



Transformation of Labor Markets of the Southern Caucasus Countries in New Geopolitical and Economic Conditions

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ABSTRACT

The paper considers key issues of the labor market condition and operation in such Southern Caucasus countries as Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. It has revealed the peculiarities of labor forces formation and the structure of their allocation. It has also fixed general peculiarities and significant distinctions in operation and tendencies of development. So, the paper sets significant influence of international labor migration to labor markets of the Southern Caucasus that exerts influence starting from the collapse of the USSR. The high level of self-employment of the population is a uniting element of the whole labor market of the Southern Caucasus countries. One more element of similarity of labor markets of the considered countries is the considerable specific weight of unpaid employees of family business concentrated in agriculture and services industry. At the same time, certain political events in some countries of the Southern Caucasus have mostly changed the labor market structure. Color revolutions which took place in some former countries of the USSR, besides the political line of policy, have also changed an economic vector of development. Rose revolution, happened in 2003 in Georgia, has cardinally changed both domestic and international policies of the country. Orientation to closer integration with the western countries and military-political blocks predetermined the main strategy of development of the country that was inevitably reflected both political and economic ties with Russia. Because of fears concerning radical opposition formation the leadership of Armenia on the contrary was targeted to closer integration with Russia that greatly affected the labor market. Azerbaijani self-sufficiency in natural raw material resources, first of all, in oil with support of Turkey, allow the leaders of this country to conduct own policy without reference to some one country or integration group.

Keywords: Southern Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Labor Market, Employment, Unemployment, Economic Development

JEL Classifications: E20, E29, F63

1. INTRODUCTION

The Southern Caucasus is an important region in the world economic system. Existence of economic capacity of the region assumes that it will not be a passive consumer in the world economy and will be able to make its contribution to the economic system, to the world scientific and industrial potential. The geo-economical role in the region is defined by its energy potential. Of course, it concerns oil and gas of Azerbaijan. Moreover, energy resources of the Southern Caucasus are considered for delivery of these raw materials to Europe. Also thanks to the favorable geographical location of the Southern Caucasus in the center of the Eurasian continent the region has unique communication opportunities.

It is also important that the region is located between two seas. The Black Sea sweeps the coasts of Georgia (the western part), and the Caspian Sea sweeps Azerbaijan in the east. There are well equipped ports on the Black Sea coast - Batumi, Poti, and also ports located on the coasts of the Caspian Sea - Baku, Lankaran. One more important peculiarity of the region is that the Southern Caucasus countries have the developed industrial and scientific potential, quite professional personnel, the developed education system and training of skilled workers.

The Southern Caucasus is a region that has opportunities for new economic and social ties based on laws of the free market and competition, and also processes connected by formation of the civil society (Away from Azerbaijan, destination - Europe: Study of migration motives, routes and methods, 2001).

However, after the collapse of the USSR integration processes in economy of the Southern Caucasus countries has led to activation of the labor force interchange process of various professional orientation. Lifting of departure and international employment restrictions in the context of job cuts, decreased gross domestic product (GDP) has encouraged many experts and professionals to emigrate to foreign labor markets where the wage level is much higher. The situation has showed that a leader in legal foreign labor force attraction is the Russian labor market. So, in 2014, according to the FMS official data, 108.8 thousand citizens of Azerbaijan and 180.9 thousand citizens of Armenia worked in the Russian labor market. The economic situation in all countries of the considered region remains acute both in Azerbaijan that is quite rich with oil and gas, Armenia oriented to Russia and western-minded Georgia. The economic situation together with well-developed expat communities in the countries of the near and far-abroad remain the key factors, affecting labor markets of the Southern Caucasus countries.

2. LABOR MARKET OF ARMENIA IN THE CONDITIONS OF INTEGRATION INTO THE EEU

The population of Armenia over the period from 2000 to 2015 has been decreased. Over the specified period the population has been reduced by 216.5 thousand people, from 3221.1 to 3004.6 thousand people or by 6.7%. The average annual population decline was 0.45%. A figure of the constant population is interesting. Over the same studied period the population has been also reduced, but from 2086.1 to 1910.0 thousand people. Thus, 36.4% of the population lives outside Armenia.

The population changes as a result of natural and migratory movement. Analysis of figures of the natural movement of the population, namely, figures of the birth and morbidity rate, allowed to draw a conclusion that the main reason for the population decline is international migration. So, the birth rate over the period from 2000 to 2015 grew from 10.6 people per 1000 to 13.9 people per 1000, thus, the morbidity rate has also increased from 7.5 people per 1000 in 2000 to 9.3 people per 1000 in 2015. Thus, the population of the country has been all the same reduced in the positive natural increase.

The labor market of the Republic of Armenia is subject to considerable outside influence. Analysis of the data of demographic statistics has demonstrated it. The economically active population of Armenia for 2010 was 1463.3 thousand people or 61.2% of the labor force of the republic that was 2389.7 thousand people. By 2015 in the context of the decreased general and constant population, the economically active population has also decreased to 1316.4 thousand people, thus, the labor force participation rate has been increased to 62.5%. Over the period from 2010 to 2015 the economically active population in absolute numbers has been reduced whereas a coefficient of the participation rate changed with fits and starts. Dynamics of the busy population of this period of time has a similar tendency - sluggish decline whereas the unemployed were subject to cyclicity. The occupational level

during the considered period has been increased by 1.3% and the unemployment rate has been decreased by 0.5% (Table 1).

In 2015 among labor force of 2106.6 thousand people 63.7% of the population lived in the urban area, 36.3% - in rural areas. In 2015 56.1% of women have the edge over 43.9% of men in the sexual structure of labor force of Armenia.

Employment by industry type in Armenia is quite interesting. The greatest part of the busy population work in agricultural sector of economy. And in spite of the fact that from year to year its share decreases, in 2015 it was 34.8% of the busy population. Though, in 2005 this figure was 46.2%. Other types of economic activity in descending order of workers are as follows: Wholesale and retail trade - 10.9%; education - 9.3%; public administration and defense - 7.9%; health system - 5.1%.

As it was already said, Armenia is characterized by the high level of self-employed workers. According to the labor legislation, self-employed workers are people who independently provide themselves with profitable occupation (employers, people who work for their own account, family helpers and members of producers' cooperative). In 2015 the share of such category was 44.2% of workers involved in economy. The main field of self-employed workers' activity is agriculture where there are 77.1% of all self-employed workers.

One more important figure is the number and share of workers involved in informal sector of economy. As a rule, these workers take informal workplaces. They are wage earning homecare employment, employers and people who have their own informal enterprises, all voluntary workers - family members, members of informal production cooperatives, and also workers involved in production of commodities only for their own final consumption. In 2015 584.4 thousand people worked in informal sector of economy. 82.5% among them were self-employment workers. In the structural relation there is domination of agricultural sector of economy. There are 71.2% of all informally busy workers here. And the number of women is 50.3% as compared to 49.7% of men.

An important component of the labor market is unemployment. Unemployment carries an obvious threat for the economic growth of the country and welfare of its inhabitants. A special alarm is caused by the increased unemployment rate among youth. In Armenia as from the economic crisis that is partially caused by the crisis in Russia there is increasing unemployment among youth. In 2015 there was the greatest share of 51.8% of the unemployed aged 20-24 years. Running second and third is groups aged 25-29 years and 30-34 years with figures of 35.9% and 28.0% respectively. An interesting peculiarity is that the education level does not influence the unemployment rate. Analysis of the data in groups of workers in view of their education level has showed the following unemployment rate: University-educated - 17.7%; with dual education - 18.3%, with professional education - 16.1%; with general secondary education - 18.1%.

With the collapse of the USSR and sharp deterioration of the economic and military situation Armenia sees increased migration

Table 1: Structure of the economically active population of Armenia

Year	Economically active population, thousand people	Number in % to labor force	Including		Coefficient of occupation, in %	Coefficient of unemployment in %
			Employed	Unemployed		
2015	1316.4	62.5	1072.6	243.7	50.9	18.5
2014	1375.7	63.1	1133.5	242.1	52.0	17.6
2013	1388.4	63.4	1163.8	224.6	53.2	16.2
2012	1418.3	62.7	1172.8	245.5	51.9	17.3
2011	1440.9	63	1175.1	265.7	51.4	18.4
2010	1463.3	61.2	1185.2	278.2	49.6	19.0

of the population. According to the National Statistics Service, the lack of work opportunities (46.3% of men and 23.8% of women), the lack of occupational work (5.1% of men, 3.2% of women), the impossibility to earn for satisfactory living standards (18.5% of men, 12.6% of women), family reunification (7.6% of men, 39.7% of women), others (22.5 of men, 20.7% of women) became the main reasons of migration (National Statistics Office of Georgia).

According to expert estimates, after the collapse of the USSR Armenia has experienced large-scale emigration - about 1.5 million people have left the country. Emigration has significantly enriched the Armenian diaspora that now consists of about 7 million people that is more than the populations of Armenia by 3 times (Pannossian, 2003). According to the population census of 2010, about 1.2 million of ethnic Armenians live in Russia. And also about 12 thousand citizens of Armenia stayed in Russia temporarily (Ryazantsev et al., 2015). However, last assessment is obviously underestimated. For example, according to the FMS, in 2014 Russia granted 31.2 thousand work permits and 149.7 thousand patents to citizens of Armenia. Thus, the minimum number of migrant workers from Armenia to Russia is about 180 thousand people.

About two thirds of Armenians moved to Russia over the last 10 years (The International Labor Organization [ILO], 2016). Armenian communities in Russia created earlier became peculiar kernels round which migrant workers from Armenia are resettled. Researches across the North Caucasus note the existence of strong related, ethnic and compatriot ties as vectors defining the direction of migration of Armenians (The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2016). Armenians are mainly resettled in Moscow and in the North Caucasus (in Krasnodar Krai, in Rostov Region, Stavropol). The FMS data testify that the majority of patents to migrant workers were granted in Moscow, Moscow Region, the North Caucasus regions, Samara Region and Yakutia.

Business activity of Armenians in Russia is quite extensive in many Russian cities and regions: They have set up many shops, cafes, restaurants, shoe repair shops, household services, trading companies and so forth. More than half (54%) of migrant workers of Armenia in 2014 were occupied in building activity, then in services sector (16%) and transport (10%).

Most likely, accession of Armenia to the EEU will increase the outflow of labor force from Armenia to Russia. Opacity of the Russian labor legislation concerning migrants kept a part of labor force in Armenia. In connection with accession to the EEU

this factor disappeared as citizens of the countries of the EEU participants do not need allowing documents for work in Russia.

3. LABOR MARKET OF AZERBAIJAN IN THE DEMOGRAPHIC INCREASE

The labor market of Azerbaijan is characterized by clearly defined differences from the labor market of Armenia. The major factor, defining this labor market, is the demographic situation in the country.

In 2015 the population of Azerbaijan was 9705.6 thousand people. Territorial distribution of the population is characterized by insignificant prevalence of the urban population over the rural. So, in 2015 5152.4 thousand people (53.1%) lived in the urban area and 4553.2 thousand people (46.9%) lived in rural areas. The sexual structure of the population is characterized by insignificant prevalence of women of 50.2% and 49.8% respectively. 22.5% of the population aged 0-14 years, 71.3% - 15-64 years, 6.2% - 65 years and older. The share of youth aged 14-29 years is 27% of the population and more than half of them live in the urban area. In 2015 the birth rate was 17.4 people per 1000 with the morbidity level of 5.7 people per 1000. At the average in 2015 the expected life expectancy was 75.2 years, including 72.7 for men, 77.6 years for women (Arutyunyan, 1999).

Azerbaijan is the only country that after the collapse of the USSR could not only keep its population, but also has considerably increased it. Over the period since 1991 the average annual rate of the population increase was 1.1%. In absolute values the population increased from 7218.2 thousand in 1991 to 9705.6 thousand people in 2015.

Clearly defined positive dynamics of all natural demographic events directly affected the number and structure of labor force of the country.

In 2015 the number of labor force was 6335.9 thousand people, being increased in comparison with the previous year by 51.1 thousand people, and in comparison with 2005 - by 914.6 thousand people. 97.8% of the total number of labor force are at the active working age (Data of the Federal Migration Service, 2015). At the same time the economically active population counted on the ILO methodology in the same year was 4915.3 thousand people, being increased since 2005 by 532.2 thousand people or 12.2%. The same positive dynamics is observed among people involved in economic activity. In 2015 their number was 4671.6 thousand

people, being increased since 2005 by 609.3 thousand people or 15%. The number of the unemployed for the same period in general has been decreased from 317.8 thousand in 2005 to 243.7 thousand people in 2015. Over the studied period a coefficient of unemployment has been reduced from 7.1% to 5.0%. However, it should be noted that the crisis in the world raw markets that has caused fall in oil prices has led to the increasing number of the unemployed in 2015 in comparison with 2014 by 5.9 thousand people.

The structure of employment by types of economic activity in Azerbaijan is partially similar to Armenia. The greatest specific weight is occupied by agriculture with an indicator of 36.4% in 2015. As well as in the previous country, the share of this sector is slowly decreased. So, in 2005 38.7% of all people involved in economy belong to the specified sector. Other types of economic activity are distributed in the following order: Wholesale and retail trade - 14.9%; education - 8%; public administration and defense - 6.1%; industrial production - 4.9%.

After the collapse of the USSR the country saw a series of reforms in economy aimed at the decreasing share of public sector in economy by privatization of state enterprises and organizations. It has influenced the labor market. If in 2005 30.3% were involved in state sector of economy, in 2015 this figure has been reduced to 25.2%, namely, the increase of people involved in non-state sector of economy was 20%.

Classification of people involved in activity by employment gives an interesting figure. In 2015 there were only 32.2% of employed workers for hire at enterprises of large and medium business. As well as in Armenia, the greatest unemployment rate is the share of groups of the population aged 20-24 and 25-29 years.

The unemployment rate in Azerbaijan, also as well as in other Southern Caucasus countries, is closely connected with economic consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union that has led to broken economic ties. Many enterprises which in the past were in a uniform industrial complex have lost suppliers of raw materials and buyers of their goods. Outdated technologies which do not allow enterprises to produce commodities meeting the international standards that would promote development of new sales markets are other reasons; investment deficiency (the greatest part of investments is directed to oil-extracting branch).

All of this stimulates a part of the economically active population of the country to be involved in migratory processes. About 1.5-2.0 million citizens of Azerbaijan work abroad. Labor migration of the Azerbaijani to Russia began during the Soviet period, in the 1950-1960s, when students and workers who live in Russia move to Russia.

According to the population census in 2010, more than 600 thousand ethnic Azerbaijani constantly lived in Russia, more than 150 thousand citizens of Azerbaijan 12 thousand citizens of Azerbaijan stayed temporarily. According to the FMS date, in 2014 96 thousand work permits and 13.4 thousand patents were granted to citizens of Azerbaijan. However, this assessment is

obviously underestimated. The real number of the Azerbaijani in Russia can be from 500 thousand to 1.2 million people, including in Moscow - from 200 to 800 thousand people and to 200 thousand people in St. Petersburg (Lyange, 1997).

The Azerbaijani live and work in various areas and cities of the Central Russia, Siberia, the Far East, the North, and the North Caucasus. According to the FMS data, in 2014 the majority of patents to migrant workers from Azerbaijan was granted in Moscow and Moscow Region, Dagestan, Sverdlovsk, Rostov, Samara, Novosibirsk areas, Khanty-Mansyisk Autonomous Area, Tatarstan, St. Petersburg and Astrakhan Region. They are settled and find job on the local (ethno - regional) principle. The Azerbaijani are involved in services industry (28%) and trade (5% of work permits in 2014): It is trade in vegetables and fruits in markets of large cities and food industry (kebab houses, restaurants, cafes). About 34% of migrant workers from Azerbaijan in 2014 were involved in building activity.

According to the Russian Central Bank data, in 2013 the volume of official money transfers of migrant workers from Russia to Azerbaijan was 1232 million US dollars (National Statistics Service. Statistical year-book of Armenia 2015, 2016). According to experts, migrant workers annually transfer about 2.5 billion US dollars to Azerbaijan. Now a considerable part of the population in Azerbaijan is not only involved in labor migration, but also live due to transfers made by migrants from abroad.

4. INFLUENCE OF GEOPOLITICAL PROCESSES ON THE LABOR MARKET OF GEORGIA

Georgia is also a country of the Southern Caucasus, bordering on Armenia and Turkey in the south, Azerbaijan in the southeast and Russia in the north. The Georgian language is an official language of the state. 71% of the population speak the Georgian language, 9% - Russian, 7% - Armenian, 6% - Azerbaijani 7% - other languages. Rose revolution, happened in 2003, has greatly changed a vector of foreign and domestic policy of Georgia. Pro-western orientation of foreign policy to the fastest integration into the European space and the North Atlantic alliance has definitely influenced the labor market of Georgia.

Analyzing the labor market, tendencies and prospects of development the demographic situation in the country that is a starting point of labor force formation cannot be overcome.

The demographic situation in Georgia with the collapse of the USSR can be characterized as negative. Over the period from 2000 to 2015 the population of Georgia has been reduced by 721.5 thousand people or more than by 16% (National Statistics Service of the Republic of Armenia, 2016). This is one of the biggest declines of the population on relative basis among the Commonwealth of Independent States countries. A general coefficient of the birth rate since 2005 in 2015 has been increased by 5.2%, from 10.7 per million to 15.9 per million, or by 50%. The morbidity rate of the population during the considered period has being

increased, from 9.3 dead per 1000 to 12.2 or by 31%. Thus, over the analyzed period the natural increase was positive. A key factor of the population decline is international migration, more exactly, emigration. The expected life expectancy during the period from 2005 to 2015 has been decreased from 74.3 to 72.9 years. 58% of the population live in the urban environment, 42% - in rural.

Despite the population decline, the economically active population during the period from 2005 to 2015 has slightly changed though in separate years there were some fluctuations. Table 2 presents more obvious dynamics of figures of the labor market.

Discrepancy of dynamics of the population with figures of the labor market is a consequence of strong influence of a migratory factor. The decreased number of the unemployed is more explained by the decreased population than by improvement of the economic environment in Georgia.

In Georgia employed workers for hire present the majority. In 2015 there were 84.6% of workers involved in economy, mostly in agriculture, in private sector of economy (non-public) concentrated while labor productivity in this sector is quite low. The share of agriculture is about 9% of GDP of the country. There is no need to claim that a sector, in which more than 50% of the total number is involved, has to have the share of more than 9% in the total volume of GDP. In 2015 the unemployment rate in rural areas was 4.8% (2015) in comparison with 21.5% in the city (Population census of 2010). Moreover, among the total number of people occupied in rural areas, 84.6% are engaged in individual work, namely, are involved in agricultural sector. The number of self-employed workers is growing while the number of workers for hire remains the same (Poloskova, 2000).

As well as in a case with other countries of the Southern Caucasus Georgia has the urgent issue concerning the high unemployment rate among youth. The highest unemployment rate in 2015 was noted in a group aged 20-24 years - 32%; further in groups aged 25-29 years - 20.7% and aged 30-34 years - 15.2%. When the matter concerns unemployment, an important point is the education level of unemployed workers. According to the UN report on human development (2015), in Georgia unemployed workers with secondary or higher education present 73.5% (Ryazantsev, 2000). It means that most highly-educated experts do not bring an economic effect to the national economy. To be more exact, the majority of the unemployed population in the state with transitional economy suffers from structural and cyclic unemployment. It is generally caused by discrepancy of workers' qualification and the existence of workplaces in the labor market.

The structure of employed by types of economic activity is quite typical for the Southern Caucasus countries. Agriculture is a leader

in this figure. It has more than 50.7% of labor force of the country. Services sector (mostly, trade) running second with 32.1%. Traditionally small sector of industrial production accumulates 9.9% (Ryazantsev, 2003).

Unemployment and the lack of well-paid workplaces represent a serious limiting factor for economic development in Georgia. To solve the specified issues a part of the labor potential of the country is actively involved in international migratory streams.

Before the collapse of the USSR more than 30 thousand of Georgians lived in the RSFSR. With the beginning of civil war and aggravation of the socio-economic crisis there was active emigration of different ethnic groups of the population to Russia and other countries from Georgia began. According to the population census data of, in 2010 about 200 thousand of ethnic Georgians lived in Russia constantly, more than 50 thousand citizens of Georgia, and also 1.5 thousand of Georgian citizens lived temporarily. These figures do not reflect a real picture of labor migration from Georgia to Russia. For example, the FMS data show that the number of migrant workers from Georgia during the period from 2000 to 2015 who got a work permit in Russia varied from 5 thousand to 50 people. The number of migrant workers after 2008 has been reduced because of aggravation of political relations between Georgia and Russia, and also because of introduction of a visa regime.

In 2014 one third (33%) of migrant workers from Georgia was involved in building activity, 17% - in services sector, 12% - in transport. Georgian restaurants are quite popular in Russian cities. Also Georgians participate in trade in citrus fruit, spices, tea, make cheeses, and bake Georgian cheese-pies. Boundary commercial migration that is developed in the border regions of Georgia and Russia should be especially noted. Businessmen bring citrus fruits, tea, bay leaf to the border with Krasnodar Krai, deliver goods at the disposal of Georgian migrants, living and working in Russia, and further goods are delivered to Russian markets.

Despite the insignificant official number of migrant workers from Georgia in the Russian Federation, volumes of money transfers to the country made 789 million US dollars in 2013 (Guseynov, 2008). According to expert estimates, migrant workers annually transferred to Georgia about 2.5 billion US dollars (Yunusov, 2003). Money transfers supported many households and allowed to provide subsistence expenses of many families, involved in labor migration.

5. CONCLUSION

Quite recently the Southern Caucasus was considered as a uniform economic, social and political complex, consisting of three friendly countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. In these countries, from the point of view of public administration, lived a

Table 2: Dynamics of key figures of the labor market of Georgia over the period from 2005 to 2015

Indicator	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Economically active population, thousand people	2023.9	1944.9	1959.3	2029.1	2003.9	1991.1	2021.5
Employed workers, thousand people	1744.6	1628.1	1664.2	1724.0	1712.1	1745.2	1779.9
Unemployed workers, thousand people	279.3	316.9	295.1	305.1	291.8	246.0	241.6
Unemployment rate in %	13.8	16.3	15.1	15.0	14.6	12.4	12.0

united people, uniform principles and mechanisms of management of economic and social processes were used. The collapse of the USSR and further formation of new independent states left the joint coexistence of fraternal peoples behind. Suddenly territorial disputes caused an armed opposition, claiming lives of the former fraternal peoples. As the practice showed, territorial proximity and general past are not of importance if the matter concerns the sovereignty of the country, its territory and power.

Our research has showed that at this stage of development of the world politics and economy the matter cannot concern any uniform labor market of the Southern Caucasus countries. With similar peculiarities of labor markets in the considered countries, common issues of public administration (unemployment among youth, low labor productivity, labor emigration to Russia), the considered countries and their management vary in many key parameters. First of all, the matter concerns the direction of foreign policy, possible allies and opponents. Each of the considered countries has already its choice to a greater or lesser degree.

Nevertheless, from the economic point of view, the Southern Caucasus countries can find general solutions. So, for example, to solve the issues concerning employment the issue concerning creation of workplaces should be solved. Business based on public-private partnership can become a certain impulse for development of those spheres of economy where there is no private business. The main obstacles for business setting up and dealing, as a rule, are the following: The lack of necessary financial support at the initial stage of business organization, inflation and insufficient qualification of labor force, bureaucratic barriers of the state. Thus, the Southern Caucasus countries need further reforms in the educational system, increased competitiveness of economy on the basis of introduction of innovative products, active introduction of elements of policy of energy preservation for economic and ecological purposes into practice.

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