

Foreword

Costa Rica is characterised by both immigration and emigration flows. Economic growth, high living standards and political stability has attracted immigrants from neighbouring countries, and Costa Rica stands out in the region for being a net immigration country. Immigrants, particularly from Nicaragua, constitute close to 9% of the population, and an even higher share of the workforce. At the same time, emigration flows have also been on the rise in the past decades. An estimated 130 000 Costa Ricans live abroad, mainly in the United States.

The significant inflows of immigrants have put integration on the political agenda. Policies related to migration have in more recent times shifted from focusing on security to an emphasis on human rights and integration. However, the development potential of both immigration and emigration flows are still not being fully incorporated into the policy framework. There is scope to further include migration in the development policy agenda. More empirically based evidence is crucial to ensure that policy responses in the field of migration and development are coherent and well-informed.

In 2013, the OECD Development Centre and the European Commission launched a project to provide empirical evidence on the interrelations between public policies, migration and development (IPPM) in ten countries around the world, including Costa Rica. The findings from Costa Rica, outlined in this report, are the culmination of four years of fieldwork, empirical analysis and policy dialogue conducted in collaboration with the Central American Population Center (Centro Centroamericano de Población [CCP]) at the University of Costa Rica, and with strong support from the General Directorate of Migration (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería) of the Ministry of Interior and Police.

The report explores the links between the various dimensions of migration and key policy sectors – the labour market, agriculture, education, and investment and financial services – in Costa Rica. It analyses both the impact of migration on these sectors, as well as the impact of these policy sectors on migration outcomes, such as the decision to migrate, the sending and use of remittances, the success of return migration and the integration of immigrants. The empirical analysis draws on quantitative data collected from surveys of 2 236 households and 15 communities, enriched by 49 qualitative stakeholder interviews, and discussions with key stakeholders and policy makers.

This report is published in parallel with nine other country reports – presenting the findings from the other IPPM partner countries – and a comparative report. The comparative report provides a cross-country overview drawing on the data and

analysis in the ten partner countries. The Costa Rican report is intended as a baseline for improving understanding of the role of public policies in the migration and development nexus in Costa Rica. It also aims at fostering policy dialogue and providing guidance on how best to integrate migration into national development strategies. Building on discussions with key stakeholders and policy makers in Costa Rica, the OECD Development Centre and CCP look forward to continuing their co-operation to enhance the positive contribution of migration to the nation's sustainable development.

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The team was led by David Khoudour, Head of the Migration and Skills Unit, under the guidance of Mario Pezzini, Director of the OECD Development Centre. The report was drafted by Lisa Andersson, Bram Dekker, Jason Gagnon, Hyeshin Park and Arodys Robles. Vararat Atisophon provided support for statistical work. Fiona Hinchcliffe edited the report and Laura Calvo Valdivielso translated the report into Spanish. The OECD Development Centre's publications team, led by Delphine Grandrieux, turned the draft into a publication. The cover was designed by Aida Buendía. Lisa Andersson managed the overall co-ordination of the report.

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