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HUMAN RIGHTS VERSUS MIGRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: During the next decade, migration is likely to be a cutting-edge issue in international relations, economics and social life in many countries. The article describes the correlation between migration and human rights in the Republic of Moldova. Today migration is considered a great and comprehensive problem for Moldova that is caused by poverty, unemployment, low wages and standards of living. These problems force many Moldovans every year to go abroad, to find not only a well-paid job, but also a safe living environment where their essential rights will be respected. Despite the fact, that in the last two years a lot of changes in government system were made Moldova remains not a place where Moldovans prefer to build their future.

Keywords: human rights, migration, the Republic of Moldova, economy, international relations.

JEL Classification: F22, F24, F66.

The migration of the population, as a problem for the world economy, arose simultaneously with the birth of humanity, and the factors that contributed to migration in the past also remain common today, when 358 million people are international migrants, which is about 3% of the world's population, and together they produce more than 9% of world GDP, which is 3 trillion. USD more than if they lived and worked at home [1]. The difference in the level of well-being between states in the context of globalization causes a natural reaction in the form of the movement of people across borders, or in other words, the migration of the population peculiar to each country.

Methods of research

The research methodology is based on a set of economic and statistical methods, as well as political, systemic and comparative methods of knowledge.

The degree of elaboration of the problem

For more than a century, researchers have been studying the issue of population migration. The theoretical basis of the research is the works of Moldovan, Russian and foreign scientists, experts and politicians in the field of migration such as: T. Tabak, N.P. Perchinskaya, V.G. Moshnyaga, K.P. Etsko and G.D. Gorbunova, O.Y. Potemkina, E.G. Ravenstein, O. Panina. These works describe the phenomenon of migration, the migration policy of the Republic of Moldova and the migration policy of the countries to which Moldovan citizens are currently emigrating; they consider normative legal acts, directives and laws regulating migration both in the OECD as a whole and in its individual countries. Moldovan scientists V.Moshnyaga, T.Tabak, K. Etsko, G.Gorbunova, V. Moraru, G. Rusnak and V.Turcan in their works reveal the main directions and volumes of modern international migration of the Moldovan population, pay attention to such effects of labor migration as remittances of migrant workers, material well-being of migrant families, strengthening of the national currency, consolidation the banking system of the country. Also, the authors analyse the impact of labour migration on the labour market, characterize the main approaches to migration regulation, reveal the content and evolution of the main approaches in the field of migration management. Separately, we can single out the works of T. Tabak, who analyses the demographic situation in the Republic of Moldova, describes the main stages of emigration from the country, starting from the post–Soviet period and up to the present day, gives a description of the destination countries of migrants.

Results and discussions

In many cases, migrants have a positive impact on the development of recipient countries, contributing in the formation of skills, strengthening the workforce, investment and cultural diversity. Donor countries are also beneficiaries of migration, as emigrants for them play a decisive role in improving life through the transfer of financial resources and skills, contributing to the achievement of positive development results. Migration also serves as a tool to reduce poverty for migrants and their families. Thanks to the diversified and high incomes that migrants receive abroad, after sending money to their homeland, the financial situation of households also improves. Thus, at the macroeconomic level, in the short term, population migration is a positive process. But do not forget that in the long term, migration is more of a negative factor for both donor and recipient countries. For donor countries, first of all, there is a demographic problem, which entails the leakage of the able-bodied and child-bearing population from the country. For the recipient countries, this is primarily an increase in unemployment among the local population and a decrease in wages for employees in some industries.

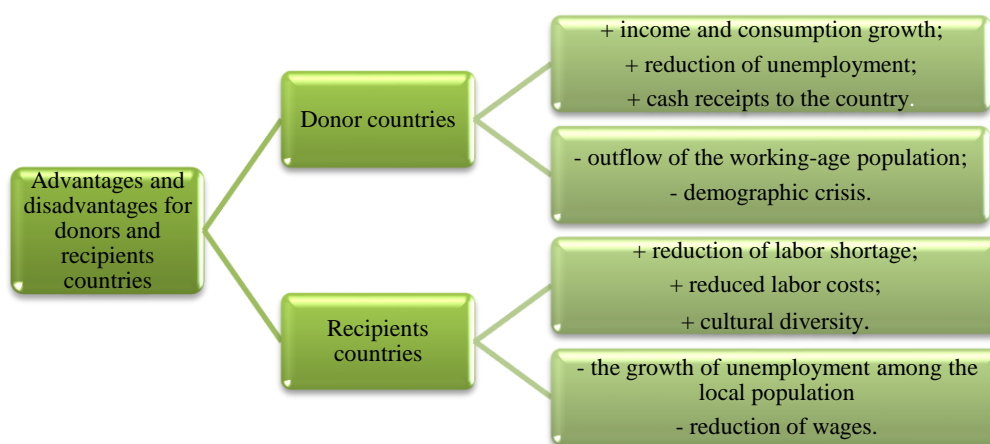


Figure 1. – Advantages and disadvantages of migration for donor and recipient countries
Source: compiled by the author

Problems in Moldova's economy began in the early 90s, after the collapse of the USSR. The poor reorganization of state structures, the loss of many sales markets, the inability to keep up with technological progress, the destruction of the banking sector after the theft of a billion, the distance from Russia and the weak rapprochement with the OECD countries led to problems that Moldova cannot cope with today.

Citizens of the country, faced primarily with unemployment, high levels of poverty and social stratification, therefore decide to go abroad in search of new opportunities. Thus, Moldova becomes one of the main Eastern European countries-donors of labour migration for the OECD countries.

Table 1. Main economic indicators of the Republic of Moldova for 2022

GDP, current US\$ billion	14.5
GDP per capita, current US\$	5,714
Life Expectancy at birth, years	71.4
Employment rate, %	40,5%
Unemployment rate, %	2.28%
Level of poverty, %	31%
Inflation rate, %	30,24%

Source: The National Bureau of statistics [2,3]

The National Bureau of Statistics informs that, according to the results of the research, Labour Force Survey (AFM), in the second quarter of 2023: labour force (active population 15 years and older) constituted 935.1 thousand people, increasing by 3.9% compared to the second quarter of 2022 the employed population of 15 years and over constituted 899.6 thousand people, increasing by 2.4% compared to the second quarter of 2022 the country's unemployment rate was 3.8%, higher than the level of the second quarter of 2022 (2.4%). From the distribution of persons employed by economic activities, 22.2% worked in the agricultural sector⁴ and 77.8% in non-agricultural activities. The share of employed persons in the industry was 15.1%, including in the manufacturing industry 12.9% (SDG indicator 9.2.2), and in construction - 7.4%. 55.3% of all employed persons were employed in the service sector [3].

If we analyse the main economic indicators for Moldova we can confirm that One of the most alarming aspects is the increase in absolute poverty to 31% in 2022. Such a significant increase in absolute poverty marks a step backwards for Moldova in its efforts to combat poverty and improve the standard of living of the population. The data presented in the report of the National Bureau of statistics shows that, despite some temporary improvements, the percentage of the population living on less than \$2.15 per day increased to 1.3% in 2022, and the percentage of the population living on less than \$4.3 per day reached 6.1%. The absolute poverty rate increased from 23% in 2018 to 31.1% in 2022, which was the highest since 2014 [4].

In 2022 the the annual inflation registered a record of 30,24%, that was the biggest one for the last years. It slowed further to 8.63% in September 2023, marking the lowest level in two years, from 9.69% in the previous month. However, the rate remained above the central bank's mid-point target of 5.0%. Prices moderated for all main groups: food (8.18% vs 9.61% in August), non-food products (5% vs 5.49%), and services (14.92% vs 16.31%). On a monthly basis, consumer prices rose by 0.46% in September, after decreasing by 0.08% in August [5].

These indicators show that a big part of Moldovan population lives in relatively bad conditions, that makes them to migrate to another country in order to search a better life for them and their relatives.

After the depreciation of the ruble and the conclusion of a visa-free agreement with the European Union, the number of Moldovan migrants leaving the country for work, study or simply in search of a better life for themselves and their relatives is increasing every year. Migrants mainly choose developed countries such as Italy, France, the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Canada, Israel, Great Britain, Ireland, the USA and Canada. 80% of Moldovan migrants work and live in these countries, as well as a large number of diasporas are concentrated and, importantly, a significant number of money transfers come to Moldova from these countries. In different countries, Moldovan communities are heterogeneous in age, educational and professional qualification structure. At the same time, there is a process of diversification of spheres of activity. This is due to the fact that there are a certain number of people who have been educated in OECD countries and have managed to find a job in accordance with their qualifications. Abroad, Moldovan migrants demonstrate their desire to integrate into the host society, legalize their status, gain additional professional skills, experience and qualifications, thereby striving to become full citizens of their new homeland and do not want to return to Moldova. Visa-free regime with EU countries, the opening of the opportunity to work under an employment contract in Israel and Canada, obtaining a Green Card for the opportunity to leave for the United States, obtaining Romanian citizenship create new opportunities for Moldovan labour migration.

All of the above has contributed to the fact that the Republic of Moldova has demonstrated a high level of population mobility and involvement in labour migration, where almost every second household has one or more family members who have gone abroad. In the future, this number may increase.

Modern Moldova is facing huge problems due to the constantly leaving population. Demographic decline, low birth rate due to the migration of the childbearing population, the decline in the pace of economic development of the country due to the migration of the able-bodied population, the leakage of highly qualified personnel, and with it problems in the education and health sector, the devastation of rural areas has a serious impact on life in the country as a whole. As we see in fig.2 within six years, the population has decreased from 2729,5 million people to 2512,8 million people, which means that 216,7 thousand people have left the country in 6 years [6].

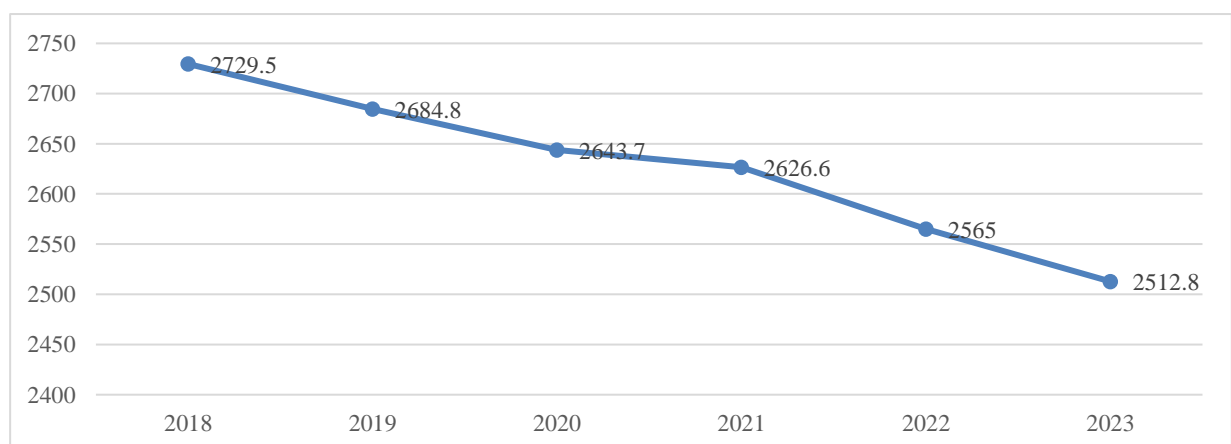


Figure 2. Population with residence in the Republic of Moldova 2018-2023, mill. people
Source: compiled by the author based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics [6]

Another problem is the growing imbalance and the gap between generations, because young people easily adapt to the environment where they grew up and thanks to these opportunities they have higher needs than the older generation. They see the positive aspects of life in another country, they leave for those countries where the standards for life they strive for are much higher than at home. The emigration of young and educated people from the country is a catalyst for the economy and the development of the state, affects economic growth by reducing the number of skilled labour. The migration of a large number of young people entails a significant loss of capital and a demographic crisis for the country for many years to come. The country is saved only by money transfers that migrants send home and thanks to which Moldova has entered the top 20 most dependent countries in the world on money transfers, where 25% of total household income is accounted for by money transfers [7]. The fact that this money did not affect investments in the country is a special feature for Moldova, since the main factor that determined emigration from the country was socio-economic, where the country's citizens, due to poverty, could not cover their needs and expenses from domestic sources, respectively, remittances compensate for this lack of income on at the local level. Once again, it should be emphasized that according to the International Organization for Migration, more than 237,000 Moldovan families receive money from relatives working abroad, and almost half of them are completely dependent on remittances. Currently, about 1 million citizens of the Republic of Moldova are abroad [8].

Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons why Moldovan migrants return to their homeland, including: the retirement age of migrants, loneliness for many years and the desire to return home, the difficulty of integration in the country where they live or work, health problems and the inability to work at the same pace, the desire to reunite with loved ones, the future of children, the expiration of documents in the country of residence or deportation. Moreover, the Moldovan Government is taking measures and attempts, creating various programs for the voluntary return of migrants to their homeland. First of all, these are bilateral agreements and agreements with OECD countries in the field of migration, and secondly, the conclusion of contracts directly with employment agencies and employers, as is the case with Israel. Work is also underway to protect migrants in foreign countries, as evidenced by the "Law on Labour Migration" adopted in 2008 [9].

Conclusion

However, unfortunately, to date, the measures taken by the authorities of the country are not sufficiently noticeable and are not effective in general, since most Moldovan citizens do not see their future at home. That is why, in order to solve migration problems, Moldova needs not only to negotiate with other organizations and states, but also to try to solve economic, political and employment problems within the country, and not wait for the majority of the able-bodied population to leave Moldova. In this regard, the author proposes measures and recommendations to reduce the number of migration flows from the Republic of Moldova to the OECD countries, including: increasing the growth of gross output per person; attracting investment to the country (not only foreign investment, but also the development of the investment climate in the country and creating conditions for those migrants who are abroad abroad, they want to invest in the country, open a business and return to their homeland); resumption of construction of industrial facilities; the introduction of new technologies, including the development of the most progressive sector of the economy – the IT sector; the creation of a department in the government whose work will focus on the development of labour market infrastructure, mainly on the basis of public-private partnership; strengthening the principles of social justice and reducing the sharp social stratification in society.

Also, it should be noticed that today problems in different sectors of the Moldovan economy still continue to dominate, besides, the problem of energy resources, the special military operation in Ukraine, which aggravated the economic situation of an independent country, stagflation, have also been added to it, and it seems that if the authorities do not take measures to solve these problems, Moldovan citizens will continue to leave their homeland in the hope of finding a better place for life and work for them and their families.

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