

**Circular Migration Policy Developments within the Framework  
of European Union's Partnership for Mobility (PfM) Initiative  
and Policy Implementation Challenges in Georgia**

**By**

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## Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned ...**Khatia Tsiramua**... hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis.

To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non – degree program, in English or in any other language.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revisions.

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## **Abstract**

Since 2009 the circular migration policy has been actively promoted in Georgia. The adoption of the policy is linked to the introduction of a new political initiative of the European Union, namely the Partnership for Mobility (PfM). The present thesis employs the qualitative research methodology and the pertinent theories of the public policy field to analyze the circular migration policy development peculiarities in Georgia from 2009 to present. In particular, the thesis intends to: (1) find the main rationales behind the adoption of the circular migration policy in Georgia; (2) reveal the challenges related to the policy implementation process; (3) and, elaborate on the reasons for the presently re-emerged political interest in the policy. The present thesis, as a country-specific research on the circular migration policy in Georgia to a certain extent fills the gap in the circular migration policy related literature and identifies the topics for further research. The main findings and the analysis of the thesis contributes to the evidence-based and informed policy-making in the future on circular migration issues in Georgia.

**Key words:** Georgia, EU Partnership for Mobility, Circular Migration Policy

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1 - Literature Review and Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Literature review .....	4
1.2 Analytical framework.....	7
1.2.1 International migration management concept .....	8
1.2.2 Circular migration policy and regulated circular migration schemes (CMSs).....	9
1.2.3 Employed theories for analysis.....	12
<b>Chapter 2 - Research Methodology and Design.....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1. Research problem and research question .....	15
2.2 Research methodology .....	16
2.2.1 Cases studies: Piloted Circular Migration Schemes (CMSs) .....	19
2.2.2 The piloted circular migration projects .....	19
<b>Chapter 3 - Findings and analysis .....</b>	<b>22</b>
3.1. Findings.....	22
3.1.1 Circular migration policy formulation and adoption process.....	22
3.1. 2 Circular migration policy implementation related challenges.....	26
3.1.3 The policy maintenance and the rational of its continuation.....	32
3.2 Analysis.....	35
<b>Concluding Remarks .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendices 1.....</b>	<b>43</b>

## List of Abbreviations

<b>AA</b>	Association Agreement
<b>CMSs</b>	Circular migration schemes
<b>ENP</b>	European Neighborhood Policy
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>GSMEA</b>	Georgian Small and Medium Enterprises Association
<b>GIZ</b>	German Society for International Cooperation
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
<b>MRA</b>	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia
<b>MoLHSA</b>	Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
<b>PSDA</b>	Public Service Development Agency
<b>SCMI</b>	State Commission on Migration Issues
<b>VLAP</b>	Visa Liberalization Action Plan

## Introduction

Since 2009 the circular migration policy has been actively promoted in Georgia. The adoption of the policy is connected to the introduction of a new political initiative of the European Union, namely the Partnership for Mobility (PfM). The initiative provides the comprehensive framework for cooperation in the field of migration between the EU Member States and third countries. The migration related areas includes collaboration on border control management, illegal migration, readmission and facilitation of regulated labor migration between Georgia and EU Member States (EC Communication on Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the European Union and Georgia, 2009).

From the beginning, the Georgian government expressed particular enthusiasm for the new political initiative and Georgia was one of the first member countries of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) that joined the EU initiative in 2009. The (PfM) framework promised a new opportunity for legal employment of Georgian citizens in the EU Member States through regulated circular migration schemes (CMSs). More precisely, the triple win impact of the circular migration policy and the regulated circular migration schemes (CMSs) as a policy tool were early recognized by the Georgian government. The policy was adopted and the government took immediate steps towards its implementation.

The new policy was aimed at bringing the triple win benefit to Georgia as a migrants' source country through the remittances and developed human capital after the return of circular migrants. On the other hand, the EU Member States as migrants' hosting countries would fill the labor shortage in particular economic sectors with the temporary migrants from Georgia. The regulated circular migration schemes would ensure recruitment of the labor force with the requested skills profiled for their legal employment and would avoid social and economic costs associated with permanent migration and the illegal overstay of migrants. For the migrants the policy promised to ensure the social and

economic benefits through temporary, legal and protected employment. Despite the promising triple win impact and the Georgian government enthusiasm, the circular migration policy did not yield any tangible results between 2009 and 2013.

The interest towards the policy re-emerged in 2013, when the newly established the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) incorporated the circular migration policy in the first Migration Strategy 2013-2015 of Georgia. The first piloted circular migration programs were initiated with technical and financial support from international organizations. The implementation process has revealed certain political, institutional and legal challenges, which put serious doubts on the widely discussed triple win impact of the policy. Despite the reasonable criticism, presently the circular migration policy is still being maintained and promoted in the national migration policy of Georgia.

The present thesis aims to analyze the main developments and challenges of the circular migration policy in Georgia from 2009 to present. In particular, the thesis intends to: (1) find the main rationales behind the adoption of the circular migration policy in Georgia; (2) reveal the challenges related to the policy implementation process; (3) and, elaborate on the reasons for the presently re-emerged political interest in the policy.

The thesis is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter provides a short overview of the relevant literature, which is followed by the theoretical framework. It briefly describes the present global discourse on human mobility and migration, and provides the definition of the main concepts including managed migration and circular migration policy. The last part of a chapter discusses the pertinent theories of the public policy field, namely the Multiple Streams (MS) and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) that are applied to analyze the circular migration policy development peculiarities in Georgia. In particular, the circular migration policy initiation processes are analyzed within the framework of the Multiple Streams (MS) theory. The policy implementation related challenges are analyzed



through the lens of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The latter theory is also used to analyze the exogenous reasons and internal processes that have recently put the circular migration policy again on the political agenda of Georgia.

The second chapter describes the methodological framework, which employs qualitative research methodology. The main findings are based on the semi-structured interviews with key state and non-state stakeholders and project beneficiaries, as well as two case studies of the piloted circular migration projects are integrated into the analysis and other relevant secondary sources.

The third chapter provides the main findings and analysis of the research. More precisely, it attempts to answer the main research questions. The first subchapter uncovers the main reasons for the circular migration policy formulation and adoption in Georgia. The second subchapter explores and critically analyzes the main challenges related to the circular migration policy implementation process. And, the last part of the chapter investigates the policy maintenance and the reasons for its continuation.

The present thesis, to the best of my knowledge, is the first attempt to conduct the country-specific research on the circular migration policy developments and challenges in Georgia. More precisely, firstly, the thesis contributes to fill the gap in the circular migration policy related literature, which is particularly scarce in 2013-2018. The second important contribution of the thesis is that it identifies the topics for further research. Last, and most importantly, the main findings and the analysis of the thesis contribute to the evidence-based and informed policy-making in the future on circular migration issues in Georgia.

# CHAPTER 1 - LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter starts with the literature review and is followed by an analytical framework discussion. To analyze the main developments and challenges of the circular migration policy in Georgia, the thesis evaluates the policy in following policy-making stages: (1) circular migration policy formulation and adoption stages in 2009-2012. Within the given period, the thesis focuses on the main rationales behind the policy adoption; (2) the policy implementation process in 2013-2016, analyzes the main actors, developments, and challenges related to the implementation; (3) and policy maintenance from late 2016 to present. The thesis intends to estimate the endogenous and exogenous reasons for the policy continuation.

Two well-established theories in public policy field are employed to conduct analysis of each policy stage. The circular migration policy adoption process is analyzed through the analytical lenses of the Multiple Streams (MS) Framework, while the policy implementation and maintenance stages are evaluated within the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). In addition, transnational migration theory and the concept of “migration management” provide the general theoretical background to analyze the global and regional (EU) discourse around regulated human mobility policies such as circular migration policy. Correspondingly, in the coming chapters the literature review and the analytical framework start with the global discourse and later lead to the circular migration policy analysis in the case of Georgia.

## **1.1 Literature Rreview**

For the last decade, the new global discourse on migration revolves around several major new themes. Foremost, the globalization process has increased the magnitude of

cross-border human mobility and the existing policies and mechanisms aiming at full control of migration have been recognized as insufficient. Furthermore, the development potential of migration for sending, hosting countries and migrants themselves known as a “triple win” impact, has been widely acknowledged; and third, there was a quest for relevant policies to stimulate the development potential of the cross border mobility of people (Geiger and Pecoud 2012).

In the newly emerged global policy discourse, the transnational nature of migration and the continuous nature of people’s cross border activities has been introduced by the aptly named transnational migration theory Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc (1995) and Levitt (2008). Haas (2010) defines the migrants “as geographically mobile persons engaged in continued cross-border practices in which migrant and markets not states become responsible for bringing the development” (Haas 2010, 252). He argues that in contrast to the permanent migration that causes outflow of the most skilful workforce from the migrants’ source countries, “the brain gain and circulation bring development “(Haas, 2012:49). Orozco (2002), Skeldon (2008), (Haas 2010) and Sorensen (2012) point out the widely discussed role of remittances that contributed to rethinking the potential of international migration and gradual recognition of migration development impact.

“The migration produces the transfer of finance and social remittances and economic development will reduce continuing migration pressures; The brain drain will gradually be replaced by brain gain or circulation; Temporary and circular migrants will stimulate development more than permanent migration”(Glick Schiller and Faist 2009, 4).

The global recognition of human mobility development potential has promoted the concept of the migration management and circular migration policy as a policy tool to manage the cross-border mobility of people. Bimal Ghosh who introduced the managed

migration concept in 1995 (Ghosh 1995) talks about the managed migration policies, such as managed circular migration program and its capacity to stimulate the triple win impact of labor migration in today's globalized world. Martin Geiger and Antonie Pecoud (2012, 2013) in two comprehensive editions provide solid theoretical ground for critical analysis of mobility governance in general, and policies on managed human mobility in particular. The referenced scholarly works are prepared in closed cooperation with the key multilateral international organizations, which since 1995 have actively promoted the importance of the migration management concept (the UN Commission on Global Governance Report 1995, Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) report 2005, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Report 2003).

The thesis integrates the comprehensive research reports on the different aspects of the circular migration policy prepared by the CARIM East-Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration. Fragues (2008) and Cassarino (2008) explore the development potential of regulated circular migration schemes between the EU and third countries. More critical analysis is provided by Wickramasekara (2011). He highlights the challenges that are related to the implementation of the regulated circular migration schemes.

The scholarly literature is relatively rich regarding the circular migration policy in Georgia in the period of 2010-2012. The research works of Georgi Gogolashvili (2012) and Kazmierhiewicz (2013) focus on the development potential of circular migration policy for Georgia. The authors also highlight the high political and economic expectations of the Georgian governments towards the EU Mobility Partnerships initiative and in particular, to the circular migration policy. The research conducted by Georgian scholars, namely: Gabrichidze (2012), Baindurashvili (2012), and Tukhashvili (2012) draw attention at the legal and institutional framework, as well as the, economic and demographic factors that

facilitate or challenge the circular migration policy development in Georgia. In addition, normative and strategic documents including the EC Communication on the Mobility for Partnerships, EU-Georgia Mobility for Partnerships Agreement, Migration Strategy of Georgia of 2013-2015 and Migration Strategy of Georgia of 2016-2020 and official reports of the State Commission on Migration Issues are further analyzed.

The well-established theories in the public policy field, works of Sabatier and Hank (1993), Zaharadiaz (2007) and Sabatier et al. (2014) gives the possibility critically evaluate the circular migration policy process in Georgia. The Multiple Streams (MS) Framework and Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) are employed to discuss different stages of the policy process. In addition to Sabatier, the work of Cairney and Heikkila (2014) provides detailed description of the policy process and the key features of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF); also comparative analysis of the policy process theories and stress the applicability of the above-mentioned theories for the analysis of the circular migration policy process in Georgia. A comprehensive overview of all stages in the policy making process is provided by Dye (2008) and Peter's (2015).

In addition to the scholarly literature, the thesis analyzes the reports and manual from implemented piloted circular migration projects in Georgia. For instance, the manual of the project “Strengthening the Development Potential of The EU Mobility Partnership in Georgia through Targeted Circular Migration and Diaspora Mobilization” (2016).

## **1.2 Analytical Framework**

The analytical framework of the present thesis is built on the concepts and theories in the field of public policy and migration that support the analysis of the research questions. In the first part, the framework provides a short and a general review of a cross-border human mobility and managed migration concepts. The second part focuses on the circular

migration concept definition and the policy in the EU Mobility for Partnerships initiative framework. In addition, the last part elaborates on public policy field theories, which are selected for the analysis of the circular migration policy in Georgia.

### **1.2.1 International migration management concept**

The emergence of a new policy narrative around the regulated migration was strongly influenced in 1993 by Bimal Ghosh elaborated concept of “migration management”. He argued that the migration policies and practices of 1990s’ aimed at full control of migration could cause the serious fluctuations in migrants receiving countries’ economy, because lack of the labor force and their recruitment related high costs (Ghosh 2010, 319). In oppose to the existing migration regime, he proposed to build a new international regime “a new cooperative global arrangement to make movement of persons more predictable and orderly and thus more manageable” (Ghosh 2007, 303). The new migration regime founded on the “regulated openness principle” (Ghosh 2007, 304) would enable the migrants’ receiving countries to meet the labor market demands on labor workforce through recruitment of the predetermined number of migrants. Similarly, the sending countries would benefit from the mobility, migrants’ human and financial capital development. The proposed regime would also ensure effective protection of migrants’ human rights (Ghosh 2007, 304).

The major academic works in human mobility and migration management area (Ghosh 2000, 2007; Geiger and Pecoud 2012; Kalm 2012) point out three important aspects. They state, that first, the migration management fosters the cooperation among the state and non-state actors and facilitates the convergence of the migration policies and interests of the actors engaged in the migration governance. Second elaborated aspect is the acknowledgement of the multi stakeholder engagement in migration governance. In

addition, the last, the new discourse has promoted “a new international framework agreement on global mobility and migration” (Geiger and Pecoud 2012, 3).

Kalm argues that the discussion whether to use or not the policies to restrict the human mobility, has recently turned into a new discourse - to find the most effective ways to manage migration. “If properly managed, migration can be beneficial for all states and societies. If left unmanaged, it can lead to the exploitation of individual migrants, particularly through human trafficking and migrant smuggling, and to be a source of social tension, insecurity and bad relations between nations”(Kalm 2012, 36).

New migration discourse has reintroduced already well-known policy tool of human mobility management such as a circular migration policy.

### **1.2.2 Circular migration policy and regulated circular migration schemes (CMSs)**

In the recent decade, the circular migration policy was labeled as a “major mechanism to reap development benefits of labor migration” (Wickramasekara 2011, 1). However, the idea of circular migration is not a new phenomenon. Fargues provides the examples of Western and Eastern Africa, Indonesia, and Asia, where the circular migration, mostly of unregulated character, was in practice. He also highlights the guest workers program in Europe after the World War II (Fargues 2008, 5).

In early 1970s, the circular migration definition was provided by Frank Bovenkerk. According to his definition, the circular migration is a “to and fro movement between two places, [this movement] includes more than one return [to the place of origin]” (Cassarino 2008, 3). In oppose to the traditional view of migration as a linear movement, the circular migrants can circulate between the destination countries and their host society. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) contributes definition that is more comprehensive:

“Circular migration refers to temporary movement of a repetitive character either formally or informally across borders, usually for work, involving the same migrants. While it can be distinguished from permanent migration (for settlement), and return migration (one trip migration and return) (IOM report, 2004).

The regulated circular migration schemes (CMSs) are increasingly viewed as an effective solution for migration related issues both for sending and host communities. The Global Commission on International Migration (GSIM) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) produce recommendation for the developing countries to open more avenues for regulated circular labor migration and at the same time put efforts for the migrants’ return and reintegration. The World Bank released the similar recommendation in the studies conducted in 2006 (Vertovek 2007, 3-4).

In destination countries, such circular migration schemes are implemented to address the labor shortages in the specific industries of economy and at the same time, the migrants’ receiving countries can effectively avoid the financial and social costs related to the permanent migrants’ social, economic and cultural integration. On the other hand, the migrants’ source countries with the implantation of the CMSs mitigate the social pressure caused by economic problems and high unemployment; and the CMSs can be an alternative way to the massive irregular outflows. The last, but not least important issue, the regulated CMSs are always designed and implemented in wider political framework, which is built on the interstate negotiations and bilateral agreements. This aspect put “commitments to all participant parties to closely cooperate in migration broader field” (Fargues 2008, 4).

The scholars (Cassarino 2008, Fargues 2008) who study the circular migration estimate the development potential of the circular migration schemes as a sum of development experienced during the emigration process and after the circular migrants’ return to their host communities. The development impact has financial, social and human



capital dimensions. During the emigration, the circular migrants financially support their families through remittances. The other important factor is the human capital development. The circular migrants bring innovations and new skills to the countries of origin after their return and reintegration. Wickramasekara provides more critical evaluation of the regulated circular migration schemes. He argues that the empirical findings have demonstrated that the scope of the circular migration programs are small, time limited and migrants often do not have chances to chose or change the employment during the migration. He also points out the circular migrants labor rights protection issues (Wickramasekara 2011, 3).

Hugo (2009) shares the opinion on the development, more precisely, the triple win impact of the CMSs. However, by demonstrating the experience in the Asia, he stresses the importance of the good governance in such regulated circular migration programs. The circular migration is regulated when “institutional mechanisms are implemented to determine the number of admitted migrants (e.g., with quotas) to monitor their limited duration of stay abroad, and to select their profiles and skills” (Wickramasekara 2011, 10). Hugo argues that the effective governance of the regulated circular migration programs constitutes of several aspects including bilateral interstate agreement that defines the circular migrants’ rights, conditions of work permit; well-established system of analysis of the labor demand and deficit in both destination and source countries; and last, circular migrants’ recruitment and preparation system (Hugo 2009, 16). Cassarino (2008) and Hugo (2009) also stress the circular migrants’ reintegration component as the essential part of the good governance in the regulated circular migration schemes. Cassarino argues that the migrants’ source countries should develop “adequate legal and institutional mechanisms aimed at supporting the reintegration of the circular migrants” (Cassarino 2008).

Since 2005, there has been a growing interest towards the regulated circular migration concept in European Union. It was first mentioned in the 2005 European

Commission (EC) Communication on “Migration and Development”. Later in May 2007 European Commission released the Communication on “Circular Migration and Mobility Partnerships”, which declared the circular migration and the mobility partnerships as an innovative framework for strengthening collaboration between the EU and third countries on migration management related issues, particularly in cooperation on illegal migration area. The circular migration policy in this initiative was foreseen as a policy tool that “can help to match the international supply of and demand for labor, thereby contributing to a more efficient allocation of available resources and to economic growth” (EU Commission 2007, 8).

Georgia was one of the first Eastern Neighborhood Partnership Policy member countries to join the EU Mobility Partnerships initiative in 2009. In the same year, the country declared the circular migration policy as one of the main priorities in the national migration policy of Georgia (The State of Migration 2015, 15).

### **1.2.3 Employed theories for analysis**

There is no single theory that can comprehensively analyze the policymaking process, which is complex and ambiguous. However, the scope and level of analysis, assumptions of the key actors and relationship with the key policy concepts are strong criteria to determine the appropriate theoretical framework for the particular policy process analysis (Cairney and Heikkila 2014, 364). To evaluate the main developments and challenges of the circular migration policy in Georgia, the thesis looks at the policy making process in different stages: the circular migration policy formulation and adoption stage and the implementation and maintenance stages. The two well-established theories in public policy field the Multiple Streams (MS) Framework and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) are employed to conduct analysis around each policy stage.

Both theories have been applied for analysis of policies in various areas, mostly applied qualitative research, particularly to evaluate the results of the case studies “when the findings are impressive, but difficult to generalize” (Cairney and Heikkila 2014, 372). Furthermore, the selected theories are applicable to do analysis on policy process on both national and international levels. However, some factors determine more often and relevant application of each theory to the particular policy stage (Cairney and Heikkila 2014, 372).

Zahariadis argues that the Multiple Streams (MS) framework, which was developed from the “garbage can model of organizational choice” (Zahariadis 2007, 65) can be employed to analyze all stages of the policy making; however, he stresses the strength of the Multiple Stream lens to evaluate the main rationales behind the process of policy formulation (Zahariadis 2007, 65). Cairney develops similar view and adds that the theory well identifies the factors and the key policy makers in the policy adoption process. (Cairney and Heikkila 2014, 376).

The Multiple Streams (MS) Framework consists of the following streams: “problems, policies, politics, policy entrepreneurs and a policy window” (Zahariadis 2007, 70). Adoption of a certain policy depends on the policy makers’ capacity to link the actual problems to relevant policies and political context. They use the policy window as an opportunity to push forward the policy initiative in order to adopt policy. The Multiple Streams (MS) Framework gives the opportunity to analyze the preconditions of the circular migration policy adoption in Georgia in 2009.

The second argument in favor of the applicability of the MS theoretical lenses to the policy formulation stage is its capacity to identify and emphasize the role of individuals in the policy process. “The institutions matter, but their important is tempered by individuals, timing and context” (Zahariadis 2007, 84).

In the period of the 2013-2015 the interest towards the circular migration policy renewed due to the active engagement of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) and the international organizations. The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is employed to analyze the policy change, implementation process related issues, policy maintenance and reasons for continuation of the circular migration policy. Paul A. Sabatier, the author of the theory, provides a comprehensive analysis around the theory (1993; 2007; 2014). Cairney and Heikkila (2014) also present the detailed description of key features of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). They argue that the ACF is one of the strongest frameworks to “explain the policy change and reformulation on the policy subsystem level” (Cairney and Heikkila 2014, 373).

The ACF suggests that policy change depends on four key courses of action. The first, the external factors, that are not under the control of “key subsystems”; the second, factors are internal and are located “in national borders or the topical area of the subsystem” (Sabatier et.al 2014, 202); the third, policy change may happen as a result of the collaboration and consent among the coalitions. And last, the policy change may occur “through policy oriented learning, which has more of ‘enlightening function’ and can be a source of only a minor change” (Sabatier et.al 2014, 202); However, Sabatier argues that, the last factor can cause the vital policy change, but only in synthesis with the internal and external factors (Sabatier 2014, 203).

## CHAPTER 2 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Chapter 3 is devoted to research problem discussion and research questions. The subchapters discuss the employed research methodology and short case studies description.

### ***2.1. Research Problem and Research Question***

Georgia was the third country among the member countries of European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) to sign the EU Mobility for Partnerships (MfP) initiative in 2009. The Georgian government set high expectations for the EU new initiative and estimated the agreement as a broad framework for development of a long-term migration strategy and cooperation with EU Member states. Furthermore, the promising development potential of such regulated circular migration schemes for Georgia was recognized and circular migration concept gained the policy dimension and priority (Interview with Archil Karaulashvili, 2018). The EU new initiative which promoted the regulated legal employment opportunities for Georgian citizens in EU Member States and their return and reintegration perfectly responded to Georgian economic needs, close political relationship with EU and scarce demographic picture of country caused by the massive outflow of the Georgian citizens (Interview with Archil Karaulashvili, 2018).

However, after nine years of signing the Mobility Partnership initiative it is obvious that the potential of circular migration policy was overestimated by the Georgian government and has not reached estimated results (Interviews at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Georgian Parliament, 2018). Recently, the extent of interest towards the circular migration has been increased among the policy makers in Georgia; the policy has been integrated in State Migration Strategy 2016-2020 of Georgia and its Action Plan (State Migration Strategy of Georgia 2016-2020, 46-47).

The series of the research conducted by the Georgian scholars mostly cover 2010-2013 and focus on the development potential of the circular migration policy in the

economic, social and demographic context of Georgia. In addition, in the context of the close political cooperation between Georgian and EU, this by that time was developing in the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The already mentioned research papers mainly make predictions on the development prospects of the regulated migration flows. However, the follow up research which properly analyzes the ways the circular migration policy has been promoted and the main challenges to use the full potential of the regulated circular migration schemes between Georgia and European Union Member States, has not been conducted so far. The present research will be the first attempt to show comprehensive picture of the circular migration policy development in Georgia.

The present paper will extend previous works on circular migration policy by assessing the development of the circular migration policy in the period of the 2012-2018. Furthermore, based on in-depth analysis of the implemented circular migration pilot schemes, the paper will elaborate on the main challenges related to the circular migration policy implementation. In addition, the paper will show the reasons that currently have again promoted the circular migration potential and prioritized the policy in the migration strategy of Georgia.

The thesis asks the following research questions:

1. Why the circular migration policy was adopted in Georgia?
2. What are the main developments and challenges to policy implementation process?
3. Why the circular migration policy has being recently again promoted?

## **2.2 Research Methodology**

The thesis employs the qualitative research methodology and the semi-structured interviews as a qualitative data collection method. The qualitative research approach is appropriate method for the thesis for two reasons: first, to analyze the small samples (case

studies) where it is difficult to measure the outcomes in qualitative terms. Second, the semi-structured interviews collect the inputs from the policymakers, practitioners and pilot project beneficiaries about the expectations, obstacles and future potential of the circular migration policy. As a qualitative research method, interviews make possible to do in-depth analysis of the research questions and to look at the research problem from different perspectives;

The thesis analysis is based on desk research and primary data collection. The primary sources including the legal and policy documents were derived from the website of the EU and the State Commission on Migration Issues of Georgia and other State Institutions including: EU Communication on Circular migration and mobility partnerships between the EU and third countries; Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the EU and Georgia, Migration Strategy of Georgia 2013-2015 and 2016-2020 and its Action Plan, Agreement between Georgia and France on Circular Migration and Residence of the Professional Workers, signed on 12 November 2013.

Throughout the analysis, two cases of the implemented circular migration pilot schemes between Georgia and EU Member States, namely Germany and Poland are provided as illustrative case studies. Despite significant efforts, the beneficiaries of the first already completed pilot project could not be reached; the project implementer organization German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) refused to share the information of the project participants. However, two beneficiaries of the ongoing circular migration pilot project between Georgia and Poland were reached in Poland and interviewed via Skype. They were reached out through International Organization for Migration (IOM) assistance.

The elite interviews are the significant part of the primary data collection, which was completed during the organized field research trip to Georgia between April 25 to May 14, 2018. The selected interviewees were experts, policymakers and practitioners engaged in the

circular migration policy implementation process. In total ten interviews were conducted. Nine interviews were conducted in Tbilisi and one Georgian expert was interviewed through Skype in Kuwait. The most respondents were contacted through a “snow-ball technique”. The first interview was conducted with the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues, which since 2010 has been coordinating all state institutions and international organization work in migration field in Georgia. The next four interviews were recommended by the Secretariat including: the interviews with the Head of the Labor Department of the Ministry of the Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia and the senior specialist of the same department and the head of the Reintegration Department at the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia. Two interviews were recorded in the Georgian Parliament with the Head of the Committee on European Integration at Georgian Parliament and the first deputy chairman of the Healthcare and Social Issues Committee. The last interview was conducted with the Director General for European Integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia who personally was engaged during the negotiations with EU on Georgia’s participation in EU Mobility Partnership.

The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to an hour and were conducted in the Georgian language. The semi-structured interviews were prepared in advance of each interview. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees and after each interview, the transcript was prepared. All interviewees gave permission to use their names and interview transcripts in the thesis. The triangulation approach was applied during the analysis of the research findings. The findings of the desk research and interviews gathered from the policy makers, practitioners and project beneficiaries were compared.



### **2.2.1 Cases studies: Piloted Circular Migration Schemes (PCMSs)**

Both projects were piloted and implemented by the international organizations and with the close cooperation with the state and private institutions. “The initiatives were time limited and short-term, suitable for testing the migration management tools and cooperation structure set-up” (Goos, 2016). With the recommendation of the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMD) the interviews were recorded with the country program officer at International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Migration-Development project manager at the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). The organizations since 2013 have been promoted the labor circular migration schemes between EU and Georgia.

### **2.2.2 The piloted circular migration projects**

The first circular migration scheme between Georgia and Germany was implemented as a part of the EU-project “Strengthening the development potential of the EU Mobility Partnership in Georgia through targeted circular migration and diaspora mobilization”. The 36-month project started in May 2013 and overall objective of the project was

“to strengthen Georgia’s capacities to harness the development potential of the of its Mobility Partnership (MP) to benefit migrants, the sending and receiving countries, thereby identifying the guidelines and good practices for replication for other EU MPs” (Goos 2016, 25).

To test the pilot scheme between Germany and Georgia, the Georgian high skilled labor was temporary placed in Germany. Two professions were selected to match the German labor market needs: nurses and hospitality professionals. In total 27 professionals participated in the scheme and went through the entire migration cycle. The project was carried out by the consortium: the Center for International Migration and Development (CIM) of the Migration-Development project manager at the German Society for

International Cooperation (GIZ), the Secretariat of the SCMI of the Ministry of Justice and the Georgian Small, Medium Enterprises Association (GSMEA) and the German Federal Employment Agency (Goos 2016, 25). The implementation of the pilot scheme with engagement of the government was very important decision in terms of institutional capacity building (Temur Goginovi, pers.comm).

The elaborated CMS aimed at triple win outcome, benefiting migrants, country of origin and country of the destination. The project had very impressive financial and human development impact on project beneficiaries during their emigration in Germany (Interview at GIZ 2016; Goos 2016, 1). The Georgian migrants advanced the professional knowledge, German language proficiency and provided support to the families through transferred remittances. None of the program participants imposed the program requirements and no single illegal overstay in EU was revealed.

However, despite of the preventive measures and incentivized return prospects promoted by the CIM/GIZ, the return and reintegration of the project participants faced certain problems. The vast majority of the program participants with the profession of nurses expressed the willingness to prolong their employment legally in Germany and upon the project completion did not return to Georgia. The more successful reintegration results were shown in the case of hospitality professionals. All project participants enhanced their qualification profile and employability for Georgian Labor market and after their return, they were successfully integrated. It should be mentioned, that regular additional financial incentives provided by the CIM of GIZ was determinant factor for the project participants to make decision about the return (Interview at GIZ).

The second piloted CMS “Piloting Temporary Labor Migration of Georgian Workers to Poland and Estonia” started on November 2015 and lasted until October 2017. The project was implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Georgia in close cooperation with IOM Offices in Poland and Estonia. The project engaged the state institutions as the key partners: including the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs (MoLSHA), Social Service Agency (SSA)/the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Georgian Missions in Poland/Estonia (Project presentation emailed to author in May, 2018). In the host countries the similar state agencies and employers were engaged in the project implementation process. The project aimed at institutional capacity building of the respective state institutions on regulative frameworks for temporary labor migration. In particular, the project should strengthen “labor migration management structures of Georgia to effectively facilitate labor migration from Georgia in a cooperative, comprehensive manner and in adherence to ethical recruitment standards and practices” (Project presentation emailed to author in May, 2018). The project developed and tested a temporary and circular migration operational model on the basis of ethical recruitment standards, for improvement of the future temporary and circular labor migration support schemes out of Georgia (Interview at IOM, May 2018).

The circular migration pilot scheme was effectively implemented with Poland, which has liberal legislature for international labor force. The first wave of the selected and trained Georgian eclectic welders was employed for 6 month period in Poland. After the completion of the labor contract, 29 persons out of 30 returned to Georgia (Interview at IOM, May 2018). After the several months of stay in Georgia, 27 people again expressed the interest in repeated employment in Poland (Interview at IOM, May 2018). The second project also revealed the similar challenges related to the governance of the legal labor circularity, selection of the demanded labor force and reintegration of the return circular migrants (Interviews at GIZ, IOM 2018; interviews with piloted project beneficiaries 2018; Goos 2016, 1-166).

## CHAPTER 3 - FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 3.1. Findings

Chapter 3 presents and analyzes the main findings of research. More precisely, the following subchapters attempt to answer the main research questions. The first subchapter discusses the rational reasons for the circular migration policy formulation and adoption in Georgia. The second subchapter explores and critically analyzes the main challenges related to the circular migration policy implementation process. In addition, the last part of the chapter investigates the policy maintenance and the reasons for its continuation.

#### 3.1.1 Circular migration policy formulation and adoption process

Georgia was the third country among the member countries of European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) to sign the EU Mobility for Partnerships (MfP) initiative in 2009. This fact highlights the high expectations of the Georgian government towards the new EU initiative. The director general for European Integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archil Karaulashvili, who was personally engaged in the negotiation process with the EU Commission, confirms that the Georgian government indeed built certain political expectations towards the EU Mobility for Partnerships (MfP) and its key mechanism - the circular migration policy (Archhil Karaulashvili, pers. comm.) The Mobility for Partnership was considered as a promising comprehensive framework for cooperation between EU Member States and Georgia in the field of migration management including border control, readmission, human rights protection and legal labor migration issues (EU-Georgia Joint Declaration 2009, 3).

Before policy adoption, the circular migration policy was seen as an effective means to address the following problems: first, the state-managed circular migration programs could stimulate the development potential of legal migration and reduce the adverse social and economic consequences related to the illegal permanent labor emigration of Georgian

citizens abroad. Due to the economic problems and high rate of unemployment, from 1991 to 2012 more than one million Georgian citizens, that is 20% of the whole population, was emigrated abroad for finding employment (Tukhashvili 2012,1). The World Bank Data 2010, supports this number (in Georgia's Migration Landscape 2017, 50). The emigration process slowed down after the Rose Revolution of 2003 that brought about intensive economic reforms (Georgia's Migration Landscape 2017, 50). Since 2003, emigration was assumed as a temporal and circular character (Labadze and Tukhashvili, 2013). However, the available surveys showed that the Georgian citizens before the circular migration policy adoption still had "a continued interest in migration abroad" (Kazmierkiewicz 2013, 4) particularly to EU Member States (Georgia's Migration Landscape 2017, 53).

In addition to the population decline, which was caused by the massive outflow of the population abroad, the population aging was and unfortunately still is a serious problem in Georgia. According to the recent data, 75 % of Georgian emigrants are in the 20-54 age brackets (Migration Profile of Georgia 2017, 26). The massive outflow of the working and reproductive age population adversely affects the demographic structure of the country (Deputy Head of the Social Committee at Georgia pers. Comm.). The circular migration was viewed as a promising alternative to permanent migration as having prospects for return and reintegration of circular migrants.

The second important factor that deserved the attention was the economic potential of the regulated legal migration schemes. The remittances constituted the significant part of the Georgian economy. In 2009, the remittances accounted for 8% of the total GDP of Georgia; this number has increased in the recent years. For 15 % of the Georgian population the only source of the income is the remittances, while over 55% of the population has at least one emigrant family member (Migration Profile of Georgia 2017, 28). The assumption

was that the circular migration schemes could stimulate the migration economic potential through legal and managed circularity of the labor force.

The third, the circular migration policy was regarded as an effective mechanism for fighting illegal migration by opening the legal employment channels in the EU for the Georgian citizens. Data on the returned migrants' showed that illegal migration was a serious problem. 63.4% of the former migrants were illegally working abroad "due to the underdeveloped regulatory framework and support mechanisms they experience predominantly informal nature of employment" (International Organization for Migration (IOM) data 2010). The circular migration policy seemed to be a promising policy mechanism for border control, fight against human trafficking and managed labor migration (Archil Karaulashvili, pers. comm.).

The decision about joining the Mobility for Partnerships framework was based on the existing long-term and close political dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Georgia. The political cooperation between the EU and Georgia started in 1999 with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (an active from July 1999), and was followed by the EU-Georgian European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) Action plan (signed on 14 November 2006). The cooperation on the issues related to migration constituted very important part of the ENP. Finally, the Mobility for Partnership Framework was built on the "Joint Declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit of May 7 2009" on Building Migration Partnership. Correspondingly, joining the Mobility for Partnerships initiative and the adoption of the circular migration policy was the continuation of the unwavering political process of close cooperation with the EU.

Indeed, the Georgian governments was convinced that the window of the opportunity should be used as the EU initiative and the circular migration policy answered the real problems associated with the illegal migration and political aspirations of Georgia to

build close political cooperation with the EU. Under the Mobility for Partnerships framework Georgia started intense negotiations with EU Member States to conclude the bilateral cooperation agreements. The first such agreement was reached with France in 2013. However to date, the ratification of the agreement is still pending in France due to two reasons: governmental changes and national migration policy related issues (Archil Karaulashvili, pers. comm.).

The director general for European Integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archil Karaulashvili mentioned several reasons. The economic recession of 2008 and later the migration crisis in Europe adversely affected the interest of the EU Member States to cooperate with the third countries on circular migration regulated programs. However, there were also the endogenous reasons. The Georgian government lacked of experience and institutional capacity to implement circular migration schemes with EU Member States. “It was obvious that even in the case of the ratification of the agreement by France; we would have difficulties to recruit the requested qualified labor force from Georgia. Skills mismatch and language barrier were our serious concerns” (Archil Karaulashvili, pers. comm.). The expert Lasha Labadze was one of the first who talked about the importance of “turning the emigration into more of a circular phenomenon [as a key to accelerating the development in Georgia in coming years]” (Georgia’s Migration Landscape 2017, 58). In the interview, he also stressed that the relevant state institutions lacked of information and knowledge at the time of the policy adoption (Lasha Labadze, pers. comm.).

Due to the exogenous and endogenous reasons, between 2009 and 2013 the Georgian Government could not reach any significant results in circular migration policy area. No single bilateral agreement (except of France) was signed with any EU Member States and no single state led circular migration program was implemented in the given period.

### 3.1.2 Circular migration policy implementation related challenges

The circular migration policy development in the period between its adoption in 2009 and 2013 can be compared to the Anthony Downs (1972) concept of “issue attention circle” (Peters 2015, 71). The concept is used to describe a policy that “came to the political agenda with ‘alarmed discovery’, but once the real difficulties of actually doing anything and successful about the issue become apparent then the interest tends to wane. [The issue] remains the systematic agenda, albeit not an active agenda, until it becomes activated again” (Peters 2015, 72). In 2013, the circular migration policy was eventually reactivated in the migration policy of Georgia. This was facilitated by several factors.

First, in 2010, the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) was established in the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, which created the platform for national migration policy development and coordination of the state and non-state actors work in the migration field (The State of Migration 2015, 11). The circular migration policy was integrated in the first Migration Strategy of Georgia 2013-2015 by the SCMI. Second, international organizations actively started lobbying for the circular migration policy developments. Particularly, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) put significant efforts into the design and implementation of the piloted circular migration schemes. Their efforts facilitated the state institutional capacity building through policy-oriented learning and the further policy implications for implementation (Temur Goginovi pers.comm.)

The following sections highlight and evaluate the main challenges to policy implementation.

**(1) Interstate negotiations and bilateral agreements.** The first important step to initiate the regulated circular migration schemes between the EU and Georgia is a bilateral agreement between Georgia and the particular EU Member State. The EU Mobility



for Partnerships is a comprehensive migration policy framework for the EU Member States; however, migration is in the domain of the individual member states' competence. Unfortunately, at present, Georgia only has one official agreement and that is with France, signed in 2009, "on the temporal stay of Georgian qualified specialists and students in France, annual quota 500 high skilled professionals and 150 students was determined" (Archil Karaulashvili pers. comm). The agreement was not ratified because of the already discussed reason. However, there are positive signs that the ratification process will be completed soon (Archil Karaulashvili, pers. Comm.).

The Migration Strategy 2016-2020 Action Plan explicitly maps the EU Member States, namely Poland and Estonia and determines the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia as the responsible institution to conduct the negotiations on bilateral agreements on circular migration regulated programs. Such agreements open the legal employment avenues for the Georgian citizens and ensure their social and labor security. The importance of such official bilateral agreements for the implementation of the regulated labor migration programs was stressed by both international organizations, specifically by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) (Interviews with program managers of the IOM and GIZ).

Why the bilateral agreements are important? The bilateral agreements give the opportunity to migrants' source and receiving states to determine the concrete needs and set rules for labor circulation. "This brings the relationship in circular migration policy area to particular level, giving your country work force to get employed in the destination country with simplified ways" (Interview with program director at IOM). The second important aspect of the bilateral agreement is the social security agreement that should protect the labor migrants' rights during and after the migration period (Interview with IOM). All interviewees highlighted the importance of the social security agreement.

It is true that the Association Agreement (AA) between the European Union and Georgia fully entered into force on July 1 2016 clearly emphasizes the importance of the regulated migration, including the circular migration schemes between the member states and Georgia. Article 15 quests for the “Cooperation on migration, asylum and border management, enhancement of an effective and preventive policy against illegal migration, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings including the issue of how to combat networks of smugglers and traffickers and how to protect the victims of such trafficking” (AA 2016, 11). However, the circular emigration regulated schemes request not for such general provision, but rather concrete bilateral agreements.

The interviews conducted at the Parliament of Georgia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized that the EU Member Countries have not expressed strong interest in cooperation with Georgia in circular migration policy area. At the present period, none of the official ongoing negotiations is happening (Interviews at the Georgian Parliament and Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

On the same questions the interviews conducted in the international organizations makes clear that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been strongly lobbying for signing the bilateral agreement with the Poland and presently has been closely collaborating with the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs (MoLSHA) (Interview at IOM). Interview with the head of the labor department at MoLSHA revealed that negotiations on partnership are planned with several countries, including Poland (Interviews at the MoLSHA). However, to present time the bilateral agreements have not been concluded with any of the EU Member States.

**(2) Lack of institutional capacity and legal framework to facilitate the circular migration schemes.** Prior to the 2013 the state institutions did not have a clear vision and any experience in the field of circular migration policy. “The circular migration policy was

incorporated into Georgian first Migration Strategy 2013-2015, but before the first piloted circular migration project implemented with Germany, we did not have any activity in this area and any related experience” (Temur Goginovi pers.comm.). All respondents share this opinion and argue that the piloted projects supported the capacity building of the institutions, however, these interventions had only piloted character and in order to launch the circular migration schemes, the government should facilitate the process by creating a legal framework and institutional infrastructure that can regulate and monitor the circular migration schemes (Interviews with the international organizations).

It is certainly obvious that the piloted projects have facilitated the institutional capacity building of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs (MoLSHA) which is primary responsible for the circular migration policy. Despite the fact that the head and one of the senior specialists are knowledgeable and well-informed about the circular migration policy related issues, the human resource of the ministry is scarce and is not enough to initiate, coordinate and monitor the policy activities. Presently, the head of the Labor Department at MoLSHA and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have been advocating for the establishment of the separate institutional unit in the MoLSHA responsible for labor migration related issues (Interview with program directors at IOM and head of the labor department at MOLSHA).

In addition, the state and private employment agencies capacities are weak and have not been used yet in administration of the circular migration schemes. Presently, there are 69 employment centers spread throughout the country, which assist the jobseekers to find employment not only in Georgia, but also abroad. “This means that their capacity should be strengthened and their engagement in the administration process of the circular migration schemes should be promoted” (Interview with the head of the labor department at MOLSHA).

Not less important actors in this process are the private employment companies. “Without their engagement it is impossible to think about the circular migration policy implementation (Interview with project manager at GIZ). In February 2016, some changes were adopted in the Labor Migration Law on the registration and operation of the private agencies both in Georgia and in abroad (Migration Strategy of Georgia 2016-2020). The MoLSHA has lack of monitoring mechanisms (Interview with Irma Tsereteli at GIZ). To ensure their active work, the state should build the legal framework that will regulate the operation of the employment agencies. The state should put into place monitoring mechanisms to oversee the working process of the employment companies and ensure the protection of labor migrants’ rights abroad (Interview in MoLSHA).

To summarize, after implementation of the first pilot project with Germany, the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) delegated the labor migration governance related issues to the Ministry of (MoLSHA), which is primary responsible for implementation of the Migration Strategy Action Plan on circular migration policy (Migration Strategy 2016-2020 Action Plan 2018). However, the institutional infrastructure and legal framework is not sufficient and strong enough to implement the regulated circular migration schemes.

**(3) Lack of the strong labor market analysis and the problem of the skills mismatch.** Both piloted projects revealed that the country lacks a reliable mechanism of data regarding the labor market. It is not possible to get explicit information on the labor surplus in particular professions and to evaluate the exact qualifications of the jobseekers. The labor market analysis is important also to prevent the outflow of Georgian labor force with the professions, which are particularly in demand in Georgia.

The recruitment of the requested skilled labor force for Germany and Poland was problematic for both projects. In both project the initial aim was to recruit the unemployed people, but as it was impossible to requite sufficient unemployed but skilled individuals, the

implementing organizations made a decision to recruit the active welders, nurses and hospitality professionals. (IOM project presentations emailed to author on May 8, 2018; Goose 2016). “In Georgia the labor market analysis can be decisive. For example, we knew that there were 20.000 unemployed persons with the nurse qualifications. However, we had serious problems to recruit 20 nurses with the relevant qualification, language knowledge and work experience as requested by Germany” (Interview with project manager at GIZ). The additional barrier in the case of Germany case was the language barrier. The selected workforce went through the German language course, which commanded the additional resources and time. In the case of Poland, the language issue was not so significant, as the simple communication level knowledge of Russian language is enough to execute the job related tasks (Interview with the project beneficiary). Despite their work experience, in both projects the selected circular migrants went through a pre-departure and after-arrival professional training programs

**(4) Return and reintegration of the returned circular migrants.** The Georgian government was aware about the risks of brain drain that could be caused by the circular migration policy and the importance of the incentives for circular migrants’ successful return and reintegration (Archil Karaulashvili pers. Comm.). The piloted projects proved that particularly the project implementers faced difficulties in case of Germany.

After the completion of the project in 2016, project participants, Georgian labor migrants with the nurse qualifications refused to return to Georgia and prolonged their legal work and stay in Germany. In case of the hospitality professionals, the project implementing organization managed to motivate their return by ensuring their employment in the country’s leading hospitality private companies and in addition by paying the bonus salaries. “In the case of the hospitality professionals, the circular migration definitely had triple win affect for all engaged parities and the migrant’s successful return and reintegration in

Georgia happened. But it should be mentioned that it did happen only for a very small number of people and because we invested a lot of human and financial resources” (Interview at GIZ, May, 2018).

In the case of Poland, after the first circular migration of a six-month long stay in Poland, all circular migrants successfully returned to Georgia. Despite their significant efforts to find permanent employment, they were not successful. This factor was the main reason for their decision to migrate again to Poland for another year (Interview with the project beneficiaries). Recently, the IOM has started working with private companies to engage the private sector in the process that will increase the chances for the circular migrants’ successful integration into the Georgian labor market after their return.

Recently state has been running state programs on reintegration of the returned migrants. However, the programs target the specifically illegal returned migrants and aims at their economic empowerment (Interview at the Ministry of Refugees). Acknowledging the scarce demographic picture of Georgia, the return and reintegration of the circular migrants should be carefully considered in the policy implementation process by all engaged parties.

### **3.1.3 The policy maintenance and the rational of its continuation**

The comparative analysis of the Migration Strategy 2013-2015 and the Strategy of 2016-2018 demonstrates that the circular migration policy presently has received more attention. In the first migration strategy document the circular migration mentioned under Article 4.1.1 on Temporary Legal Employment Abroad had general and descriptive character (The Migration Strategy of Georgia 2013–2015:11). The new Migration Strategy of 2016-2020 places the circular migration policy under the Article on migration and development and while providing clear steps for the policy implementation which include

the mapping of the concrete EU States for partnership, specific legislative and administrative changes, institutional capacity building of the state institutions, as well as multi-stakeholder partnership and engagement of international organizations, not leaving out the private sector in the implementation of circular migration schemes (Migration Strategy of Georgia 2016-2020, 36).

The conducted interviews in the State Migration Commission, the Ministry of the International Affairs and the Committee of European Integration at the Georgian Parliament reveal the reasons why recently the circular migration has gained more interest from the policy makers. Temur Goginov, who participated in the preparation of both migration strategies, argues that since 2016 the policy has gained institutional importance because of the two reasons: first, the Visa Liberalization Action Plan with the EU, which was implemented in the parallel to the Migration Strategy, incentivized the Georgian government to draw attention to the circular migration policy. Consequently, the Migration Strategy Action Plan 2018 has paid particular attention to the regulated labor migration between EU and Georgia. Second important reason was the gained experience from the implemented piloted projects. “We acknowledged that the circular migration schemes are an effective ways to regulate the legal labor migration. These reasons strengthened the importance of the circular migration policy and we expanded this issue in the new migration strategy. We have planned ambitious plans in this direction (Interview with Temur Goginovi at SCMI, May 2018).

In February 2017, the EU granted “”visa liberalization to Georgia, visa free travel to the Schengen area for short stays of up to 90 days” (EC Statement, 2017). During the first year, the large number of Georgian citizens traveled to EU. The first deputy chair of the healthcare and social issues committee at Georgian parliament argues that the first big wave of Georgian citizens’ travel to EU after the visa liberalization regime was predictable, as it

happened in all countries that got visa free regime with the EU. He predicts that the wave will weaken (Interview at the Parliament, May 2018).

The head of the Committee of the European Integration at the Georgian Parliament stated that the interest towards the labor migration in the EU countries is high among the Georgian citizens and the legal mechanisms that will support their legal employment in EU member states is correspondingly, important. She argues that there is not direct connection between the visa liberalization regime between the EU and Georgia and legal labor migration. However, she suggests that definitely there is a connection. Nowadays Georgian citizens have free access to EU member states and they have more opportunities to find employment and the legal labor migration schemes will support their employment in the EU (Interview at the Committee of the European Integration at the Georgian Parliament, May 2018).

The Director General for European Integration at MFA, Archil Karaulashvili thinks that the re-emergence interest to the circular migration policy is closely related to the visa liberalization process. “Visa free regime with EU has its threats. Unfortunately, there are cases when the Georgian citizens refuted the conditions of visa free travel within the EU, which does not grant citizens the work permit and legally stay in the member countries over 90 days” (Interview with Archil Karaulashvili, May 2018). He thinks that it is in Georgia’s interest to reduce the risks of illegal overstay in EU countries and promote the legal employment through strengthening the policies that assist to intensify the opportunities for legal employment.

The interviews at the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs (MoLSHA) also highlighted that the regulated labor migration policy is significantly stipulated by the visa free regime with EU. The interest towards the EU member countries as the destination country is high among the Georgian citizens. “This is public information and you might



know that we have problems concerning the illegal labor migration of Georgian citizens to EU countries, especially after Visa free regime to European Union. Unfortunately, some Georgian citizens abused the visa liberalization conditions and prolonged illegally their stay in EU countries mainly for the employment purposes” (Interview with Giorgi Bunturi, May 3, 2018). The ministry as the key state institution in implementation of the circular migration policy estimates the circular migration schemes as one of the realistic mechanisms that will facilitate the Georgian citizens to enter the EU labor market without the labor test and additional labor permits. These conditions are regulated by the bilateral agreements between the Georgian and EU member states (Interview with Giorgi Bunturi, May 3, 2018). The Ministry plans to take active measures in circular migration policy implementation process in 2018 (Interview with head of the Labor Department, at MoLSHA; Migration Strategy 2016-2020 Action Plan 2018)

### **3.2 Analysis**

The Georgian government with high enthusiasm and particular expectations joined the EU Mobility for Partnerships (MfP) initiative. The circular migration policy as a key aspect of the new political framework was quickly recognized and rapid steps were made for policy adoption. Georgia signed the “Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the European Union and Georgia” in 2009 and engaged in negotiations with France on Mobility Partnership bilateral agreement, which was signed in 2013. The policy rapid adoption was stipulated by several supportive factors. The policy was aimed at promoting the legal employment for Georgian citizens’ in EU through regulated bilateral working schemes. It bore promising perspectives to tackle the demographic, economic and social problems related to the long-term, permanent and illegal migration of Georgian citizens abroad.

The political context strongly favored policy rapid adoption. Despite the fact that Georgia was closely cooperating with EU on migration related issues in the framework of the ENP (priority area 4: integrated border management), new initiative was additional avenue for continuation of the unwavering political process of close cooperation with the EU and Member States. The national mood<sup>1</sup> supported any initiative to build close political cooperation with the EU. The Georgian government was convinced that the window of the opportunity should be used by joining the EU Mobility for Partnerships (MfP) initiative. However, due to the exogenous and endogenous reasons, between 2009 and 2013 the Georgian Government could not reach any significant results in circular migration policy area. The exogenous reasons such as the Financial Crisis of 2008 and European Migration Crisis decreased the EU Member States interest to Mobility Partnerships. On the other hand, Georgia was not institutionally ready to implement the regulated bilateral working schemes with the EU.

The circular migration policy was eventually reactivated in the migration policy of Georgia in 2013 that was facilitated by state institutions capacity building in migration management. The significant factor was the establishment of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) in 2010, which created the platform for national migration policy development, and coordination of the state and non-state actors work in the migration field. The circular migration policy was integrated in the first Migration Strategy of Georgia 2013-2015 by the SCMI. Moreover, international organizations actively started lobbying for the circular migration policy developments putting significant efforts into the design and implementation of the piloted circular migration schemes.

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<sup>1</sup> 77% of citizens of Georgia support Georgia's integration in EU and NATO <http://infocenter.gov.ge/1126-77-evrokavshirshi-kholo-66-natoshi-saqarthvelos-gatsevrebas-utcers-mkhars.html>

The piloted circular migration schemes reveal certain challenges and call for the necessary measures. Georgia presently faces difficulties in policy implementation. The first, Georgian government needs to intensify the interstate negotiations to conclude the bilateral agreements on circular migration schemes primarily with the EU Countries Georgia already have tested the programs. Secondly, the institutional infrastructure and legal framework is not sufficient to implement regulated circular migration schemes. The capacity building of the state institutions and employment agencies as well as an active engagement of private employment agencies are crucially important for administration of such schemes. In addition, the existing system of labor market analysis should be improved and the migrants' recruitment and preparation system should be designed. In addition, the last, but most important, acknowledging Georgia's scarce demographic picture, the circular migrants' return and reintegration aspect should be carefully considered during concluding the bilateral agreements and designing the concrete circular migration schemes.

The research findings show that presently circular migration policy has gained particular interest. The international organizations and piloted circular migration projects implemented in multi stakeholder partnerships supported policy-oriented learning. There is an experience how the system works, what are the challenges and potentials. Furthermore, the visa liberalization with EU incentivized the Georgian government to draw attention to the policies that will promote legal employment opportunities for Georgian citizens in the EU.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of the present thesis was to analyze the main developments and challenges of the circular migration policy in Georgia from 2009 to present. In particular, the thesis intended first, to find the main rationales circumstances for the circular migration policy adoption in Georgia; second, to reveal the challenges related to the policy implementation process; and, third, to elaborate on the reasons for the presently reemerged political interest in the policy.

The conducted research has certain limitations. The circular migration policy perspectives and implementation related challenges are evaluated unilaterally from the perspective of Georgia. For more comprehensive analysis, the research should be expanded to the EU Member States level, particularly to the countries engaged in the piloted projects (Germany and Poland). This extended analysis, however was beyond the scope of the present thesis, but is recommended for future research on the topic.

The value of this research is threefold. The present thesis, to the best of my knowledge, is the first attempt to conduct the country-specific research on the circular migration policy developments and challenges in Georgia. The thesis contributes to fill the gap in the circular migration policy related literature, which is particularly scarce in 2013-2018. Second important contribution of the thesis is that it identifies the topics for further research. Last, and most importantly, the main findings and the analysis of the thesis contribute to the evidence-based and informed policy-making in the future on circular migration issues in Georgia

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## **Appendices 1.**

### **List of the Interviewees**

#### **Piloted Project beneficiaries:**

1. Beneficiary of the project
2. Beneficiary of the project

#### **International Organizations:**

3. Irma Tsereteli, *Director of Center for Migration and Development of GIZ (CIM/GIZ)*
4. Natia Kvitsiani, *National Programme Manager, International Organisation for Migration (IOM)*

#### **Experts:**

5. Lasha Lagidze, *Expert in labor migration issues, The International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (ISET)*
6. Temur Goginovi, *Expert in Analytical Issues, Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI)/Public Service Development Agency*

#### **State Institutions:**

7. Archil Karaulashvili, *Director General for European Integration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (MFA)*
8. *First Deputy Chairman of the Healthcare and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Georgia*
9. Elza Jgerenaia, *Head of the Labor Department, Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLSHA)*
10. Giorgi Bunturi, *Senior Specialist at the Labor Department, Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLSHA)*
11. *Chairman of the European Integration Committee, Parliament of Georgia*
12. Rusudan Asatini, *Head of the Migration Department, Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA)*