



Information Sheets on Return Policies: the case of Türkiye, Georgia, Iraq, Nigeria



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Georgia

(prepared by Nino Tartarashvili)

Data on Migration and Returns

Georgia has experienced significant migration patterns, driven by economic factors and conflicts, particularly the wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These conflicts in the early 1990s displaced about a quarter of a million people. Estimates suggest 12,200 people are internally displaced from South Ossetia and 230,000 from Abkhazia (Selm, 2005). Emigration trends show that three-quarters of the Georgian diaspora in the OECD area reside in Greece, Israel, Türkiye, and the United States, with Greece alone accounting for 34% of the emigrant population in 2020 (OECD, 2022). The Georgian diaspora has increasingly feminized over time, with many women emigrating to OECD countries (OECD, 2022b).

Internally, Georgia has seen significant migration from rural areas to the capital, Tbilisi, driven primarily by young people. This urban migration exacerbates social disparities between Tbilisi and other regions (Migrants & Refugees Section, n.d.-a). As of 2021, Georgia had about 74,000 immigrants, constituting 1.99% of the total population. These immigrants are predominantly from Russia, Syria, Iraq, and Ukraine. Notably, more than 160,000 Ukrainians have entered Georgia since February 2022, highlighting the country's role as both a transit and destination nation amid ongoing conflicts (Migrants & Refugees Section, n.d.-a).

Georgia has established several return agreements and legal migration pathways to EU+ countries. Negotiations with the EU on readmission agreements began in 2008 and culminated in a successful agreement in 2010 (eur-lex.europa.eu, 2010). The Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has facilitated the return of over 18,163 Georgian citizens from 32 nations since 2003 (IOM Georgia, n.d.). However, since Germany classified Georgia as a safe country in 2023, there has been an increase in enforced returns, with 1,070 Georgian nationals deported from various EU member nations due to residency infractions (Today, 2023).

Key Drivers of Emigration and Returns (with a focus on country-of-origin characteristics)

The primary drivers of emigration from Georgia include economic challenges, insufficient productivity growth, and the scarcity of high-quality jobs. Despite post-2004 reforms that boosted the business sector and attracted international investment, a significant portion of the labor force remains in low-productivity agriculture (Overview, n.d.). Additionally, Georgia's labor market issues, such as the lack of skilled labor opportunities, prompt many to seek better employment abroad, particularly in EU and North American countries. The aging population in Georgia further complicates these economic and labor market challenges (Human Rights in Georgia, n.d.).

Remittances play a crucial role in Georgia's economy, accounting for 12.9% of GDP in 2019. They have bolstered the country's economy, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. However, reliance on remittances exposes the economy to international economic trends and policy changes in remittance-sending countries. The Georgian diaspora is actively engaged in promoting Georgian culture and maintaining ties with their homeland, supported by governmental initiatives like the Governmental Commission for Migration Issues established in 2010 (Datablog | The Importance of Remittances for Georgian Households, n.d.).

Influence of Macro-Level Country Indicators and Geopolitical Factors on Georgia's Migration Patterns

Georgia's migration trends are heavily influenced by macro-level measures such as GDP, employment opportunities, and human development considerations. The country's economy has improved, especially since the 2003 Rose Revolution, largely due to economic liberalization and the creation of a more appealing business climate. Georgia's partnership with the European Union, including its membership in the EU Free Trade Area since 2014, has also contributed to economic growth (Civil.Ge, n.d.). However, challenges like high inflation, budget deficits, and economic downturns in the post-Soviet era led to significant emigration. These factors, along with political stability and economic prospects, play a major role in influencing migration decisions (Georgia, n.d.-b).

Diaspora and Development

Remittances are a significant factor in Georgia's economy, contributing 12.9% of GDP in 2019. They provide essential financial support to many Georgian households, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. However, reliance on remittances exposes the economy to international economic trends and policy changes in remittance-sending countries. The Georgian diaspora is actively engaged in promoting Georgian culture and

maintaining ties with their homeland. The government recognizes the importance of these ties, evidenced by initiatives like the Governmental Commission for Migration Issues established in 2010 (Datablog | The Importance of Remittances for Georgian Households, n.d.).

Key Historical Developments Affecting Migration and Returns

Georgia's economic growth significantly influences migration trends and decisions to return. Georgia's GDP per capita grew from \$3,048 in 2010 to \$5,073 in 2022, according to the World Bank (Overview, n.d.). Although these signs indicate better living conditions and employment prospects, issues like slow productivity growth and a dearth of high-quality job creation persist. Historical factors, such as post-Soviet economic instability and internal conflicts, have shaped Georgia's migration patterns. The country's hopes for integration into the European Union, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), have also influenced migration trends (Bringing the EU and Georgia Closer, n.d.).

Human Rights Records

Human rights conditions significantly impact migration and return decisions. Issues such as abuse of law enforcement, lack of accountability, threats against media freedom, and discrimination against LGBT individuals and minorities influence these decisions. The government's efforts to integrate with the European Union and address internal economic and demographic challenges will continue to shape Georgia's migration landscape (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Concluding Remarks

Georgia's migration patterns are shaped by economic, social, and geopolitical factors, including conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, driving significant emigration. Despite economic reforms and EU integration efforts stabilizing the economy, reliance on remittances exposes vulnerabilities. Rural-to-urban migration, particularly to Tbilisi, exacerbates regional disparities, while an influx of immigrants from conflict zones adds to demographic complexities. Proactive measures like return agreements and the AVRR program facilitate the return of Georgian citizens, though recent classifications have increased enforced returns. Efforts to enhance the business climate and maintain diaspora ties are vital for sustainable development, but challenges such as high inflation, budget deficits, and an aging population persist. Addressing human rights issues, including law enforcement abuse and discrimination, is crucial for improving migration dynamics. Georgia's future hinges on balancing economic development, human rights improvements,

and effective migration management to provide better opportunities for citizens and attract skilled migrants, fostering a dynamic and prosperous society.

Iraq

(prepared by Laura Cleton and Can Aygun)

Data on Migration and Returns

Since the 1980s, Iraq has experienced significant conflict, including the Iran-Iraq War, authoritarian rule, and the Gulf Wars, leading to large-scale emigration. The sectarian conflicts and actions of ISIS have also contributed to this trend, making Iraq a major migrant-sending country. Many Iraqi immigrants seek refuge in neighboring countries like Türkiye and in EU countries. By 2017, approximately 1,679,000 Iraqis had left the country, with 1,457,800 of these migrants residing in the EU (European Commission, 2022). The majority of Iraqi refugees in the EU are in Germany, followed by Türkiye, Jordan, Iran, and Syria (United Nations, 2021).

Efforts to reconstruct Iraq and the moderate stances of coalition governments have spurred investments, particularly appealing to entrepreneurs and companies in the construction and oil sectors. The Syrian Civil War also led to an influx of Syrian refugees into Iraq's Northern Kurdistan province, which hosts a diverse population including Kurds and Turkmens. As of 2021, Iraq had approximately 368,100 international migrants, with women constituting 41.9% of this population (Migrants and Refugees Section, 2021).

Iraq has return agreements with Belgium and Latvia within the EU. The absence of broader return agreements influences the length of stay and humanitarian mobility of refugees in the country (European Commission, 2022).

Key Drivers of Emigration and Returns (with a focus on country-of-origin characteristics)

Iraq's emigration is driven by wars, internal unrest, and religious and sectarian conflicts. High corruption levels, low security, and economic challenges also contribute to increased emigration rates and decreased motivation for return migration (Brookings, 2020). Despite substantial oil resources and a growing construction industry, Iraq's recovery is hindered by ongoing security challenges and regional terrorism. The country's World Peace Index score remains high, indicating significant security concerns. Religious intolerance exacerbates social polarization, with Christian and Yazidi communities facing suppression (Vision of Humanity, 2024).

Economic recovery in Iraq is partial, with a high unemployment rate of approximately 15% (MacroTrends, 2024). The educational and health systems face significant challenges due to the aftermath of conflicts and require substantial investment. Inequality in education and employment opportunities is pronounced, particularly affecting children, women, and minority groups (UNICEF, 2021).

Diaspora and Development

Both remittances and official development aid are important sources of income for Iraq. Remittances peaked at \$1.09 billion in 2017 but have fluctuated in recent years, accounting for 0.2% of Iraq's GDP in 2022 (World Bank, 2022). The Iraqi diaspora in Europe, primarily residing in Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, and Greece, plays a significant role in remittance flows. The diaspora's interactions with Iraq are crucial for the country's development, despite the challenges of reintegration and the political instability in Iraq (UNDESA, 2020).

Key Historical Developments Affecting Migration and Returns

The British mandate over Iraq in the early 20th century, subsequent independence in 1932, and the series of conflicts and occupations have significantly influenced migration patterns (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). The rise of Saddam Hussein, followed by the Gulf Wars and the 2003 US invasion, led to large-scale displacement and emigration. The conflict with ISIS and the ongoing sectarian violence continue to impact migration and return trends.

Economically, Iraq is heavily dependent on oil revenue, which accounts for 42% of its GDP. Political instability, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure hinder economic growth and job creation, driving many Iraqis to seek opportunities abroad. The health and education systems are similarly affected by these challenges, with significant disparities in access and quality of services (MacroTrends, 2024).

Human Rights Records

Human rights in Iraq are a critical concern, with ongoing violations related to freedom of expression, assembly, and treatment of minority groups. The 2019 protests against corruption and poor public services were met with severe repression, resulting in deaths and injuries (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Internally displaced persons (IDPs) face difficulties in returning safely to their areas of origin and accessing basic services. Those suspected of ISIS affiliation are subjected to collective punishments and unfair trials (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2022).

Women's rights and the rights of LGBT individuals are severely restricted, with reports of violence, discrimination, and lack of legal protection. The use of torture, arbitrary detention, and repression of journalists and activists further exacerbate the human rights situation in Iraq (Amnesty International, 2024).

Concluding Remarks

Iraq's migration patterns are profoundly influenced by decades of conflict, political instability, and economic challenges. The country has seen significant emigration due to wars, sectarian violence, and insecurity, with a large diaspora in Europe. Despite efforts at reconstruction and investment in key sectors like oil and construction, high unemployment and ongoing security issues hinder substantial recovery. Remittances and development aid are vital for Iraq's economy, yet the country remains vulnerable due to its dependence on oil revenue and fluctuating remittance flows. The educational and health systems require significant improvements, and social inequalities persist, particularly affecting minorities, women, and children. Human rights issues, including restrictions on freedom of expression, repression of protests, and the treatment of minority groups, continue to pose significant challenges. The situation for internally displaced persons and those returning from abroad is precarious, with many facing difficulties in reintegration and access to services. Iraq's future stability and development depend on addressing these multifaceted challenges, improving governance, and ensuring security and human rights for all its citizens.

Türkiye

(prepared by Nino Tartarashvili and Can Aygun)

Data on Migration and Returns

Türkiye has a complex history of emigration and immigration. In the early 1960s, large numbers of Turkish workers emigrated to European countries, especially Germany, through labor recruitment agreements. Although initially intended to be temporary, many migrants settled permanently, with over 600,000 Turks moving to Germany by the end of the guestworker program in 1973 (Akgündüz, 1993). Today, over half of the 3.4 million Turkish international migrants in Europe reside in Germany. Political and economic factors, including the Kurdish conflict and military involvement in politics during the 1980s, also influenced Turkish emigration (Kirisçi, 2003).

Türkiye has also become a major destination for immigrants and refugees, particularly from neighboring countries. The Syrian civil war led to a significant influx of Syrian refugees, with Türkiye adopting an open-door policy and granting temporary protection to Syrians since 2011 (Kaya, 2023). By 2014, Türkiye had instituted temporary protection regulations

similar to refugee status in Western countries. However, inconsistencies between regulations and practices have been reported, especially regarding work permits and access to education for Syrian refugees.

In 2016, the EU-Türkiye Statement significantly impacted the return of migrants who were not eligible for asylum in the EU. This agreement aimed to manage the flow of refugees and migrants, with Türkiye agreeing

to accept the return of refugees from Greece in exchange for financial assistance and resettlement of Syrian refugees within the EU. Despite criticism, the agreement remains a key aspect of EU-Türkiye migration policy (Terry, 2021).

Key Drivers of Emigration and Returns (with a focus on country-of-origin characteristics)

Emigration from Türkiye primarily started in the 1960s, driven by the search for employment opportunities in Europe. Political instability and conflicts, particularly the Kurdish conflict, have also driven asylum seekers to Western Europe. Currently, about 3.6 million Turkish nationals live abroad, predominantly in Europe (Kirisci, 2003). Immigration to Türkiye has increased due to its economic potential and its strategic location as a bridge between Europe and Asia.

Türkiye's Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.838 places it in the "very high" category, ranking 48th out of 191 countries. Despite economic growth, Türkiye faces challenges like high inflation and unemployment. The unemployment rate was approximately 10.03% in 2022, and inflation reached 64.77% in December, driven by significant increases in the minimum wage (MacroTrends, 2024; Glinski, 2023).

Diaspora and Development

Türkiye's diaspora, especially in Europe, holds significant financial and political importance. The Turkish government has implemented policies to maintain ties with its diaspora, including dual citizenship, paid military service options in foreign currency, and investment opportunities (Duvar, 2023). Remittances from the diaspora contribute to Türkiye's economy, although they account for a modest percentage of GDP. However, high inflation and currency depreciation enhance the significance of these remittances (Moody's, 2024).

The Turkish diaspora's political influence is notable, with diaspora votes being a critical factor in elections. For example, in the May 2023 elections, President Erdoğan received substantial support from Turkish voters in Germany. The government encourages the diaspora to invest in Türkiye while maintaining their residence abroad (Duvar, 2023).

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programs, coordinated by IOM Türkiye, play a crucial role in managing migration. These programs provide migrants with a secure pathway to return to their home countries and support their reintegration. AVRR efforts in Türkiye involve collaboration with the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) and other relevant entities (Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration, n.d.).

Key Historical Developments Affecting Migration and Returns

Türkiye's migration patterns are influenced by significant historical events. The labor migration to Europe in the 1960s established large Turkish diaspora communities, particularly in Germany. The economic recovery following the 2001 crisis, driven by IMF recommendations and efforts towards EU membership, improved social welfare and stimulated a return trend. However, rising political polarization, authoritarian pressures since 2015, and economic instability have increased emigration motivations (Kirisçi, 2003).

The 2016 coup attempt and subsequent martial law escalated migration motivations and deterred the return of those who had migrated. Historically, Türkiye's role as a migration hub dates back to the Ottoman Empire, influencing today's migration routes. Political and economic crises in neighboring regions continue to drive immigration to Türkiye (Kaya, 2023).

Human Rights Records

Human rights conditions in Türkiye significantly influence migration decisions. Economic and social reforms in the early 2000s, influenced by EU aspirations, improved human rights conditions. The "Solution Process" aimed at addressing Kurdish-Turkish polarization also fostered social harmony. However, the termination of this process in 2015, increased authoritarianism, and the post-2016 coup crackdown on dissidents have worsened human rights conditions, driving emigration (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

Reports of human rights violations, including suppression of opposition, restrictions on freedom of expression, and inadequate protection for minority groups, further impact migration patterns. These conditions deter return migration and influence the decisions of those considering leaving Türkiye (Amnesty International, 2024).

Concluding Remarks

Türkiye's migration patterns are shaped by its historical labor migration to Europe, ongoing conflicts, and economic challenges. The country hosts a significant refugee population, particularly from Syria, and has complex migration agreements with the EU. Economic instability, high inflation, and political polarization drive emigration, while human rights concerns continue to influence migration decisions. The Turkish diaspora plays a crucial

role in the country's economy and politics, with remittances and political support from abroad being significant. Türkiye's future migration dynamics will depend on addressing economic challenges, improving human rights conditions, and managing its strategic role as a bridge between Europe and Asia.

Nigeria

(prepared by Paul O. Adekola, Ph.D)

Data on Migration and Returns

Migration patterns in Nigeria show that the vast majority of inhabitants are Nigerian, with less than 1% being foreigners throughout the study period from 1990 to 2022. As of 2020, about 46% of the 1.3 million international migrants in Nigeria were female, and 30.5% were aged 19 or younger (United Nations, 2021). Most foreigners in Nigeria come from other African countries, primarily as economic migrants or refugees, with the largest groups being from Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Congo DRC, Chad, and Mali (United Nations, 2021).

Emigration from Nigeria is notably high, driven by poverty, insecurity, low wages, and unemployment. The term "japa," meaning to quickly leave the country, reflects this trend. Migration used to be gender-selective, but now both men and women emigrate as opportunities arise. Return rates of Nigerian migrants in Europe are low due to fears of post-return livelihood challenges. Legal migration pathways exist, such as those for education and employment in countries like Canada and the UK, but these opportunities are limited and costly (Adekola et al., 2022).

Key Drivers of Emigration and Returns

Economic factors are the primary drivers of emigration from Nigeria. Many Nigerians seek better job opportunities and higher living standards abroad. Insecurity and lack of respect for human rights also drive people to leave. Relationships with countries like the Netherlands and Switzerland facilitate migration management, with many Nigerians residing in the UK, US, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and France due to historical and economic ties (Koser, 2003).

Diaspora and Development

Remittances to Nigeria have steadily increased from \$10 million in 1990 to \$20.1 billion in 2022, significantly surpassing development aid. The Nigerian diaspora is a valuable asset for

national development, contributing to family support and community development. The Nigerian government recognizes this and has established the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) to engage with its diaspora for national development through trade, investment, entrepreneurship, and job creation (World Bank, 2022).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) collaborates with the Nigerian government and the EU on Assisted Voluntary Return, Readmission, and Reintegration (AVRR) programs for illegal migrants. The European Reintegration and Return Network (ERRIN) partners with local organizations in Nigeria to provide reintegration assistance to returning migrants (IOM Nigeria, n.d.).

Key Historical Developments Affecting Migration and Returns

Historical events significantly impact migration patterns in Nigeria. The Biafra War in the 1970s caused massive internal displacement. The oil boom of the 1970s made Nigeria a destination for West African migrants, but economic downturns led to harsh return policies. The Boko Haram insurgency since 2010 has been a major force behind internal displacement. Urban renewal projects have also contributed to internal displacement (Koser, 2003).

International migration is driven by political persecution and economic factors. Political instability and economic challenges prompt many Nigerians to seek better opportunities abroad (United Nations, 2021).

Human Rights Records

Nigeria's human rights record is poor, with significant issues in corruption, rule of law, and safety. High corruption levels, terrorism, and inadequate protection of human rights deter return migration. The job market is also influenced by nepotism and favoritism, discouraging skilled migrants from returning. Resources for reintegration programs are often insufficient, and relief materials are sometimes hoarded by camp officials, further discouraging return migration (Amnesty International, 2024).

Concluding Remarks

Nigeria's migration management presents challenges but also opportunities for development. Effective collaboration between the Nigerian government and EU partners can enhance return and readmission policies. Managing migration well can be a blessing if both legal and informal frameworks are properly utilized (Adekola et al., 2022).

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