

IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA

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Abstract

The article discusses some aspects of immigrant integration in Russia. Migration is a vital problem for Russia. Russia is a country with rising inflow of migrants, especially from the territory of the former Soviet republics. Such active migration process determines negative image of migration in Russian society. Russians feel anxious about migrants. Therefore, the paper aims to define the factors that impede the integration of immigrants. The first problem is that modern Russia has an ethnic model of the nation. Russian citizens often have a painful reaction to the growing influx of immigrants. As a result, Russian people look at immigration as a threat for the national security and the cultural homogeneity of Russian nation. The second factor is the lack of effective legal mechanisms of immigration processes. Such laws as «On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens» (2002), «On Citizenship of the Russian Federation» (2002) have complicated the naturalization process for immigrants. It became more difficult to get Russian citizenship than it was in the previous ten years. Since 2005, the Federal center tried to change immigration policy. In 2006 appeared a government program "On the support of compatriots", from 2007 work permit procedures have been simplified for international workers, finally, quotas for foreign workers have been raised considerably in 2008. However, according to experts, these actions did not change the situation. Ultimately, widespread corruption also has a negative effect on development of Russian integration policy. Sometimes government officials are self-interested in failure of immigrant integration. They do not need a transparent labour market and an effective recruitment of foreign workers. Our research shows that it is very important for government to give a possible response for public rejection of immigrants. Russian society needs effective legal, social and economic tools of immigrant integration. The Concept of Migration Policy of Russian Federation up to 2025, adopted in June 2012, became an answer on the immigrant integration problems. Suggested solutions will be taken into account and discussed.

Keywords: immigration, integration, migration policy, political process, Russia.

1 INTRODUCTION

The number of people living outside their country of origin is 200 million and it is more than 3 percent of the world's population. Almost half of them people who are from less developed countries (Naumkin, 2010).

Immigration is a challenge for many countries. Modern Russia is not an exception here. According to the United Nations report, the number of immigrants living in modern Russia is over eleven million people (United Nations, 2013).

What are the main causes of immigration to Russia?

Firstly, Russia shares land border of more than twenty thousand kilometers with the former republics of the Soviet Union where the standard of living is very low. For example, the gap in wages between Russia and Tajikistan has grown up 11 times (April 2011) (Russian Council of International Affairs, 2013, p. 4). The proportion of immigrants from Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) increased considerably from 6.3% in 2000 to 63% in 2012 among the citizens who have permission to work (Federal State Statistics Service, 2011).

Secondly, Russia has serious demographic problems. For 19 years (from 1992 until 2011), the decline of population in Russia was almost 6.7 million people. If low birth rate and a high death rate continue the population of Russia will be about 130-135 million people in 2030 (Auzan and Bobylev, 2011). According to the Federal State Statistics Service, the population of working age will decrease (from 2013 until 2030) to 10.3 million people (Federal State Statistics Service, 2010).

In such situation, immigration for Russia is an issue that has grown in importance. Immigrants became an integral part of Russian society. Therefore, immigrant integration became the fundamental aspect of Russian immigration policy. How to help immigrants to become productive citizens and to socialize with Russians? To get an answer to this important question, we need to understand the factors that impede immigrant integration.

2 FACTORS THAT IMPEDE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN MODERN RUSSIA

2.1 Rejection of Immigration

Modern Russia is a multination state with ethnic and cultural diversity. At the same time, Russia is a country with ethnic model of the nation. Russian elites deny that Russia is a country of immigrants (Malakhov, 2010, p.156). Therefore, Russian citizens have really fear of growing number of immigrants. Russian people look at immigration as a threat to national values and cultural identity. Such fear also known in Russian official discourse as migrantophobia. Look at the results of survey of Public Opinion Foundation "Table 1". More than 50% of Russians responded negatively to the invitation to live near immigrants from Transcaucasia, Central Asia and Southeast Asia.

Table 1. "How would you react if you were the neighbor of immigrants' family from ...:" (all results in percentages, %):

	Positively	Indifferently	Negatively	Prefer not to say
Ukraine	49,7	32,2	14,7	3,4
Republic of Moldova	37,2	33,0	24,4	5,4
Transcaucasia	19,3	23,6	52,6	4,5
Central Asia	17,1	23,1	55	4,8
Southeast Asia	14,4	22,4	57,3	5,9

Source: Public Opinion Foundation, (June 2012). Migration policy. <http://fom.ru/obshchestvo/10490>

Over 40 % believe that Russia does not need any more immigrants "Table 2".

Table 2. "What kind of immigrants Russia needs?" (all results in percentages, %)

Migrants who want to stay in Russia, to get permanent residence status	15,0
Migrants who want to get a job and do and not plan to stay permanently	26,0
Russia needs to accept all migrants	11,0
Russia does not need any more immigrants	39,0
I do not know the answer	9,0

Source: Public Opinion Foundation, (June 2012). Migration policy. <http://fom.ru/obshchestvo/10490>

More than 50% of respondents indicate that the way of life of immigrants is not acceptable for them and they do not recommend immigrants to arrive to their city "Table 3".

Table 3. "Willingness to accept immigrants" (all results in percentages, %)

I agree with a statement	In total
I do not mind if immigrant children will be permanent residents of my city	47,7
The way of life of immigrants is not acceptable for native-born citizens of my city	54,7
I do not recommend immigrants to arrive to my city	54,9

Source: Public Opinion Foundation, (June 2012). Migration policy. <http://fom.ru/obshchestvo/10490>

These survey results demonstrate Russian's distaste for immigration. Y. Levada stated that native-born citizens are fearful about the loss of cultures and resources of their ethnic group (Levada, 2000, p.167). According to the Federal Migration Service, the level of anti-immigrant attitudes is much higher in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Moscow Region and Leningrad Region. Nevertheless, more than half of newly immigrants resided to these four areas and the ten largest cities in Russian Federation (Britvina, 2014, p.143). Immigrants arrive in Russian regions even despite fears. The results of sociological researches speak for themselves. Only 45% of immigrants say that they feel completely safe in Russia. Over 45% of foreign citizens deal with dangerous situations. In Saint Petersburg 71% of respondents, select this option. At last, 8% of respondents feel themselves in constant danger (13% in Moscow) (Zayonchkovskaya, 2010, p.45).

View an example of Yekaterinburg, it is a big, economically developed Russian city, the number of citizens living in Yekaterinburg is over one million and a half. The report «Potential for Integration in the Middle Urals: ethnic, religious and linguistic aspects» includes trend definition: reduction in indigenous communities and growth in immigrant groups. The number of Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians) has decreased by 13 % since the last twenty years, the Tatars and Bashkir's by 23 %, the Finno-Ugric peoples by 50%. At the same time, the number of immigrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus has increased almost two times, from East Asia more than four times (Starostin, 2015).

The majority of immigrants come from rural areas and small towns. Therefore, immigrants living in big cities face various problems that impede their integration. They continue to live in the same way as they did before. At the same time, most of these immigrants are uneducated. For these reasons, we see the growing tension between locals and immigrants. Nevertheless, over 28% of immigrants plan to stay in Russia for long term and to get permanent residence (Starostin, 2015). In that case, it is necessary to develop social integration institutions. There are Ethno-Cultural Organizations, Religious Organizations, Russian Language Centers, Schools and Universities. Such structures create new effective abilities for immigrants. In this regard, major function of government is to provide an opportunity for interaction among these organizations.

2.2 The Quality of Legislation

Lack of effective legal mechanisms of migration processes is another problem of immigrant integration. For example, such laws as «On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens» (2002), «On Citizenship of the Russian Federation» (2002) have complicated the naturalization process for immigrants. It became more difficult to get Russian citizenship than it was in the previous ten years (Malakhov, 2010, p.156). Since 2005, Russian government sought to change immigration policy. In 2006 appeared a government program "On the support of compatriots". This program was initiated by the President of Russian Federation V. Putin. The primary aim of this program was to provide immigration to Russia of compatriots living abroad. This project was not fully implemented. Unfortunately, the program was late. The number of returning Russians has decreased in 2000s. «The share of Russians together with other nationalities living in Russia, having reached three quarters in the period of the highest migration wave (1993-1997), dropped to a half in 2003-2007, whereas the share of the Central Asian peoples rose from 1.3% to 6.8%» (Zayonchkovskaya, 2013).

From 2007, Russian Government simplified the procedure of obtaining a work permit. Such Federal Laws as «On Migration registration of foreign citizens and stateless persons in Russian Federation» and «On the Legal Status of Foreign citizens» made a fundamental changes to the immigration policy (Malakhov, 2010, p.156). Quotas for foreign workers have been raised considerably in 2008 (in 2014, Russian Government abolished migrant quotas and adopted patent system). At the same time, Russian authorities found ways of cooperating with Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In 2006, CIS countries agreed to take a series of joint measures to combat illegal migration. In 2007, CIS founded the CIS Council of Heads Migration Bodies. CIS leaders adopted a Declaration to coordinate migration policy. In 2011, members of the Single Economic Space (Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia) «adopted an Agreement on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, which guarantees their citizens freedom of movement and

employment in each participating country» (Zayonchkovskaya, 2013). Nevertheless, all these legislative acts were unable to improve the integration of immigrants into Russian society. The concept of system integration of immigrants was not created.

In 2012, the President of the Russian Federation V. Putin adopted «The State Migration Policy Concept of the Russian Federation through to 2025». This concept defines the strategic objectives of Russian migration policy. The Concept identifies «conditions for the formation and implementation of Russia's state migration policy; the goals, principles, objectives and key areas of this policy; international cooperation in this area; information analysis and basic mechanisms and stages for implementing Russia's state migration policy» (The State Migration Policy Concept, 2012). At the same time, The State Migration Policy Concept does not give an answer to the question of how to support the integration of immigrants in contemporary Russia.

The need for comprehensive and effective integration assistant programs is greater than ever. Clashes between locals and immigrants in Pugachev, Biryulevo, Sagra, Kondopoga and Moscow were the direct result of lack of legal basis for immigrant integration.

2.3 Corruption

The high level of corruption in Russia also prevents integration of immigrants into Russian society. There are three aspects of this issue, which need to be considered. Firstly, the problem is the quality of legislation. According to experts, rules for migrant workers contain opportunities that lead to corruption. Some of them are broad interpretation of rules concerning migration, the lack of or incomplete of administrative procedures and partly change the scope of rights (Sabirova, Shenfeld, Chuklinova and Gavrish, 2016, p.16). Government officials who are involved in the formulation and implementation of immigration policy are not interested in transparent and effective recruitment of foreign workers (Malakhov, 2010, p.156). Most researchers criticize the existence of two overlapping rules in national legislation – deportation and administrative expulsion. The only difference is that administrative expulsion is possible after the court's decision and deportation is an administrative solution (Sabirova, Shenfeld, Chuklinova and Gavrish, 2016, p.19).

Secondly, there were two federal law enforcement agencies responsible for migration policy in modern Russia – Federal Migration Service (FMS, created in 1992) and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). This system was inefficient primarily because of overlapping and concurrent governmental powers. Bad coordination between departments, the lack of cooperation among authorities, delays and problems in decision-making process and as a result, widespread abuse of public office for private gain. In 2016, FMS was dissolved, by presidential decree. Most of FMS functions were transferred to MVD.

Finally, Russian governments do not want to involve non-governmental organization and institutions in controlling current immigration. There are many reasons why it is important to develop cooperation with non-governmental organizations in the field of immigration policy. One of them is to provide a transparency of public administration and availability of information about immigration for Russian society. For example, in 2014 there were 150 corruption complaints to FMS. In 84 cases, FMS has launched their own official investigation, 12 officers were held accountable for their actions. The fate of the remaining 66 cases is still unknown (Sabirova, Shenfeld, Chuklinova and Gavrish, 2016, p.28).

3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the past ten years, Russian government has made big steps towards the immigration relief process. It concerns migration registration of foreign citizens, administrative procedures for granting work permits and introduction of patent system. At the same time, significant changes to immigration policy did not improve integration of immigrants. Russian state, business and society need to establish strategy of immigrant integration. The following recommendations are intended to promote integration of immigrants in Russian Federation:

- It is extremely important to expand cooperation with CIS countries on migration policy and to establish common rules for immigrants. Such measures can provide a normalization of immigration policy.
- Equally important to change the attitudes of native-born citizens towards immigrants, to improve the level of religious and social tolerance. Educational institutions, mass media, social organizations should help in mutual adaptation between host society and immigrants.
- It is necessary, to develop the social inclusion of immigrants and their children through the creation of federal program for linguistic integration of immigrants. The purpose of such program is not only to increase the level of language proficiency, but also to expand educational and job opportunities for immigrants.

- At last but not the list, Russian society needs effective laws regulating international migration and social programs of integration immigrants. Effective means - clarity of conditions and rules, control of human rights and permanent anti-corruption assessment of legislation.

In our view, such measures can positively influence integration of immigrants in contemporary Russia.

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