



POLICY NOTE OF WORKING PAPER 3.6

Migration within CIS countries

January 2013

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this work is to reveal the picture of international migration movements – both permanent and temporary - between the new states of the former Soviet Union during the years of their independence, to evaluate the magnitude and dynamics of this phenomenon, the transformation of the types of migration under the influence of various factors, also to show how the main challenges associated with migration are reflected in the migration policy of the region.

SCIENTIFIC METHODS

The features of migration situation in the region are presented in their historical perspective, based on a study of the main factors determining directions of flows, shape and scale of migration, as well as the analysis of all available types of statistics on migration in countries in the CIS. During the preparation of this work we have relied on census data, the results of the current migration accounting (registration based annual statistics of flows), as well as surveys of the population and migrants. Traditional statistical techniques of indicators' presentation and matrix coefficients were used for the study of migration.

Besides of the analysis of trends and volumes of migration as such, a comparative analysis of migration flows and stocks obtained from various sources has made it possible to estimate the condition of migration statistics in those states. Information about the Russian Federation is presented in a wider volume, which is caused not only by the leading part of the RF in the formation of migration within the CIS, but also by much more varied statistics available for this country.

While describing the current migration situation over the former Soviet territory, we took into account the fact that comparatively recently all the former Soviet republics were part of one country, and migration between them was of in-county nature. The former belonging to one country is still revealed by numerous personal ties between the residents of different countries and usage of the Russian language in their everyday life; in existence of large Diasporas, consisting of persons originating from other parts of the former Soviet Union.

Although, the common Russian language space has shrunk, it still exists, despite the fact that in most of the newly independent states because of their language policy. The Russian is no longer their official language, it is much less taught in schools or used for teaching at their universities.

POLICY VALUE-ADDED

The study shows that the CIS remains to be the region of massive migration movements. As compared to the Soviet period, the volume of permanent-type of migration between the former Soviet republics has declined, but the temporary forms of migration, mostly associated with labor force have started their active development. The main sources of labor migration have become regions that in the Soviet period were characterized by low mobility of the indigenous population - Central Asia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. Currently, the turnover of permanent migration movements between the countries of the Commonwealth is up to 1 million persons per year, while the flow of labor migrants of legal and illegal forms makes 7-8 million. In the countries that host migrants (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan), still reside a large number of the persons who were born in other countries of the CIS. Although the number of the latter over the former Soviet territory has significantly reduced, it is still rather large - 18 million persons.

Perceptively, the weakening of migration flows, especially between Russia and Kazakhstan should not be expected on the one hand, and the other former Soviet republics, on the other. Push for development of these relations will be the remaining differences in the expected scenarios of economic and demographic development. In Russia, as well as in Ukraine and Belarus, a significant decrease of the working age population (up to 10 million by 2021) is expected, also - the acceleration of the aging process. Under these conditions arises a sensitive question "Is economic growth possible when the working population shrinks and gets older? ". However, in three Central Asian countries - Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan - the working age population will increase by 5.4 million.

At the same time, millions of persons born in the Commonwealth, who are not residing in the countries of their origin, along with migrant workers are the guarantors of maintaining personal ties between the countries of the CIS, and keeping a common Russian language space.

Analysis shows that the interests of immigration policy in the CIS countries are directly related to the predominant function of the state: a donor country or a recipient of migrants. Despite the difference of interests, the understanding of the importance of migration, not limited by mere "economic sense" is growing in all countries.

At the same time there is more awareness of the need to establish effective mechanisms of migration managing, first of all - temporary labor migration in order to reduce the high social and economic costs. In the recent years, donor and recipient countries are increasingly discussing how to develop the organized forms of recruitment of foreign labor, and come to understand the need for training of migrant workers and teaching them the language of their hosting country.

A practice of conclusion of bilateral or collective (for a limited number of participants) agreements and alliances is common in the region that facilitate access of citizens of the partner countries to their national labor markets. However, the effectiveness of most agreements is low, many are of declarative nature.

The predominance of visa-free travel so far could be considered as the most important factor contributing to the free movement of migrants and labor in the CIS region, however almost all of the countries at the same time apply the system of restrictions on admission of foreigners to their national labor markets by imposing quotas, employment bans, stay limits, etc. Thus, so far we can not speak about the formation of a common labor market in the CIS region. The lack of efficient enforcement over restrictive rules and regulations creates favorable conditions for the preservation of significant-scale illegal employment of foreign workers in the CIS. However, there are positive examples of interstate cooperation in migration management. The most vivid one is the customs union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, and agreements in the framework of the Union State of Russia and Belarus.

Due to the existing conditions the future of migration situation in the CIS strongly depends over Russia's policy. In the regulatory framework of Russia in the field of migration and naturalization important changes are occurring during the recent years. On June 13, 2012 the President of Russia has signed a new Concept of state migration policy of the Russian Federation. It is intended to increase the selective component of migration policy, application of differential mechanisms for attracting and usage of foreign labor, development of various forms of temporary migration (labor force, students, professors and researchers). One of the key trends of the new migration policy, is the strongly demanded both in Russia and in the countries of migrants' origin, development and implementation of the programs of adaptation and integration of migrants, including teaching them Russian, legal education, information about cultural traditions and norms of behavior in the hosting society.