



## PRESS RELEASE OF WORKING PAPER 3.18

### A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS IN ESTONIA AND RUSSIA

June 2013

#### OBJECTIVE

The paper aims to conduct a comparative analysis of possible determinants of peoples' attitudes towards immigrants depending on individual's socio-demographic and economic characteristics in Estonia and Russia. Estonia and Russia have the similar post-socialist past dependence being the members of the Former Soviet Union (FSU). However, these two countries have different size, ethnic composition of population as well as somewhat different migration history.

Minority population of Estonia has been formed as a consequence of centrally planned soviet economy. The major part of ethnic minorities came to Estonia from other soviet republics (mainly from Russia) since the beginning of 1950s till the second half of 1980-s. Since restoration of independence in 1991, the structure of Estonian immigrant population, as well as external migration trends have changed remarkable. Immigration has become more varied, with new countries of origin (Finland, Sweden, Latvia, etc). The immigrants of Russia are mainly from other CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries that perform economically worse than Russia. As citizens of CIS-countries can enter Russia without a visa, plenty of immigrants do not have residential status or a working permit. They are labour immigrants working often illegally and thereby creating the conditions for expansion of shadow economy. Different immigrant patterns and ethnical composition of population may create different environment for forming people's attitudes towards immigrants in these countries.

## MAIN RESULTS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

We estimated three types of regression models for both countries Estonia and Russia focusing on several aspects of people's attitudes towards immigrants: how people perceive the role of immigrants regarding country's economy; how people perceive the role of immigrants regarding cultural life of a country; how people perceive the role of immigrants regarding the country as place for living.

Surprisingly, socio-demographic indicators like age and gender do not play any significant role in peoples' attitudes towards immigrants in Russia. In the case of Estonia older people found that presence of immigrants make country worse to live. People who have higher income believe that immigration is good for country's economy in both Estonia and Russia. Estonian people who have higher income also believe that immigrants can enrich country's cultural life. The latter is in not true in the case of Russia. Labour market status as a rule does not have statistically significant relationship with the attitudes towards immigrants in Estonia. Only in the case of Russia unemployed people found that immigrants make country worse place to live. Better education improves attitudes towards immigrants in Estonia but does not have any statistically significant relation to attitudes towards immigrants in Russia.

So, the determinants of people attitudes towards immigrants in different post-soviet countries may differ sufficiently. The attitudes towards immigrants as a non-EU country are as a rule lower than in Estonia and other EU member countries.