected for the IASCI Nexus Migration Survey 2013 shows, a greater proportion of women migrants are older than 30. In part, this may be explained by the fact that younger women are caring for small children and it is hard to leave them in the care of someone else.
- Women migrants have more access to social protection. In each type of social and labour protection, women migrants benefit more compared with male migrants. In particular, they have better access to health insurance, paid sick leave, unemployment insurance and social security. A risk profile of migrants (CBS AXA 2013) tends to confirm these findings. It shows that the incidence of *successful* migrants is higher among women (64%) compared to 59% for males and the incidence of *exploited* migrants is higher among men (68.7%) compared to women migrants (31.5%). One explanation of this gender dichotomy is the nature of migration patterns outlined above: the nature of seasonal work with less need to formalize labour relationships, the construction industry being a sector with very high informal employment, the country of destination that influences migrants' propensity to formalize.
- Women are more interested in assistance related to social security, state health insurance, state pension scheme as well as assistance in reskilling/retraining, than men, who tend to be more interested in help with business start-ups.

¹ Extended migration profile of the Republic of Moldova 2005-2010, International Organization for Migration, 2012

² Innovation in Circular Migration, Nexus-Moldova 2014

³ Costs and benefits of labour mobility between the EU and Eastern Partnership partner countries, Country Study Moldova.

Reasons for labour emigration

- The main push factor for Moldovan migrants is economic: poverty, lack of adequate employment opportunities and low wages, while higher living standards abroad act as a pull factor.
- Data on poverty shows that about 80% of Moldovan poverty is concentrated in rural areas. Due to lack of rural employment opportunities, rural women are more exposed to discrimination at work and domestic violence, and this is a major cause of migration.

Destination countries

- Women represent a majority of migrants from Moldova working in the European Union (70%) and they stay abroad for longer (2.3 years on average), while men represent the majority of migrants from Moldova working in the Commonwealth of Independent States (two thirds), usually in seasonal work and stay abroad for shorter periods, up to 12 months.
- Women migrant workers choose Italy, Greece, Israel, and Turkey while male migrants more often choose destinations such as the Russian Federation, Portugal, Romania and Ukraine.
- With no gender specifics, contact between working migrants and foreign employers can be established based on an agreement between countries. Out of the six existent agreements only one is in operation, that with Israel, but it concerns only jobs in construction for men. Under the remaining agreements (with Azerbaijan, Poland, Slovenia, Italy and Kyrgyzstan) no employment is offered. No response has so far been received from Spain, France and Portugal in reply to letters from Moldova suggesting establishing similar agreements. In 2008 a new initiative, the "Mobility Partnership" was established. a partnership that covers 15 EU countries and Moldova. As a result of this, a new, improved agreement with Italy was signed in 2011.⁴
- The Government invites recruitment agencies to collaborate in drafting legislation. In order to

Remittances: Impact of Moldovan women migrant workers' labour migration

- Remittances have represented and continue to represent the most substantial and stable contribution in foreign currency, compared with foreign direct investment, exports, loans, and external assistance. The respective foreign currency inflows have also contributed to increasing the state budget through value added tax (VAT) and import taxes, development of the banking system, financial mediation services, and increase of capital.
- Women migrant workers, on average, make more money transfers than men: 6.9 as compared to 6 per year, but the amount transferred by men is larger: – 4,699 euros against 4,127 euros for women⁵.
- Both men and women (73% in each case) preferred to send money through formal channels. Money transfer systems, such as Western Union, Money Gram are more popular among men 69% compared to 64% of women), while more women, albeit a minority of the total, send money via bus drivers or travel agencies (7% as compared to 3%). 45% of men and women also carry the money in person and 20% of each use bank transfers. 7% of men and 8% of women trust their friends or fellow migrant to carry the money personally.
- While remittances have contributed to decreasing poverty in the beneficiary households, and have increased access to education, less than 10 per cent of remittances are productively invested, the bulk being used for consumption and acquisition of real estate. A government owned remittances investment programme has, since 2010, attracted EUR 2.4 million of remittances into the small and medium-sized enterprise sector, with one-to-one match funds from government and donors.⁶
- There are significant differences in the purposes of money transfer. Women more often transfer money to support their spouse and children, emergencies and risks, and supporting other relatives. Men more often transfer for renovation, reconstruction of a house or apartment, savings, investment in a

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