

# Modern social problems of labor migration in Russia

## Problemas sociales modernos de la migración laboral en Rusia

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### Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. Methodology](#)
- [3. Results](#)
- [4. Conclusions](#)

[Bibliographic references](#)

#### ABSTRACT:

In this article, we analyze the actual problems of labor migration in Russia. We survey how the economic reforms in Russia affect the migration from the neighboring countries that were former Soviet republics and now are in the zone of influence of the Russian economy. This article examines the possibilities and the origins of social conflicts. The article is a result of working in the related fields of economic sociology, sociology of labor and conflict resolution.

**keywords** migration, labor migration, economic sociology, sociology of labor, social conflicts

#### RESUMEN:

Analizamos en este artículo problemas de la migración laboral en Rusia. Estudiamos cómo reformas económicas en Rusia afectan la migración desde los países vecinos que habían formado parte de la Unión Soviética y que pertenecen hoy día a la zona de influencia de la economía rusa. El artículo mide las posibilidades e los orígenes de conflictos sociales. El artículo ha resultado del trabajo en interrelacionados ámbitos de sociología económica, sociología laboral, tratamiento de conflictos.

**Palabras clave** migración, migración laboral, sociología económica, sociología laboral, conflictos sociales

## 1. Introduction

Labor migration is the most dynamic and the largest migratory flow from countries of the former Soviet republics. The hard economic circumstances and collapse of the former sphere of employment stimulates labor migration.

Initially development of labor migration bore an explosive character, but very soon, the labor migration has become a mass phenomenon. It should be noted that in society undergoing transformation the labor migration plays quite important role: it charges off, diffuses the social grievance and tensions. No doubt, during a post-Soviet period the labor migration provided a

significant part of society with a chance to avoid impoverishment in conditions of abrupt decline of production rise of unemployment [Bening, 2001].

To some extent, a consumer market in post-Soviet space has been rescued due to labor migration. On one hand, labor migrants support people communications in all the countries of Commonwealth of Independent States in spite of nationalism and breaking former economic links. On the other hand, labor migrants have formed the alternative employment sphere due to initiatives and activities of population itself.

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## 2. Methodology

During the pre-reform period under rather stable social and economic conditions, slow change of equipment and technology, the operated financial situation, quite weak international competition to the enterprises managed to build the activity with foreign workers. [Gureva et al.] In the 1990s in result of removal of former limitations on the exit-entry, abroad number of international migrants increased significantly. Labor migration, especially within the former Soviet republics confines, has been stimulated by political instability, international conflicts and forced migration determined by the first two factors.

An overwhelming majority of migrations can be referred to as labor movements. Whatever might be a reason for changing the abode a person leaves a job in a point he/she leaves and takes up a new job at a new place of staying [Castles, 1989].

Economic progress of various states is becoming increasingly dependent on the world trends and regularities of social development, active interaction of separate national economics one with each other. Nowadays no country can achieve a success in isolation from the world community. Processes of globalization in a sphere of economics, growing movement of capital, broadening economic, trade, financial ties among countries, and rapid internationalization of industrial production are accompanied by deepening integration of national labor markets, activation of the processes in a field of international labor migration [Dmitriev et al, 2009].

Increasing number of countries is involved into the world migrations and takes part in international exchange of labor resources. The international labor migration became an integral part of world economic system, a norm of existence for the majority states. During the 1990s, about two thirds of world countries sent their workers abroad on considerable scale. By estimations of International Labor Organization (ILO): "Latest estimates suggest that there were more than 232 million international migrants in the world in 2013, of which some 207 million were of working age. Almost two-thirds of these, or 150 million, were migrant workers, accounting for some 4.4 per cent of all workers". [World Employment, 2017, 14] Social and cultural differences determine the labor motivation, in the conditions when other forms of motivation are not sufficiently effective (especially in the context of the current global economic crisis and the negative effects of economic globalization). [Baynova et al, 2016, 1415]

Tendencies to broadening the foreign labor migration manifested themselves quite clearly in late decades in many countries all over the world. The same trends are already observed for a long time in contemporary Russia too [Kataeva et al, 2015].

A metamorphosis of the Russian Federation into the center of attracting labor migrants not only from former union republics, but also from countries of far abroad as well has become the one result of political and socio-economic transformations in Russia. At the same time, a turn from ideological considerations to economic ones has happened in the state policy of regulating the field related to attraction and use of the foreign work force.

Just before the beginning of reforms, there were about 100 thousand of labor migrants from near and distant foreign countries in the Russian Federation. Transformation of both political and economic systems added with some opening of the Russian society naturally contributed to increase of foreign working force inflow into the country.

Russia found itself in a dual situation in the process of Russian economic reform. On one hand, lowering the standard of life for broad masses of population, especially for representatives of some vocations, first for scholars, scientists, creative intellectuals, puts in action ejecting factors that have stimulated an exit of national working force abroad. The facilitation of leaving the country favored enlarge of outflow abroad for many pro groups of population in conditions of severe crisis. On the other hand, Russia, in comparison with many other countries, particularly within Commonwealth of Independent States limits, has kept more stable economic position. That made Russian labor markets more attractive for many foreign citizens.

Quite number of factors determines an increasing use of foreign working force in Russian economics in a result of the country entry into the international labor market system.

The first important factor of labor immigration into Russia is relative attractiveness of migration, in opinion of migrants themselves, due to higher level of life, the opportunity to get higher earnings. In the late decade in the Russian Federation, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita considerably exceeded the similar indicator for main countries being work force exporters into RF, above all countries of Commonwealth of Independent States.

The second factor, important too and determining the inflow of labor migrants is the situation on labor market, stabile demand on foreign work force in Russia, remaining opportunities for employment of foreigners in both sectors of economics, formal and informal.

The labor migration occurs in both legal and illegal, irregular forms. The legal migrant, if he is a foreigner, must have following permits: permit to entry the country, permit to stay in it during indicated term, permit for specific labor activity. Even if a single of these requirements is violated, a migrant is considered an unlawful migrant. "Unlawful» migrants are often designated as illegal migrants. However terms "unlawful" and "illegal" (or "irregular") are not identical. Unlawful migrants are not necessarily illegal while illegal migrants are always illegal. Thus, the overwhelming majority of labor migrants from the countries arrival from which requires visas have them. Therefore, such migrants come and stay in Russia on legal grounds.

The most frequent violation in case of migration is a mismatch of actual engagements in the country of residence with the aims of entry. Typical violation of this kind is the entry by tourist or study visa with a real aim to trade on the market. Other typical violation is an expiration of the visa. However, even in this case migrant most frequently doesn't become illegal one: he trades on the market openly and pays penalties for breaking regime of staying in the country. Such migrant, undoubtedly, does not comply with the law but at the same time, he or she does not hide from authorities.

Many of illegal migrants live in bad conditions in premises unsuitable for living, in dormitories and that has a negative impact on their health. Among illegal migrants, the morbidity is caused by diverse infectious deceases, including tuberculosis, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Working conditions and regime lead to psychic overloads, nervous overstrain. Illegal migrants are under constant fear of detention, loss of work, and deportation from the country [Pascal, 2000].

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### **3. Results**

It is our opinion that labor migration generates conflicts by its own nature and many researchers confirm this conclusion. In Russia, the generation of conflicts is notable because the country is characterized by the high level of unemployment and, at the same time, by the shortage of work force. In many regions of the North, East Siberia, Far East and some others regions economic development is retarded by the lack of workers in a number of branches. Megalopolises always welcome the inflow of builders, drivers, and workers of domestic and personal services. In these cases relatively low cost of migrants who do not pay taxes and do not enjoy any social privileges of together their no paying taxes, no having any social privileges presses up seriously local inhabitants competing for the same jobs.

In a broad sense conflict rise in all the spheres of social life is a derivative of daily routine in our

country and of the Russian State politics aimed at the radical market modernization of Russia. These factors create unsafe milieu fraught with acute conflicts where contradictions that emerge between migrants and recipient society are increasingly often solved not on basis of consensus, but by overt confrontation and force use by, first of all, the recipient society [Sulyagina, 2013].

A lack of operatives is only one seam of the problem. The other seam is the steady reduction of population in Russia. If the deficit of employment resources can be (only hypothetically) filled in by inflow of temporary employment migrants, then depopulation may be smoothed over exclusively by inflow of immigrant resettlement into Russia for permanent residence. Thus for our country the migration is a question not of choice, but the question of necessity. The migration becomes the most important element of the economic development potential support, preservation of stability in separate regions and securing the national safety.

Unfortunately, xenophobic moods are spread in all strata of the Russian society. According to public opinion polls conducted by the sociologists a slogan «Russia for Russians» is supported by the majority of respondents. These moods are persistent in Russian society from the early 2000s. If in 1998 this slogan, [to one extent or another](#), was supported by 43 % of respondents, in 2002 already 49 %, and during next years the support of it has not been lowered. Irritation, enmity, distrust and fear are dominant in respect of other ethnical groups. [Sulyagina, 2016]

A presence of negative social ideas attitudes to migrants is dangerous not only for migrants themselves, but also for the recipient population. Attitudes of the recipient population may have a boomerang effect. Migrants may unconsciously reproduced patterns of behavior that native, recipient people wait from them. It is important to develop readiness to constructive interaction in migrants as well as in native people. Migrants have to develop readiness to learn and accept norms of behavior of milieu they came in while the indigenous people have to be ready to explain these norms. Sure, it is senseless to say that everybody has to be tolerant or everyone has to love each other. When migrant behaves in the same way as the native people do, speaks in the same way and demonstrates little difference from local people such migrant will be perceived as a member of the local community, as "one of their own".

Study of the problem reveals the fact: Russians very often attribute to representatives of ethnic minorities such quality as "cohesiveness". It is interesting that migrants have never attributed this quality to the Russians. Russians appraise this characteristic rather negatively because they dislike social success and activity of some migrant groups. Based on data provided by sociological survey of local population and migrants it is possible to come to conclusion that the stable syndrome of foreigners (aliens) rejection in general. Formation of the local people's negative attitude to migrants is defined by many factors. Aggregation of such factors is determined by peculiar social-economic situation in regions. [Sulyagina, 2016]

Growth of crime on basis of xenophobia should be noted. In the recent years, the object of xenophobia has been determined: "The principal enemy is the migrant. Russia is already incapable to do without guest workers, predominantly illegal ones" [Migratory situation, 2009]. The status of illegal migrant deprived of rights enables employers to pay dough for the work or not to pay for it at all, to say nothing about «savings» on housing and medical services. These opportunities became especially «valuable» against the background of economic crisis, when enterprises strive to optimize expenditures. Curiously enough, the similar situation has formed itself not only in Russia, but in West European countries as well. Many economists, officials and employers specify: migrants are working mainly in the spheres where local population doesn't want go to because low wages: migrants are employed as builders, drivers, in housing and communal services (HCS). However, frequently savings on migrant's wages are directed not at all to development of industrial production. Such savings come into accounts of officials and Chief Executive Officers (CEO).

One of the most common problems in Moscow is the illegal employment. Less than 15 % of migrants have labor permits and about 25 % have the registration by place of residence. To study the phenomenon of unlawful migration in Russia a big study that included several

sociological polls was undertaken within Moscow research program on migration. The poll of 34 experts including officers of state apparatus was one of the most interesting polls [Migratory situation, 2009].

Labor migration promptly develops also together with it and the number of the conflicts increases. Before passing to the reasons of emergence of the conflicts in the sphere of labor migration, we will allocate the reasons of the conflicts which affect any sphere of society.

That concerning origin of the conflicts in the sphere of labor migration, it is necessary to designate for a start the migration reasons that pushes people to leave the small Homeland. The bases can be different: economic, political, ecological, social. Exists such as: 1. usual desire of the better life. 2. Realization of the requirements, recognition of the personality and professionalism. 3. Thirst for knowledge and to development. 4. Moving for health reasons, need of change of climatic conditions. 5. Social conflicts, adverse situation in the country, region. 6. Family and labor conflicts. 7. Unforeseen circumstances. [Sulyagina, 2016]

Migration is one of such factors that promotes development of a conflict situation and instability in society. We will address consequences of the international labor migration. What advantages at host countries exist? As all know, at implementation of various social programs, foreign workers are not considered. In addition, distribution of pensions does not concern them too. In case of growth of unemployment in the country, migrants first are included in the list of dismissal. You should not forget about both taxes and that on vacancies, which enjoy smaller popularity there will always be foreign citizens wishing to get a job.

Together with advantages, there is also a number of negative consequences, problems and contradictions. There is an aggravation of a national situation, on the jumped-up growth of offers in labor market the labor salary falls. In addition, skirmishes between the radical and immigrating population, and this birth of the ethnic and national conflicts are inevitable. Therefore, rise in crime follows from all this.

Proceeding from everything is higher than told, follows that growth of intensity is obvious. In many cases the reason of origin of this intensity – historical memory, she combines in herself not only social contradictions, but also language and cultural and together with all this aggravates many conflicts.

Sociologists carried out the analysis of main spheres of unlawful migrant employment. The analysis indicates that domestic labor market in Russia is structured in the same way as it is structured in many other recipient countries. In particular, a characteristic division of labor occurs on the basis of workers' ethnical segregation, definition and formal execution of migrant employment niches. The process goes in two directions: by spheres of employment and by territories. The mass spread of illegal relations in spheres of migrant employment is the other important trend. Employers get accustomed to employ workers from a number of newcomers and to form up their activity beyond the field of law. Both methods enable employers to achieve some pliancy, get cheap work force, lack of social expenditures and tax evasion. In an economic sense, such «a habit» means the following: not just casual employment of a casual worker occurs but the definite procedure is created and self-reproduced and that system ensures employment of migrants only.

A verification of the hypothesis as if «migrants do the work that local people don't want to do» has shown: by observations of migrants themselves, about a half of working places occupied by them is strictly «migrant jobs», reserved for migrants for many years while so called competitive sectors, demanded by local inhabitants too, comprise other half of jobs. In opinion of illegal migrants, no more than 10 % of the polled people are employed in the field of professional, skilled labor [Sulyagina, 2016].

Segregation processes by nationality at the Moscow labor market that we observe today, indicates that the City of Moscow and Russia as a whole keep themselves to the track beaten by many well developed countries, namely to the track of embedding migrants' labor into the most informal sectors of their economics.

There is also an opinion that migrants, having formed their informal labor amalgamations, create obstacles to the local people eager to occupy desired jobs. Most likely that is true, but serious economic studies targeted upon quantitative clarifying the problem of supplanting the local population from working places mentioned are required. So far, there studies of such kind are absent. Really, migrants' communities are forming informal amalgamations aimed at keeping profitable fields in their hands, markets in particular, and these amalgamations have certain possibilities and abilities to achieve their aims. However, more often their activity is aimed at a division of influence spheres among migrants' communities, not between migrants and local population. "Islands of migrants' economic are organized either by branch or by territorial principles. Markets are an example of migrants' just territorially organized business. Around the market, where migrants work as trade specialists, as a rule, the whole infrastructure of services, depends, is emerging. This infrastructure includes coffee shops, transport service etc. and all these jobs are generally occupied by migrants. Thus, in recent years precisely migrants buy the second-hand car that Muscovites get rid of and use these cars for serving markets, points of sale, as private taxi and for other carrier activities. Often, but not always, migrants' market business is organized on ethnic basis.

Unfortunately, so far the authorities have not found key factors necessary to establish some control of this informal economics or to curtail its share. In addition, a difficulty of the control is connected with the readiness of migrants' labor to participate only in this informal economy that gives to migrants a profit and the possibility to reduce the state bodies' claims. A tolerance (or, on the contrary, negative relation) of local population is an important factor of social integration. Though the migrant majority emphasizes good or neutral relation to migrants, a considerable part of migrants still feels the ill will or hostility of the milieu nevertheless [Shalenko, 2008].

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## 4. Conclusions

Because of the researching, it is possible to conclude: today the City of Moscow is a large migrant recipient center and will stay the same for a long time. The megalopolis declares its interest in receiving migrants. In these conditions a well thought-out politic solution of migrants' integration problem is necessary but no such policy exists in Russia so far. Such politics has to become one of constituent parts of integrated politics, both migratory and social.

Reprehension of xenophobia and migrantisphobias is developing pursuant to ethic considerations. It is time to understand: xenophobia is not pragmatic response, on the contrary, it tears the society into pieces, it threatens the Russian statehood.

A basic distinct feature of conflicts between immigrants' ethnic groups, on one hand, and society which receives them on the other hand is an existence of conflicts «Russian citizens versus non-citizens», when people who differ in essence by legal status and by character of their juridical ties with the Russian State became participants of conflicts mentioned. Possibilities of such conflicts in the process of interaction differ considerably in territories of different constituent parts of the Russian Federation. In many aspects, these possibilities depend on the extent of interest or disinterest displayed by local elites in presence of migrants in territories these elites govern. However, as a rule, the simple opposition always grows into a confrontation of interpersonal or inter-team kind. Thus, the character of conflicts creates an atmosphere, rare by its intensity, when risks of collisions on ethnic, racial, religious ground are rather high.

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