

9 || DIASPORA POLITICS IN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES: WHAT IS ON THE AGENDA?

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of migration politics and respective research branches, the focus usually lies within immigration rather than emigration policies such as, for example, diaspora policies. This is understandable since countries are usually concerned about coordinating immigration within their borders. However, in recent years, more and more countries realize the necessity of adopting consistent emigration strategies such as diaspora policies.

This trend is driven by the understanding that nationals abroad can be actively involved in the promotion of their countries as well as bringing new investments/donations to the country of origin. In order to facilitate relations with the diaspora, several countries have created specialized diaspora institutions, responsible for establishing and maintaining affairs with their emigrants. In a way, such institutions try to execute their authorities in order to strengthen the sense of belonging of emigrants and help them create political, economic and cultural ties with their state of origin.

The diaspora, however, is a challenging concept to define. It is hard to agree on one definition of a diaspora since any transnational group that possesses a sense of national/ethnic identity and maintains ties with each other as well as with their

homeland can belong to a diaspora (Adamson 2016). By engaging with a diaspora, states may also try to establish closer relations with other countries. In a globalized world, the diaspora gives states an additional source of outreach that extends beyond the physical borders of the nation. Depending on the scope, nature and country of residence, the diaspora can be considered by governments as potential sources of revenue and investment as well as a lobby group. However, in some countries, the success of state efforts to establish ties with their diaspora may depend on how loyal certain diaspora representatives are to the current government (Adamson 2016). Accordingly, governments can build ties with their nationals through special electoral rules, laws on repatriation, citizenship laws, provide investment opportunities and organize cultural events in order to promote the participation of co-ethnic population in the affairs of the state (King & Melvin 1999).

The level and direction of state efforts to promote these type of relations vary significantly across Eastern Partnership countries (EP). This is because state efforts depart from a specific definition of the concept of a “diaspora” (King & Melvin 1999) to a large extent and the role of states in defining a particular group as a diaspora is crucial. What is understood by the diaspora in EP countries, however, varies across these countries and will be discussed later in this paper.

In this paper, I would like to examine the existing diaspora policies of Eastern Partnership (EP) countries and try to identify the challenges and the good practices of working with the diaspora. I will do so by mapping the existing strategies and particularly focus on the actors involved. All Eastern Partnership countries have experienced the same major political disturbance at the beginning of the 1990s – the breakdown of the Soviet Union and newly gained independence. One of the many resulting changes was an increased mobility of people who could move much easier to a new country seeking employment, pursuing studies, working toward family reunification, etc. Consequently, all Eastern Partnership countries have experienced an upsurge of emigration. This trend has made these countries place the issue of emigration high on the policy agenda.

After the breakdown of the USSR, the emigration policies of these post-Soviet states were mainly focused on the prevention of labour emigration. However, later

in the 1990s, post-Soviet states realized the economic opportunities and cultural potential in migrants living abroad and gradually issues related to cooperation with the diaspora became part of new migration policies (Makaryan 2013). Therefore, the relevance of investigating good practices is motivated by the gradual turn from the policies of trying to halt emigration in the 1990s to policies based on the realisation of the benefits of establishing networks with permanent emigrants.

Based on the conducted analysis, I will try to propose my own policy recommendations which could facilitate diaspora cooperation.

POLICY FRAMEWORK AND CHALLENGES

Belarus

After becoming independent, Belarus adopted several laws and programmes in the field of emigration. For instance, the State Migration Programme 1998-2000 focused on reducing the emigration of researchers, engineers and other highly-qualified specialists as well as young professionals and at the same time on facilitating temporary labour emigration to developed countries which was done with the aim to improve the qualifications of potential returnees and increase investments into the economy (Bobrova 2013). The aim to reduce the emigration of highly-qualified professionals and young people was re-established in the State Migration Programme 2006-2010 (“State Migration Programme 2006-2010,” 2016).

The responsibilities of diaspora policies are shared between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and the Office of the Commissioner for Religions and Nationalities. In 2010, the Consultative Council on Belarusians abroad was established within the Ministry of Culture. It consists of representatives of state organisations and is in charge of the coordination of cooperation with the diaspora (Yeliseyev 2014).

Already in 1993, the government tried to establish ties with its nationals abroad through adopting the ‘Belarusians in the World’ programme. There are also non-governmental efforts to support the Belarusian cultural identity abroad. The main non-state organisation which deals with diaspora matters is the World Association of Belarusians “Bačkauščyna” (‘Fatherland’) which also connects various smaller diaspora organisations (Yelisyeu 2014). Under its auspices and with the coordination of the government, seven World Congresses of Belarusians have taken place.

One of the efforts to boost diaspora cooperation was the Law on Belarusians Living Abroad which was adopted in 2014. According to the law, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became the main coordinator of developing relations with the Belarusian diaspora. Belarusians abroad are defined as people permanently residing outside the Republic of Belarus and identifying themselves as Belarusians or are descendants from the territory of the modern Republic of Belarus (Law on Belarusians Living Abroad 2014, 2014). The law, which was expected to introduce some benefits to Belarusians residing abroad, nonetheless had a rather declarative nature focusing mostly on the necessity to promote national identity and language, ensure intercultural exchange with diaspora organisations, holding events, etc. The law was centred around the cultural dimension of cooperation and did not produce any concrete strategy to facilitate developing links with the diaspora.

In 2016, the government also adopted the State Programme ‘Belarusians in the World 2016-2020.’ One of the subsections specifically set targets for monitoring diaspora relations. For instance, there should be at least 17 cultural events and one business forum per year with the participation of Belarusians abroad (“State programme ‘Culture of Belarus’ for 2016–2020,” 2016). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and the Office of the Commissioner for Religions and Nationalities were assigned to be responsible for the implementation of the programme.

Another dimension of cooperation is economic. One of the organisations involved in promoting relations with co-nationals abroad, ‘Radzima,’ suggested to hold a business forum targeting specifically Belarusians living abroad (“Business Forum of Belarusians Living Abroad,” 2015). This idea was re-stated in 2015 at the first

meeting of the Consultative Council on Belarusians abroad (Gubarevich 2016) and became a part of the State Programme ‘Belarusians in the World 2016-2020.’ The first forum (round-table meeting) took place in 2018 and gathered only 17 representatives of the diaspora (“Round-table with the Participation of Members of the Advisory Council,” 2018).

One problem of diaspora cooperation in the Belarusian context is the fact that it mainly exists on paper rather than in practice. Another challenge is preserving the cultural and his-torical roots of Belarusians abroad. This was also highlighted as a problem at the 2016 round-table dedicated to the discussion of the experience of the diaspora with representatives of local CSOs, businesses and educational and international organisations. The barriers for preserving cultural links include the weakness of cultural and language identities in Belarus itself and the lack of coordinated efforts to strengthen them (“What Contribution Can the Belarusian Diaspora Make to the Development of the Country?” 2016). One more possible area for the development of relations with the diaspora is visa-free travel. It could also be done through the introduction of a so-called ‘Compatriot Certificate’ for Belarusians living abroad and their children (much like the ‘Pole Card’) which would allow visa-free entry to Belarus (“What Contribution Can the Belarusian Diaspora Make to the Development of the Country?” 2016).

Ukraine

In Ukraine, it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine that is the principal coordinator of cooperation with Ukrainians abroad. Several committees of the Parliament of Ukraine, the National Commission on matters related to Ukrainian foreigners, the Ministry of Education and other institutions are engaged in diaspora cooperation (“Ukrainians Worldwide”). The Ukrainian government also created 30 councils of associations of Ukrainians abroad within its foreign diplomatic missions (Jaroszewicz & Kazmierkiewicz 2014). Additionally, there are several non-governmental organisations involved in diaspora matters. For instance, the Ukrainian World Congress is an international association which brings together around 300 non-governmental organisations of Ukrainians living abroad from

more than 30 countries (“Ukrainians Worldwide”). The Ukrainian World Congress was recognized by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organisation with a special consultative status and in 2018 received a participatory status as an international non-governmental organisation in the Council of Europe (“Information on the UWC”). Besides the Ukrainian World Congress, there are other diaspora organisations such as the European Congress of Ukraine which represents Ukrainian communities in 23 countries, the World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organisations, the Ukrainian American Coordinating Council and others (“Ukrainians Worldwide”).

After the adoption of the Law on Ukrainian Foreigners in 2004, the National Commission on matters related to Ukrainian foreigners was established. One of its responsibilities included making decisions on the granting, refusal or termination of the status of a ‘Ukrainian Foreigner’ (“Receiving the status of a Ukrainian Foreigner”). The Law on Ukrainian Foreigners defines a Ukrainian foreigner as a person who is a citizen of another state or a stateless person but has a Ukrainian ethnic origin or originates from Ukraine. The status of ‘Ukrainian Foreigner’ has several benefits. A person who acquires it has the right to apply free-of-charge for a multiple-entry visa for visiting Ukraine as well as the right to a permanent residence in Ukraine. These benefits also apply to members of her/his family in the event of their joint entry into the territory of Ukraine. Additionally, ‘Ukrainian Foreigners’ have the right to work in the country on the same grounds as the citizens of Ukraine. Moreover, they are assigned annual admission quotas to higher educational institutions where they are exempt from paying tuition fees (Law on Ukrainian Foreigners, 2004). This status, however, is not equal to citizenship since it does not provide its holders with political rights in Ukraine.

It is important to mention that a person applying for this status cannot have Ukrainian citizenship. Applications for obtaining the status of ‘Ukrainians Foreigner’ are submitted to the diplomatic consulate/embassy of Ukraine abroad or to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. In the case of a positive decision, a person is granted a special certificate confirming the status of ‘Ukrainian Foreigner’ (Law on Ukrainian Foreigners, 2004). The introduction of the status of a ‘Ukrainian Foreigner’ was a major step for encouraging the return of ethnic Ukrainians. It can

be considered as a positive step aimed at attracting diaspora representatives to visit, study or work in Ukraine. According to the statistics, as of 2018, 10,000 people have received the status of ‘Ukrainian Foreigner’ (“Over 10 Thousand People,” 2019).

The desire to increase the flow of returning nationals was reconfirmed in 2017 when the government adopted a new strategy for the state migration policy of Ukraine in effect until 2025. Among the priorities in relation to emigration and diaspora issues, this strategy pointed out the necessity for creating the conditions for the return and reintegration of Ukrainian migrants into Ukrainian society such as the possibility of introducing a state system of providing loans to returnees who wish to open their own business or tax benefits for those who wish to invest money earned abroad in starting a new business (“Strategy of the State Migration Policy of Ukraine to 2025,” 2017).

Other initiatives aimed at strengthening relations with Ukrainian emigrants include the National Programme for the Ukrainian Diaspora (1996). Additionally, in 2004, the government adopted the Programme Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of Citizens Leaving for Employment Abroad (Makaryan 2013). These programmes were aimed at supporting the development of relations with the diaspora and facilitating the preservation of national identity and cultural heritage (Tolstokorova 2012).

One of the issues raised by diaspora organisations is the necessity to introduce dual citizenship. It would allow diaspora representatives to influence the situation in Ukraine since they would have political rights (“Dual Citizenship in Ukraine: Necessity, Risks and Advantages, 2019”). While Ukraine has not yet developed an extensive policy towards diaspora communities, the government managed to introduce and successfully implement some instruments (e.g., the status of a ‘Ukrainian Foreigner’) aimed at the promotion of the integration of Ukrainians abroad into Ukrainian society. Furthermore, the active engagement of non-governmental diaspora organisations into bringing together Ukrainian communities abroad partially fills the gap in the state policy.

Moldova

In Moldova, according to the government's Decree 1322 (2000) on measures for providing assistance to people from the Republic of Moldova living abroad, the government considers the diaspora as people originating from Moldova and residing abroad who are united by their ethnicity, roots and common ancestors from the Republic of Moldova and who understand their origin but because of different circumstances happen to be residing outside of their historical homeland (Decree 1322, 2000). Moldova allows dual citizenship which means that Moldovan citizens who live abroad enjoy the same voting rights as people residing in the Republic of Moldova. The exception is local elections when only citizens residing in the Republic of Moldova can vote (Mosneaga 2014).

According to the Decree, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration together with the Ministry of Commerce and Economy and the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Services were made responsible for establishing contacts with Moldovans residing abroad (Decree 1322, 2000). The government of Moldova also established a special Coordination Council which is in charge of monitoring the work of government agencies in the field of promoting diaspora relations, organizing events with Moldovans abroad and suggesting new legislative documents and strategies aimed at supporting the diaspora (Decree 1322, 2000). Since 2011, its members include not only government officers but also representatives of the Moldovan diaspora. Another agency involved in diaspora relations is the National Bureau of Interethnic Relations which promotes cultural cooperation with the Moldovan diaspora communities abroad (Mosneaga 2014).

The basic principles of migration policy, in general, and diaspora policies, in particular, were stated in the National Strategy on Migration and Asylum (2011-2020). It gave more power to the diplomatic representations of Moldova abroad in maintaining relations with the Moldovan diaspora; for example, in supporting the return of labour migrants to the country, the coordination of relations with the diaspora, etc. In order to facilitate return, the government undertakes efforts for recognizing the skills and qualifications in Moldova as well as providing training skills and financial assistance for start-up companies (Mosneaga 2014).

The government also adopted several specialized programmes specifically targeting the diaspora such as the Programme for Diaspora Support (2006) and the Action Plan for Diaspora Support (2008) as well as the Action Plan to promote the Return of Moldovan Labour Migrants (2008) (Mosneaga 2014). The last one included creating a website about jobs and employment options in the country, carrying out advocacy campaigns among Moldovan migrants abroad about the development of small and medium companies, providing information on opening businesses in Moldova after return and also about investment opportunities in Moldova. The government also launched a project, entitled PARE 1+1, for matching investments from remittances made for business development (Makaryan 2013). During 2010-2016, the project has managed to support the return of 785 migrants to Moldova who have become business owners (“Moldova: PARE 1+1 – Encouraging Migrants to Return Home,” 2016).

In 2011, the government called for the creation of an agency for diaspora affairs and in 2012, the Bureau for Diaspora Relations was launched. It deals with coordinating public policies in order to ensure sufficient diaspora engagement. Essentially, the Bureau provides the coordination of diaspora policies between the government and diaspora organisations to make sure that those policies meet the interests of the Moldovan diaspora (“Diaspora Relations Bureau”). With the vision to ensure the continuous and sustainable development of diaspora cooperation, the Moldovan government has been conducting congresses of the Moldovan Diaspora since 2004. They are used as a platform to establish contacts between Moldova and diaspora representatives as well as between Moldovans residing abroad (Makaryan 2013).

An interesting feature of the diaspora policies in Moldova is the engagement of international organisations into facilitating progress. Government agencies actively use financial and advisory assistance from international organisations for developing and implementing Moldova’s migration policy. For instance, there is the Diaspora Small Grants Mechanism competition implemented by the IOM Mission to Moldova as part of the project entitled supporting the Implementation of the Migration and Development Component of the EU-Moldova Mobility Partnership (Porcescu 2013).

In general, Moldova's policies on diaspora can be considered quite successful. The government adopted several cooperation programmes and worked closely with international instruments as well as with its diaspora representatives in order to enhance cooperation. The policies towards the diaspora are focused mainly on engaging the diaspora in the economic development of the country and promoting the return of Moldovan emigrants.

Armenia

In Armenia, the government defines the Armenian diaspora as the Armenian communities outside the borders of the Republic of Armenia and the Nagorno Karabakh Republic (Concept of Armenia-Diaspora Development Partnership, 2009). Armenia's diaspora policy presents itself a special case of diaspora politics since it is historically one of the world's classic diasporas. Armenian communities are spread around the world as a result of several migration waves over the centuries and the diaspora numbers exceed country's population (Gevorkyan 2016). Further, I will look at diaspora relations starting only from 1990s onwards in order to trace the most recent trends as well as to see the government's policies in the independence period.

A distinguishing feature of the Armenian diaspora is the fact that, because of the long history of migration waves, Armenian communities abroad are already quite well organized even without the support of the government. For instance, the Armenian Assembly of America and the Armenian National Committee of America are among the most influential diaspora organisations were both founded in the middle of the 20th century (Gevorkyan 2016).

Therefore, understanding the potential of diaspora contributions to the country's economy already in 1992, the Hayastan All-Armenia Fund was started in order to "match up" diaspora financial contributions with development projects in Armenia. This helped to engage Armenians abroad in investing in the country's business projects. In the 1990s, the government started a privatisation process of state-owned enterprises. By 1999, privatisation comprised of more than half of foreign direct investments and a big part of this belonged to the diaspora. As mentioned

above, the government of Armenia has tried to embrace the opportunities provided by its active diaspora participation since the country's independence. In 1998, the Armenian Development Agency was launched to promote foreign investments. To encourage diaspora engagement, the Ministry of Economy launched an "Open Doors" investment policy, one aspect of which has been linked to creating free economic zones offering tax relief for companies operating within (Development through Diversity) the country. The government also started to incorporate the diaspora through the creation of All-Armenian Bank (which was later transformed into an investment fund) in order to use investments coming from the diaspora for Armenia's economic development (Makaryan 2013).

One more major step was the adoption of dual citizenship in 2007. This made it possible for people of Armenian ethnic descent as well as long-term migrants who live in other countries to obtain Armenian citizenship. However, one significant requirement of citizenship concerns military service. Dual citizens who are under 28 years old and have not undertaken military service in their native countries for at least 12 months must complete a two-year service in Armenia (Danielyan 2007). This requirement may potentially hamper the willingness of the diaspora to seek dual citizenship.

In 2008, the government also established the Ministry of the Diaspora and adopted an official legislative framework on the Armenia-Diaspora Collaboration Development. It was aimed at protecting the language, culture and religion of Armenians residing both in Armenia and abroad as well as at developing economic relations (Makaryan 2013, "About Us").

Another promising area of cooperation with the diaspora is youth volunteering. There are several organisations (the Armenian Assembly of America and Birthright Armenia) that provide a volunteering opportunity for young Armenians living abroad ("Internship in Armenia"). This way they can visit the country and make a meaningful contribution.

Recently, the Syrian conflict has somewhat affected the Armenian diaspora politics. Armenia accepted 22,000 refugees, most of them of Armenian origin (Lieberman 2017). The government offered these refugees a fast track to

citizenship and healthcare services (Teicher 2017). The Syrian Armenian Relief Fund was established to provide financial assistance to Syrian Armenians refugees. Donations were mostly obtained through the Armenian community in the United States as well as the churches, political parties and charity organisations which operate in the region (“About SARF”).

In sum, Armenia’s cooperation with its diaspora is quite comprehensive as it involves different economic, cultural and political spheres. However, despite the efforts undertaken by the government, there have been several disagreements over the future of diaspora cooperation. It is motivated by the common perception of the diaspora that while the Armenian government maintained a welcoming policy in relation to diaspora economic contributions, it was sceptical of the diaspora’s engagement in internal domestic affairs. Essentially, over the years there has been the divide between a post-Soviet government and a more Western-oriented liberal diaspora (Giragosian 2017). It remains to be seen how the situation might change following the April democratic revolution in 2018 which resulted in the removal of the old ruling party and its leader from power (Demytrie 2018).

Georgia

The Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues which was established in 2008 is one of the key government institutions involved in the maintenance and development of cultural, economic and political ties with Georgians abroad. It was also responsible for the development of strategies on diaspora relations as well as for the implementation. This institution coordinated the collection and analysis of information on Georgians abroad as well as on the activities of Georgian diaspora organisations. The Diaspora Office was meant to support these bodies in organising cultural and business events as well as in establishing contacts among diaspora representatives. Being the main coordinator of diaspora cooperation. It collaborated with the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Ministry of Education and Science and Georgian diplomatic missions abroad (Georgian Diaspora and Migrant Communities in Germany, Greece and Turkey, 2014). In 2016, the Diaspora Office was merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

One of the major steps on the way to ensure efficient coordination of government efforts was the adoption of the Law of Georgia on Compatriots and Diaspora Organisations Residing Abroad in 2011. The Law introduced a status of a ‘compatriot residing abroad’ who is a citizen of Georgia and has been living in another country for a long time or a citizen of another country but is of Georgian origin or/and whose native language belongs to the Georgian-Caucasian language group. Accordingly, the diaspora is understood as a community of compatriots living abroad (Law of Georgia on Compatriots, 2011).

Similarly to the Law on Foreign Ukrainians, the law in Georgia introduces a procedure of granting the status of a ‘compatriot residing abroad.’ The Georgian origin of a prospective applicant to receive the status of a compatriot residing abroad must be verified by an appropriate decision issued by the relevant state authority (Law of Georgia on Compatriots, 2011). The law, however, does not specify which agency will be responsible for issuing a certificate of a compatriot residing abroad. It just says that a suitable commission made up of qualified experts needs to be established at a relevant state authority in order to examine the application. A person residing abroad can submit an application either to a Georgian diplomatic office or to a consulate abroad. Close relatives of the applicant for the status of ‘compatriot residing abroad’ will also be entitled to obtain the same status (Law of Georgia on Compatriots, 2011).

The status of ‘compatriot residing abroad’ gives special benefits such as entering Georgia without a visa and staying within Georgia for a maximum 30-day time period, reduced fees when making an application for Georgian nationality and studying in the programmes of secondary and higher education in Georgia free of charge (Law of Georgia on Compatriots, 2011). Such benefits can be seen as an effort to encourage more Georgians to visit or study in the country. Unlike Ukraine, Georgian law does not allow holders of the compatriot certificate to work on the same terms (without special permission) as Georgian citizens. Despite that, it can still be considered as a positive step towards attracting the diaspora to the home country.

Dual citizenship was introduced in 2018. Essentially, it will be possible to retain Georgian citizenship (along with a foreign one) if a person receives permission from Georgian authorities before receiving citizenship in another country. Those

Georgian citizens who lost their Georgian citizenship as a result of accepting foreign citizenship in the past can appeal to the Ministry of Justice to restore their Georgian citizenship (Georgia Approves Dual Citizenship, 2018).

Promoting cooperation with the Georgian diaspora abroad has become one of the major goals stated in the Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia (2009-2012), official documents on migration and the “EU Partnership for Mobility” (Chelidze 2012). The “EU Partnership for Mobility” aims to support programmes attracting investments from the diaspora, including remittances, and to collaborate in the field of double taxation while also engaging the diaspora in return policy formulation (“Joint Declaration,” 2009).

Besides public authorities, the international community is also involved in diaspora matters in Georgia. For example, the European Union’s project – Enhancing the Role of Georgian Migrants at Home which is led by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the Danish Refugee Council with the collaboration of Georgian state institutions, focuses on contributing to the strengthening of interactions among Georgians residing abroad and the government of Georgia through collecting up-to-date data on the diaspora (Chelidze, 2012).

In general, the Georgian government tries to encourage the diaspora to make a contribution to the country’s development by introducing the status of a “compatriot residing abroad” and dual citizenship and developing programmes to direct investments and remittances.

Azerbaijan

In Azerbaijan, the Law of Azerbaijan on State Policy related to Azerbaijanis Residing Abroad (2002) defines Azerbaijanis residing abroad as citizens of Azerbaijan, their children, former citizens of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, their children and former citizens of Azerbaijan and their children. The law also defines Azerbaijanis residing abroad as those who consider themselves Azerbaijani from an ethnic, language, cultural and historical point of view (Law of Azerbaijan on State Policy related to Azerbaijanis Residing Abroad, 2002).

The same law also highlights the importance of maintaining relations with the diaspora by stating that policies related to Azerbaijanis living abroad are an integral part of the domestic and foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Moreover, Azerbaijanis living abroad who are citizens of another state or who do not have any citizenship, while being on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, can enjoy all rights as citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan (“On State Policy,” 2003). It is, however, not clear which rights (political, economic, etc.) are meant specifically and how exactly Azerbaijanis living abroad will exercise them, given the fact that the law does not say anything about granting a special status (like in the case of Ukraine and Georgia) to Azerbaijanis living abroad.

The law also lists the general aims of diaspora cooperation. It says that state agencies will encourage cooperation between commercial enterprises operating in Azerbaijan and companies of Azerbaijanis living abroad, promote the creation of joint ventures and create favourable conditions for investments by Azerbaijanis living abroad and ensure cultural exchange and promote the use of the native language and the dissemination of the national culture (“On State Policy,” 2003).

The government established the Congress of World Azeris whose first meeting took place in 2001. The Congress gathers together all Azerbaijani associations from abroad (Makaryan 2013). The Congress of World Azerbaijanis meets every five years. In 2008, the State Committee for Diaspora Affairs was created. The Committee is a principal body in charge of the implementation of state policies related to Azerbaijanis residing abroad as well as the coordination of the work of state agencies and non-governmental organisations (“Regulation on the State Committee on Affairs with Diaspora”, 2009).

A distinctive feature of Azerbaijan-diaspora relations is the “political” function of the diaspora, meaning that the government sees its compatriots as an important element of foreign policy and as a lobby in the Western and post-Soviet space, especially when it comes to the position on the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh region (Rumyantsev, 2017). That means that the government only supports representatives of the diaspora who are loyal to the government. One more point of criticism from Azeri diaspora researchers is the fact that the government tries

to increase the amount of organisations dealing with diaspora issues and show it as an indicator of successful development (Rumyansev 2010). Another issue is the desired monopoly of the government on diaspora relations. It tries to control the activities of the diaspora, creating a sort of hierarchical structure abroad (Riaux, 2013).

REMARKS

After examining the cases of all six countries, it is possible to conclude that these countries mostly focus on the economic dimension of diaspora cooperation and structure their policies accordingly. For instance, almost all of the countries have adopted some kind of policy mechanisms which are aimed at helping diaspora representatives to invest in the economies of their home countries. Another advancement is the introduction of a special status for diaspora with respective benefits (visa-free travel, free education, ability to work without a special permit). Some countries went even further and allowed dual citizenship, thus, granting political rights to members of the diaspora. Several governments have also turned to international organisations for technical and financial assistance.

In order to achieve successful diaspora relations, the mapping also demonstrates some gaps and issues that need to be addressed by policymakers. Firstly, the lack of information can be a serious hindrance to effective communication with the diaspora. For instance, not all of the countries have proper websites about the opportunities available for the diaspora. Thus, even though a country may have mechanisms to allow the diaspora to contribute to the economy, people abroad might not have a possibility to access this information. Secondly, some countries seem to somehow neglect the cultural dimension of relations, focusing mostly on economic benefits that they can obtain from co-ethnics while it is cultural ties that help to maintain the sense of belonging of the diaspora. Thirdly, most countries do not set specific targets in their programmes which makes it difficult to track the implementation of such programmes.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the previous discussion on different policy measures and arising challenges, I will try to propose my recommendations addressing current diaspora policy issues in the countries of the Eastern Partnership. However, the following recommendations can be generalized to other countries seeking to work actively with their diasporas.

1. Granting special status to diaspora members. One of the strongest incentives to reintegrate into the life of the country of origin is the granting of a special status to the diaspora community by the government.

- Visa facilitation. Such an initiative may allow the former nationals residing abroad to visit the country without a visa and stay in the country for a longer time period.
- Dual/multiple citizenship. Introducing dual/multiple citizenship can also be a strong facilitating factor for the diaspora for building closer ties with their homeland.
- Providing special economic opportunities. States should provide study and work opportunities to their diaspora equal with the citizens of the country. Economic opportunities can extend to making an easier process in setting up companies, opening special bank accounts without paying additional fees as a foreigner, the introduction of tax exemptions on investments; e.g., on imported materials and equipment (Agunias & Newland 2012) establishing special remittances schemes, etc.

2. Strengthening cultural identity and national language. Most countries that have more active diaspora communities are generally diasporas that manage to preserve the cultural ties and the language of their country of origin. Moreover, as noticed, these are usually countries that have stronger cultural and educational policies inside the country. Therefore, it is essential to ensure proper cultural and language education both at the domestic level and in the countries

of residence of the diaspora. An emphasis should be put on qualitative rather than quantitative indicators. For instance, most EP countries have continuously provided educational materials to their diplomatic missions abroad. While necessary, this should be complemented with promoting the active participation of the representatives of the diaspora (e.g., conducting intercultural exchange between countries, introducing volunteer programmes for youth, etc.).

- 3. Better government coordination.** One feature of most governmental policies in the EP region is the overlapping of the responsibilities of several agencies. Two governmental offices can be responsible for the same field of cooperation with the diaspora. This creates unnecessary ‘red tape’ which leads to the ineffective share of duties and resources. This practice should be eliminated either by either introducing one agency responsible for diaspora cooperation or by making sure that legislative acts and action plans do not include too many responsible authorities.
- 4. Guaranteeing access to information about diaspora policies.** One of the major barriers for diaspora engagement is the lack of public information about the possible ways to participate in the home country’s life. It is especially important when it concerns business opportunities. A good example of this is the website of the Ministry of Diaspora of Armenia which provides extensive information about different spheres of engagement.
- 5. Engaging in dissemination and outreach.** In line with the previous recommendation, it is crucial to promote diaspora activities through mass media as well as social networks. It allows for more visibility and, thus, better public outreach. It can be done both through the public pages of diplomatic missions abroad and/or creating a special public page for diaspora activities.
- 6. Establishing partnerships.** As seen in the example of Georgia and Armenia, it is important to engage non-governmental partners in coordinating and assisting the diaspora. Such partnerships may include providing volunteering opportunities in the country of origin, doing research on diaspora cooperation, organizing cultural events, etc. It is important not to neglect the potential of associations of nationals abroad as they can often provide a better insight into the needs of the diaspora. International organisations can also be a source of assistance in developing projects.

- 7. Maintaining an active dialogue with the diaspora.** The first step towards engaging with the diaspora is to collect information about its size, composition and location in the country of residence. Embassies and consular offices can play an important role in gathering information about diaspora characteristics and interests. One of the challenges of collaboration with the diaspora is the lack of input from the diaspora itself. Most government agencies and action plans are somehow unilateral and fail to incorporate the insights of representatives of diaspora organisations into their framework, often due to the post-Soviet legacy of hierarchical government structures and their traditional division of responsibilities.
- 8. Building trust.** Successful partnerships between states and their diasporas is more likely to last if they are based on good communication and trust. Diasporas may feel that governments in their countries of origin view them only as a means of income. This perception may discourage them from further cooperation. Thus, building trustworthy relationships is an essential component of a diaspora collaboration strategy. Governments can promote such relationships through visa facilitation/dual citizenship, providing funds for diaspora projects, ensuring the transparency of the diaspora's investment flows and arranging cultural events. Making sure that the input from the diaspora about their interests and needs is taken into account in the country of origin is also an integral element of building trust.
- 9. Monitoring progress.** Governments should monitor the implementation of regulations and action plans put in place. This helps to avoid ineffective strategies and allows for short-term and long-term planning of activities.

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