

# SKILLED MIGRATION IN GEORGIA AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT

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**ABSTRACT:** *In this paper we investigate the economic preconditions for the skilled migration emergence in Republic of Georgia. We analyze the impact of the new visa regulation on the immigration in the country by focusing on the returned migration and the skilled migration, represented by experts from different areas of competence. The latest group has been exhaustively studied along the country in order to analyze how it contributes to the current transformation of the Georgian society in its own route to EU integration.*

**Keywords:** *Return and skilled migration, Georgian development, New visa regulation*

## INTRODUCTION

Georgian migration has been the topic of intensive investigation during the last several years (Jasnova 2012, Collyer 2013, Zurabishvili 2013, Badurashvili 2015). According to some surveys, presented in these publications, the Georgian potential migrants are divided into two subgroups: prospective migrants (with an intention to migrate) and non-migrants (with no intention to migrate), with almost one third of people aged 18–50 years being as prospective migrants and 11.4% being ready to migrate at any moment. The tendency to (re)migrate is particularly high (close to 50%) among returnees, thus indicating a circular pattern. The intention to go abroad is most likely expressed by young single people (more men than women) with lower and upper secondary general or vocational education, by people from urban areas more than from the capital Tbilisi and rural areas and by unemployed people (Jasnova 2012).

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From the other side, the people who have worked abroad and have returned, gained experience and skills, such as language, vocational/technical, entrepreneurship, higher professional skills as well as skills related to workplace organization, culture and ethics.

The recent economic and social development of Georgia, campaigned by several bilateral programs between several countries, has attracted professionals from abroad in order to accelerate the country transformation in its route to EU integration.

The aim of this paper is to focus on this specific skilled migration in the Georgian context. For this aim a detailed analysis of the skilled migration in the country by making surveys with different groups of skilled migrants from different countries has been performed.

The paper is organized as follows. The next second Section is a short introduction to recent the Georgian economic development. The third Section represents the main characteristics of the Georgian migration phenomena, by focusing later to the return migration, the effect of the new visa regulation, the language difficulties for foreign migrants and presenting finally the results of the surveys regarding the skilled migration. The final conclusions are presented in the last Section.

## ECONOMIC PRECONDITIONS FOR THE SKILLED MIGRATION EMERGENCE

Republic of Georgia is located between Asia and Europe having neighbors as Turkey to the southwest, Azerbaijan to the east, Russia to the north and Armenia to the south. It is a country that become independent from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Georgian's population for 2014 amounts of a total 4.490.500 people, almost equally distributed in urban and rural areas (Table 1). The natural increase shows a negative trend for Guria, Imereti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions, while the city of Tbilisi, Adjara and Kvemo Kartli show a good positive trend of the population natural increase. There is no data for the region of Abkhazia, because it is not under the control of the central Government (National Statistics Office of Georgia).

The distribution of unemployed population by regions corresponding to 2014 is given in the following Fig. 1.

The highest unemployment rate is observed in the city of Tbilisi (29,1%) and Adjara region (18.1%), while the distribution of the unemployment rate by age groups is given in Fig. 2, showing the highest value for young people aged between 15 and 24 years.

Like other former Soviet Union countries, Georgia's economy initially suffered from the breakdown of the centrally-planned economy that had its impact on the country and city changes. After the Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgia started a series of reforms including anti-corruption measures, labor and tax reforms and improved in general the country's infrastructure. The Georgian tax system was simplified, customs duties were reduced and all procedures for granting licenses and permits were simplified. Georgia also improved access to credit by implementing a central electronic database as well as strengthened investors protections by allowing access to corporate information.

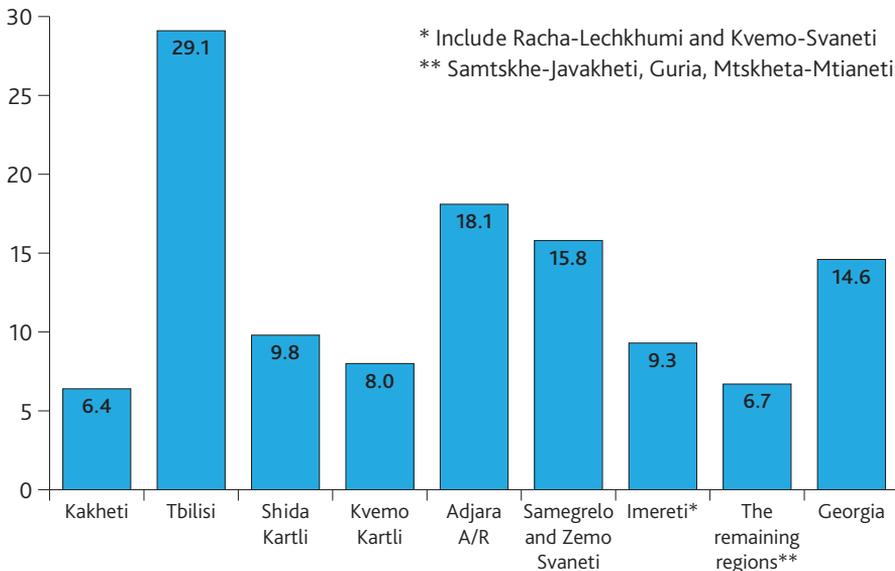
**Table 1.** The Georgian population by regions (in thousands)

Regions	2014		
	Total	Urban	Rural
Georgia	4.490,5	2.411,7	2.078,8
Tbilisi. City of	1.175,2	1.144,4	30,8
Abkhazia, Autonomous Republic of	...	...	...
Adjara, Autonomous Republic of	396,6	198,7	197,9
Guria, Region of	138,8	36,8	102,0
Imereti, Region of	703,3	336,4	366,9
Kakheti, Region of	405,0	83,4	321,6
Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Region of	108,8	26,9	81,9
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, Region of	45,9	9,1	36,8
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Region of	476,3	191,9	284,4
Samtskhe-Javakheti, Region of	213,7	66,2	147,5
Kvemo Kartli, Region of	513,1	196,6	316,5
Shida Kartli, Region of	313,8	121,3	192,5

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

These reforms attracted a large influx of foreign direct investments (FDI) and a positive GDP growth (Fig. 3).

After a steep decline of economic growth in 2008, Georgian GDP growth quickly bounced back to 6.4% in 2010 and 7.0% in 2011.

**Fig. 1.** Distribution of unemployed population by regions in 2013, %

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

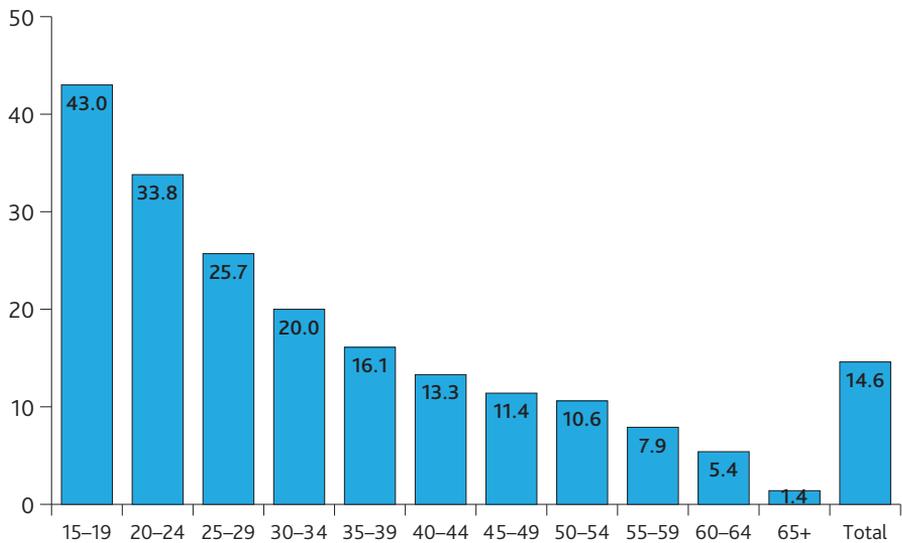


Fig. 2. Distribution of the unemployment rate by age groups in 2013, %

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

A distribution of the GDP by sectors, corresponding to 2013 is given in Fig. 4, where the predominance of the Trade and Industry sectors is observed with potential economic activities in the agriculture and food industry, mining industry, wine production, chemicals, machine tools and equipments, wood industry, steel, textile and wood productions (National Statistics Office of Georgia).

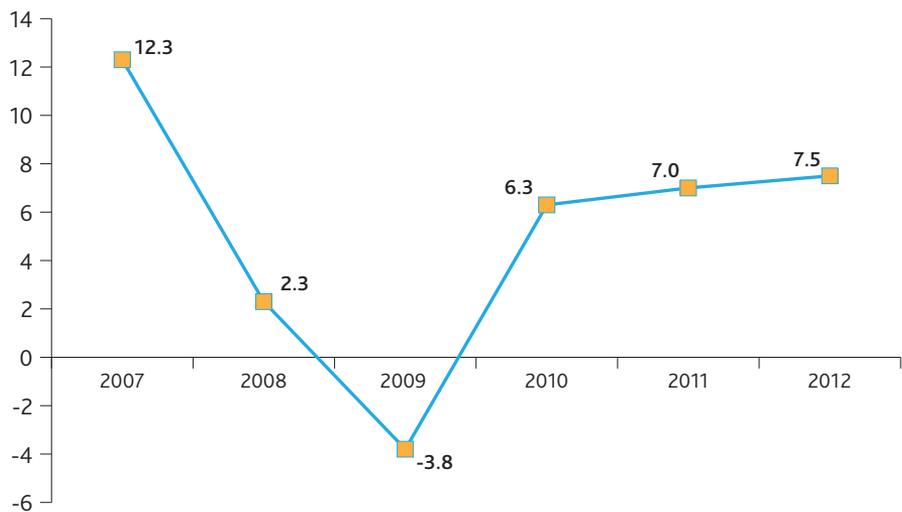


Fig. 3. Georgian real GDP

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

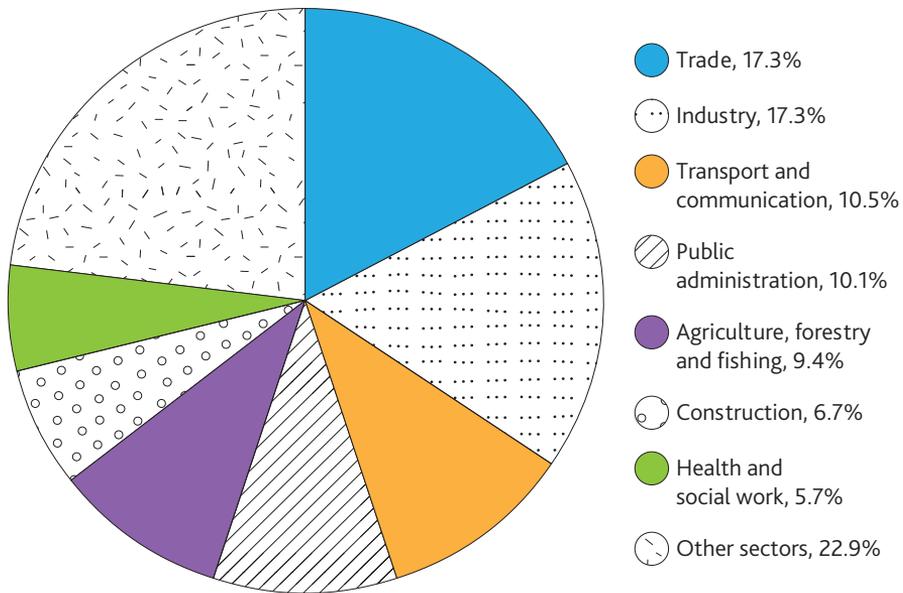


Fig. 4. Georgian GDP by sectors corresponding to 2013, %

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

When regarding the Georgian GDP by sectors, the Gross Value in millions of USD, added by regions in 2013 was 4800, corresponding to the city of Tbilisi, 1200 to Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, 850 to Kvemo Kartli, 750 to Adjara, 650 to Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, 590 to Shida Kartli and Mtskheta-Mtianeti, 550 to Kakheti, 290 to Samtskhe-Javakheti and finally 200 millions of USD, corresponding to the region of Guria.

The fastest growing sectors are Finances, Manufacturing, Trade, Hotel & Restaurants, and Real Estate. Foreign Direct Investment has been fairly modest at average levels of USD 800 million annually, mainly concentrated in the capital Tbilisi (National Statistics Office of Georgia).

Georgian economic output consists of 9.3% agricultural production, 23.5% manufacturing and 67.1% services. During the last several years, industrial output has been growing at a faster pace than other sectors of the economy, showing growth rates of 17.7% in 2010 and 22.5% in 2011. Manufacture of base metals and fabricated metal products increased from GEL 234 million in 2009, which is approximately around USD 100 million, to GEL 523.7 million in 2011 (USD 220 million), while petrochemical industry increased from GEL 235.4 million in 2009 (USD 100 million) to GEL 478.9 in 2011 (USD 200 million).

The evolution of the turnover in the business sector during the last decade is represented in Fig. 5 (National Statistics Office of Georgia).

Retail trade is the second largest economic sector in Georgia. Output has been increasing steadily since 2009, with an average annual growth of 17.9%. Including wholesale trade, fuel and repairs, the trade sector accounts for 17.3% of national GDP, illustrating its importance to the economy of the country. With a 72.6%, Tbilisi has a dominating

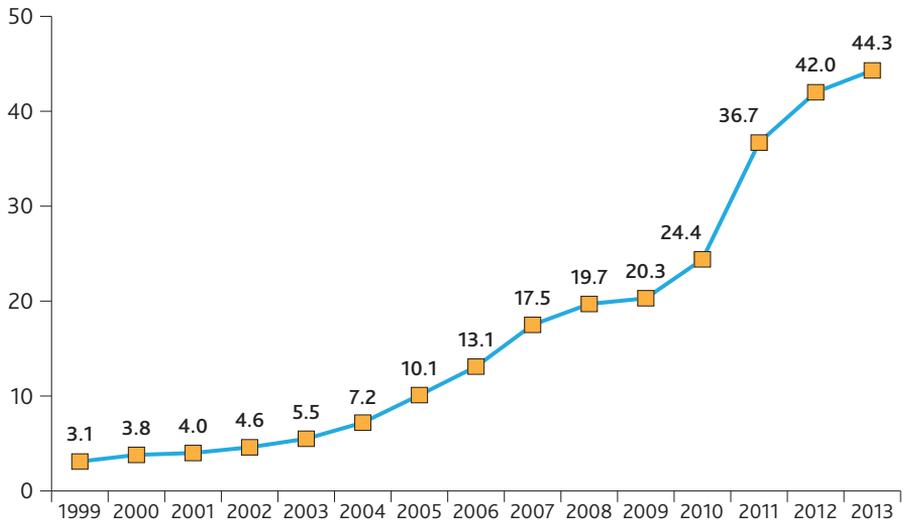


Fig. 5. Georgian Turnover in business sector (Billion GEL)

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

position in the trade economy of Georgia, and the sector accounts for around 25% of Tbilisi GDP. Trade is growing fast in other regions of the country as well, mainly in Imereti (Kutaisi) and Adjara (Batumi) (GNIA 2014).

Regarding the transport, rail and ferry connect the Georgian Black Sea ports in Poti and Batumi with the ports in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, making Georgia an important and strategic transit country. Direct rail connections exist between Georgia and Armenia. Georgia has airports in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Senaki and Batumi. (GNIA 2014).

The sharp growth of transit flows and completion of vital transport links provide a strong demand for the development of modern warehouse & logistics facilities in Georgia, which amounts of about 286,736 sqm. The largest development potential is in the capital Tbilisi and nearby the city of Rustavi, with smaller opportunities in the port city of Poti.

One of the main priorities of the Government is the improvement of the telecommunications and the country's infrastructure for the further development of Georgia's tourism sector, where national and foreign investments are encouraged.

Georgia is experiencing a tourism boom since 2009. Only during the period 2009-2011, the number of guests in accommodation facilities increased by 140%. As a result, the average national hotel occupancy rate increased to 36% in 2011. In the capital Tbilisi, demand has grown almost four times faster than supply, resulting in an average occupancy rate of 58% in 2011. Tourism demand is growing even faster in other parts of the country, such as the Black Sea coast resorts of Batumi and Kobuleti, the Kakheti region and Kutaisi (GNIA 2014).

The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) shows a relatively stable growth after the sharp decrease after 2009 (Fig. 6), while the major direct investor countries are the following ones (Fig. 7).

Georgia acts as a gateway between the Europe and Asia providing benefits to investors in the manufacturing sector. It offers competitive labor and energy costs, logistics

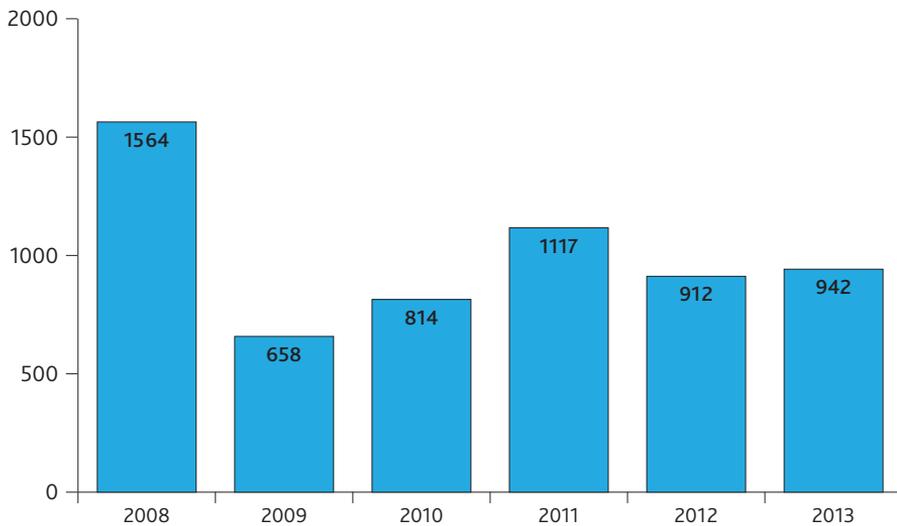


Fig. 6. Foreign Direct Investment in million USD (2008-2013)

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

network and business friendly environment. Country's current advantages in terms of handling large transshipment flows, business stability and low cost of power provide opportunities for the industry production of iron, steel and aluminum among others (GNIA 2014).

The FDI by economic sectors are given in Fig. 8 (National Statistics Office of Georgia).

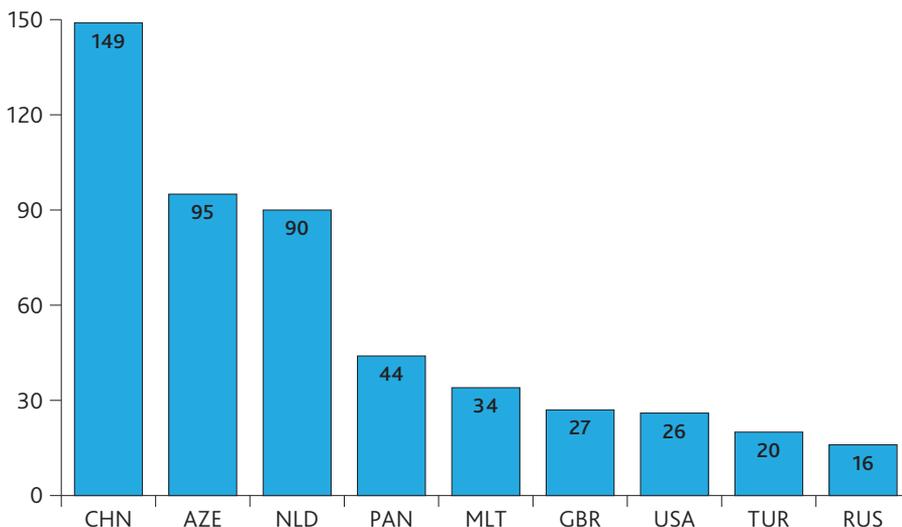


Fig. 7. Major Direct Investor countries for Q3-2014 in millions USD

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

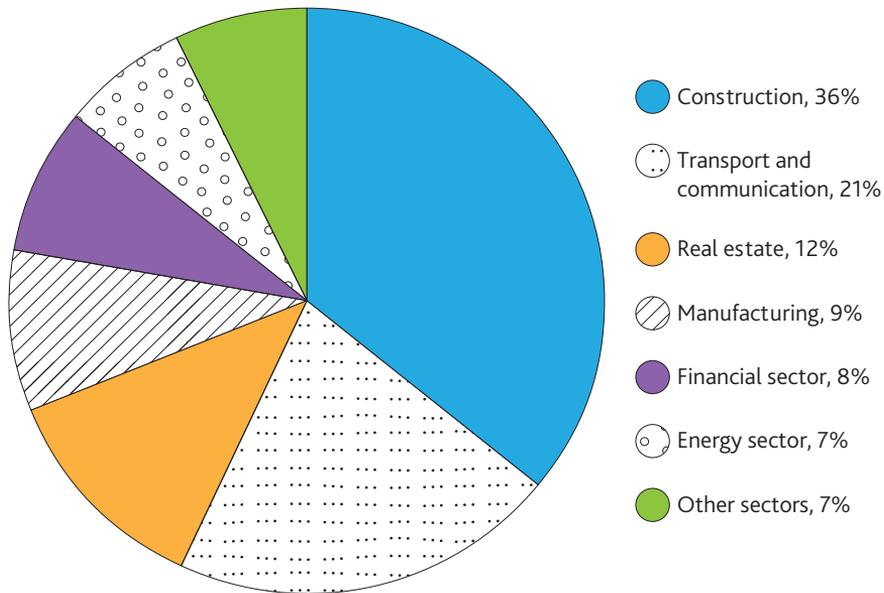


Fig. 8. FDI for Q3-2014, %

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

The Co-Investment Fund has been established in September 2013. It is based on the country's dedicated private equity and provides opportunities to investors to get exposure to the Georgian economy. It is fully privately owned and set up according to international best practices as a limited partnership and based on a professional management team with years of international investment experience. The total commitments of the Fund are of USD\$6Bn.

The Investment Criteria are based on the kind of Industries (Energy and Infrastructure, Manufacturing, Hospitality and Real Estate, Agriculture and Logistics), Investment Restrictions (trading, retail, residential real estate development, gambling, transit, Working capital financing, Speculative investments) or Investment Type (startups, new projects, expansion, turnaround, reorganization, etc.) among many others. Minimum Investment Size is of US \$5M. The investment period is of 5 years.

Hospitality & Real Estate is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Georgian economy. During the period 2000-2013, the number of visitors increased 13 times reaching 5.4M.

Key sector opportunities to invest in are: hotels located in Tbilisi, seaside hotels, mountain and alpine ski hotels, Spa hotels, regional hotels, leisure, entertainment and commercial facilities (GCF 2014).

The second fastest growing sector of the Georgian economy and an opportunity to invest is the Agriculture, due to the country strategic geographic location and extensive micro-climatic zones. In this activity, the Georgian Co-Investment Fund is offering import substitution opportunities, export opportunities, spanning agriculture value chain and a transit hub.

Finally, the Manufacturing sector is a good investment opportunity sector due to the country's strategic geographic location, the competitive labor cost, the low energy cost, the investor-friendly climate, the efficient taxation system and the liberal regulatory environment. The capital Tbilisi and other big Georgian cities are currently attracting investor capital and continuously changing and improving due to the effective and transparent administration, good regulation and geographical position (Lasalle 2012).

## GEORGIAN MIGRATION PANORAMA AND ITS IMPACT

During the last two decades, Georgia faced a series of political crises that had their impact on the country's economy, the urban composition and migration.

According to the European Training Foundation project, launched in 2011 and researching the relationship between migration, development and skills, almost 30% of people aged between 18 and 50 years living in Georgia intend to go abroad and 11.4% of them are ready to migrate at any moment (Bardak 2011).

The intention to emigrate is highest for single young men with lower and secondary education, being primarily from rural and urban areas rather than from the capital Tbilisi, who have a poorly paid jobs or are unemployed.

According to the data, given by the Georgian National Statistics Office, the distributions of the emigrants/immigrants by sex, age and citizenship, corresponding to 2013, are given in the following Figs. 9 and 10.

The circular character of the migration pattern is represented by about 25% of the returned migrants, the later being mostly from rural areas, generally married with children.

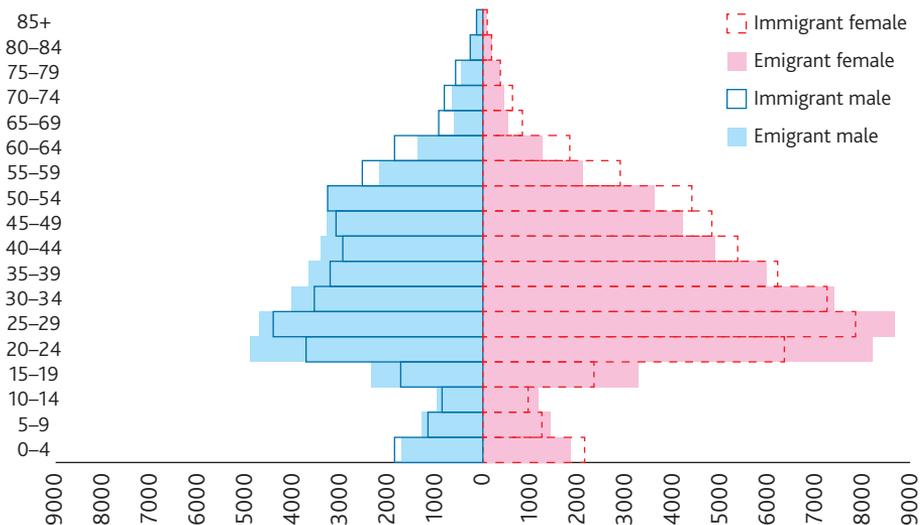


Fig. 9. Emigrants/Immigrants by sex and age for 2013

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

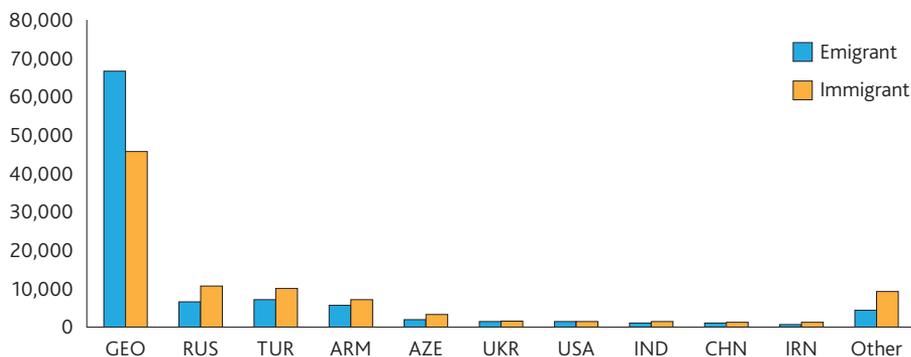


Fig. 10. Emigrants/Immigrants by citizenship for 2013

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

In general, the Georgian migrants are relatively well educated, almost 30% have university education and another 30% have vocational education, being the female migrants better educated than males in both the potential and returned migrant groups.

Countries are quite diverse. The preferred destinations for migrants with low and intermediate education level, according to the ETF research, are Turkey (32%), Russia (29%) and Greece (13%), being Turkey a top destination due to the lack of visa requirements for Georgian citizens, while better educated people tend to prefer the USA, Italy or Germany as an emigration destination (Jasnova et al. 2012, Collyer 2013).

The migration period of the Georgian migrants is in average around three years per migration period, being the main reason for return predominantly personal /family reasons, accompanied by difficulties regarding work and legal status. Usually, most of the migrants rely on informal contacts and help from family or friends already living abroad.

The main sectors of employment abroad are domestic service for female returnees and construction for males. Due to the rather high educational background of the Georgian migrants, many of them, 48% from the ETF statistics, had working experience abroad

below their education level, which is even more pronounced in the case of female migrants (70%), who are usually characterized by a higher education level (Jasnova et al. 2012).

On the other side, the experience abroad has enriched the migration pattern through formal training, language training, vocational training, workplace organization, culture and entrepreneurship skills.

The number of students studying abroad and foreign students studying in Georgia during the last academic year (2013-2014) is represented in Fig. 11, where an important predominance of foreign students is observed (National Statistics Office of Georgia). This has a positive impact on the city composition and changes can be seen as a converging factor towards European and World-wide education apart of being an important diversity factor.

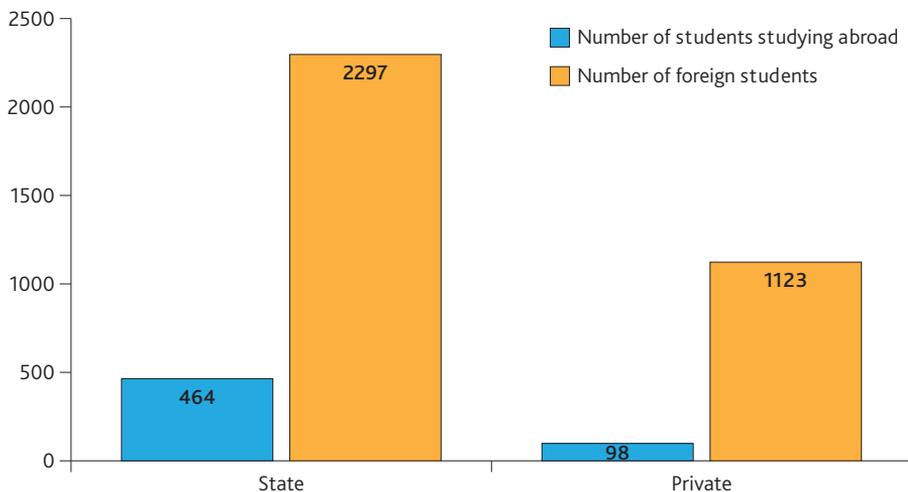


Fig. 11. Number of students studying abroad and foreigner students studying in Georgia (2013-2014)

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

### Return migration to Georgia

Taking in mind the previously described emigration panorama, it is obvious that the return migration faces a lot of challenges. According to the ETF survey (Bardak, 2011), only around 30% of the returnees manage to find a job after return and around half of them have the same job before and after migration due to the poor conditions of domestic labor market. In general, the experience of living and working abroad has helped them to have some improvements, being most of the return migrants wage employees, while around 12% have started their own business.

As a general rule, the educated people tend to enjoy a more successful return than less educated people, the later facing a series of difficulties to fit into the Georgian labor market.

In this sense, more support for the creation of employment and job opportunities in terms of job-matching and placement services and labor market management, increasing legal labor circular mobility with a gradual liberalization of entry visas for beneficial migration and sustainable return are necessary.

Recently, a comparative analysis of the migration patterns has been done between Georgia, Armenia and Morocco (Collyer 2013). The long and relatively regular character of the Moroccan migration phenomena, accompanied by longer migration periods mainly to EU destinations and by the larger migrant networks abroad are the main factors that contribute for the increase the benefits. At the same time, the relatively recent Armenian and Georgian migration phenomena, characterized by shorter periods abroad and destinations outside the EU is represented by smaller migrant networks and higher education levels of migrants shows less benefits and satisfaction among the mi-

gration pattern. Actually, Georgia has the lowest success rate due to the higher percentage of female migrant workers, who generally had a higher level of education, but have worked in less skilled jobs, mainly related with the domestic sector.

In 2009, Georgia entered into a mobility partnership with the European Union. Within this frame, the Center for International Migration and Development (CIM), which is promoting cooperation between the German and other Governments in the area of global migration for sustainable development. It is supporting Georgia with a pilot migration project referring to return and circular migration between Germany and Georgia (CIM 2013).

The return migration to Georgia is one of the main tasks of the pilot project “Strengthening the Development Potential of the EU Mobility Partnership in Georgia through targeted Circular Migration and Diaspora Mobilization”. With an estimate of 25 percent of all Georgians living abroad, Diaspora mobilization plays a major part in the frame of this pilot project (CIM 2013).

CIM is offering an information and support on starting up an own business or/and to find a job in Georgia. In addition to placement and advisory services, the program offers financial support to experts interested in returning to Georgia.

Especially, every year there are around 30 Georgian citizens of the 25.000 Georgian citizens living in Germany, and who wish to go back to Georgia. The CIM project, supported by the German Government, which started in 2007, help them with monthly payments of between 400 and 800 euros during the first two years and by helping them to find a job. Usually about 80% of the applicants win these financial help and return to Georgia.

The profile of the returned skilled migrants is mainly represented by Georgians who have been educated in Germany in the area of Social Sciences and who are not willing to work as entrepreneurs once back in Georgia (CIM 2013).

It is believed that this project will contribute to the improvement of the professional skill's levels and the country's and city's development changes towards effectiveness and innovation.

In 2009 the joint declaration on Mobility Partnership was signed between Georgia and the European Union member states, which promotes among others managing legal labor migration in the form of circular migration equally benefiting migrants, countries of origin and of destination, including the respective societies and individuals.

The circular migration project provides 40 Georgian professionals of the health-care and hospitality sector with employment/continued education opportunities in Germany.

This is supported by the CIM, the “Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit” (GIZ) and the German Federal Employment Agency.

The hospitality sector in Georgia has a big potential for development. The South Caucasian region has a long history of tourism, which is currently revitalizing after the post-soviet collapse. Tourism is one of the most important areas of the country's economy, but a lack of innovative business ideas and a skills shortage are major obstacles to the sector's development.

These are the basic points of the project based on the needs of the Georgian and German labor markets. This includes an offering of an adequate pre-departure trainings to candidates prior to their stay in Germany (German language, intercultural and profes-

sional specific training) and an offering reintegration support promoting their successful return to Georgia through the CIM advisory and placement services.

Through this action, Georgian migrants have the opportunity to enhance their skills while working in Germany and to improve their employability after their return to Georgia thus contribution to the continuous country and city changes.

### The new visa regulation

The recently started Georgian migration policy on September 1st, 2014, based on the new Law entitled “The Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons”, is a step towards a comprehensive migration strategy, which could have an effect on the future investment processes.

Under the new law, visas are divided into the following categories: A – Diplomatic, B – Special, C – Ordinary, D – Immigration and T – Transit.

- (A) Diplomatic visa is issued to officials of legislative and executive bodies of foreign countries to Georgia on state, official, business, friendly, unofficial visits, officials of the highest and high level delegations, accompanying family members or these persons, employees of diplomatic and other equivalent representative offices accredited to Georgia, to employees of representative offices of International organizations located in Georgia who were granted a diplomatic status by Georgia and to their family members, to diplomatic couriers, persons visiting Georgia on special diplomatic missions and to honorary consuls of Georgia, if they are not Georgian citizens.
- (B) Special visa is issued to members of foreign delegations, their accompanying family members and other persons, administrative, technical and service personnel of foreign diplomatic missions, consular staff and service personnel of consular offices, and to their family members, employees of international and humanitarian organizations in Georgia and their family members who live with them, persons visiting Georgia on the basis of international bilateral and multilateral treaties of Georgia, members of peace-keeping forces and other military contingents deployed on the territory of Georgia under international treaties.
- (C) Ordinary (Tourist) visa is issued to persons who visit Georgia for tourism purposes and to visit relatives and friends, freelancers (persons, whose purpose of visiting Georgia is not paid labor activity), persons coming to Georgia for business meetings and negotiations, the participants of scientific workshops, conferences and other scientific-research, pedagogical, cultural or sports events; persons coming to perform journalistic activity.
- (D) Immigration visa is issued to persons (and accompanying family members) who visit Georgia to conduct labor activities, representatives, consultants of companies or firms visiting Georgia to perform work duties, workers of mass media who visit Georgia to perform work duties, aliens who visit Georgia on the basis of labor contracts, persons who visit Georgia to conduct entrepreneurial activity, aliens who come to Georgia to study at educational institutions and to reunite with their families. This kind of visa is a precondition for issuing a residence permit. Immigration visas are always issued for a long-term.

(T) Transit visa is issued when transiting Georgia to enter a third country.

A short term visa is issued according to the length of stay requested on the visa application form, but for a stay of no more than 30 days. These are only single entry visas.

For a stay longer than 30 days, one should apply for a long term visa, which can be issued for a maximum 90 day stay within a 180 day period. This is a multiple entry visa enabling the holder to return to Georgia as many times as they like within the 180 day period, providing the total stay does not exceed 90 days.

Visa Free Nationals are subject to the same duration of stay conditions, but do not require a visa for entry. These countries are the Member countries of the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent Countries (CIS), the North Atlantic Organization (NATO), and Schengen area countries. Visa Free Nationals do not require visas to enter Georgia, but are subject to the same duration of stay provisions as Visa Nationals.

Under the new law, the following residence permits will be issued to aliens (foreigners): Work residence permit, Study residence permit, Family reunification, Residence permit of a former citizen of Georgia, Stateless person, Special residence permit, Permanent residence permit and Investment residence permit.

When applying for a Georgian Residence Permit, the applicant should first hold a valid long-term Georgian visa issued for the same purpose for which they now require a residence permit. The applicant can only apply for a residence permit while in Georgia.

Foreigners who were in Georgia under the 360 day provision (Before 01.09.2014) (whether they be a Visa National or a Visa Free National) can continue to remain in Georgia under this condition. However, after September 1st 2014, if such a person leaves Georgia, but plans to return and stay for more than 90 days, they will be required to obtain the relevant visa at the Georgian Embassy overseas. When they return to Georgia, they will then have to apply for a residence permit. All visitors must hold a passport valid for 3 months.

The residence permits given in 2014, according to their types, which amount to around 53.000, are given in the following Table 2.

**Table 2.** Residence permits according to the permit type (2014)

Permit Type	Total number
Temporary permits	34425
Permanent permits	10827
Labor permits	2804
Residence permit of former citizen of Georgia	1929
Training permits	1217
Family reunification permits	502
Special permits	196
Permanent investment permits	57
Total	52974

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

Due to the absence of norms regulating labor migration in Georgia and the need for their establishment, as well as the commitments undertaken by Georgia towards liberalization of the visa regime with the European Union, a Draft Law of Georgia on Labor Migration is currently being edited.

The draft Law intends to create efficient tools for regulating labour migration, which will facilitate development of legal labour migration in the country, and eliminate cases of illegal labour migration and trafficking. Its aim is also to fulfil the commitments undertaken under an action plan for the liberalisation of the visa regime with the European Union and to regulate labour migration processes in the country thus contributing to the country's and city's development.

The draft Law of Georgia on Labour Migration regulates matters, relations and entities that fall within the field of labour migration, defines bodies exercising government regulation in the field of labour migration and their powers, and establishes mechanisms for exercising government regulation in the field of labour migration (Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs 2014).

### Language difficulties for foreign migrants

Based in the above description of the Georgian migration phenomena and the new Immigration Law, it is interesting to investigate the skilled migration of foreigners in Georgia and its effect on the country's and city's development.

Georgia is an interesting country with his history, customs, religion or language, among many other typical characteristics. One of the main difficulties for the foreigners coming to Georgia is its language and alphabet, which date from 5th–8th centuries (Early Old Georgian) and have been improved during the time to get their present form in 17th-18th century.

According a recent survey of the CRRC-Georgia (Gutbrod and Viefhues 2010), conducted in 2008 with a small online census among mostly English-native, who were currently living in Georgia, or did it in the past, Georgian is important for daily life in the country, being especially important for social and family life, while Russian is more useful in a professional context, being the language known at better level by the participants of the survey. For those people, who had neither Russian, nor Georgian knowledge, 1% answered that it is impossible to perform daily tasks in Tbilisi without the knowledge of any of the two languages, 34% responded that it is very difficult, 54% responded that is moderately difficult and only 11% responded that it is slightly difficult to perform daily tasks. These results change for the community who had knowledge of Russian, but not Georgian and reverse. For the former group, only 2% reported that it was very difficult to perform daily tasks in Tbilisi, 26% reported that it was moderately difficult, 54% reported that for them it was slightly difficult and 18% told that they don't find any difficulties at all. For the latter group (only knowledge of Georgian, but not of Russian), the corresponding percentage of very difficult, moderately difficult, slightly difficult and no difficult at all are 1%, 18%, 52% and 29% respectively.

## Skilled Migration in Georgia - results

Skilled migration refers to any migrant who has special skills, training, knowledge, and ability. This is usually referred to as brain gain, raising thus the average level of education of the remaining population in a way that may stimulate economic growth.

Skilled migrants, who have returned after acquiring work experience abroad, generally increase their employability and entrepreneurial skills often relying to their savings to invest in business start-ups on their return. Returnees with entrepreneurial and technological skills, financial resources and networks abroad may actually boost economic development and productivity in their countries of origin. In this way, brain circulation reflects the positive aspects of movements, such as the development of expertise, business contacts, scientific exchange and cooperation and technology transfer.

It is believed that such processes are important for the city's and country's transformations and will lead to improvements of quality of life.

With the aim to research the skilled migration in Georgia and how it contributes to the country's development and especially the city changes, we have performed an extended field work and interviews by analyzing different skilled foreign immigrant groups, settled down in the following cities and country's regions (Fig. 12).

The different groups have been selected to have the largest pattern representation in order to have more complete results. The interviewed were originally from (written in alphabetic order): Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Rep., Estonia, Germany, Iraq, Israel, Italia, Lithuania, Nigeria, Spain, Turkey, UK and USA.

The main cities and regions where interviews and field work investigations have been performed are the following: Stephantsminda (Kazbegi), Juta Remote Region, Etseri (Mestia Municipality), Kutaisi, Tskaltubo, Senaki, Ozurgeti, Poti, Batumi, Borjomi, Nintsminda, Oni, Lentekhi, Signaghi, Dedoplistskaro, Gurjaani, Lagodekhi, Tsnori, Gori and Tbilisi - where the majority of the interviews have been taken.

The interviewed had their field of expertise in teaching (high school and university), research (university level), social entrepreneurship and social volunteering, medicine,



Fig. 12. Map of the performed interviews

work in international organization, engineering in international green projects, hospitality sector, international trading as well as management.

The interviewed from the represented groups of experts have demonstrated a big interest towards Georgia as a country with an important historical and cultural heritage, traditions and ethnic composition and impressive geographic resources, characterized by diversities of its landscapes. In general they find a big potential for development in almost all the economic branches and main cities. Most of them are working since several years and are willing to settle permanently in Georgia because of the safety, the effective and transparent administration, low taxes and relatively good profit margin for doing business. In general they are satisfied, they feel integrated in the Georgian society and they hope to contribute in some way for the Georgian city's and country's development.

P., 22 years, Male: "I like very much the security system in Georgia"

J., 56 years, Male: "I like the country (the nature) and the climate very much"

M., 65 years, Female: "I like the people, the beauty of the country, the ancient history"

In general some representative groups of skilled migrants and investors in Georgia are the following:

- Israeli citizens (around 2000 people living in Georgia), who have already invested in Georgia nearly 350 million USD. The sector, in which they prefer to invest is Real Estate. Although the annual turnover of trade between Georgia and Israel is relatively low of only several million USD, this representative group has an important impact on the city's and country's development as real estate is one of the most important economic sectors in Georgia and especially in Tbilisi.
- Turkish citizens (around 2300 residents), who are mainly investing in retail and services sectors or in wood processing and trading. This representative group has a critical opinion about the business opportunities and conditions in Georgia but they are willing to continue with their investments in Georgia, especially in Batumi.
- USA and UK citizens, who are actively working in the educational sector, are effectively contributing for the development of the country by introducing new educational and social projects and practices. The mutual exchange permits an acceleration of the necessary administrative and policy reforms and thus contributes to the improvement of the life quality through the country.
- Other European citizens, who are involved in common European projects with Georgia and contribute with their knowledge for the technological and economic innovation of the country. This representative group is contributing to a faster EU integration of Georgia and the country's development.
- The numerous foreign and exchange students from all around the world, who are acquiring basic and specific knowledge in the Georgian universities and are contributing to the cultural enrichment and traditional interchange of the continuous migration processes, improvement and transformation of the Georgian cities in general.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper we have studied the recent Georgian city's and country's transformations related to the country's further EU integration. We have done a detailed analysis of the current economic and social situation in Georgia and the role of the migration processes with an emphasis on the skilled migration and its contribution to the city's and country's development.

By performing an exhaustive in field research and interviews with different groups of skilled migrants coming from different areas of competence, we have analyzed how their labor contributes to the current transformation of the Georgian society in its own route to EU integration. Georgia is a country of opportunities due to its effective administration, transparency and safety.

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