



# Evaluation Summaries

## Towards Sustainable Partnerships for the Effective Governance of Labour Migration in the Russian Federation, the Caucasus and Central Asia

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** Russian Federation, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan

**Final Evaluation:** Nov 2009

**Mode of Evaluation:** *Independent*

**Technical Area:** *Labour Migration*

**Evaluation Management:** *ILO-Moscow*

**Evaluation Team:** Anna Lucia COLLEO

**Project End:** March 2010

**Project Code:** RER/06/03/EEC

**Donor:** *European Union*, \$ 2,522,833

**Keywords:** Labour Migration

### Background & Context

#### Project Background

Between the end of 2006 and March 2010, the project *Towards Sustainable Partnerships for the Effective Governance of Labour Migration in the Russian Federation, the Caucasus and Central Asia*, co-financed by the European Union and coordinated by the Moscow Sub-regional Office of the ILO, has brought together five countries of the former Soviet Union (the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia) to support their individual and cooperative efforts to address labour migration issues more effectively.

The region is an area of intensive labour migration: existing economic and growth disparities represent a strong encouragement to the mobility of the workforce across the region, and this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. Organised labour migration is however a relatively new policy area for governments and social stakeholders. In fact, due to its historical legacies, the region had a

background of managing the movement of workers as a regional issue, within a common framework. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, regional agreements were no longer operational, and this affected as well the management of cross-border labour movements.

The project has implemented an inter-related programme, whose objectives were tailored on the individual, and yet to some extent common, needs of the beneficiary countries: in the Russian Federation, the project has focused on developing practical methods for assessing and forecasting labour market requirements, and a system of earned regularization and introduce sound regularization policies and procedures; in Kazakhstan, it has worked on decent work and the protection of migrant workers' rights; in Kyrgyzstan, it was centred on the qualification of human resources and on the recognition of certifications. In Armenia and Tajikistan, the project aimed to develop instruments to enhance the positive impact embedded in migration.

Activities that were put in place can be grouped as *policy-oriented research*, to develop the countries' knowledge base on labour market dynamics and migration issues; *policy dialogue*, through workshops, seminars and conferences, conceived as participatory initiatives to make existing expertise available, identify policy and knowledge gaps to fill, and eventually develop a national and regional process of dialogue; *capacity building* efforts, tailored on the specific needs of involved administrations and social stakeholders.

Direct beneficiaries are the European Commission's Directorate General EuropeAid, responsible for the AENEAS Programme, which co-financed this project; the International Labour Organisation; the

ILO country teams that coordinated the project at the national level; the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), as the only ILO formal partner in this project; ILO tripartite constituents in the beneficiary countries.

The evaluation is based on the review of relevant project documents, i.e. the project application form, the progress reports, mission reports and meetings' minutes, outputs and different materials including policy documents developed as a result of project interventions. Moreover, the evaluation has drawn its findings on the outcomes of direct individual and group interviews that the evaluator carried out between October 28 and November 7 with national stakeholders: government officials, representatives from national and regional trade unions, employers' associations, NGOs, individual researchers, migrant workers, UN agencies.

## Main Findings & Conclusions

The project has effectively encouraged and supported the insurgence of locally owned processes of dialogue and cooperation within and between countries in the region. It has established structures for multi-stakeholder and multi-sector policy initiative in the field of labour migration, involving a wide range of government structures and non-governmental actors, at the local, national, and regional level, including trade unions and employer associations.

More in details, the project's concept entailed that key national stakeholders were brought together in Country Project Advisory Groups (CAGs), thus structuring national consultative processes. An initial gathering of information on specific migration and labour market issues allowed for the identification of gaps in knowledge and policy that needed be filled. In depth research was carried out in the specific areas identified for each country. National conferences disseminated study results among national stakeholders, at the presence of representatives from the other project countries. The recommendations made in the studies and in regional consultations were revised, discussed and refined until they were agreed upon by relevant stakeholders. They therefore offered a solid framework for transnational agreements and partnerships, and to build follow-up action, at national and regional level.

Cooperation was sought with UN country teams, as well as with regional and international organizations; this included the dissemination of ILO conventions and guidelines.

Trade unions became more prone to include migrant workers among their target groups; according to interviewed trade union representatives, it was with this project that trade unions in Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Kazakhstan inaugurated their activities with migrant workers. The support received by the project enhanced their understanding of the human and labour rights of migrant workers, whether regularly or irregularly employed, and their own role in defending such rights. Migrant membership in trade unions was effectively promoted, including at the local level, and information on their labour rights spread through dedicated local resource centres, in Tajikistan, Armenia and Kazakhstan. Thanks to the regional dimension of the project, trade unions became also more inclined to enter into transnational dialogue and partnerships with their peers in other CIS countries.

According to country constituents, this project has indicated an effective and sustainable modality of identifying and addressing existing needs in the multifaceted policy area of governing labour migration. It has had a structural impact, which includes the improvement of legislation and codes of conduct on labour migration, but also the development of more effective methods of managing migration flows, in accordance with international standards on labour rights and decent work. The set of recommendations developed by the project in different migration areas served as references for current initiatives and are expected to inform future cooperative action across the region.

Overall, the project has

- supported national governments to develop more coherent migration policies, by means of establishing tripartite national structures for multi-sectoral policy dialogue and cooperation on labour migration; helping to expand the local capacity to identify policy needs in relation to migration management, labour market trends, and migration flows; making international experience and expertise available; circulating the outcomes of the work done in the different countries, thus facilitating the identification of concrete grounds for transnational cooperation; supporting regional dialogue, therefore increasing bilateral and

regional cooperation; supporting formulation at regional level of policy-oriented recommendations, containing concrete proposals for improvements in the governance of labour migration;

- assisted the private sector in meeting labour needs more effectively, by guidance to employers on procedures for recruitment and employment of migrant workers and development of guidelines for employers' organizations for their participation in the definition of entry quotas; broadening the involvement of employers in policy dialogue and policy making on labour migration; highlighting the need to focus on labour migration aspects whose importance had been underestimated (i.e. qualification and certification of training programs); soliciting governments to link more closely migration management with the labour market needs of different segments of the economy;
- enhanced the participation of non governmental actors in migration policy development, and their capacity thereof;
- strengthened the local research infrastructure, enhancing their capacity to collect and analyse information and data, and their exposure to regional and international methods and expertise;
- developed practical schemes for enhancing the developmental impact of return migration and remittances, and involved private stakeholders to support their applicability.

A number of features of this project should be regarded as lessons to learn for the coming future. These include: its participatory approach, throughout all project phases, that foresaw the active involvement of key national counterparts, both governmental and non-governmental, and allowed structured cooperation among all entities with a stake in labour migration, and a growing sense of local ownership of the process; the improvement of coordination among stakeholders horizontally, at country level, but also vertically, between countries in the region; the exposure it ensured to experiences and methods developed in other countries, in and outside the region, concerning the different facets of labour migration; the relevance it accorded to flexibility: activities were adapted to changed in national contexts, and to incorporate the feedback and inputs collected from national stakeholders, avoiding that the project gained distance from actual socio-economic trends and political contexts; the efforts it placed in

building or strengthening local capacity; its efforts in attracting the interest of the media towards the project and its outcomes; the cooperation it actively sought with other organisations and donors working with labour migration in the target area.

Recommendations formulated in the context of this evaluation exercise focus mostly on the need to reinforce the insurgence of an autonomous national capacity in beneficiary countries. This entails placing regional dialogue and partnerships on labour migration within existing regional frameworks, to ensure appropriate effectiveness and sustainability to the regional process of dialogue and partnerships; fostering coherence between migration policy and other policy areas, according to national priorities; supporting governments and social partners to adjust their internal structure of responsibilities to include the governance of labour migration; helping the establishment of a more structured local research and training capacity, with regard to both mechanisms for the regular monitoring and analysis of labour market trends, and the training offer for public administrators and constituents in thematic areas relevant for the governance of labour migration. Constituents who have been interviewed have highlighted the relevance of being exposed to international experience and expertise: together with seminars and country visits, future actions should also explore possibilities for launching twinning projects that would allow administrations in the region to gain a closer insight of the experience and the methodologies developed elsewhere; the possibility to launch twinning projects with EU Member States should be explored for countries in the EU Neighbourhood area.

## Recommendations & Lessons Learned

The experience of this project has recommendations of a more general nature that can be taken into account for current and future work on labour migration. The overall concept of these recommendations is to focus on supporting the establishment of an autonomous national capacity in beneficiary countries:

1. Regional dialogue and partnerships on labour migration should be placed within existing regional frameworks, to ensure appropriate effectiveness and sustainability to the regional process of dialogue and partnerships in this policy area, which the project has contributed to reinforce; the

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) should be regarded as appropriate regional policy infrastructures;

2. The project's 'whole of government' approach should be seen as an essential dimension in migration policy development; it concretely supports coherence between migration policy and other policy areas, according to national priorities;
3. The involvement of trade unions and employers' associations in policy dialogue should be maintained, following the project's tripartite approach to labour migration, so that the identification of policy priorities, and the eventual development of effective national and regional partnerships, is part of a wide participatory process;
4. Follow up actions should also support governments and social partners to adjust their internal structure of responsibilities to include the governance of labour migration; moreover, a functional allocation of responsibilities should be complemented by the development of effective methods of coordination among the departments that deal with different migration aspects, in order to foster the overall cohesion of their approach and initiative with regard to labour migration;
5. This project has made research and training opportunities available. It is important to work in the direction of structuring local capacities by creating mechanisms for regular monitoring and analysis of labour market trends where such service has not yet been structured; and establishing a local training offer for public administrators and constituents;
6. Future initiatives should exploit the partnerships established by the project with other international agencies; the project outcomes are well known by supranational organisations and donors who are active in the region, and explicitly appreciated by government and social constituents: these are solid grounds on which future action can be built;
7. Future initiatives should consider continuing support to commitments which

have been undertaken in the context of this project, on a case-by-case basis. However, they should also consider expanding the project concept from policy making to embrace also implementation of guidelines and inputs, including on a pilot basis;

8. New guidelines may also imply the need to involve local counterparts, and include a broad range of successful pilot experiences developed under this project, in order to enlarge the number of direct beneficiaries of migration governance (migrants and perspective migrants, and their families); a critical aspect to take into due consideration in this regard is the limited availability of IT facilities and equipment pointed out by local branches of trade unions and grassroots organisations;
9. Interviewees highlighted the relevance of being exposed to international experience and expertise: together with seminars and country visits, future actions should also explore possibilities for launching twinning projects that would allow administrations in the region to gain a closer insight of the experience and the methodologies developed elsewhere; the possibility to launch twinning projects with EU Member States should be explored for countries in the EU Neighbourhood area;
10. The presence of country referees (as ILO country representatives, national coordinators, project staff) is deemed critical to support country-based efforts in a field that remains relatively new in the beneficiary countries; the competencies and the relations developed by the country staff of this project should be valued for ensuring adequate follow up.