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

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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 republics of the FSU (Former Soviet Union). 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.

SCIENTIFIC METHODS

To perform a comparative analysis of peoples' attitudes towards immigrants in two neighbour countries Estonia and Russia that have different immigration patterns we estimated separate regression models for both countries using ESS fifth round data. Relying on the interdisciplinary framework of theories and the results on previous empirical studies that vary depending on several circumstances, we composed the set of explanatory variables that characterise respondents' socio-demographic and economic features considering them as the possible determinants of people's attitudes towards immigrants.

Since our dependent variables were categorical we estimated ordered logit models to reveal the determinants of public attitudes towards immigrants.

To test the robustness of our results we also estimated linear regression model and ordered logit model with reduced number of selected categories (in answering about attitude toward immigrants). All estimated models provided the similar results.

POLICY VALUE-ADDED

As expected, we got empirical confirmation that having different immigration patterns and ethnic composition of population, also determinants of people's attitudes towards immigrants are differing between Estonia and Russia.

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 signify.cant 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. Thus, with improvement of people's economic situation and education also attitudes towards immigrants will probably improve in Estonia. In the case Russia, these expectations are not valid and socio-economic development will probably not create sufficiently favourable precondition for integration of ethnically diverse society in Russia.

Taking into account that in both countries the attitudes towards immigrants are still below the levels of the European advanced economies, these countries have to put continuously emphasis on monitoring and profound analysis of attitudes' determinants. The analysis of attitudes towards immigrants has to comprise country specific conditions as well as international comparisons to create necessary preconditions for development of immigration and integration policies that can improve business environment of the countries. These developments are unavoidable in order create favourable and competitive preconditions allowing to achieve sustainable economic growth in the long-run perspective.