

Dr. Leah Utyasheva. Report Review. International migration and Russia's sustainable development. Report of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. Moscow 2015

Authors use OECD countries' migration policy as a backdrop for reflection on the specifics of Russian migration, and the possibilities of utilizing it for country's sustainable development.

Similarly, to the OECD countries, Russia needs labour migrants to offset reduction in the birth rates and in the forthcoming shortage of people of the working age. The authors point out that according to the Russian Statistics Agency, in 2014-2030, Russia will need from 5,6 to 7,7 million migrants in order to keep its current production rates. This would mean that the number of migrants will have to be 15–20% higher than at the moment.

Migration in Russia has a number of distinctions that put it in a different position compared to Western industrialized countries. First, most migrant workers come to Russia on a temporary basis and do not plan to stay indefinitely. This situation has its advantages and disadvantages: the advantages are that the state is not obliged to provide migrants with social benefits (pensions, unemployment benefits, etc), and create infrastructure (housing, schools). The disadvantages are more important - temporary workers are people who will not become parts of the Russian society, and will not contribute to country's demographics and wellbeing. These people are less active as consumers - most of their wages are sent to relatives at home. Furthermore, these people are not motivated to integrate into the Russian society.

Another distinction is that sadly, Russia is not a desirable destination for highly-skilled migrants. It is a destination country only for low-skilled workers. The battle for better educated migrants Russia loses to countries of North America and Western Europe. In addition, Russia loses its own people due to brain drain - another negative tendency which sees highly skilled and highly educated workers emigrating to the West.

Which countries provide Russia with immigrants? Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are the main source countries for labour migrants in Russia. The authors conclude that these countries will probably remain donors in the foreseeable future. Apart from Kazakhstan, which is becoming a destination place for many people from the region, there are no alternatives for citizens of these countries. Migrants are also coming from farther abroad - China, Viet Nam, Afghanistan, North Korea, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other Asian countries, although their numbers are less significant than numbers of migrants from Central Asia.

The situation is aggravated by restrictive immigration policy in Russia. It was formed in the 1990s on an ad hoc basis, without the long-term strategy and

goals. In developing the policy, Russian authorities had made a mistake of considering immigration a temporary measure. They believed that problems with the lack of workers in certain areas could be solved relying on temporary workers, who come to the country for several months, and not more than 1-2 years. Instead of using labour migration for country's development, the policy creates hindrances and introduces red tape.

The authors call corruption and outdated policy of registration, the main factors blocking effective migration policy in Russia. The country is not able to use the potential of business and student migration (in contrary to the Western countries), mainly due to the restrictive legislation. Prohibitionist approaches in legislation and policy lead to the fact that the rules are less human-friendly and designed mostly to discourage people from arriving and applying for job permits.

Anti-immigration trend in society is another hindrance for effective migration policy in Russia. Media predominantly perpetuates negative view of migrants, creating images of deviants and criminals, instead of portraying them as potential development resource and future citizens and active contributors to the economy. Myths regarding the harms of labour migration are spread in the society.

Authors conclude that labour migration is an important and necessary means of compensating decline in the population, and decrease in people of employment age. The idea that Russia will be able to effectively develop without labour migration, using measures aimed at increasing the birth rate and stimulating internal movement of population - are an illusion. To successfully compete on the global scene Russia needs to use such resource as labour migration, including with permanent residence status. The report provides a comprehensive list of recommendations on how to improve legislation and policy in order to create a more enabling environment conducive to migration.

Source: Malakhov, V.; Mkrtchyan, N.; Vendina, O.; Florinskaya, Y.; Varshaver, E.; Rocheva, A.; Postavnin, V.; Vlasova, N.; Simon, M.; Samson; J. (2015): International migration and Russia's sustainable development. Report of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. Moscow: Delo, 2015.