Immigration situation in Russia (2016–2020)

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Abstract. The article overviews the peculiarities of migration in the Russian Federation in the modern period and analyzes the situation faced by people with a migrant background in Russia. The study provides a detailed description of the regions that are popular among immigrants and the underlying reasons for their choices. The main directions of migration flows in Russia are studied (Moscow, Moscow Region, St. Petersburg, Leningrad Region, Krasnodar Region, Novosibirsk and Tyumen Regions); the reasons for the popularity of these regions among migrants are revealed. The goals of the arrival of foreign migrants in Russia, as well as the information about their level of education and age category, are presented. It was revealed that more than 80% of migrants who arrived in Russia were males of working age. The article also presents statistical data on refugees and stateless persons in Russia, as well as information on national diasporas organized in the territory of the Russian Federation.

Keywords: foreign immigrants, reasons for migration

1 Introduction

The Russian Federation is the second country in the world ranking in terms of the number of migrants. Migration processes significantly affect the socio-economic and demographic situation of the Russian Federation. The migration attractiveness of Russia in comparison, for example, with the countries of the European Union, is low for a number of reasons: climatic, economic, and social. Migrants arriving in Russia are predominantly citizens from the countries of the former USSR. The high level of foreign migration to Russia is the reason for the ethnocultural, economic, and national security problems that are completely new for Russia and specific regions (for example, Siberia, Moscow, and the Moscow Region). One of the issues of foreign migration in Russia is the problem of statistical reporting of migration. Some experts [1] note that the volume of illegal migration is many times higher than the officially registered one. In this regard, the issue of collecting migration statistics in the Russian Federation and the need for a thorough analysis of the

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problems that arise as a result of a large influx of migrants to Russia become more relevant. Nowadays “more than ever before, migration touches many countries and people of all walks of life and background” [2].

Objective: analyze the immigration situation in Russia (2016–2020), identify the causes of migration and the main directions of migration flows, and determine the impact of migration movements on the economic and social spheres in the country.

2 Materials and methods

The article relies on data from official websites of the Federal Migration Service, the Border Guard Service of the Federal Security Service, the Federal State Statistics Service, and the Central Bank of the Russian Federation. According to the Border Guard Service of the Federal Security Service data, posted on the website of the Federal State Statistics Service, in 2016 the total number of foreign migrants in Russia was 27,811,917 [3]. According to the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation, the total number of foreign migrants who arrived in Russia in 2016 amounted to 575,158 people, most of which were males of working age. The number of migrants from the countries of the former USSR (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, etc.) who arrived in 2016 was 511,773 people, which is 89% of the total number of foreign migrants arriving. According to the data of the Main Directorate for Migration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation (statistics as of April 2016), one of the main purposes of entry of foreign migrants is to work for hire (40% of migrants). The next most important purpose is a private one (39%), transit – 2%, business – 2%, education – 3%, business trip – 1%, tourism – 7%, commercial purpose – 1%, other reasons account for 6% [4]. The bulk of migrant employees work in the food, construction, marketing, and cleaning spheres, and also assist in households. As Lisitsyn and Rezaev have stated: “The employer prefers foreign labor migrants to local (Russian) workers due to the ability to quickly and easily resolve overtime issues beyond the time specified by law. A migrant’s working day per week averages 10–12 hours” [5]. “The discrimination experienced by migrants and the other ethnic minorities through both formal policies and processes as well as informal practices or cultures is well-established” [6].

3 Results

The main flow of foreign migrants in 2016 is attributed to the Central Federal District (especially Moscow and the Moscow Region) – 190,414 foreign migrants arrived here, to the North-West Federal District (in particular, the Leningrad Region and St. Petersburg), which welcomed 59,587 foreigners in 2016; Southern Federal District (69,951 migrants), Siberian Federal District (76,511 migrants), and Volga Federal District (78,603 foreign migrants arrived). In detail, the most attractive regions for foreign migrants in 2016 were Moscow and the Moscow Region (25,788 and 35,267 people arrived, respectively), St. Petersburg (22,391 people) and the Leningrad Region (10,890 people in 2016), the Krasnodar Region (23,550 foreigners), and the Voronezh Region (18,580 migrants). These regions are characterized by a large number of jobs and a fairly high level of wages, as well as optimal climatic conditions and tourist attractions. In these regions, various nationalities and representatives of different religions live together for a long time, usually without acute ethnic conflicts. The Siberian part of Russia receives a large flow of foreign migrant workers due to the rapid development of industry in this region: in 2016, 22,360 foreigners

arrived in the Novosibirsk Region, 14,471 – in the Krasnoyarsk Region, and 11,853 – in the Tyumen Region. As a rule, the Far East region of Russia is attractive mainly for Chinese workers – 11,458 foreign migrants arrived in the Khabarovsk Territory in 2016, and 12,139 people – in the Primorye Territory. Chinese of working age accounted for 65% of the total number of migrants who arrived in the Far East region [3].

“The workplace and labor market experiences of migrants are highly diverse” [7]. Migrants with higher education and a doctorate/candidate of science degree tend to work in the kindergartens, schools and higher education, medicine, economics, and law; they also occupy managerial positions in various companies, etc. As for migrants from other countries (non-CIS), the largest number of them with higher education comes from Germany (1069 people), Georgia (876 people), Abkhazia (395 people), China (391 people), Latvia (403 people), Syria (304 people), Turkey (324 people), and Estonia (381 people) [8]. In 201, 5 migrants from Georgia and 4 migrants from Syria with a doctorate came to Russia, and 6 migrants from Syria and 5 migrants from Georgia had a candidate of science degree (the highest rates) [8].

“Migration is always the result of a complex combination of macro-, meso-, and micro-factors” [9]. The reasons for migration to the Russian Federation are:

1. Economic reason. The presence of friendly relations between Russia and many countries of the former USSR and a visa-free entry-exit regime create conditions for relatively free movement of the population for employment purposes. The main flow of labor migrants comes from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine. In comparison with Russia, in these countries, wages are low.

2. Return of ethnic Russians to Russia (mainly from the countries of the former USSR).

3. Political reason (including military) – one of the reasons for migration to Russia is people’s disagreement with the political course of the government of their native state or the military situation in the country. In 2016, there was a large influx of population from Syria (1,107 people), Ukraine (including from its western part – a total of 178,274 people), Iraq (955 people), and Afghanistan (847 people).

- 4) Education (academic mobility).

“There are ... a number of problems related to comparing the impact of the migration dimension on acculturation, as this often entails comparisons of culturally very different groups” [9]. Migrants in Russia create their own national diasporas, public organizations, associations, communities, and cultural centers in different regions. The largest diasporas are:

1. Tajik – represented by the All-Russian social movement “Tajik Migrant Workers” (Moscow), non-governmental organization “Tajik Union of Russia” (Moscow), regional non-governmental organization “Vatan”, which means “Motherland” (Moscow), non-governmental support organization for Tajikistan citizens “Compatriots” (Moscow), non-governmental organizations “Tajik Community” (Moscow) and “Tajik Culture Society” (Moscow), Tajik national cultural center “Samanids” (Yaroslavl), Tajik culture community center “Sino” (Ryazan), Tajik cultural center “Navruz” (Lipetsk, Voronezh), non-governmental organization “Friendship of Russian-Tajik People “Somonien”, “Ajam” (St. Petersburg), Union of assistance in cultural and national traditions preservation, in family consolidation, in women and children protection, women involvement in social and economic activity (St. Petersburg), Charity Support Fund for Tajik migrants (St. Petersburg), Information and Culture Centre “Tajikistan” (Kaliningrad), non-governmental organization for the protection of Tajik rights and interests “Pamir” (Astrakhan), non-governmental organizations for assistance in cultural restoration of Central Asia people

“Assistance” and “Mekhri Somonien” (Krasnodar), non-governmental organizations of Tajikistan migrants “Umed” (Nizhny Novgorod) and “Tajik Union of Russia” (Perm), non-governmental organization of Tajiks “Vakhdat” (which means “Unity”) (Orenburg), Tajik culture national centers “Somon” (Kazan and Ufa), and others.

2. Uzbek – represented by the non-governmental organization Uzbek Cultural Center “Uzbekistan” (Astrakhan), Union of Uzbek Compatriots (Volgograd), Uzbek community “Farishta” (Voronezh), Uzbek national and cultural autonomies (Moscow and St. Petersburg), Council of Uzbek Diasporas (Novosibirsk), Uzbek National and Cultural Center (Bashkortostan, Russia), Uzbek National and Cultural Center “Aziz” (Rostov-on-Don), and others.

3. There are also Ukrainian, Kazakh, Moldavian, Armenian, Georgian, Syrian, Kyrgyz, Azerbaijani, Jewish, and other diasporas in Russia that organize their own cultural centers, compatriot support centers, youth (student) organizations, etc.

According to the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, in 2018, individuals located in Russia, but not citizens of the Russian Federation, transferred \$7,491 million to the former Soviet republics, and \$3,285 million to other countries. The average amount of one transfer to the CIS countries was \$336, far abroad – \$3,661. Therefore, more than twice as much money was transferred to the CIS countries in 2018 than to other countries of the world.

Transfers from Russia made in 2018 by non-resident individuals (foreign citizens) are presented in Table 1 (the figures are given for 20 countries – counterparties of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation) [11].

Table 1. Geography of transfers from Russia.

Recipient country	Transfer amount (USD mln)	Amount of one transfer (USD)	Recipient Country	Transfer Amount (USD mln)	Amount of one transfer (USD)
Former Soviet Union	7491	336	15. USA	307	15806
1. Uzbekistan	2940	427	16. UK	185	13243
2. Tajikistan	1510	195	17. China	208	7048
3. Kirghizia	1401	416	18. Spain	52	8998
4. Ukraine	124	276	19. Germany	117	10843
5. Azerbaijan	400	344	20. Cyprus	42	24287
6. Armenia	521	355	21. Austria	68	19985
7. Kazakhstan	273	1,413	22. Luxembourg	153	396922
8. Moldova	236	329	23. Italy	96	7962
9. Belarus	85	284	24. Netherlands	61	12973
10. Turkmenistan	0,5	219	25. Turkey	38	2251
Others countries	3,285	3,661	26. Monaco	32	122,585
11. Switzerland	306	91658	27. Georgia	159	544
12. Latvia	36	5640	28. France	136	10072
13. Israel	30	6903	29. Singapore	15	22179
14. Czech Republic	51	10385	30. United Arab Emirates	66	19425

4 Discussion

Currently, the issue of foreign migration to the Russian Federation is actively being discussed not only in the Russian media but also by academia – the papers by Gadelshina and Zubaidullina [12], Postavnin and Vlasova [1], Lisitsyn and Rezaev (2015), Florinskaya

and Mkrtchyan, and others. Gadelshina and Zubaidullina determine the following main problems of foreign labor migration to Russia: “1. All rubles earned by migrants are exported from the country and spent outside its borders. 2. As a result of migration processes, the unemployment rate among the natives is increasing. 3. Most of these workers are illegal immigrants. This means that employers profit from their work and do not make any contributions to the budget. In addition, if there is a cheap labor force, there is no need to introduce new technologies and develop” [12]. The data of the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation on the state of crime for January-March 2019 are alarming: “Foreign citizens and stateless persons in the territory of the Russian Federation committed 9,288 crimes, of which 8,228 crimes were committed by migrants from the countries of the former USSR” [13].

According to Florinskaya and Mkrtchyan, “the number of documents issued by migrants for work in the Russian Federation does not in any way correspond to the number of those staying for the purpose of employment. The problem of legalization does not lose its relevance; moreover, in 2016 it became even more acute. In total, at the end of September 2016, 1.8 million foreigners had valid documents giving the right to work in the Russian Federation (and 4 million were for the purpose of ‘work for hire’)”. “Companies play a central role in structuring the opportunities offered to migrants” [14]. There are 1.3 million completely illegal migrants in Russia. There is still a fairly significant share of those who entered the Russian Federation stating a “private purpose”, but at the same time working without registration. A small number of foreign workers enter into official relations with Russian employers: out of 900 thousand citizens of the EAEU countries coming to “work for hire”, more than 60% worked unofficially [15]. “States should redouble their efforts to reconcile national border security concerns and the basic human rights of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers” [16].

Also, one of the most important problems is the health of migrants. “Despite the many health challenges that migrants face, data on their health status and needs are limited and fragmented” [17].

5 Conclusion

It should be noted that in recent years, the inflow of migrants from foreign countries (especially from the CIS) to the Russian Federation has sharply increased, the main purpose of which is work, since the standard of living in Russia is quite high compared to most of the CIS countries and some other neighboring countries, which serves as an “attraction” factor for migrants. By now, certain practices of resettlement of immigrants, as well as directions for the integration of migrants into the economic sphere of the regions, have already been formed. The main areas with a high concentration of migrants are Moscow and the Moscow Region, St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region, the Krasnodar Region, the Novosibirsk Region, and the Khabarovsk Region. As a result, new large elements of the ethnocultural structure are being formed in the Russian context.

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