

Observatory of migrations East of EU
Agnieszka Weinar
Anna DI BArtolomeo
Shushanik Makaryan
Sergo Mananashvili

Understanding the relation between migration and development for evidence-based policy-making: data and research needs

How can research support policymakers?

Cooperation between researchers and policy-makers is crucial in all policy areas, including of course migration and development. However, there are a number of issues to be acknowledged that hinder this cooperation almost in every country in the world.

1. Why is research done or not done?

Migration research has not the same priority in all countries. Naturally, countries where migration is high on political agenda, where it has become an issue for the voters will be more keen on investing in research on this topic. The others (majority in the world today) will not. Understanding migration is not as vital as e.g. understanding challenges of energy supply or consequences of financial crisis. In less affluent countries (and increasingly in the wealthy ones, due to austerity programmes) the less vital themes receive none or limited funding.

2. What is researched?

Obviously the destination countries are interested in immigration part of the story, while source countries – in the emigration one. There is little bridging going on, with cross-boundary research only emerging.

3. How it is researched?

In the presentation I define research in academic terms, as an activity conducted by independent scholars working in academic setting, with a view of moving the frontiers of knowledge. To this end they employ scientific method and base their reasoning on primary data (often collected as a part of the research). Not being policy-oriented, this activity can take anywhere between 2 to 5 years (in social science). Now, in the real life there is a clear division between countries funding migration research as their national priority and those who see it as an imposed priority or not so much a priority (especially when short of budget). In the first case, the investment is done in academic research; in the second the academic research is funded by external actors or policy research is chosen to be funded. There is also a difference between data collection (costly, lengthy primary research) and collection of e.g. statistics, readily available for compilation (secondary research). Unfortunately policy makers more readily invest smaller funds in short-term desk research delivered in digestible form rather than in primary research, on which the secondary one could feed.

4. Who is doing the research?

The question of ownership and capacity is crucial. Every country should have a decent number of researchers in academia trained to do the research and educated policy makers to put the results into practice. Having researchers at universities has multiplier effect of creating a bigger pool of people able to apply scientific method and conduct primary research. We observe however (for example in Eastern Europe) a brain drain from academia to international organizations, think-tanks etc. In these settings the secondary research often prevails.

What about the tools?

Migration profiles can be useful tool if the right balance between primary research and secondary research can be found.

- A report gathering existing information
- Good place to introduce coherent set of indicators on migration and development
- However...
 - Only as good as the **existing** data
 - It cannot be updated if
 - primary datasets are not updated/created
 - no new research is done
 - the legal framework is not implemented/updated/changed

How to do better research for the sake of all?

For example, most studies and the research in the post-Soviet region carry an examination of either past policies and migration dynamics, or the current state of things. Forecast studies with possible scenarios are typically absent from the policy-making domain of many of the project countries. The long-term policy planning (with at least 10-15 years of forecasting) is also significantly weak in the target countries. Most policy frameworks provide only 5-10 years of (short-term) goals.

Moreover, the research does not find its way to policy documents. For example the UNDP (2009:52) National Human Development Report of Armenia states, the 2008-2021 Sustainable Development Program of the government “regards supply-demand mismatch in the labour market as the main cause of migration processes;... [and the] significant difference in levels of demand for labour force in the Armenian and Russian labour markets as a primary reason for emigration.” Thus, other causes of emigration (such as political, social, environmental i.e. other than the lack of jobs) are neglected and not or weakly addressed in the policy framework.

Policy frameworks tend to be blurry and unmanageable with non-codified variety of a legal body of different hierarchy (Constitution, law, presidential decree, governmental decision, ministerial orders or instructions, etc.) with overlapping subjects, what renders even the initial process of orientation very laborious and sound policy recommendations by legal researchers – very difficult.

There is a need to do immediately the following:
--

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- invest in primary research by national institutions (national capacity building)- invest in forecast studies/longitudinal studies- invest in better contacts with researchers. |
|--|