

 **Migration Yearbook:
Central Asia and
Russia-2020**

**Influence of the COVID-19
on the migration policy's
formation of the Central
Asian countries and
of the Russian
Federation**



2021

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ACRONYMS

WB – World Bank
 GDP – Gross domestic product
 HIV - Human immunodeficiency virus
 RP – Residence permit
 GRP – Gross Regional Product
 HEI – Higher educational institution
 SMS under the GKR - State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic
 MDMA of MoI RF – Main Directorate for Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation
 VHI – Voluntary health insurance
 EAEU – Eurasian Economic Union
 EU – European Union
 EEC - Eurasian Economic Commission
 ZhK KR – Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic
 IIN – Individual identification number
 KR – The Kyrgyz Republic
 KIBHR & RL - Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law
 IDC - Interdepartmental Commission under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan
 MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 IOM – International Organization for Migration
 ILO – International Labor Organization
 MoI – Ministry of Interior
 NPO – Non-profit organization
 NGNPO – Non-governmental non-profit organization
 NGO – Non-governmental organization
 UN – United Nations
 UAE – United Arab Emirates
 OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
 PPR – Permanent place of residence
 UNDP – United Nations Development Program
 RK – Republic of Kazakhstan
 RIAC – Russian International Affairs Council
 RF – Russian Federation
 RT – Republic of Tajikistan
 RUz – Republic of Uzbekistan
 CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States
 USA – United States of America
 UNHCR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
 FMS of Russia – Federal Migration Service of Russia
 FRG – Federal Republic of Germany
 CA – Central Asia
 SCP – Service Center of Population
 SDC – Strategic Developments Center
 SDG – Sustainable Development Goals
 SoE – State of emergency
 ES – Emergency situation
 SCO - Shanghai Cooperation Organization
 UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund
 COVID-19 - COronaVIrus Disease 2019
 UNCDF – United Nations Capital Development Fund

INTRODUCTION

Dear readers,

Starting the Spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic in a substantial way has influenced mobility and trans-border movements in all countries, bringing tourism and business trips to a minimum, considerably limiting labor migration, and having great deal of influence on all forms of the migration. Since the start of introducing the measures of counteraction to the spread of the virus in the countries of Central Asia and in the Russian Federation, the main destination country for the labor migrants from the Central Asian region, multitude of migration restrictions were observed, such as closing down of the borders and toughening of travel requirements. The measures on changing the migration policy in order to suppress the spread of the COVID-19 in Central Asia and in the Russian Federation were swift and had a defining influence on the destiny of millions of the migrants in the framework of the Eurasian migration system.

In real life, after the decreased mobility there were some personal, full of dramatic developments stories of the people, who had no ability of returning from abroad, of the labor migrants who nonetheless have managed to go back home, but no longer having access to other countries, where they have had some real prospects of employment, albeit the of the seasonal or temporary type, of the persons seeking asylum or trying to utilize the international protection mechanism, of victims of trafficking in human beings, as well as of many people affected by migration in the context of the pandemic.

In the year 2020 some specific trends in migration appeared, in the context of which it remains affordable for those who have financial resources for the considerably more expensive relocation process and access to vaccination. It is becoming increasingly difficult to migrate for vulnerable groups of population.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a defining influence on change of the labor migration dynamics in Central Asia. Weakening of the national economies of the countries of Central Asia and the Russian Federation, political changes of October 2020 in Kyrgyzstan, which were accompanied by extensive period of political instability have changed the approaches to formation of the migration policy in Central Asia and in the Russian Federation, which is the main country of destination for the labor migrants from the region of Central Asia. We are hoping that the survey, implemented by the authors of the changes that took place in 2020 in the area of migration in Central Asia and in the Russian Federation, which is proposed to our dear readers will be interesting and useful for them. According to the authors' intent it is the first one in a line of surveys concerning migration changes in the context of Eurasian migration system.

Yours truly,

The survey's authors:

Dmitry Poletayev	(chapters about the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan)
Leyla Delovarova	(chapter about Kazakhstan)
Tatiana Zlobina	(chapter about Kyrgyzstan)
Saodat Olimova	(chapter about Tajikistan)
Lyudmila Maksakova	(chapter about Uzbekistan)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive resume of the Migration Yearbook: Central Asia and Russia – 2020 Influence of the COVID-19 on formation of migration policy of countries of Central Asia and the Russian Federation

Brief migration profile of countries

Eurasian migration system, which is including all countries that are described in this reference guide over the last five years is identified by the temporary migration to the Russian Federation (major part of the migration flow) and to the Republic of Kazakhstan (mainly the labor migration) from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The main stimuli of the migration flow to the *Russian Federation* are related to the country's better economic position in the context of Eurasian migration system and aging of population, which brings about the need for workforce, including unskilled labor. The labor migrants are an integral part of the Russian labor market with gradually changing structure, with a "parallel society" that has its own "migrant-related" services and infrastructure. In the Russian Federation, as of December 1st, 2020, at any one time have arrived about 6,196,500 citizens from the CIS, including 1,460,100 citizens of Uzbekistan, 1,012,200 citizens of Tajikistan, 599,300 citizens of Kyrgyzstan and 365,600 citizens of Kazakhstan. The share of the Central Asian citizens that went to the Russian Federation with official purpose "to work" in the overall amount of such arrivals has increased from 63% in the year 2016 (2,700,000 people in absolute numbers) up to 75% in 2020 (1,800,000 people). In the year 2020 most of all with the official purpose "to work" there has arrived 1,011,000 citizens of Uzbekistan (43% of the overall influx with such a purpose), then 507,300 people (22%) of Tajikistan, 190,300 people from Kyrgyzstan, 60,500 people (2,6%) from Kazakhstan and 3,900 people (0.2%) from Turkmenistan.

Kazakhstan is a country of reception, transit, and origin of the migrants, whereas the labor migration of citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is of returning nature (recurring seasonal migration). According to the data provided on the Internet portal of CIS countries in 2020, in Kazakhstan there was more than 2,035,306 arrivals of foreigners (*in 2019* - 6,088,252), out of them according to their purposes: family reunification – 1, business – 2, diplomatic – 1, treatment – 4,892, international freight transportation – 264,739, pilgrimage – 229, permanent residence – 3,152, work – 55,259, service – 30,688, transit – 250,078, tourism – 15,429, studies – 9,064, and private purposes – 1,412,772. According to the same source, out of the overall number of arrivals 90 % – are the CIS countries' citizens, including from Uzbekistan – 915,974, Russia – 476,412, Kyrgyzstan – 281,144 and Tajikistan – 177,671, out of the non-CIS countries majority are the citizens of Turkey (39,435), China (12,349), India (7,575) and Germany (8,856). Internal migration in Kazakhstan is mainly directed to the capital city and to Almaty.

Labor migration from *Uzbekistan* is the most numerous migration flow, covering up to 3 to 4,000,000 people. That is mainly men of up to 40 years of age with education on the level of the basic public school and vocational training. Internal migration for permanent place of residence is taking place within CIS boundaries. As for internal migration the inter-provincial movements are prevailing.

In *Tajikistan*, which is mainly a country of departure, there is a high level of temporary male labor migration, which is directed mainly to Russia (at least 500,000 people over the last 5 years and up to 800,000 in the year 2019) with low intensity of migration exchange (mainly only with neighboring states of the Central Asian region), education migration exchange, low level of internal migration, including rural-urban kind. Over the recent years, in migration flows the number of women has increased, as well as increase of migration exchange with Uzbekistan.

Kyrgyzstan remains the country of origin of the labor migrants. Alongside the flow of male migrants, after joining of EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union) female and family migration received its development as well. In the year 2018, in the Russian Federation there were 640,000 citizens of *Kyrgyzstan* registered as migrants, i.e., 20% of the able-bodied population of *Kyrgyzstan* went to Russia to earn money. And 18% of the population are internal migrants mainly who moved from rural areas to Bishkek and to Chui province. In 2016-2017, 2,529 ethnic *Kyrgyz* have received the status of repatriate who mainly came to the *Kyrgyz Republic* from *Uzbekistan*, *Tajikistan*, and *China*.

In *Turkmenistan*, a country that is sending out the migrants, in recent years the number of outgoing migrants has increased. According to official statistical data of Turkey, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and other countries, one can estimate the total number of the migrants who left *Turkmenistan* in 2019 as approximately 110,000 people. According to a random sampling survey of the internal migration of female residents of *Turkmenistan*, three quarters of them have never migrated, while the migration activity is higher amongst the women from rural areas.

State policy and state programs in the area of migration

In the *Russian Federation*, in the year 2016 a transfer of control over the migration processes took place from the civil federal agency (FMS of the Russian Federation) to the oversight of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation (SDMI MoI RF). The strategic decisions in the area of migration are made by the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation. Management of migration processes is also part of responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, Federal Agency on Ethnicity Affairs, Border Guard Service under the Federal Security Service (FSB). The state strategy of the migration management in the Russian Federation is stated in the Concept document of the state migration policy of the Russian Federation for the years 2019–2025, and there is a State program on rendering assistance to the voluntary relocation to the Russian Federation of fellow compatriots, the immigration program, supporting repatriation.

In *Kazakhstan*, the main migration agency is the Committee of migration service of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Republic of Kazakhstan). The migration processes' management in Kazakhstan also includes the Committee of National Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Healthcare, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, Ministry of National Economy and the Ministry of Education and Science. The state strategy of migration management in Kazakhstan is provided in the Concept document on migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017-2021. National programs are put in place that are regulating migration area, such as: Strategy “Kazakhstan 2050”, Strategic (national) development plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan up to 2025, “Nurly zhol” State program of infrastructural development for 2015-2019, State program for educational development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020.

In *Uzbekistan* the management of migration processes is including the Agency on external labor migration under the Ministry of Occupation and Labor Relations (there are regional bureaus of the Agency), the country's Commission on external labor migration affairs, Commission on development of cooperation mechanism with the migrants in the issues of stimulation of investment capacity for money transfers of the Ministry of Occupation and Labor Relations, intergovernmental working groups are working on organization of the labor migration.

In *Tajikistan*, the management of migration processes is implemented by the Ministry of Labor, Migration, and Occupation of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan, also the following are included in such management: Ministry of Healthcare and Social Protection, Agency of Social Security and Retirement, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science, National Bank of Tajikistan. Policy development in the area

of migration is described in the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan up to 2030 and in the State Strategy of the Labor Market of the Republic of Tajikistan up to the year of 2020.

In *Kyrgyzstan* in 2020, management of the migration processes was implemented by the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. In 2021 its functions were transferred to the Department of Foreign Migration under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic while the Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic is implementing work with refugees and repatriates, dealing with counteraction to trafficking in human beings. In 2021 a Concept document of migration policy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the years 2020-2030 was adopted. Issues of the migration policy are touched upon in the National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2040. In the development program of the Kyrgyz Republic “Unity. Trust. Reconstruction” for 2018-2022, in the Government Program “Forty Steps to a New Era” (“Meken kart” program, the map of the fellow compatriots). In 2021, there was created a Council on ties with fellow countrymen abroad, and the Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic “On adoption of measures directed to enhancement of migration related situation” was signed.

The authorized state agencies of *Turkmenistan* in the area of migration are the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, the Ministry of National Security of Turkmenistan, the Ministry of Interior of Turkmenistan, and the State Border Guards Service of Turkmenistan. There has been no strategic document adopted in the migration area and no special national programs in the migration area.

Intergovernmental cooperation

Priorities of international cooperation of the *Russian Federation* in the area of migration could be identified as interaction with the former USSR states. Wherein migration-related regional and inter-governmental cooperation both on multilateral basis (in the context of CIS and EAEU) and on bilateral basis is related mainly to the questions of counteracting the illegal migration and regulation of the labor migration processes.

Internal migration policy of *Kazakhstan* is defined by bilateral agreements of the Central Asian countries, the Russian Federation as well as multilateral agreements between the CIS states, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Almaty process and related to the issues of forced migration, labor migration and counteraction to unregulated migration.

Uzbekistan is implementing active inter-state cooperation with recipient countries of the labor migrants, such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Japan, and UAE in the area of protection of rights and lawful interests of the labor migrants.

For *Tajikistan*, the main direction of intergovernmental cooperation in the area of migration is cooperation in the labor migration area (with Russia, Uzbekistan, UAE, Qatar, South Korea), moreover it was taking place in the context of “migration and security” theme, search of new labor markets for the workers from Tajikistan and protection of the migrants’ rights. The main efforts were directed to combat illegal migration.

For *Kyrgyzstan*, the main direction of inter-state cooperation is the cooperation on the labor migration issues especially in the context of EAEU within the bilateral cooperation framework with the Russian Federation. Kyrgyzstan is included into the several regional advisory processes on migration (Almaty, Budapest, and Paris processes) and is a member of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), with which the country is interacting on issues of counter-trafficking in human beings.

Turkmenistan is a country that has proclaimed permanent neutrality and has associated membership in the CIS. Turkmenistan is included in achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and has joined the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Legal Migration.

Protection of the migrants' rights

In *the Russian Federation*, the challenges for the migrants are mainly related with institution of registration upon the place of residence, with professional area, social needs, and services, with difficulties of adaptation and integration. Mutual assistance to the labor migrants in Russia has led to its expression into a series of institutions that have created a basis for emergence and strengthening of the “parallel” communities of the migrants in Russian towns and cities. Protection of the labor migrants' labor rights as of yet remains outside of the priority activities of EAEU. Civil society organizations have limited abilities for rendering assistance to migrants.

In *Kazakhstan* for the arriving migrants and/or for those implementing the labor activity illegally, it is quite difficult to obtain observance of their rights, including the right for access to the basic services (mainly medical assistance). Amongst the vulnerable groups in 2020 were the transit migrants, particularly from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan who were returning from the Russian Federation. The pressing issue is still the protection of the labor migrants' rights from Kazakhstan in Russia and in South Korea.

For *Uzbekistan*, the pressing topic is protection of the labor migrants' rights in Russia and in Kazakhstan, as well as their reintegration and adaptation upon return to their homeland.

Tajikistan is implementing protection of rights and interests of their labor migrants abroad, in particular in the Russian Federation; the National action plan is adopted on implementation of recommendations of the UN Committee on protection of rights of labor migrants for 2020-2024. The migrant networks, fellow compatriots' communities, and communal institutions have been acting as equal partners of the state power, both in the country of origin and in the Russian Federation in rendering assistance to the labor migrants and to members of their families.

Kyrgyzstan is taking measures on protection of the labor migrants in the Russian Federation, which is the labor migrants' main country of destination. In 2020, the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic was engaged in activity on protection of migrants' rights through their representative officers on the territory of the Russian Federation; special headquarters for coordination of actions was created.

Turkmenistan is participating in elimination of cases of statelessness and has experience in utilization of the digital environment for support of the migrants from other countries (a multilingual website of the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan has an information section, which is useful for foreigners).

Migrants' money transfers

Starting from 2015 to 2020 the trans-border private money transfers from the *Russian Federation* into the countries of Central Asia have increased (except for Turkmenistan), since 2016 to 2018 from US\$ 6,980,000,000 - 9,833,000,000 and were decreasing in the years 2018 to 2020 (down to US\$ 8,324,000,000). Decrease of the money transfer scale in 2020 in comparison with 2019 was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; however, for all countries of Central Asia except for Uzbekistan such a decrease was insignificant in comparison to the decrease in 2019 as opposed to 2018.

Amounts of money transfers to *Kazakhstan* starting from 2015 and up to 2018 had a tendency for increase but in 2019, a sharp decline was registered. The countries from which money transfers are coming to Kazakhstan are the Russian Federation (in 2019, US\$ 206,900,000 or 41.2% from the overall number of transfers) and the Republic of Korea US\$ 112,800,000, which is 22.46%. According to the data of the National Bank in 2020 in Kazakhstan KZT 286,900,000,000 (US\$ 686,000,000) has been transferred from abroad. Considerable number of transfers over the last year came from the Russian Federation 25.8%, South Korea 18.0%, Uzbekistan 13.4%, and Kyrgyzstan 11.7%. Analysis of the above

mentioned data indicates that over the last five years the amount of money transfers from Kazakhstan abroad usually exceeds the amount of incoming funds from all the foreign countries.

According to the Ministry of Employment and Workplace Relations of *Uzbekistan's* data, in 2018 money transfers of labor migrants made up US\$ 5,100,000,000 or 10% of GDP, in 2019, from the Russian Federation alone there was US\$ 4,700,000,000 transferred, out of which US\$ 3,300,000,000 by nonresidents (data of Central Bank of the Russian Federation). Money transfers are mainly used for current basic needs, providing the growth of migrants' families living standards.

According to the National Bank of *Tajikistan's* data, in 2020 the growth of incoming money transfers from private persons has decreased in comparison to the previous year down to 6.3% and the correlation of money transfers to the GDP of Tajikistan in 2020 has dropped down to 22%, which is a record low figure from the early 2000-s. Amount of money transfers a year earlier, in 2019 has made up US\$ 2,700,000,000, which is equivalent to 33.4% of GDP of the Republic of Tajikistan.

The main bulk of funds that are transferred to *Kyrgyzstan* comes from the Russian Federation and from Kazakhstan. In 2020, the trans-border transfers to Kyrgyzstan from the Russian Federation made up US\$ 1,714, 000,000, and in 2019 US\$ 1,957,000,000, i.e., there was a 12% decrease.

According to data from the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, cross-border transactions of physical persons, the citizens of *Turkmenistan* have been steadily decreasing from 2015 to 2020. In the year 2019, they amounted to US\$ 234,000, and in the year 2020 to 0.121 (a decrease in the year 2020, in relation to the year 2019 made up 52%).

Migration and the COVID-19

The shocks of the pandemic and of the economic crisis in 2020 have placed many migrants from Central Asia in dire straits of expectation for lifting of restrictive measures with undefined prospects of returning to their homeland.

The Russian authorities have applied a series of measures assisting in improvement of the migrants' situation in *Russia* over the time of pandemic, extending the validity of the documents, permitting the migrants to stay on the territory of the Russian Federation and to be engaged in labor activity and these temporary measures are partially continuing to be valid until 15th of June 2021.

In 2020, in *Kazakhstan*, over the period from the end of March up until the end of 2020, several thousand migrants from the countries of Central Asia, because of the COVID-19 pandemic got stuck at the border of Kazakhstan, including the time of their return from the Russian Federation. Over the period of pandemic, the terms like "migration amnesty" became relevant, which points out the increased attention to the migrants in the context of difficult situations. On the other hand, the importance of much more accelerated response and reflection in the migration policy is emphasized.

In the very beginning of the pandemic, in Russia there were approximately 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 labor migrants from *Uzbekistan*, many of whom have lost their jobs and income and had no opportunity of returning to their homeland. By the beginning of the summer almost half a million of labor migrants have returned to Uzbekistan. Decrease of labor migration has drastically affected the economy and the situation in the labor market in Uzbekistan as well, which specifically affected the situation of socially vulnerable groups of population.

In *Tajikistan*, the closing of the border crossings has led to growth of unemployment and increase of poverty. Starting March to April of 2020, approximately 350,100 citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan have tried but were unable to go abroad to earn money. Labor migrants from Tajikistan in the Russian Federation do not have financial savings that would allow them to survive the time of crisis and were forced to look for any work available. The number of

labor migrants that are leaving the Republic of Tajikistan over the first half of 2020 in comparison to 2019 has decreased down to 30%.

In *Kyrgyzstan*, according to the World Bank's estimates, the level of poverty in 2020 has increased from 11% to 20,1% in 2019 (national data), i.e 700,000 people more were left under the poverty line because of the pandemic among other things, out of 6,600,000 of population in the KR. The pandemic has had its destructive influence on life of internal migrants in the KR who have lost their jobs and the working migrants with origins in Kyrgyzstan, who have lost their jobs in receiving countries, mainly in the Russian Federation.

The Government of *Turkmenistan* has imposed travel restrictions and closed the borders because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Turkmenistan does not provide any official statistical data concerning the spread scale of the COVID-19 in the country.

International and non-governmental organizations

The international organizations in the area of migration *in Russia* are poorly involved in the processes of comprehensive interaction with Russian agencies that are implementing management of migration processes. Migration policy of the Russian Federation so far does not have mechanisms of comprehensive inclusion of NGO in the area of migration.

In *Kazakhstan*, one can observe quite active and effective role of the international governmental and non-governmental organizations, which is accompanied by informational and legal support of the state agencies. A typical feature is the lack of sustainability of the NGO projects, that are mainly implemented due to the donors' funds, that does not suppose the long-term support. Amongst the international organizations the leading role belongs to the International Organization on Migration (IOM), which is involved in the dialogue on all levels and is a good platform for cooperation with the state structures, the NGOs, and the migrants themselves.

In *Uzbekistan*, the international organizations such as OSCE, IOM, UNFPA, and the other UN agencies are successfully collaborating with the government and other state structures in resolution of the issues that are related to their competencies. The NGOs are implementing their activities on counteraction to the trafficking in human beings, dealing with issues of labor migrants' adaptation, mitigating the negative influence of the pandemic to the migrants that are returning to their homeland, as well as the issues of internal labor migration.

In *Tajikistan* the international organizations (IOM, FAO Tajikistan) and initiatives in the area of migration of the Asian Development Bank and JICA project on creation of business incubators are successfully developing assistance in such areas as: reintegration of the returning migrants and their family members; mobilization of financial and human resources for investment in small and medium-sized business, income generating activity; training of the returning migrants and their family members for business development, new professions, and development of economy of Tajikistan. Mutual assistance of traditional tribal and communal institutions of the migrants' families is developed.

In *Kyrgyzstan*, the international organizations (IOM, UNODC, ILO, UNICEF, UN Women, OSCE, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)) are supporting capacity building activities of the state agencies that are engaged in implementation of the migration policy through the programs that are conducted with assistance of the specialized noncommercial organizations, promoting awareness increase of the migrants regarding the employment conditions in the countries of destination, concerning the risks of migration, about the NGO networks and diasporas that are rendering informational, advisory, legal, psychological and social support to the labor migrants and their families who are in need of it.

Turkmenistan is a member of 42 international organizations, including the UN and of a number of its specialized agencies; in the country there is a working representative office of the International Organization for Migration, which is the UN migration agency. In Turkmenistan

there are working non-governmental organizations, including those in the area of combating trafficking in human beings.

Prospects and forecast assessments of migration processes

In the context of the EAEU the development of migration partnership in the long-term range will require much more pragmatic forms, while migration flows in the Eurasian migration system will gradually go back to the pre pandemic level.

In the midterm and long-term future in the *Russian Federation* there will be a continuous process of liberalization of migration-related legislation and strengthening of flexibility in the migration processes' management. In the near future in the Russian Federation there will still be vulnerability of the migrants (the main vulnerable groups of the migrants are children of migrants, women migrants and refugees) because the complex system of integration and adaptation of the migrants does not have sustainable funding.

In the near 3-5 years *Kazakhstan* will remain a country with a mixed migration status, the country of reception, transit destination and origin of the migrants.

Labor migration from *Uzbekistan* in the upcoming years will retain its considerable scale, and the Russian Federation will remain the main destination.

Labor migration from *Tajikistan* will remain the biggest migration trend well into the future. One can also foresee the growth of net immigration (permanent residency departure) to the Russian Federation.

Labor migration from *Kyrgyzstan* will continue mainly to the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, also there is an increased interest of the citizens of Kyrgyzstan towards obtaining Russian citizenship through the Russian state program of rendering support to the volunteering relocation to the Russian Federation of fellow countrymen.

In the short-term future, *Turkmenistan* will remain a donor country of the migrants, the main flow of which will be directed to Turkey and the Russian Federation. There will also be continuation of educational mobility from Turkmenistan to the Russian Federation and to other countries, as well as that to Turkmenistan from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, China, and other countries, both based on inter-state agreements and private format.

KAZAKHSTAN

Brief migration profile

Republic of Kazakhstan is the country of the main and alternative destination in the Central Asian region, and the transit corridor, over the recent years there is a certain abroad outflow of the young and able-bodied population.

The main migration trends in Kazakhstan are identified as follows: internal migration, ethnic migration to the country, transit migration, external labor migration to Kazakhstan as well as from Kazakhstan. Alongside, it is necessary to emphasize the role of educational mobility in and out of the country, as well as feminization and returning migration. The results of the experts' surveys conducted by the author confirm these trends.

...If we are to take into consideration the last five years then we definitely were mainly the country of reception, the country of transit. It is not a secret that the main provider of the labor resources of the labor migrants to the Russian Federation and basically possibly to other republics are the Republic of Tajikistan, and Republic of Uzbekistan. A part of these people would settle down in our country, and a certain part would follow along to the Russian Federation. But over the recent times, there is a trend that we as well are becoming a country of exodus, that our fellow countrymen, our citizens are also starting to actively leave the country for the Russian Federation and South Korea. As for the incoming labor migrants from Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan this trend is somewhat unchanged, in my opinion it is neither increasing nor decreasing. I might say that nowadays we are gradually moving to the category of the country of exodus... Taken from the expert's interview.

One of the relevant directions as of today, with consideration of the main migration trends is also the labor return migration¹ of citizens of the Central Asian region's countries to the countries of origin (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan).

Internal migration is an extremely important phenomenon in the context of social and political processes' development. According to the analysis of the UNPF in Kazakhstan, which was conducted with the Ministry of National Economy, the internal migration flows in Kazakhstan from 2000 to 2018² with consideration of the trends that were detected by the author up to year 2020 had two centers of gravity and some minor flows in all directions. One of the main advantages was and still is the capital city of Nur-Sultan (previously Astana), which is a result of migration, according to the national statistics has received more than 510,000 people³. The second pole, according to the same data is the city of Almaty, the former capital city of Kazakhstan, which has received a migration increase of no less than 385,000 people. The main sources of internal migrants were Turkestan, Jambyl and East Kazakhstan provinces. Such a situation shows that the problem of internal migration remains to be a significant trend and the measures that are taken by the state so far were unable to resolve the problem of this disproportion of the population density.

The experts also think that the internal migration is an important and sustainable global and regional trend, which is projected in Kazakhstan.

...the internal migration is increasing, which more and more affects on the issue, people are naturally gravitating towards larger cities, because, again, in rural areas, unfortunately, there is no work, there are no basic commodities for the normal life of people... and nonetheless, especially amongst the younger generation, the people prefer to leave for the larger cities, since they provide more prospects... From the experts' interview.

¹ Return migration: international approaches and regional features of Central Asia. Training manual. Under the general editorship of correspondent member of RAS, Doctor of Economics Ryazantseva S.V., International Organization for Migration (IOM) - United Nations Agency for Migration, Almaty, 2020.

² Report. Analysis of the situation in the area of population settlement of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan, 2019// <https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org>.

³ Ibid.

Volumes of migration

It is quite hard to assess the expanse of migration in Kazakhstan, especially considering the visa-free regime with all the countries of the Central Asia (except for Turkmenistan) and the Russian Federation, as well as functioning of the Eurasian Economic Union and constant discrepancies in the record system for the foreign citizens. As of 2016-2018 the overall estimate of the migrants' number in Kazakhstan is approximately 1,500,000 to 3,000,000 migrants. Thus, according to some surveys, in 2016 the number of migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan with temporary registration was estimated as 1,265,000 people⁴. In 2018, the temporary stay of the CIS citizens in the Republic of Kazakhstan was estimated as 1,812,438 people, out of whom more than 85% are the citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan⁵, who have arrived to work and for private business. The majority of this number are the citizens of Uzbekistan (up to 90%).

According to the data presented at the Internet portal of the CIS countries in 2020, more than 2,035,306 foreigners arrived to Kazakhstan (in 2019 it was 6,088,252) out of them, according to the following purposes: family reunification - 1, business - 2, diplomatic - 1, medical treatment - 4,892, international freight transportation - 264,739, pilgrimage - 229, permanent residence - 3,152, work - 55,259, service related - 30,688, transit - 250,078, tourism - 15,429, studies - 9,064, private - 1,412,772. According to the same source, out of the total number of those who arrived, the 90% are citizens of the CIS countries, including from Uzbekistan - 915 974, the Russian Federation - 476,412, Kyrgyzstan - 281,144 and Tajikistan - 177,671, from non-CIS countries the majority are the citizens of Turkey (39,435), China (12,349), India (7,575) and Germany (8,856)⁶.

These data provide an idea about the number of arrivals and allow in general to comprehend the volumes. It is important to note that the migration in the region has a circular and seasonal nature which also does not allow to make exact assessments of the migration flows.

Kazakhstan is an intense actor of the migration processes, the demographic development of which has gone through a series of considerable changes over the last quarter of a century, including the quantity-based and qualitative characteristics. Quantitative characteristics have been strengthened due to the two components: the migration processes, and to be more specific due to the process of repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs so called "oralmans" and the "kandas"⁷ since 2020 and the natural growth⁸.

It is necessary to note that there is an active ethnic migration from Kazakhstan on repatriation of fellow countrymen to the Russian Federation. According to the recent assessment the migrants from Kazakhstan took the second place after Tajikistan by number of arrivals to the Russian Federation. That is what the data of the Russian statistic agency "Rosstat" are indicative of⁹. Certainly, in order to have a full analysis of the situation it is necessary to consider the entire specifics of the migration processes, but such statistics does not provide a definitive overview of the migrants' direction flows from Kazakhstan.

The main measuring mechanism for the demographic situation in Kazakhstan is the overall population census, which is taking place every ten years. Since the time of gaining the independence, two censuses, one in 1999 and the other in 2009, were conducted. (The next one

⁴ Migrants' vulnerability and the needs in integration in Central Asia: Migrants and communities' needs assessment and risk management. - Astana, 2017 - 48 p.

⁵ Official data of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Kazakhstan provided to the author by the IOM Almaty in 2019 within the framework of the project "Return migration: international approaches and regional features of Central Asia".

⁶ Migration situation in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the year of 2020. // <https://e-cis.info/cooperation/3782/91014/>

⁷ On introduction of amendments and additions to some legislative texts of the Republic of Kazakhstan concerning the issues of migration processes' regulation. Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by May 13th, 2020, No. 327-VI LRK // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2000000327>

⁸ Delovarova L.F. Demographic development of Kazakhstan and the main directions of the migration policy at the present stage // Population settlement № 1-1 - 2016, - P.74.

⁹ Citizens of Kazakhstan took second place in the number of migrants arriving to Russia // <http://today.kz/news/zhizn/2019-02-23/775449-kazahstantsyi-zanyalitoroe-mesto-po-chislu-pribyvivshih-v-rossiyu-migrantov/>

is planned for October, 2021). The data results show a positive development, primarily in the quantitative aspect¹⁰.

Over the recent years, the population numbers are steadily increasing. According to the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as of January 1, 2021, the total number of the country's population was 18,877,100 people¹¹. Out of this number the urban population is 10,312,900 (57.8%), rural population is 7,744,000 (42.2%) people¹².

According to the data provided in the expanded migration profile of the Republic of Kazakhstan the ethnic map of Kazakhstan has changed and the titular ethnic group nowadays is making up the dominating majority of the population (whereas at the beginning of 2019 the Kazakhs make up 67.98% of the entire population of the country)¹³.

According to the experts, who's data is based on survey and observations the share of ethnic Kazakhs the titular ethnic group has exceeded 70%.

We already have 73% of Kazakhs, and for sure, we expect the next population census, which will most likely be conducted either at the end of this year, or at the beginning of the next. But, even now, according to the unofficial statistics, which is not yet connected to the census, we have about 73% of the ethnic Kazakhs and 19% of the Slavic population... the ethnic group, which has always been the second largest group in terms of the number population, and which has become the third largest group, and the Uzbeks are turning into the second largest group. From the experts' interview.

In general, data monitoring seems to be possible primarily because of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The experts point out some controversies in the data, but in general they agree with the fact that the data is updated regularly and can be verified. The statistics of external permanent migration from Kazakhstan in 2020 shows a decrease in the number of those leaving the country. According to the official statistics' data, in 2020, 29,110 people have left Kazakhstan for permanent residence abroad against 45,231 people in the year 2019¹⁴. Alongside that, according to the data of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), in January-September of 2020, only 21,000 people left the country, which is more than 50% less than over the same period of previous year¹⁵. According to various experts' views, one of the reasons for the change in migration attitudes and in reduction of the outflow from the country in the reported year is the pandemic.

Geographic span of those who are leaving the country primarily includes the Russian Federation (according to different estimates up to 80% of all Kazakhstan immigrants), Germany, Uzbekistan, USA, South Korea, Europe, etc. One of the main reasons is the economic aspect. That is what the analysis of expert interviews is indicative of, as well as some secondary sources. Economic migration is one of the most significant global trends, which is projected on all levels. And the choice in this case of the Russian Federation is explained by the whole series of factors, including territorial proximity, cooperation in the context of EAEU, lack of the language barrier, free visa regime, etc. In this context it is understood that it is mainly the younger economically active population that is immigrating. During the analysis of the reasons,

¹⁰ Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Results of the 2009 National population census of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Volume 1: Statistical digest / Under editorship of Smailova A.A. Astana, 2011 - 242 p.

¹¹ Main social-and-economic indicators // <https://stat.gov.kz/>

¹² Population of Kazakhstan made up 18,350,000 people. <https://www.zakon.kz/4950127-18-35-mln-chelovek-sostavilo-naselenie.html>

¹³ Kazakhstan: Extended migration profile of 2019. - Almaty: Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kazakhstan - Sub-regional coordination office for Central Asia, 2020 - 146 p.

¹⁴ The population outflow from Kazakhstan has decreased by 1.5 times in the year 2020. <https://www.nur.kz/politics/kazakhstan/1899634-ottok-naseleniya-iz-kazaxstana-sokratilsya-v-15-raza-v-2020-godu/>

¹⁵ Social-and-demographic statistical indicators of the Eurasian Economic Union, January through September of 2020 // http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/integr_i_makroec/dep_stat/econstat/Documents/Bulletin_SDI/SDI%202020_09.pdf

contributing to this process the following factors are emphasized: political, social, economic, and other ones¹⁶.

Besides the economic immigration and the outflow of the population, a much clearer and more significant trend is in educational mobility both from Kazakhstan and to Kazakhstan. Educational mobility from Kazakhstan is directed to the Russian Federation, China, Turkey, USA, EU countries, etc.

Kazakhstan is increasingly positioning itself as an educational hub in the region. In Kazakhstan, the share of foreign students is a key indicator of the Strategic Development Plan of Kazakhstan until 2025 (by 2021 - 6%, by 2025 - 10% and by 2050 - 20%). According to the data provided by universities, in the 2019-2020 academic year, 40,188 foreign students studied in Kazakhstan. This is 6.7% of the total pool of all the university students. In comparison with 2018, the number of foreign students has almost doubled (in 2018 it was 20,866 people)¹⁷. Despite the fact that the share of foreign students in Kazakhstan has considerably increased it is still insignificant in comparison with the worldwide figures. According to the same source, a major share of foreign students belongs to the CIS countries (31,257) with that more than a half (25,550) are the share of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Kazakhstan is a popular country for obtaining education for the students from Afghanistan. There is a trend that the country is often viewed as a “springboard” for educational migrants from Afghanistan, who study annually under the intergovernmental agreement, as well as on a commercial basis. Upon completion of their studies, the foreign students from Afghanistan often apply for scholarship programs in Europe and the United States, preparation for which is implemented in the process of studying in Kazakhstan. Students actively learn languages, receive various certificates according to the field of their studies. By the time of graduation from the bachelor’s degree program, these students have an intent of migration aimed at remaining in Kazakhstan or to emigrate for educational purposes to Europe or the United States.

Education of Kazakhstan is also popular in Tajikistan; however, the Russian Federation provides more grants for foreign students, and the cost of studies there is lower. It can also be pointed out that a stable community of ethnic Tajiks, the diaspora, was formed in the Russian Federation, which provides comprehensive support to arriving students, alongside the labor migrants.

In recent years, more and more foreign university students from Turkmenistan could be found in Kazakhstan. While entering the country’s top higher educational institutions on a commercial basis, the students receive priority in transferring money for tuition and accommodation, as well as support of their representative offices in the form of consultations and continuous monitoring.

From an interview of the education migrant from Turkmenistan:

«- *Why have you decided to study in Kazakhstan?*

- *It is all due to the stories of my sisters. I very much admired the city of Almaty and wanted to be like them as well. They motivated me very much.*

- *Do you like the education system in Kazakhstan? What advantages, disadvantages would you point out?*

- *Yes, I really do like studying in Kazakhstan. Since Almaty itself is a city of young people and we have more capabilities, therefore our university provides more opportunities to learn and gain an experience.»*

Educational mobility is becoming a constant relevant trend, which is related to other trends as well. Thus, upon the arrival of educational migrants, in some cases, one can observe

¹⁶ External migration of the young people in countries of Central Asia: risk analysis and negative consequences mitigation, 2019. // https://kazakhstan.iom.int/sites/kazakhstan/files/documents/External%20Youth%20Migration_RUS_2019_1_updatedcover.pdf

¹⁷ Analytical report on implementation of the Bologna Process principles in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019. - Nur-Sultan: Center for the Bologna process and academic mobility of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019 -- 40 p., Pp. -26.

transformation to the labor migration. Educational mobility to the country from European countries and the United States is quite insignificant and is often associated with the studies of the Russian language and the interest towards the Central Asia region. In general, one can note that the educational mobility to Kazakhstan is increasing, and traditionally the main sources of this kind of mobility are the neighboring countries.

Educational mobility from Kazakhstan quite often is causing concerns amongst the experts. According to a survey of the regional office of International Organization on Migration in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, assessment of educational mobility, which can be of non-return nature is identified in 30-35% with propensity to growth, according to this data, approximately 20,000 students from Kazakhstan that are studying abroad, in the future can renounce citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan¹⁸. Such data is causing concern, but it seems that more in-depth and predictive surveys are needed. The results of educational mobility from Kazakhstan have quite different outcomes and this process is worth examining in detail.

In general, it should be noted that the Republic of Kazakhstan is an active participant in migration processes in the Central Asian region with the most diversified migration profile.

State policy and state programs in the area of migration

The priority directions of the migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan are enshrined in the main law and within the context of the “Kazakhstan-2050” development strategy¹⁹, which is identifying *a global demographic disbalance* as a second out of the *Ten global challenges of XXI century* and actualizing the sustainability issues of the migration processes.

The modern demographic image is very closely interconnected with the state of the current migration situation, which is quite clearly examined in the Concept document of the migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years of 2017-2021. Thus, the Republic of Kazakhstan is adhering to the strategy of temporary migration for involvement of foreign workers, optimal settlement of the population throughout the country’s territory, as well as for the long-term permanent migration in relation to the ethnic repatriates that are arriving to the Republic of Kazakhstan²⁰. This defines the main directions of the migration policy in the country. In Kazakhstan, there has been developed a sufficient legal framework in the area of the migration processes’ regulation, which is being improved on a permanent basis. An entire array of the relevant regulatory documents is a testimony of this.²¹ The most significant one is the law “On migration of the population” dated by July 22, 2011²², which is being corrected with consideration of the ever-changing migration reality.

¹⁸ External youth migration in countries of Central Asia: risk analysis and negative consequences’ mitigation, 2019 // https://kazakhstan.iom.int/sites/kazakhstan/files/documents/External%20Youth%20Migration_RUS_2019_1_updatedcover.pdf

¹⁹ Strategies and programs of the Republic of Kazakhstan // https://www.akorda.kz/ru/official_documents/strategies_and_programs

²⁰ Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On ratification of the migration policy Concept document of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the period of 2017 - 2021 and of the Activities’ plan on implementation of the migration policy Concept document of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2017 - 2021” dated by September 29, 2017.

²¹ Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan. August 30th, 1995. // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/K950001000>. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan about citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Dated by December 20th, 1991. 1017-XII // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z910004800> ; “On the legal status of foreigners”. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by June 19th, 1995. // https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U950002337_u952337.htm

“On Refugees”. The law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by December 4th, 2009, № 216-IV // https://kodeksy-kz.com/ka/o_bezhentsah.htm;

“On migration of the population”. The law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by July 22nd, 2011, № 477-IV.or 22.06.2011 // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z1100000477> ;

“On introduction of amendments and additions to some legislative texts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the migration processes’ regulation”. The law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by May 13th, 2020. № 327-VI LRK // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2000000327#z93>
Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On approval of the migration policy Concept document of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years 2017 - 2021 and of the activity plan for implementation of the migration policy Concept document of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years 2017 – 2021” dated 29.09.2017.

// <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1700000602>

²² “On migration of the population”. The law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by July 22nd, 2011, № 477-IV.or 22.06.2011 // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z1100000477>

It is worth emphasizing the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Approval of the concept document on migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years 2017 to 2021 and the Action Plan for implementation of the concept document on migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years 2017 to 2021”, that were adopted in September, 2017 as a result of reorganization of the two Ministries’ work, namely the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Health and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan. As a result of this very reform, the Migration Service Committee under the Ministry of Interior was formed.

During analysis of the concept document one can note that in the foreign migration priorities the focus should be made on attraction of the highly skilled workforce, which will promote innovation-based social and economic sustainable development of the country. The next important aspect is the policy directed to attract the ethnic Kazakhs, so called “kandas”. The third aspect is regulation of internal migration. In the concept document the priorities of the migration policy with the membership in the Eurasian Economic Union are not elaborated upon, while the free movement of the labor resources throughout the entire Eurasian area is important for the economic development of Kazakhstan.

One of the issues that were touched upon in the Concept document is the quotas for foreign citizens. The adoption of the quota, according to the government agencies’ representatives, will allow to protect the domestic labor market from unskilled foreign labor, and to employ more human resources of Kazakhstan, as well as to fulfill the employers’ demand for highly skilled foreign labor. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as of October 1, 2020, 16,105 permits for attracting foreign workforce (FWF) were issued in Kazakhstan²³.

Survey of the data presented above is indicative of a decline in the share of foreign workforce. Thus, as of January 1st, 2020, more than 19,000 foreigners worked in Kazakhstan, by the end of the year there were about 16,000 remaining. The explanation for this decrease is surely the COVID-19 pandemic and all the consequences associated with it. The quota distribution is a mechanism for balancing the attraction of foreign workforce, but it does not reflect the entire reality and does not satisfy all the needs of the imbalance in the labor market. There are some gaps in the legislation and recruitment procedures. In this regard, it is vital to point out the Law “On introduction of amendments and addenda to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the issues of migration processes’ regulation” dated by May 13th, 2020²⁴. This law brought about some amendments and addenda on issues of terminology (that were already mentioned in the previous section) and the whole series of clarifications.

Committee of migration service is a department of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which within the limits of their authority is implementing inter-departmental coordination and implementation of the state policy in the area of migration, as well as monitoring, analysis and forecasting of the migration processes, as well as organization of work on issues of refugees and citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan²⁵. Creation of a separate structure on migration issues has become a serious decision directed at implementation of a more systematic internal and external migration policy.

In order to implement the effective migration policy in the process of migration processes’ regulation, several Ministries and departments of Kazakhstan are involved: *National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Committee of Migration Service under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Labor and*

²³ There are less of the labor migrants in Kazakhstan // <https://politics.nur.kz/1880436-trudovyh-migrantov-v-kazahstane-stanovitsa-mense.html>

²⁴ The law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by May 13th, 2020, № 327-VI LRK // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2000000327#z93>

²⁵ Official website of the Committee of the Migration Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan. About the committee: // <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/migration/about?lang=ru>

Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

This list is not exhaustive since the other sub-departmental structures and agencies are also involved in implementation of the migration policy in certain aspects.

Existence of legislation, its improvement and adjustment testify not only about realization of the migration policy's significance, but also about its continuous change and development. Along with the legal acts, in Kazakhstan there are some active national programs²⁶, regulating the migration area. It is necessary to highlight the following: Strategy "Kazakhstan-2050", Strategic (national) development plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan up to 2025, State program of infrastructural development "Nurly zhol" for the years 2015-2019, State program for education development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the years 2011 to 2020, which was adopted by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan № 1118 dated by December 7th, 2010.

Along with the state programs, it is worth noting that the government is responding to some international trends and changes. In this context, it is important to mention the process of nationalization of the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development, and of adoption of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) until the year 2030, both at the global and the national levels. In 2019, Kazakhstan has provided a Voluntary national survey on implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development²⁷.

In general, not only secondary sources, but also the respondents' surveys from amongst government agencies, NGOs and the expert community indicate that the legal field in the area of migration policy is sufficient and there is an understanding of the migration policy's main directions, with recognition of significance of its effective implementation. It is also important to note that the approach based on the perception of migration primarily in the context of threats and risks is outdated, and it is more and more based on development and cooperation. Besides that, on December 30th, 2019, the President Tokayev has signed the Law "On introduction of amendments and addenda to some legislative texts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on issues of improvement of the criminal and criminal-procedural law and strengthening of the individual's rights protection"²⁸, which provides abolition of the compulsory registration of foreigners in Kazakhstan. According to this law, the receiving party is assuming an obligation to inform the migration service of a foreign guest's arrival within three working days since the date of entry to the country²⁹. Such a measure is directed first to increase the touristic activity and attractiveness for foreigners in general, but it is also very convenient for those foreign citizens who are planning to conduct the labor activity. Abolition of registration in this case does not lead to lack of systematic setup and to the control lack over the migration because the information on arrivals and leavings as well as for those who are staying in the country can always be found in the "Berkut" unified information system's database.

Over the time of pandemic such terms as "migration amnesty" have become relevant, which is indicative of emergence of the great deal of attention to the migrants in their difficult situation's conditions, but some of the abovementioned innovations were limited or cancelled because of the situational change. On the other hand, the importance of much speedy and clear response and reflection in the migration policy is emphasized. It is also confirmed by the experts' survey results.

²⁶ Strategies and programs of the Republic of Kazakhstan // https://www.akorda.kz/ru/official_documents/strategies_and_programs

²⁷ Kazakhstan: Voluntary national review on implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the area of sustainable development. - Nur-Sultan: Ministry of national economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019. -- P. 66.

²⁸ Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Legal texts. https://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/laws/glavoi-gosudarstva-podpisan-zakon-respubliki-kazahstan-o-vnesenii-izmenenii-i-dopolnenii-v-nekotorye-zakonodatelnye-akty-respubliki-kazahsta-239.

²⁹ In Kazakhstan registration of foreigners was abolished. // <https://tengritravel.kz/my-country/v-kazahstane-otmenili-registratsiyu-inostrantsev-387760>

I think that quite close attention is paid by the state, I can assure you of that with all the responsibility, because I myself took part in it. Naturally, we might be lagging behind somewhere but nonetheless we are always responding...

We have a legislative field, in which the most important thing is the law on the population migration, and we have the migration policy concept document for 2017-2021 which in this year is expiring. Nowadays the work is done on development of the new migration policy concept document. In general, the legislative field is present, however, there should also be discussions concerning the effectiveness' increase. As I previously stated, in the legislation there is a set of unresolved issues in relation to keeping track of the migrants.

... the Law on migration as of 2011, with the further amendments, is a fairly effective instrument that works well and with which I agree... Thankfully, we are, in general, gradually moving away from... exclaiming that migration is a threat, just a threat, and nothing but a threat. Naturally, in Kazakhstan, there is still some amount of anxiety persisting, because in the concept document it is stated that migration brings certain risk factors in it.

Excerpts from the experts' interview.

Intergovernmental cooperation

Cooperation in the area of migration between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the other actors (participants) of migration processes is determined by interaction on bilateral and multilateral levels.

Foreign (external) migration policy is determined by bilateral agreements with the countries of Central Asia, the Russian Federation, as well as by the multilateral agreements between the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Almaty Process and with the other international organizations.

The issues of migration are primarily being resolved on the national levels, in which regard, the bilateral agreements are quite significant between the countries, with which the most active migration exchange is taking place, including the neighboring countries. Bilateral agreements and the readmission agreements between the countries of Central Asia as of this day are the key mechanism for the migration regulation, including that with the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan.

With all the countries in the region, except for Turkmenistan, the Republic of Kazakhstan has established a visa-free regime. There are baseline agreements with each of the states in the region that regulate migration issues³⁰. Kazakhstan has signed some general international documents that are protecting human rights, and which also touch upon the area of migration³¹.

Kazakhstan has become one of the countries that have signed the UN Global Compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration on December 12th, 2018³². The Global Migration Network was launched, the purpose of which was announced as mobilization of all international organizations to resolve the problems of migration through organization of their coordinated

³⁰ On the signing of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on cooperation in the area of migration. Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by November 26th, 2019, No. 878// <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1900000878>

On the ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan on regulation of the population migration processes. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by December 13th, 2000, N 111-II // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z000000111>

On ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on cooperation in the migration area. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by January 25th, 2019, No. 220-VI LRK // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z1900000220>

On signing of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on cooperation in the area of migration. Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by March 7th, 2018, № 112 // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1800000112>

On ratification of the Treaty on strategic partnership between the Republic of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated by January 11th, 2018, № 137-VI LRK // <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z1800000137>

³¹ International Covenant on civil and political rights (New York, dated by December 16th, 1966); International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights; Convention on the rights of the child (New York, November 20th, 1989); Convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (New York, December 18th, 1979); Kazakhstan ratified the slavery convention signed in Geneva on September 25th, 1926, as amended by the protocol dated by December 7th, 1953; The UN Convention about the status of refugees (Geneva, July 28th, 1951), etc.

³² Kazakhstan pledged to help the migrants // <https://ru.sputnik.kz/society/20181212/8455266/kazakhstan-migranty-dogovor-sodeystviya.html>

work. Kazakhstan has been actively engaged in the work of this Network and in March of 2020, a launch of the National Consultation on the UN Migration Network took place in the capital city of Nur-Sultan³³ due to productive cooperation with the International Organization for Migration.

The foundations of cooperation on the international and regional levels have been incorporated within the framework of the CIS activities since the very time of independence for the countries of Central Asian region. Here there have been developed and enforced the legal acts concerning the regulation of migration³⁴. On the CIS level the most pressing topics for regulation are the forced migration and regulation of the refugee status and forced migrants, optimization of the legal regulation of the labor migration and counteraction to unregulated migration.

The start of the Eurasian Economic Union's activity (EAEU) in January 2015 according to the agreement dated by May 29th, 2014,³⁵ has provided the freedom for movement of goods, services, capital, and workforce, as well as the implementation of coordinated, synchronized, or unified policy in different sectors of the economy. According to Clause 26 of the Agreement (96-98), within the context of the Union, favorable conditions have been created for the migrants' labor activity, capabilities for movement in a unified economic area. It is important to note that as of today the EAEU is one of the most progressive platforms in relation to migration issues in the Eurasian area.

The issues of unregulated migration are taken into consideration within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO is a permanent regional international organization founded in June 2001. Migration issues within the framework of this organization are taken in consideration through the context of combating separatism, terrorism, illegal trade of arms, drug trade and trafficking in human beings. In this regard, within the SCO framework there was no separate document adopted regulating the migration issues. The main emphasis is made on the resolution of issues of counter-trafficking in human beings.

Within the context of international cooperation, it is particularly important to mention such an international platform as the Almaty process, which was initiated by Kazakhstan. It is a regional advisory process on protection of refugees and concerning the international migration to, from and across the Central Asia. This process was launched in 2011 (implementation of activity was launched in 2013) and it is designed to address a multitude of problems that are caused by the complicated dynamics of migration and directed to improvement of the regional cooperation and coordination regarding the mixed types of migration. This process' coverage include resolution of the uncontrolled migration problems, management and security of the borders, trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, protection of the migrants and refugees' rights, as well as the labor migration, etc.

It is worth noting that the most comprehensive and valuable at this present stage of cooperation are the bilateral agreements between the states of Central Asia and the Russian Federation. This is also confirmed by the interviews' results between the government officials and experts³⁶. Alongside this, one can note that not all agreements work effectively and not all the issues have been resolved. The next in line document in terms of efficiency, according to our opinion, is the EAEU Agreement. As of this date, it covers only Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and the Russian Federation, but it is worth emphasizing that Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are acting as observers and could be the potential members of the Union.

³³ Kazakhstan: Extended migration profile of 2019. - Almaty: Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kazakhstan - Sub Regional coordination office for Central Asia, 2020 - 146 p.

³⁴ Cooperation in the area of migration // <https://e-cis.info/cooperation/3127/77661/>

³⁵ "Treaty on the Eurasian economic union" (Signed in Astana on 05/29/2014) (revised on 10/01/2019) // http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_163855/

³⁶ From the interview results conducted by the author.

Protection of the migrants' rights

Problems, challenges, and measures for protection of the labor migrants' rights in Kazakhstan and abroad are some serious issues in the context of the migration processes' regulation. One serious obstacle to realization of the migrants' rights is the status of the migrants residing in Kazakhstan. Despite the absence of a mandatory visa regime and even application of the national regime for labor activity (for the migrants from Kyrgyzstan), most of the migrants in Kazakhstan are lacking access to essential services (primarily medical ones) due to the fact that they reside and/or implement their labor activities outside the legal field.

In Kazakhstan, the main emphasis is made on reducing the negative impact of migration flows to the national economy and on attracting highly skilled migrant workers to the labor market of Kazakhstan. Therefore, there was intensification of restrictive administrative measures in general, including for the groups of migrants who have found themselves in Kazakhstan in a state of shock due to refusal to re-enter the Russian Federation for various reasons³⁷. The migrants quite often, upon arrival to Kazakhstan, are finding themselves disoriented and depressed and, while even having all the needed documents, are missing the scheduled registration process and other legal type of procedures, which takes them out of the legal field. Especially sensitive is still the gender related aspect. This is manifested when it concerns not just the young women who find themselves in a difficult situation, but also the divorced women who are left with minors without means for survival.

According to Kazakhstan's legislation in the area of accessing the medical services (Article 88.5 of the Code on people's health and the healthcare system of the Republic of Kazakhstan), the migrant workers with a regulated status only are eligible to access the free medical care in the event of contracting infectious diseases that pose a danger to the public.³⁸ All migrants are granted access to free medical care in case of an emergency, regardless of their migration status. In other cases, access to the healthcare services for the migrant workers is payment based.

Migrants from Kyrgyzstan are in the most advantageous situation due to the start of the Eurasian Economic Union's activities in 2015, according to the statutory document of which the migrants from the participating states are taking advantage of a national regime and have a certain social benefit, moreover, they have a better direct awareness alongside with the information, provided by their fellow countrymen. The migrant workers with the regulated status from Kyrgyzstan and their family members have access to the healthcare system of Kazakhstan in the similar terms as the citizens of Kazakhstan. In reality though, a major part of the migrants from Kyrgyzstan work in Kazakhstan without signing upfront any formal agreement, therefore they find themselves deprived of the opportunity to access the medical services that are without restrictions, and only have an access to free medical care in emergency cases. Thus, the migrants from Kyrgyzstan as well quite often are getting in the same situation just like the migrants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Other reasons for limited access of all migrants to the medical services are financial insolvency, as well as the fear of being detained by the law enforcement officers during their admission to a hospital.

Moreover, in Kazakhstan there has been introduced a population registration system, according to which everyone is to obtain an IIN, the individual identification number (which is done at the tax service and concerns the foreign citizens who do not have a permanent residence permit)³⁹. Many migrant workers with the non-regulated status are unable to obtain this number

³⁷ Vulnerability of migrants and needs of integration in Central Asia. Main causes and social-and-economic consequences of the return migration. Regional field assessment in Central Asia. 2016.- p. 9.

³⁸ Labor migrants in Kazakhstan: no status, no rights. September. 2016 [Access Mode: https://www.fidh.org/TMG/pdf/note_kazakhstan_681r_6_sept_2016_ru_web.pdf]

³⁹ Return migration: international approaches and regional features of Central Asia. Training aid. Under the general editorship of associate member of RAS, Doctor of economics Ryazantseva S.V., International Organization for Migration (IOM) - United Nations Agency for Migration, Almaty, 2020.

due to their lack of registration, or some violations or because of various fears of persecution.⁴⁰ This system does not include complete denial of using the services, for instance, it is related to rendering of services on a commercial basis, and it is a limiting factor either.

Migrants have limited access to the healthcare system, there is also a problem of deteriorating health conditions of the migrant workers. This is related to worsening of the living and working conditions⁴¹, when migrant workers are more often becoming victims of accidents at work, getting infected and sick with infectious diseases or becoming sick with such kinds of sicknesses that manifest themselves only after a certain amount of time, when it becomes harder to render them an assistance.

Thus, the migrants' access to the healthcare and education in Kazakhstan is complicated by a whole set of factors of the socio-cultural nature, including knowledge of the languages, and their psychological health. The main institutions that render assistance in tough situations are the international governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as the migrants' organizations.

It is just important to have protection of the labor migrants' rights from Kazakhstan in such countries as the Russian Federation and South Korea. If in the case of the Russian Federation, the bilateral agreements and the EAEU Treaty regulate the situation, then in the case with South Korea it is more complicated. According to the estimation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, now there is almost 10,000 citizens of Kazakhstan staying in Korea as non-documented ones⁴². The flow of labor migration from Kazakhstan to South Korea became active in the year 2014. Some migrants have found permanent jobs and settled in Korea, while others have returned. The labor migrants arrive there as tourists, taking advantage of a visa-free regime between the countries, but their main goal is to find work. According to different sources, there is increasing number of cases when the migrants contracting diseases and receiving injuries, since they do not have the right to free medical support⁴³. In such a situation, the position of the government of Kazakhstan is particularly important, as within the country, as well as in the establishment of a dialogue and multilateral communication with the countries of destination. The President K.K. Tokayev stated that the labor migration of Kazakhstan citizens is one of the pressing issues, since every year thousands of citizens of Kazakhstan leave for work abroad and work there illegally, which leads to various complications⁴⁴. The issue about protection and support of the labor migrants from Kazakhstan is remaining on the agenda and requires development of much more effective mechanisms of resolution. In general, the situation with observance of the labor migrants' rights in Kazakhstan is under the constant focus of the responsible state structures, international, and non-governmental organizations.

Migrants' money transfers

Influence of migration on the concerned countries' economies as well as in the context of interconnection of migration and development is also defined by the amounts of money transfers. Increase of labor migrants' money transfers' amount on a global scale is one of the most significant trends, which is also related to the region of Central Asia. Migrants' money transfers promote increase and improvement of the migrant's households, stabilization of social

⁴⁰ Labor migrants in Kazakhstan: no status, no rights. September. 2016 [Access Mode: https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/note_kazakhstan_681r_6_sept_2016_ru_web.pdf]

⁴¹ Monitoring of the migrants' access to decent and effective employment. Report. Astana. 2018. Access Mode: <https://redcross.kz/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Doklad-po-dostupu-migrantov-k-dostojnomu-effektivnomu-trudoustrojstvu-Krasnyj-Polumesyats-Republic of Kazakhstan.pdf>

⁴² "Many are dying there." How the citizens of Kazakhstan live illegally in Korea // https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/mnogie-umirayut-kazahstantsyinelegalno-jivut-koree-421217/

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Tokayev made a statement about the labor migrants from Kazakhstan // https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/tokayev-vyiskazalsya-o-kazahstantsah-trudovyyih-migrantah-417808/

situation in the regions/countries of origin. According to unofficial assessments, the amounts of money transfers to the countries of Central Asia over the recent years have surpassed the annual amounts of international support and foreign development investments to these countries. This allows viewing the migrants' money transfers as a separate and significant "sector of economy". The volume of the migrants' money transfers, which is dynamically increasing, is the evidence of it. The influence of this migration-related trend on development of the regions' countries is in many cases positive, but the money transfers have mainly the temporary nature. Usually, they are insufficient for investment in a long-term business, and the gap between the amount of money transfers and the losses and risks that the migrants are taking upon themselves is incomparable (difficult labor conditions).

With regards to the volume of money transfers due to the country's migration status, it is necessary to consider its two dimensions, namely from Kazakhstan and to Kazakhstan. Money transfers from Kazakhstan, despite a small increase in the years of 2017 and 2018, tend to go down. According to the IOM survey, in 2019 from Kazakhstan there was transferred US\$ 470,300,000 (36.3%) less than in 2014 and amounted to US\$ 1,056,900,000⁴⁵. The main directions of money transfers from Kazakhstan are the Russian Federation (in 2019 - US\$ 418,600,000 or 39.61% of the total volume of transfers), Uzbekistan (US\$ 143,200,000; 13.55%), Turkey (US\$ 142,800,000; 13.51%) and Kyrgyzstan (US\$ 135,700,000; 12.84%). The same data shows that the share of money transfers relative to the GDP of Kazakhstan slowly increased from 2014 to 2017, and then there was a significant decrease (by 0.1 percentage points).

According to the information with reference to the country's National Bank, the volume of money transfers from Kazakhstan to other countries in 2020 has increased by 20% and amounted to KZT 787.700,000,000 (US\$ 1,800,000,000)⁴⁶. According to experts, the growth of international money transfers is a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact; conditioned by the enforced quarantine measures and the state of emergency, the labor migrants started visiting their home countries not that often and therefore more intensively use money transfer systems. According to the National Bank, the list of the largest recipients of money last year stayed the same. The leaders of the list are the Russian Federation (27.1%), Kyrgyzstan (21.0%), Uzbekistan (19.5%) and Turkey (17.4%), these countries account for 85.1% of the total money transfers. Compared to the year 2019, the amount of money transfers to Kyrgyzstan (+90.0%) and to Turkey (+46.4%) has increased significantly⁴⁷.

According to the migrants' survey results (6 in Almaty and 6 in Nur-Sultan) in Kazakhstan, within the framework of this survey, a conclusion can be made that on average the monthly sum of US\$ 100-150 is transferred to their homeland. This money is used mostly for upkeep of their households, including food, education, medical treatment, etc. Alongside this, it should be noted that during this time of complete lockdown in the Republic of Kazakhstan because of the pandemic and in connection with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan⁴⁸, the migrants found themselves in an exceedingly complicated situation and were unable to transfer money to their homeland.

The amount of money transfers to Kazakhstan, starting from 2015 and up to 2018, had a trend to increase, but in 2019 a steep decline was registered. The countries from which the largest volumes of money transfers are sent to Kazakhstan are the Russian Federation (in 2019 it was US\$ 206.900,000, or 41.2% of the total volume of transfers) and the Republic of Korea (US\$ 112.800,000, or 22.46%). The amount of money transfers from Kyrgyzstan, the United

⁴⁵ Kazakhstan: Extended migration profile of 2019. - Almaty: Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kazakhstan - Sub Regional coordination office for Central Asia, 2020 - 146 p.

⁴⁶ Money transfers from Kazakhstan to other countries have increased up to 20%
// https://forbes.kz/news/2021/02/11/newsid_243722

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 15th, 2020, No. 285 "On introduction of a state of emergency in the Republic of Kazakhstan."
// https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=32648341#pos=0:2051

States of America and Uzbekistan are approximately equal and make up about 6.75-7.65% of all money transfers wired to Kazakhstan⁴⁹.

According to the previously mentioned data of the National Bank, in 2020, KZT 286,900,000,000 (US\$ 686,000,000) was brought over to Kazakhstan. A considerable amount of money transfers over the last year came from the Russian Federation (25.8%), South Korea (18.0%), Uzbekistan (13.4%) and Kyrgyzstan (11.7%)⁵⁰. Analysis of the above-mentioned data indicates that over the last 5 years, the volume of money transfers from Kazakhstan abroad, usually exceeds the volume of incoming funds from other countries. This is mainly related to the issues of labor migration and business activity of the citizens that are engaged amongst other industries in the unofficial sector of the economy (markets, private taxi services, sector of unofficial catering/food provision). Over the recent years, the issue of labor migration to South Korea and the number of transfers accordingly has become even more interesting. One can also observe that the volume of money transfers from the Republic of Korea to Kazakhstan has decreased in the year 2020. According to the Ranking.kz calculations, over that year the migrants transferred KZT 38,200,000,000 to Kazakhstan, and in the year 2019 it was KZT 49,100,000,000⁵¹.

It should also be noted that in this survey the data is provided from official sources, as well as the results of the author's own research. The issue of the exact amount of money transfers both from and to Kazakhstan needs additional research.

On the national level, in Kazakhstan, there is a continuous work being done, thus, in order to have more comprehensive monitoring. Upon the National Bank's initiative, there were drafted the legislative norms that restrict the use of anonymous wallets for money transfers, which will exclude ability to use electronic wallets for money laundering and other illegal operations. On July 15, 2020, this legislation was brought into power. This will promote the formation of an internal oversight system over the monetary transactions in the non-bank operators' services. Moreover, on November 15, 2020, the requirements have been intensified for the banks and money transfer systems' operators in order to monitor transactions and to record data concerning the senders and recipients of the international money transfers⁵². It is obvious that the government's measures are aimed at reducing the so called "shadow money transfers", however, this might lead to the development of other "solutions" for these types of operations and therefore, other kinds of measures are needed that will be more flexible, and not just will strengthen the control over the money transfers, but will also contribute to the cooperation with the migrants.

Migration and the COVID-19

The migration processes in 2020 have gone through some substantial changes all around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Kazakhstan in this time period experienced multidimensional stress as a country of migrants' reception, country of transit and the country of the labor migrants' origin.

In 2020, the return migration has become a relevant trend. Over the time period from the end of March and up to the present day, several thousand migrants from the Central Asian countries have become hostages of the situation related with the COVID-19 pandemic and got stuck at the border crossings with Kazakhstan, including the cases of returning from the Russian

⁴⁹ Kazakhstan: Extended migration profile of 2019. - Almaty: Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Kazakhstan - Sub Regional coordination office for Central Asia, 2020 - 146 p.

⁵⁰ Money transfers from Kazakhstan to other countries have increased by 20% https://forbes.kz/news/2021/02/11/newsid_243722

⁵¹ "Many are dying there." How the citizens of Kazakhstan live illegally in Korea // https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/mnogie-umirayut-kazahstantsyi-nelegalno-jivut-koree-421217/

⁵² Money transfers from Kazakhstan to other countries have increased by 20% https://forbes.kz/news/2021/02/11/newsid_243722

Federation. The resolution of this problem was the joint work of the state structures, diplomatic missions, international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Kazakhstan has decided to introduce a state of emergency, and suspended air traffic and all other types of commuting. The government has taken a number of restrictive measures regarding the entry of foreign citizens to the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Starting on March 16th, 2020, until the April 15th, 2020, in Kazakhstan a state of emergency was introduced⁵³, which was extended until May 11th, 2020. The migrants from the Central Asian countries found themselves in one of the most vulnerable circumstances. Because of this stressful situation, which was an unprecedented reality for them that was underestimated and unpredictable, the migrants could not make a commitment to go back home on time. Many of them did not have abilities or plans for returning. There wasn't any fast or reliable access to the information on all the levels.

Over the period of the State of Emergency (SoE), under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan a state interdepartmental commission was created in order to ensure the enforcement of this mode. In part of the foreign citizens' presence in the country, restrictions were established concerning the entry to the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as concerning the exit from its territory by all types of transportation, with the exception of personnel of the diplomatic service of the Republic of Kazakhstan and foreign states, as well as members of delegations of the international organizations that are going to Kazakhstan upon invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In connection with tightening the restrictions since March 27th, 2020, the work of the migration service was suspended until stabilization of the situation, a 30-day visa free mode for citizens of 57 countries and 72-hour transit travel for citizens of the PRC and India was canceled until November 1st, 2020⁵⁴. Crossing of the border was allowed on exceptional basis, including return of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and of foreign citizens of all categories. The coordination was conducted through approval of the Interdepartmental Commission, which was headed by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan (IDC). This rule is also currently applied if it relates to foreign students, since all universities of Kazakhstan still implement a remote learning model and only the first-year students are allowed to be in offline study mode, while certain reservations for foreign citizens are applied. This is also true for the workers of socially significant occupations from amongst the foreign citizens.

Return of labor migrants and the migrants of other categories to their homeland was a particularly urgent issue throughout the year 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many foreigners are unable to leave Kazakhstan in a set timeframe. In this regard, such an idea as migration amnesty came to existence, the essence of which is to legalize the status of those who are temporarily residing in Kazakhstan and thereby to prevent violations of the country's migration law. In order to do that, certain measures were applied, thus on May 12th, the Kazakhstan government has announced that foreigners would not be held accountable for violating the migration law in Nur-Sultan, and on 26th of October, the Ministry of Interior announced that the migrants would be able to register their labor licenses in all PSCs of Kazakhstan⁵⁵.

Besides identification of the migration status and registration at the very beginning of the pandemic, the migrants faced a whole set of other issues, such as a complete loss of income, absence of the full access to the medical services in the midst of the pandemic. For different reasons they were unable to self-isolate and to comply with the necessary requirements of sanitation. On top of that, at some point the migrants were even reluctant to admit whether they

⁵³ Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated March 15th, 2020, No. 285 "On introduction of a state of emergency in the Republic of Kazakhstan."

// https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=32648341#pos=0;2051

⁵⁴ Abramova A. Migration & COVID-19. The migration regime in Kazakhstan has been significantly simplified // <https://kapital.kz/gosudarstvo/88877/migratsiya-covid-19.html>

⁵⁵ Mamyrkhanova M. Foreigners were allowed to temporarily live in Kazakhstan because of the coronavirus // <https://liter.kz/112340-2/>

were sick. The migrants were unable to receive government-assigned benefits of KZT 42,500⁵⁶ due to the fact of their employment in the informal sectors of the economy or because of their status. Surveys show that more than 85% of the migrants received no subsidies during the pandemic⁵⁷. Consequences of the ongoing pandemic caused even more vulnerability of the migrants, and the challenges of securing their rights have worsened.

In the context of the survey, which was conducted by the author, it became clear that the migrants are in fear of hurting their status, answering the questions reluctantly, especially the questions concerning the health and medical treatment.

When the countries of Central Asia started closing down their borders, many citizens of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan who worked in the Russian Federation and in Kazakhstan decided to go back home but were unable to do so on time for different reasons. Because of the lockdown mode and the lack of understanding amongst the government agencies, almost 2,000 people were in limbo. For more than two months, the migrants lived in a tent camp, which was established for them by representatives of the human rights organizations⁵⁸. According to different sources, a large number of the migrants experienced difficulties while returning to their homeland until the late fall⁵⁹ and the return itself was accomplished through complete and direct assistance of the International Organization for Migration⁶⁰, with participation of the local non-governmental organizations and representatives of the state institutions. All measures of rendering support to the migrants during the pandemic, including their return, were organized primarily by the international and non-governmental sector, specifically by the IOM. This included some localized yet not complex support to the migrants with food, means of protection, as well as the informational support.

With regards to the assessment of activity of the involved state structures of Kazakhstan, one can make a statement that there were no measures directed at hindering the migrants' return or for increased punishment for migration-related or other violations. Besides that, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a certain positive influence on the process of accelerating the digitization of the documentation processing in the area of migration services in Kazakhstan. However, in these conditions it was quite important to make a decision on the international and regional levels amongst the Central Asian countries. The pandemic has exposed the crisis of cooperation in the area of migration. Organization of localized opening of the borders, monitoring of the labor migrants and foreign students' health status, timely provision of information and support, all this would have reduced the negative impact of the pandemic. Along with that, examination of the migrants' frame of mind indicates that the majority of them plan to continue staying in migration, which shows the need to develop an international migration-related cooperation with the participation of all actors of the migration processes, namely the migrants, the states, the international organizations, and the nonprofit sector.

International and non-governmental organizations

A great role in support of migration-related processes on all levels of implementation of the safe and regular migration is taken by the international governmental, non-governmental and local organizations that are active in the area of migration in Kazakhstan. Effective multilateral migration cooperation in Kazakhstan is implemented under the lead of the

⁵⁶ Social payments of 42,500 tenge and food packages during an emergency time // https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31959619#pos=6;-106

⁵⁷ What kind of threats to Kazakhstan is presented by millions of the migrants that are left without work? / https://forbes.kz/finances/integration/chez_kazahstan_ejegodno_prohodit_3_milliona_migrantov/

⁵⁸ How the lockdown quarantine has complicated life for the labor migrants in Kazakhstan // https://baigenews.kz/news/kak_karantin_uslozhnil_zhizn_trudovykh_migrantov_v_kazahstane/

⁵⁹ Hundreds of migrants have gathered at the Kazakh - Uzbek border again // <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/30704391.html>

⁶⁰ IOM has helped with return to their homeland to Tajikistan citizens that got stuck at the border crossing between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan // <https://www.muhojir.info/news/1147>

150 Tajik migrants were sent from Kazakhstan to their homeland through the IOM mediation // <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/society/20201103/150-tadzhijskih-migrantov-bili-dostavleni-iz-kazahstana-v-stranu>

International Organization for Migration (IOM), which has established effective interaction with the state agencies and with the local and foreign governmental and non-governmental organizations. This organization has a well-diversified network of partners⁶¹.

The foundation of the IOM's strategy in Central Asia⁶² is in capacity building for migration in order to promote development and economic growth in Central Asia, which also includes a whole set of tasks for achievement of this goal. The IOM has played a significant role over the beginning period of the COVID-19 pandemic and as of this day it is the most effective link in the work of supporting the migrants and their return to the homeland.

The role of the IOM is significant in supporting the development of the national and regional program documents in Kazakhstan. The organization is working in close cooperation with some progressive NGOs, such as the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (KIBHR & RL)⁶³, which is also cooperating with the Committee of Migration Service under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the UNHCR. The KIBHR & RL is actively implementing such activities as counseling, informational and legal support for the labor migrants and other groups of displaced persons. The experts and employees of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights work simultaneously in several regions of Kazakhstan and, whenever necessary, contact the government and non-governmental institutions.

Amongst the organizations that are actively promoting resolution of migration-related problems, it is also necessary to highlight the International Committee of the Red Cross⁶⁴, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the "Sana Sezim" NGO, whose activities are implemented on the territory of southern Kazakhstan province, as well as the "Rodnik" NGO, which operates in the city of Almaty and Almaty province, along with some others. "Sana Sezim", "Rodnik", and the KIBHR & RL actively participated in supporting the migrants during the pandemic of COVID-19.

The NGOs are implementing several significant functions. In addition to the informational and advisory function, it is necessary to point out redirection of the migrants to the relevant state and other institutions, rendering the other types of assistance; besides that, an extensive work is being done on recovery, adaptation, and psychological preparedness for those who are returning to their homeland. The NGOs participate in the reintegration process and in partial monitoring up to the moment of the migrants' complete adaptation. Despite the fact that the NGOs are constantly facing a whole set of different problems, including the financial, organizational, and legal ones, they continue their active work in this regard. As for the nongovernmental organizations in the region, including Kazakhstan, their typical feature is the projects' instability that are implemented mostly on sponsors' funds, which does not imply long-term support and are hampered by the situation of the migrants themselves, their fear, and their lack of awareness.

The role of migrants' networks and diasporas. While being an informal but yet significant link in the long chain of the migration-related process, the "migrants' networks" are substantially improving migrants' life and assist in avoiding many aspects of tensions and uncertainty for all involved parties.

Migrants' access to the public services, as well as more effective integration can be implemented with diasporas' assistance. As of this date, the diasporas' role and contribution is not yet sufficiently consolidated, however, one can note a great capacity for the implementation of this type of activity.

⁶¹ Partners and donors // <https://kazakhstan.iom.int/partners-and-donors>

⁶² IOM strategy in Central Asia // <https://kazakhstan.iom.int/iom-strategy-ca>

⁶³ Status and the structure of KIBHR // <https://bureau.kz/status-i-struktura/>

⁶⁴ Red crescent of Kazakhstan // <https://redcrescent.kz/ru/about/>

Thus, in Kazakhstan one can observe quite an active and effective role of the international governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as of the non-profit sector and the migrants' networks. This whole activity is accompanied by informational and other types of support from the state agencies. *The experts' survey in all identified areas shows that there are no obstacles on the part of the accountable state institutions, moreover, they are always ready for a dialogue and multilateral communication.* Implementation of the commitments on the ground and the funding so far still in need of additional measures and mechanisms.

Prospects and forecast assessments of migration processes

One of the complex and significant aspects in the context of identification and implementation of the effective migration policy is the assessment of the migration attitudes and forecasting of migration-related processes. For Kazakhstan, this issue is especially significant because of the multidimensional migration status of the country. The Republic of Kazakhstan as of this day remains to be a country of the main and alternative destination, the transit country, and the donor for labor and educational migrants, as well as for the other categories of displaced persons.

According to the experts' assessments that were interviewed in the context of this survey, the following conclusions can be made:

- Situation with migration will depend on the social and economic situation development in the post-pandemic period in Kazakhstan;
- In the short-term, ethnic Slavic emigration from Kazakhstan will continue, although its volumes are dropping down, since the number of people of Slavic descent is significantly decreasing,
- There will be a decline in ethnic Kazakhs, so called "kandas" that are wishing to move to the permanent place of residence in Kazakhstan.
- There will be an increase in educational mobility both to and out of Kazakhstan.
- Labor migration in Kazakhstan will remain in the same volume;

These conclusions correlate with the report data, which was released in 2019 by specialists of the United Nations Population Fund in Kazakhstan (UNFPA) with the support of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, where an analytical report on the situation in the area of population settlement in Kazakhstan was developed. In this report, in a separate section, a forecast is provided for external migration of Kazakhstan up to the year of 2050⁶⁵. According to the report's forecast, the population outflow from Kazakhstan over some time will decrease. This will be influenced by such factors as the country's economic development, accompanied by a high demand for workforce, the gradual capacity depletion for some significant ethnic migration of so called "kandas" to Kazakhstan. Also, it is stated that the population increase in the neighboring countries of Central Asia will provide an abundance of human labor resources, including that amongst other places to Kazakhstan as well.

For improvement of the situation, besides the internal procedures and harmonization of legislation, it is deemed to be important for Kazakhstan to join the international conventions regulating labor migration (International Convention on Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families dated by 1990, ILO Convention on Migrant Workers dated by 1949, ILO Convention on abuses in the area of migration and provision of equal opportunities and treatment for the migrant workers, as of 1975). This will promote much more effective observance of the migrants' rights on the international level.

In relation to the impact of migration on demographic indicators, one can agree with a statement that for Kazakhstan with population of over 18,000,000 people, the loss of about

⁶⁵ Report. Analysis of the situation in the area of population settlement of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nur-Sultan, 2019 // <https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org>

32,000 people per year (author's note: migration balance in 2019) does not significantly influence the natural growth of population⁶⁶. However, during the analysis of the qualitative characteristics of emigrants, and considering their age, one should pay attention to the fact that the departure of able-bodied young specialists, especially of those with families and with children, can be a serious loss for Kazakhstan in the future. In this situation, in order to prevent such a trend, systemic changes are required in all areas of society of Kazakhstan and, primarily in the economy, social area, and education.

We are now talking about 40,000 people leaving Kazakhstan for a permanent place of residence. But how big of a number is 40,000, if we are to compare the volumes of external migration in the year 1994, when according to the statistics we have had more than 400,000 people leaving Kazakhstan with change of their permanent place of residence. In other words, nowadays it is quite a low percentage, which in reality does not have some significant influence on the demographic or social and economic situation in the country... Therefore, with consideration of the birth rates in Kazakhstan, external migration is not a trend that has significant influence on social processes in Kazakhstan, but here we are in any case should pay attention to strengthening educational mobility. Because these are the young people who were socialized here in the country. From expert's interview.

According to experts' estimates, the pandemic has only postponed the migration of many young people from Kazakhstan, especially those aspiring for educational mobility. The migration attitudes are stable and legitimate, since they are associated with the social and economic situation in the country and with the global mobility of the younger population. As for the labor migrants, most of the respondents, despite their intention to go back to their homeland of other countries of Central Asia, prefer to stay in Kazakhstan, since there is already an idea that the COVID-19 pandemic is a global trend, and it is equally difficult to survive it elsewhere.

Due to the fact that in the context of this survey, it was not planned to conduct interviews of the migrants from Kazakhstan that are staying in South Korea and in the Russian Federation, etc., it is hard to draw a clear conclusion about their migration attitudes. However, the analysis of the above-mentioned secondary sources shows a similar behavior during the time of crisis, in other words, they are planning to remain in their host country, unless they are forced to leave for their homeland by some significant factors or due to the natural return process associated with the end of migration. Thus, based upon the above-mentioned statements, one can make a conclusion that in the next 3 to 5 years Kazakhstan will still remain a country with a mixed migration status, the country of destination, transit, and departure of the migrants.

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KYRGYZSTAN

Brief migration profile

Migration processes in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2019 were characterized by a negative value of the migration balance, that is, by an excessive amount of those who left the country for permanent residence (or for a sufficiently long period of residence) over the number of those who entered the country. In the year 2019, 1,400 people arrived in the country for permanent residence (1,700 people in the year 2018), 7,600 people left the country (as opposed to 7,100 people in 2018), thus the migration outflow of the population made up -6,200 people (-5,400 people in 2018). As a result, the migration outflow of the population has increased by 14.3%. In the year 2019, there was an increase in the number of the Kyrgyz Republic citizens who left the Kyrgyz Republic to move to another country in order to change their place of permanent residence. The main countries of choice for a place of permanent residence are the Russian Federation (71%) and Kazakhstan (18%). The highest level of the outflow was observed in the Chui province and in the capital city of Bishkek (2.2 persons per 1,000 of population).⁶⁷

According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, over the time period from 2009 to 2019, the number of people of the Kyrgyz Republic has increased by 16%, over the same time the employment rate has increased by just 7.6%, which was the case because of the country's economy slow development, the rural population of which made up 65% of the entire population. Because of this, the Kyrgyz Republic remains to be a country of the migrants' origin, mostly the labor migrants. Due to the continuous high level of unemployment and low wages, the main "push out" motivation for emigration of the Kyrgyz Republic citizens remains the economic situation. Mainly it is the rural group of the population, which, in comparison with any other groups, is more active in the foreign labor markets in such countries as the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Turkey, USA, UAE, Italy, South Korea, Germany, and Great Britain. Initially, it was mainly the male population that would go out for the labor migration, but after Kyrgyzstan joined the EAEU Treaty, the development took place amongst female and family migration as well. The rise in employment-related migration is taking place because of quite limited opportunities in the country's labor market combined with high demographic growth. The main destination countries for the workers from the Kyrgyz Republic are still the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, and Turkey. The main attractive factors are geographic, language-related, and cultural proximity and the presence of diasporas of the fellow compatriots from Kyrgyzstan in these countries. Most migrants are engaged in low-skilled labor in the countries of destination.

Easing of requirements for the migrants' employment after the Kyrgyz Republic joined the Eurasian Economic Union, which has allowed to ease the conditions of stay for the legally working migrants from the Kyrgyz Republic in the Russian Federation and in other EAEU member states, has considerably influenced the increase in the number of workers from Kyrgyzstan in the Russian Federation from 526,000 people in 2014 up to around 665,000 in 2017.⁶⁸

According to the data of the State Migration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, the number of citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic, which were recorded in the migration register of the Russian Federation in 2018 was 640,000 people, thus, approximately every fifth able-bodied citizen left the country for the labor migration.

On September 30th, 2016, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic by its Provision No. 518, approved the "Kairylman" Program for the years 2017 – 2022, aimed to assist the ethnic Kyrgyz people in resettling in the Kyrgyz Republic. While implementing this Program, in the years 2016 to 2017, the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic

⁶⁷ National statistics committee of the Kyrgyz Republic: <http://www.stat.kg/ru/news/podvedeny-itogi-migracionnoj-aktivnosti-naseleniya-podrobnnee/>

⁶⁸ "Migration profile of the Kyrgyz Republic for the year 2018": <https://kyrgyzstan.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Migration-Profile-2018-in-Russian.pdf>

has assigned the status of “Kairylman” to 2,529 ethnic Kyrgyz people (in 2016 to 1,023 people, in 2017 to 1,506 people). As it was in the previous years, most of the “Kairylman” people use to come from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China.

The internal migration still has quite a strong influence on all the aspects of the social life’s development in the Kyrgyz Republic. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as of 2020, the internal migrants are mainly moving from rural areas to Bishkek and Chui province, which makes up for 18% of the country’s population. Most of the internal migrants are working unofficially, and only 29% of them are under official contract agreements. The same applies to the living conditions: 76% are not officially registered at their place of residence.⁶⁹ Striving for economic sustainability is the main factor that is pushing the internal migration, just like in the case of external migration, but such factors as better access to education and healthcare, and family-related factors are also quite important.

State policy and state programs in the area of migration

On May 5th, 2021, the President of Kyrgyzstan signed a Decree No. 114 “On the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic”, in realization of which the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic was disbanded, its representative office in the Russian Federation was eliminated, the staff of the representative office was moved to the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Russian Federation. The functions of formation and implementation of the migration policy alongside with external migration were transferred to the Department of external migration under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic. The Ministry of labor and social development of the Kyrgyz Republic has become a new agency authorized for the issues of combating trafficking in human beings, and work with refugees and “kayrylman” has been handed over to this agency as well.

Closing down the borders because of the pandemic has caused a migration crisis in the country, and along with the new institutions, the existing and recently adopted strategic migration development documents have put together the basis for resolving the crisis.

The National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the years 2018 - 2040 identifies the necessity for a migration policy development in order to get the following results: 1) preservation of ethnic and cultural identity of the labor migrants; 2) organization of voluntary resettlement process of the ethnic Kyrgyz to the Kyrgyz Republic based on the principles of assistance to the social and economic development of the regions and in resolution of demographic issues; as well as 3) enhancement of institution of the immigrant status provision to the foreign citizens who have arrived to the Kyrgyz Republic for a purpose of scientific work, with intention of permanent residence and contributing to cultural development in the Kyrgyz Republic. According to this document, in the area of external migration, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic will take in consideration capabilities for mastering the different labor markets for the local workforce, without making limitations solely for the labor markets of the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, it will make efforts to render assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic citizens in increasing of their competitiveness on the labor markets and in provision of legal and economic protection in the country of destination. This Strategy emphasized the importance of creating much needed conditions for the migrant workers so that they would be investing the money that they made to the economy of the Kyrgyz Republic, to some promising industries, facilities, and production enterprises of Kyrgyzstan.

Development Program of the Kyrgyz Republic “Unity. Trust. Reconstruction” for the period of 2018-2022 is including a migration policy component in the context of provision of the economic well-being of the people, emphasizing creation of the better conditions for ensuring the rights and interests of the Kyrgyz Republic’s citizens and that of the foreign

⁶⁹ Central Asia Program. Migration and COVID-19: Challenges and Policy Responses in Kyrgyzstan: <https://www.centralasiaprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Final-CAP-Paper-247.pdf>

citizens in their migration process, creation of the employment conditions, provision of the high-quality state services in the sphere of labor and labor migration and in achievement of the gender equality.

According to the President's decree, in the framework of the "Mekendeshter" Forum of compatriots under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, a Council for the ties with fellow compatriots abroad was created.

In order to retain the ties, such as cultural, historical, and economic ones, as well as the opportunities for investment in the country's economy by the former citizens of Kyrgyzstan, with consideration of the existing international experience, the state agencies have developed a strategy for compatriots' attraction in the context of "Meken Kart" program, a map of fellow compatriots, which provides certain privileges to the former citizens of Kyrgyzstan.

On January 29th, 2021, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic signed a Decree "On adoption of the measures directed to improvement of the migration situation". In that decree, a major task was identified, which is to provide comprehensive support to the labor migrants in the countries of their stay, protection of interests and rights of the migrant's families that are remaining in the Kyrgyz Republic. A series of tasks were set before the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, including intensification of work on protection of rights and interests of the migrant workers that are residing abroad, taking of measures for provision of tracking, oversight, and protection of rights and interests of the children whose parents are in labor migration; introduction of the concept of "the children of labor migrants" on legislative level with guarantees of their protection by the state; as well as the development and submission for consideration of the draft of Migration policy concept document of the Kyrgyz Republic. The need for regulation of the migration processes is also recognized in the National development strategy document of the Kyrgyz Republic for the years of 2018-2040 and in the Program entitled as "Unity. Confidence. Reconstruction" of the Kyrgyz Republic Government. Creation of conditions for the safe, orderly, and legal migration is also part of the 2030 global agenda on achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Implementation of the latest Concept document of the state migration policy was completed in the year 2010. It has been more than ten years, during which Kyrgyzstan has joined the EAEU Treaty in 2015, and the pandemic that started in 2019, as well as many other migration events that are significant for Kyrgyzstan took place for this decade. Over such a considerable period of time, a new migration-related look of Kyrgyzstan has been formed, the new migration trends have emerged and, accordingly, the new risks and challenges have appeared. In the year 2021, the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic has submitted for public discussion a draft Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic "On ratification of the Concept document of migration policy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the years 2020-2030".⁷⁰

According to the document, the Concept paper for 2020-2030 is representing a long-term vision in the area of migration regulation processes. The concept document includes a whole system of goals, priority directions and tasks in the area of migration and development and is based on observance of the human rights and freedoms, as well as on protection of the national interests of Kyrgyzstan. Migration, while being a dynamic process, is constantly changing depending on external and internal conditions. Basing on the goals, tasks and directions provided in the National Development Strategy document of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2018-2040, the Sustainable Development Goals until the year 2030, adopted by the United Nations, and also being based on the social, economic, political, and cultural trends and characteristics of the migration processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, there was identified the goal of the country's migration policy for the years 2020-2030.

The goal of the migration policy of Kyrgyzstan is the stabilization of the migration processes through implementation of the state programs directed at mitigating the unfavorable

⁷⁰ Website of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic: <https://www.gov.kg/ru/npa/s/2277>

factors that are causing and accompanying the migration process and is in creation of conditions for maximal realization of the migration capacity for the country's development benefit.

Priority directions and tasks of the Concept document are as follows:

- Improvement of conditions for realization of educational, labor, professional and cultural capacities, and opportunities in the Kyrgyz Republic by its citizens, fellow countrymen, immigrants, and stateless persons;
- Engagement of migration potential of the population, compatriots, immigrants, and stateless persons for the development of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- Creation of the rights protection system for the citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic that are residing outside of the country, as well as for the immigrants, fellow compatriots and stateless persons residing on the territory of the country;
- Creation of a safe migration environment;
- Enhancement of the legal framework in the area of migration and registration of population;
- Informational support for implementation of the migration policy and creation of efficient migration data base.

By the Provision of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic dated as of May 4th, 2021, No. 191, the Concept document on migration policy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2020-2030 has been approved. The document, due to its development in pre-pandemic time, does not contain an assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic influence on migration processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as the risks for migration management in such conditions, and the ways of tackling them. Besides that, the new agencies that are responsible for implementation of the migration policy, according to their mandate, are considering the abroad workers only as citizens outside of the Kyrgyz Republic, but not as migrant workers. A unique situation is formed when the Concept document was developed by one agency, and its implementation is to be done by another state agency, within the context of its amended mandate.

... Nowadays it is quite a difficult time, the reorganization is underway, nothing is known as of yet, still difficult times are up ahead, I don't even know who would express their opinion to you, I do not know such people in our midst...

... Officials that are conducting the migration policy often do not understand the international commitments of Kyrgyzstan, they make no effort in this regard, and we have come across this numerous times. We are genuinely concerned about the status of these institutions, which will deal with internal and external migration policy. Nowadays, the entire architecture of migration policy is being reconstructed... there should be an even greater responsibility of decision-makers, especially within the latest context...

... All strategies must be formulated and implemented from the bottom up starting from local communities and up to the global level. If this is not the case, then no amount of help will make a difference.

From the experts' interviews.

Intergovernmental cooperation

Kyrgyzstan is a member of a large regional association, the EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union). One of the most important features of this association is a free movement of the labor force between the EAEU member countries, opening of the labor market of the five EAEU member states (Belarus, Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan) for the labor migrants from these states. The mode of operation of the labor migrants from the EAEU member states is equivalent to that of the national workers (national workers regime) in the countries of destination within the association. All these preferences are attracting migrants from Kyrgyzstan to the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan.

Concerning Kyrgyzstan's joining the EAEU in 2015, the country's legislation in the area of labor migration and migration policy was brought in line with the norms of the Treaty on the Union.^{71 72}

As part of the preparatory work for obtaining membership in this association, an Agreement "On residence procedure of the Kyrgyz Republic citizens on the territory of the Russian Federation and of the Russian Federation citizens on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic" was developed and signed between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation as of by June 19th, 2015. The document is providing possibilities of the citizens' stay without registration for 30 days.

The purpose of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) activity, in which Kyrgyzstan has a membership, among other things, is the counter-acting trafficking in human beings.

Kyrgyzstan is a part of several regional advisory processes such as the Almaty, Budapest, and Prague processes. These processes serve as consultative forums promoting cooperation and coordination amongst the member states in addressing the migration-related issues.

In the Commonwealth of Independent States, in which Kyrgyzstan has its membership, there is a functioning Council of leaders of migration agencies, the activity of which is directed to coordination of the migration policies of the member states.

In the year of 2019, the European Union has adopted the Enlarged Strategy of the European Union for the Central Asia countries, and has identified the development directions and intensification of cooperation between the EU and the Central Asian region, in amongst other things, the migration area. A significant place in the strategy is designated to collecting the fact-based material on migration in Central Asia, conducting on its basis the fundamental research and surveys on migration issues, and to studying the migration strategies of the countries of Central Asia. In April of 2020, the EU, along with its development partners, aided Kyrgyzstan in tackling the pandemic challenges as a part of an urgent EU "Horizon 2020" package of measures, which is €36,000,000 worth. In the aggregate terms, the EU aid package to Kyrgyzstan has reached €44,000,000. In the migration area the EU is supporting a number of programs at the regional and national levels that are directed at protection of children living in migration, and to development of the border guard services.

Protection of the migrants' rights

According to the National Statistical Committee, in the year 2020 the number of unemployed in Kyrgyzstan has reached 156,300 people, and due to the crisis, on average, one person in each household has lost the work. There are about 2,500,000 able-bodied citizens in Kyrgyzstan, and 40% of them live because of employment outside the country. And the pandemic has only made the situation more complicated. According to the latest data from different sources, on average, there are about 550,000 citizens of Kyrgyzstan who work in the Russian Federation. Whereas in the past, there were about 700,000 - 750,000 migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan. With consideration of their family members, the number of citizens of Kyrgyzstan in the Russian Federation has reached more than one million people.

Tens of thousands of Kyrgyzstan citizens were forced to go back home during the pandemic because of the loss of employment abroad. According to official data, about 60,000

⁷¹ Aliev S.B. Labor migration and social provision of the people working in the Eurasian Economic Union 2016 pp. 10 <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/Documents/spreads.pdf>

⁷² Section XXVI "The labor migration" of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union. Annex №. 30 "Protocol on medical care provision to the member states' laborers and their family members"; The cooperation agreement on counteraction to illegal labor migration from third countries, dated by November 19th, 2010; The concept document of the draft international agreement on cooperation in the area of retirement provision (approved by the Decision of the Council of the Eurasian Economic Commission dated by November 12th, 2014, No. 103).

citizens from 60 countries returned to the Kyrgyz Republic. The vast majority of them were returning from the Russian Federation.

*I really wanted to go home so much, so that while the flights from the Sheremetyevo airport were canceled and delayed, I for three days was sleeping on a piece of cardboard on the floor of the Sheremetyevo airport. Good thing, the staff would bring us some food, compatriots- taxi drivers would also help us whenever they were driving to the airport, they would pick up some hamburgers.*⁷³

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, up to January of 2021, approximately 60,000 of our citizens from about 60 different countries of the world have returned to Kyrgyzstan.⁷⁴ Such data is indicative of the fact that, in general, decisions were made to continue work “at any cost”, in order to retain the job and wages.

“The Mayor of Moscow is saying that there are not enough workers, and that we are unable to resolve the issue of air traffic. If necessary, we must be sending our citizens by the several railroad trains. The government can provide subsidies for the cost of the tickets, and the citizens will pay back within one or two years”, stated in January of this year, the member of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. A. Japarov⁷⁵. The Parliament member surely raised this issue in front of the Government as an attempt to reduce the growth of unemployment and to resolve the situation with the entry of our fellow countrymen to the Russian Federation. But his proposal, which was made in such a format, caused a controversial reaction in the society, and was intensely discussed in the social networks.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation formed up, which had never previously occurred in terms of dramatic consequences and being so ambiguous in its nature, when the Russian Federation tightened the rules for arriving in the country. The country’s borders have already been partially closed since March of 2020. Some severe restrictions were imposed on the air traffic, and regular flights to the Russian Federation were stopped. In September of 2020, the flights were re-established, however not at the same level as previously, and there are no forecasts on how long this will last. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were at least ten flights a week from Bishkek and Osh to Moscow. A one-way plane ticket would cost 15,000 to 20,000 KGS. But since the pandemic’s outbreak, the air fares have increased significantly, but nonetheless, the demand for tickets is several times higher than the available supply.

According to the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation, over the time period from January to March of 2019, 97,000 citizens of Kyrgyzstan have arrived in the Russian Federation, indicating “work” as the purpose of their arrival to the Russian Federation. In addition, from March to June of the same year 2019, when the majority of the migrant workers come for work, there have already been 105,000 citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic arriving to the Russian Federation with intention of employment. For comparison, from January to March of 2020, by the pandemic’s beginning, 83,000 of citizens of Kyrgyzstan have arrived in the Russian Federation for work, and over the period from March to June, after the WHO announcement of the pandemic, only 26,000 citizens of Kyrgyzstan have managed to come to work in the Russian Federation.⁷⁶

The situation with legal support of the migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan who remained in the Russian Federation and of those who arrived, for whom the migration remained a principal strategy for supporting themselves and their families, had required the urgent involvement of the migration authorities at the highest levels, it needed respond measures and making of swift decisions according to the pandemic’s development.

Many migrants, against their will, have “moved” from a situation with proper documentation down to the informal sector of the economy because of the fact that, after the

⁷³ From the in-depth interviews.

⁷⁴ <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/31035686.html>

⁷⁵ <https://www.azattyk.org/a/kyrgyzstan-migrant-eshelon/31061426.html>

⁷⁶ According to the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation.

expiration of their contracts with the employers, they did not extend their contracts. In such a situation the timely measures were taken for protection of the migrant workers' rights in the Russian Federation, a system of temporary measures was established in the area of migration management, as a result of which, on a legal basis the rights to stay on territory of the Russian Federation within conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic of foreign citizens, including those of labor migrants were reserved.⁷⁷

Kyrgyzstan has facilitated the document-based support of foreign citizens' stay on the country's territory. In accordance with the Provision of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic dated by May 19th, of 2020 No. 256 "On issues of providing the population with documents of citizens' identity of the Kyrgyz Republic, for foreign citizens and for the persons without citizenship", the duration of foreign citizens' registration would be extended for the state of emergency's time. Upon termination of the state of emergency, the foreign citizens, and persons without citizenship, who expressed a wish to extend their stay on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic, were granted a right to extend their registration within 10 working days.

By the Order of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic dated by April 14th, 2021, No. 89-r, the citizens of the EAEU member states are allowed to enter the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic, arriving to the Kyrgyz Republic through checkpoints in the international airports of "Manas", "Osh" and "Issyk-Kul" located at the state border of the Kyrgyz Republic, under the condition of presenting negative results of PCR examinations for the COVID-19, displayed in the mobile application "Traveling without COVID-19".

According to the Kyrgyz Republic's legislation, the foreign citizens in relation to which a visa-free regime is applied, if the period of their stay in the Kyrgyz Republic does not exceed 60 days, are exempt from registration upon their place of stay in the authorized state agencies. For the Republic of Kazakhstan citizens, this period makes up 90 days.

If the foreign citizens' period of stay on the Kyrgyz Republic's territory is exceeding the set limits, they must get registered at their place of stay.⁷⁸

Registration is conducted by the Department of registration of population under the State Registration Service, which in turn is under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and its agencies, according to the territorial subdivision.⁷⁹ The registration is carried out by issuing a registration coupon.

All immigrants, regardless of their legal status, have access to the healthcare and education system in Kyrgyzstan on the same grounds as the country's citizens, as stipulated by the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On the legal status of foreign citizens".

Permanent residents and persons with work permits have access to the social security payments and retirement payments. Permission for family reunification is available to all immigrants, regardless of their visa type or of the residence status, provided they can support their family members.

All permanent residents and temporary residents with work permits can be self-employed or work in the private or public sector, and they are not allowed to take up leadership positions in the state agencies or to work as judges and in the law enforcement agencies or to be part of the military.

All immigrants are eligible to apply for permanent residence. After five years of continuous residence in the country, with observance of all other requirements of the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic on citizenship, the immigrants may file an application for obtaining the citizenship.

According to information of the Department for external migration of the Ministry of

⁷⁷ Official web-portal of legal information: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202012170001>

⁷⁸ The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On external migration" dated by June 23rd, 2000.

⁷⁹ Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic "On approval of the Regulation concerning the registration procedure of foreign citizens and persons without citizenship on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic" dated by May 2nd, 2008, №. 200.

Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, *as of this day about 750,000 of our fellow citizens are on the territory of the Russian Federation in labor migration, while according to the unofficial data there are much more of them with consideration of their family members who are staying with them in the migration.*⁸⁰

Over the period of announcing the pandemic, the State Migration Service (SMS) under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, which at the time was implementing the migration policy of the Kyrgyz Republic, was conducting activities for protection of the migrants' rights through its representative offices on the territory of the Russian Federation. The state institutions have definitely faced such a problem for the first time ever, which quite negatively impacted the effectiveness of the migrants' rights protection. Kyrgyzstan has also introduced restrictive measures such as closing of the borders, quarantine, suspension of many departments' activity and transition to remote operation.

Over the time of the pandemic, the number of complaints and appeals for help from migrant workers to the diplomatic representative offices and to representatives of the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Russian Federation has significantly increased, the complaints mainly were filed in due to the massive layoffs, non-payment by the employers, the inability of sustaining without funds, food, medical supplies, with regards to evictions from institutional dormitories in connection with termination of employment relations with the employer. With each day the number of citizens who came up for assistance to leave for their homeland was increasing. A major role in supporting the migrants who got stranded in the lockdown was played by the international organizations, diaspora organizations and non-profit organizations.

In March 2020, in order to provide assistance to the citizens of Kyrgyzstan, a special headquarters was formed, which included workers of the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Russian Federation, representatives of State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, representatives of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation, and of some other institutions. This staff has rendered assistance to many migrants in sending them back to Kyrgyzstan, provided help in people's transportation to the departure points. The staff took part in accommodating the remaining fellow countrymen in need in the hotels, hostels, providing them with food, personal protective equipment (PPE), and medical supplies. A hotline center operated around the clock, providing advisory support to the workers, the citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic. The representative office of the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic was continuously operating in providing audiences to the citizens, including remote support.

It was particularly important to continue supporting the citizens who expressed a wish to stay and to continue working in the Russian Federation, despite the worsened conditions of work and the decreased level of wages. Of particular care there were those migrants, who, for different reasons, lost their jobs and needed employment; and in order to ease the social stress it was necessary to assist them in finding work, and around 6,000 of such jobs were identified. Continuous informational and explanatory work was conducted, in which the diaspora organizations were taking a major part. Of particular significance, there was support, which was received in a timely manner from the International Organization for Migration, which, within the context of an agreement, has allocated some funds that facilitated assistance by providing the Kyrgyz citizens with medical supplies and the PPE. In order to avoid the overcrowding in the living quarters of the migrants, which was caused by the loss of work and the inability to pay for their housing, which in turn contributes to the increased risks of spreading the COVID-19 infection in residential quarters, where up to ten and more migrants stayed in one room. With the support of the IOM, those who were in need got accommodated in the hotels and hostels, also transportation was provided from their residential regions to the departure points for Kyrgyzstan.

⁸⁰ From the expert's interview.

Such an assistance was of relevant and timely nature, which is confirmed by a survey conducted by the migrant workers' trade union of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Russian Federation: *about 64% of our working citizens have faced inability to pay for their lodging at the place of employment, 45% of Kyrgyz citizens lost their jobs, there is lack of money for food 43% of the citizens, and 20% pointed out the increased pressure from the inspection authorities. This information was obtained concerning the Russian Federation.*

*In total, more than a third of the migrant workers were sent to unpaid leave, about 28% of the migrants were fired, just 20% of the workers were able to keep their jobs, only 2% of them after losing their job found a new one. As it is pointed out by the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, approximately 80% of Kyrgyz migrants have stated that they were not provided with any assistance, and in majority of cases, according to the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, this is related to the undocumented residence of the Kyrgyz citizens in the Russian Federation, as well as to the fact that many of the Kyrgyz citizens were unable to take advantage of the assistance provided on returning to Kyrgyzstan for different reasons and decided to stay in the Russian Federation.*⁸¹

According to this state agency, about KGS 13,000,000 in 2020 was spent on delivery of the "Cargo 200" to Kyrgyzstan. The relatives of many of those who died abroad, including the migrant workers, were unable to apply in time for financial aid and consequently to receive it, however, nowadays it has become possible to get this kind of support in the country where the deceased is located.

Migrants' money transfers

According to the UNDP assessment, money transfers from the migrant workers promoted poverty reduction in Kyrgyzstan by 6-7%⁸². Truly, the annual incoming money transfers of the labor migrants to Kyrgyzstan in the year 2016 made up US\$ 1,995,000,000, while in 2017 it has already been US\$ 2,541,000,000. Money transfers in percentage relation to the GDP, according to the 2017 data, increased up to 37.1%⁸³, while in 2019 that percentage in relation to the GDP has slightly decreased, making up to about one third of the equivalent to the GDP (29%), thus, Kyrgyzstan nonetheless still remaining in the top ten countries that receive the largest amounts of money transfers from the migrant workers, not necessarily in the terms of the funds' amount but in terms of percentage relative to the GDP⁸⁴. With such a level of dependence on the migrant workers' money transfers, Kyrgyzstan is quite susceptible to any changes in the migration situation and policies of the countries that are receiving and employing the migrants from Kyrgyzstan.

According to the FAO data for the year 2020, money transfers of the migrant workers in total to the CIS countries, have dropped down by 6.9% in the first quarter of this year, and by 28.5% in the second quarter of the same year in comparison to the same periods of last year 2019. Throughout Kyrgyzstan, there was a decrease by 22.3% and by 45.1% accordingly, in relation to the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2020 in comparison with the same periods of the year 2019.

The main bulk of money that is being transferred to Kyrgyzstan comes from the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. According to the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the dynamics of money transfers to Kyrgyzstan from the Russian Federation, despite the challenges of the pandemic and a considerable reduction in the volume of money transfers, remains stable.

Thus, in 2019, the amount of money transfers made up to the following figures: 1st quarter - US\$ 453,000,000; 2nd quarter - US\$ 482,000,000; 3rd quarter - US\$ 525,000,000; and 4th quarter of 2019 - US\$ 497,000,000.

⁸¹ From experts' interviews.

⁸² UNDP, no date.

⁸³ The World Bank, KNOMAD, 2017.

⁸⁴ According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

In the year 2020, the following amount of money was transferred to Kyrgyzstan from the Russian Federation: 1st quarter - US\$ 358,000,000; 2nd quarter - US\$ 356,000,000; 3rd quarter - US\$ 550,000,000; 4th quarter - US\$ 450,000,000.⁸⁵

According to the National Bank of Kazakhstan, in the context of the pandemic, the migrant workers are much less likely or almost unable to visit their native countries and therefore are starting to use all types of opportunities for money transfers. Kyrgyzstan is one of the largest recipients of money transfers from Kazakhstan, 21.0% of all money transfers from Kazakhstan are sent to Kyrgyzstan. In relation to the volume, the money transfers increased by an unprecedented 90.0%.⁸⁶

In the context of the pandemic, some new progressive practices are on the rise, such as the provision of digital channels by money transfer service providers in order to make it easier for implementation of the transfers. With reference to the UNCDF digital data, 64% of this type of service providers are planning to scale up this initiative or to pilot previously existing digital channels, and 14% of them are willing to reduce the transaction costs, 10% of the providers expressed a need to conduct market survey and to increase the customers' awareness concerning provision of the new services, while some of them, approximately 10% are considering upon the need to reward their customers for using the digital capabilities of their services.⁸⁷

Within Kyrgyzstan, the pandemic has affected all sectors of the economy and public life of the country, and the country's GDP dropped down to 5.3% in the first five months of 2020. Such a decline is partly explained among other things by the dependence on migrants' money transfers, which had a tendency of decreasing in numbers.

The situation with decrease of money transfers from the labor migrants makes one ponder upon the significance of promoting a migration policy, which is aimed at such an approach as respecting the labor migrant's rights, on expanding of mobility capabilities for the migrants in the context of the pandemic, as well as in continuation of working towards removing the labor migrants from the so called "black lists" in order to achieve their actual equality in labor rights with the local workers of the destination countries, and to improve the labor migrants' professional skills and qualifications.

On the other hand, one should consider that such a policy would provide creation of jobs within the country, development of a favorable investment setting for the labor migrants in their homeland, introduction of low interest rates on loans and the use of money transfers for development of small and medium-sized business enterprises within the Kyrgyz Republic, and for the use of savings in agricultural sector, doing all of this while utilizing capacities with acquired skills and qualifications of the returning labor migrants for the business development in the country. In general, the attention should be drawn to development of some much more efficient money transfer investment mechanisms for the sustainable wellbeing of the migrants. This is indicated by the noticeable increase of unemployment rates within the country, which is leading to the fact that upon the return, it is quite challenging for the migrants to find alternative employment options in their homeland.

Migration and the COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has negatively affected the income of the population of Kyrgyzstan, which is the main factor in poverty reduction. In combination with decrease of the population's purchasing power caused by inflation, the situation has led the citizens to vulnerability of the pandemic's economic impact. According to the World Bank assessments,

⁸⁵ Central Bank of Russia: https://www.cbr.ru/statistics/macro_itm/tg/

⁸⁶ Money transfers from Kazakhstan to Kyrgyzstan: <http://kabar.kg/news/v-kakie-strany-kazakhstantcy-perevodiat-bol-she-vsego-deneg/>

⁸⁷ UNCDF digital data: https://twitter.com/mf_newson/status/1387340818307067906/photo/1
<https://twitter.com/UNCDFdigital>

the poverty rate in the Kyrgyz Republic has increased by 11 percentage points in the year 2020 (from 20.1% in 2019, according to the national data). As a result, another 700,000 people got below the poverty line, which is a massive number for a country with a population of 6,600,000 people. The main tool of tackling poverty is the stable employment of the country's able-bodied population.

Many migrant workers who came originally from Kyrgyzstan in the year 2020 have lost their jobs in the countries of destination, mainly in the Russian Federation. The labor migrants have especially been affected by the lockdown and the economic crisis. By the middle of March of 2020, the countries of Central Asia, one after another started shutting down their borders in order to prevent the spread of the pandemic. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have stopped flights on March 20th of 2020, Uzbekistan did that on March 16th, and on March 23rd of 2020 the Russian Federation has stopped air traffic to all countries. In the airports of the Russian Federation's major cities, citizens of the Central Asian countries, who were caught by surprise by the quarantine, were left behind waiting for flights, and the similar situation was true for those of them who decided to return to their homeland via automobile border crossings. The labor migrants along with their family members who have decided to go back to their countries inevitably found themselves in a stranded situation in the destination countries and were unable to return, which has formed up an entire new group of vulnerability. The reasons for falling to such a situation are quite different, some of them had expired periods of residence in the destination country, some in the context of the pandemic either experienced workforce reductions, or the organization in which they have worked had stopped its operational activities. Lack of earnings, fear of contracting the highly contagious disease, state of isolation abroad; far from their relatives and friends during the pandemic, lack of money and the overall uncertainty concerning the future have brought these people into extremely vulnerable social group. However, of particular concern there were the labor migrants in the country of destination who were in the non-regulated circumstances from the start. While not having state protection they, much more than other migrants, were exposed to various types of exploitation, being exposed to the risks of becoming victims of trafficking in human beings and were more susceptible to the risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus.

While not being able to return to their country of origin amidst the economic crisis in the country of destination, the migrants are running to such problems as loss of work and income; absence of an economic "safety cushion"; overcrowded living quarters, which means greater vulnerability to the pandemic, complicated access to the healthcare system, insufficient awareness of the pandemic' situation, including information in their native language.

The data of the Russian Federation's Economic Situation Monitoring over July of 2020 is quite indicative, according to which, in general, up to 40% of the migrant workers have lost their jobs in the Russian Federation, in comparison to the local workers, for whom this figure made up 23-25%. Around 35% of the migrant workers had to go on unpaid leave.

This happened also because the migrants were mainly employed in the areas that were affected by the lockdown the most, such as restaurant business, catering places and cafes, retail services, taxi and transportation services, courier services and construction, all these sectors typically have a high level of migrants' employment. Nonetheless, the majority of the migrant workers chose to remain at their workplace in the country of destination during the pandemic. They were mainly counting on their limited savings, as well as on assistance of their compatriots' social ties, in case they go beyond their savings. In the entire Russian Federation, the share of the migrants with savings is 42%, in Moscow it is 38%⁸⁸. This strategy of waiting out is a common and quite understandable one for the Kyrgyz migrant workers, which is

⁸⁸Monitoring of the economic situation in Russia, No. 20 (122), July 2020. The monitoring was prepared by a joint team of authors from the E. T. Gaidar Institute for economic policy (Gaidar Institute) and the Russian Academy of national economy and public administration under the President of the Russian Federation (RANEPA): <https://www.iep.ru/ru/publikacii/publication/monitoring-ekonomicheskoy-situatsii-v-rossii-20-122-iyul-2020-g.html>

indicative of the fact that the pandemic will go away, and the migrants will be able to retain their jobs by that time. This strategy is quite risky for the migrants who are under a threat of depleting all of their savings. It is also quite risky because of the fact that it can have psychological and social consequences if the migrants run into long-term unemployment.

The pandemic has also had its destructive effect on the lives of internal migrants who have moved to the country's large cities because of the low income and limited employment opportunities in rural areas, and who have now lost their work.

According to expert's data, over the years of independence, more than 1,500,000 people have changed their permanent place of residence in the country. According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the volume of gross regional product (GRP) per capita throughout the provinces of Kyrgyzstan differs significantly, determining the population's standard of living throughout the provinces. Thus, the smallest volume of the GRP per capita is produced in Osh, Batken and Jalal-Abad provinces - KGS 27,800, KGS 38,800 and KGS 41,400 respectively. The highest rate of GRP production is in the city of Bishkek - KGS 159,900, in the city of Osh - KGS 85,500, in the Issyk-Kul and Chui provinces, respectively KGS 116,000 and KGS 69,400. This situation has led to active migration of the population from the depressed regions to more prosperous territories, with a positive inflow of internal migration in Chui province and the city of Bishkek, up to 35%, as well as outside of the country's borders.⁸⁹

As of March of 2021, during the pandemic in Kyrgyzstan, there were about 87,000 cases of COVID-19 infection registered, of which for 1,484 people it was lethal.

The pandemic's economic consequences for Kyrgyzstan in 2020 were: loss of jobs 40,000, decline in the real GDP rates 8.6%, inflation 9.7%, currency inflation (KGS / US\$) 19%, state budget deficit 4.2% of the GDP, state debt increases from 51.6% in 2019 to 68.1% in 2020.⁹⁰

Due to a special geographical location, and the large sections of non-delimited and non-demarcated borders, the border-related conflicts are of a permanent nature, as well as due to a high level of corruption, all the prerequisites for the existence of illegal migration in the Central Asian countries persist. It is almost impossible to figure out the exact number of illegal migrants, but the routes of their arrival in the Central Asia region go from both neighboring countries and from outside the region limits alike, in the case of their transit through Central Asia, often in the direction of West European countries. For the majority of migrants, the first points of entry are Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and then they are illegally transported through the territories of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation to Western Europe.⁹¹

Illegal migration within the region is also facilitated by such a factor as poor management of rather "porous" borders, that amongst other things lay through some hard-to-reach areas. Smuggling of the migrants in Central Asia is a complex process, which implies both official and unofficial agreements at different border crossings of the region, as well as of the transborder activity that allows the movement of the people outside the limits of Central Asia⁹²

In these conditions, the outburst of the economic and social crisis, which was caused by the COVID-19 has revealed the state's unpreparedness to respond to the pandemic's challenges

⁸⁹“Challenges of managing the internal migration in the Kyrgyz Republic: the role of the state agencies and of local self-government agencies in this process”, 2017, TAC AUCA. The survey was conducted with the support of the Representative office of the Heinz Seidel Foundation in the Kyrgyz Republic.

⁹⁰ The World Bank: <https://www.vsemirnyjbank.org/ru/news/feature/2021/03/17/one-year-later-in-the-kyrgyz-republic-s-battle-against-covid-19>

⁹¹ IOM: Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A global review of the emerging evidence base (Volume 2), 2018. Central Asia. By Anita Sengupta: <https://publications.iom.int/books/migrant-smuggling-data-and-research-global-review-emerging-evidence-base-volume-2>

⁹² The IOM World Migration Report of 2020: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/final-wmr_2020-ru.pdf

in a timely manner, and once again has demonstrated the outcomes of the absence of a coherent migration policy in Kyrgyzstan, and the need for a complex approach to the migration problems, which would take into consideration the approaches on tackling of such risks.

For quite a long time, on the website of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, at a public discussion, there was presented a draft document of the “Concept of migration policy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2020-2030”. Since it was developed in the year of 2020, it did not contain and did not take into consideration the most serious risks of the migration policy’s implementation, which were associated with the pandemic with some ways of tackling them, therefore no changes were made in this document.⁹³

By the Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic dated by May 4th, 2021, No. 191 “On approval of the Concept of migration policy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the years 2021-2030”, this Concept document was ratified. As it is pointed out in the document, it contains a long-term vision in the migration area processes’ regulation and includes a system of goals, priority directions and tasks in the area of migration and development, and it is based on observance of the human rights and freedoms and on protection of the national interests of the Kyrgyz Republic.

It should surely be noted that, as of today, not all consequences of the situation have been manifested, which on the one hand is characterized by a long absence of strategic migration-related documents in the country, and on the other hand, the situation is aggravated by such force majeure circumstances as the pandemic, and there are no reliable forecasts with regards to duration and severity of the situation. However, in order to have a further enhancement of management and regulation of the migration-related processes, with consideration of significance of the migration’s influence on the economy and for maintaining of viability of communities in Kyrgyzstan, it is still extremely important to assess and reflect the impact risks of the COVID-19 pandemic on the migration processes in the Kyrgyz Republic in such documents of strategic nature and to introduce the relevant amendments and addenda. This would have helped to avoid missing out on the current changes in the country’s migration situation.

International and non-governmental organizations

The expert and technical support plays quite a significant role, a number of international organizations in implementation of the migration policy of the Kyrgyz Republic provides this support. Within the context of their mandates and agreements on cooperation made with the Government of Kyrgyzstan, a great deal of attention in their activity is given to the country’s support in fulfilling of its international commitments within the membership framework in different international institutions and in implementation of the international legal documents’ provisions that were ratified by the Kyrgyz Republic.

The international organizations support the capacity building of the state agencies that are involved in implementation of the migration policy, increasing the expertise capacity of the officials, and rendering to them assistance in receiving additional migration-related training in order to raise efficiency of their official duties’ performance. Through their programs, that are implemented with support of specialized NGOs, the international organizations contribute to the migrants’ awareness raising concerning the terms of employment in their countries of destination, about the migration-related risks, about the NGO and diasporas networks that could provide informational, advisory, legal, psychological, and social support to the labor migrants in need, as well as to their families in the countries of destination.

A set of programs and projects that are implemented by the United Nations agencies in collaboration with the state agencies and non-profit organizations is directed at development of

⁹³Draft Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic “On approval of the Concept document of migration policy of the Kyrgyz Republic for the years 2020-2030”: <https://www.gov.kg/ru/npa/s/2277>

some alternative employment opportunities within the country, at obtaining of some new professions on the demand by the returning migrants, and in general at improvement of economic well-being of the population and reduction of poverty, at supporting of communities, juveniles and the elderly that were unwillingly left behind by the migrants in these communities, etc.

Assistance to the authorized state agencies of the Kyrgyz Republic in the implementation of the migration policy of the state is conducted by the following UN agencies and the International Organizations: IOM, UNODC, ILO, UNICEF, UN Women, OSCE, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) within the framework of their missions, authority, and mandates.

The United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a leading organization that is working in the migration area, which promotes humane and orderly management of the migration processes. The IOM supports the Government's efforts on development of a comprehensive scientifically grounded migration based on protection of the migrants' rights. In May of 2019, the IOM was appointed as a co-chair of the interdepartmental working group on development of the draft concept document for the migration-related policy of the Kyrgyz Republic. In partnership with the State Migration Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the IOM is providing information and advisory services to the migrants on issues of regulated, safe, and civilized capabilities for migration and reintegration in the Kyrgyz Republic. The IOM is providing active assistance to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in implementation of the state policy in the area of prevention and combating trafficking in human beings. Through the IOM there was implemented a project "Assistance to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in strengthening of the legal and technical basis for combating trafficking in human beings", which is funded by the Office for Monitoring and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the US Department of State (J/TIP), in the context of which the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic was rendered an assistance in improvement of the national legislation and in bringing it in line with the international standards.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as one of its activity areas identifies assistance in development and implementation of effective policies of combating trafficking in human beings: support of legislation reform efforts in accordance with the international standards; promoting of the concept of the law enforcement agencies' work basing on interaction with the local public, training of the law enforcement officers in working skills of this area; assistance in the creation and development of informational resources that are providing the citizens with the opportunity to verify activities' legitimacy of the commercial enterprises that are offering employment abroad; facilitating the exchange in experience, professional knowledge and best practices amongst the practicing specialists from different countries of the world.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is implementing the function of compliance oversight over the Protocol on prevention and suppressing of trafficking in human beings, especially the women and children, as well as providing practical assistance to the state agencies in development of the draft laws and national strategies for combating trafficking in human beings, providing expertise and technical assistance in implementation.

The USAID project "Safe migration in Central Asia" is helping the returning migrants to learn skills of information technology, social media management, graphic design, mobile application development, and other skills via online courses. The USAID continues to support small and medium-sized businesses that provide employment to women, young people, and vulnerable groups.

Despite of the fact that the "Concept document of migration policy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2020-2030", which was approved by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on May 4th, 2021, does not contain any provisions defining the directions of cooperation with the non-profit sector of Kyrgyzstan, these organizations implement quite a significant work in the area of migration, and over the years of operation in this area they have acquired a solid

expertise capacity, which use is necessary and vital, especially in this difficult time of reorganization and subsequent optimization of the state agencies' work that identify and implement the country's migration policy.

Non-profit organizations (NPO) are working in the following areas: general awareness raising concerning the employment opportunities and migration risks in the countries of destination, informing of certain vulnerable target groups of the migrants with regards to the risks of getting in to situation of trafficking in human beings (seminars, training sessions, educational campaigns); participation in the development projects on strategic migration-related documents and implementation of these projects; rehabilitation and reintegration of the trafficking in human beings' victims; creation of the crisis management centers; provision of legal and psychological assistance to the migrant workers and victims of trafficking in human beings, as well as on a number of other directions that are related to promotion of the labor migrants' rights and those of their family members.

Prospects and forecast assessments of the migration processes in Kyrgyzstan

The pandemic has shown once again that the labor migration has its sustainable place in the economic development of Kyrgyzstan. The creation of the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015 has let the residents of its member states, including Kyrgyzstan, to freely move to live, to work and study in other member states of the Union.⁹⁴

After closing of the state borders in the countries of origin and destination in the pandemic time, and after the revolution of October 2020, which was the third one in thirty years of independence of Kyrgyzstan and during the period of radical political and administrative reforms in the country, which followed right after, many citizens of Kyrgyzstan, migrant workers in particular have made a decision in favor of acquiring the citizenship of the Russian Federation for themselves and for their family members, which was the migrants' response during the in-depth interviews. Starting July 24th, 2020, the Law of the Russian Federation "On citizenship of the Russian Federation" no longer grants citizenship to many categories of the people who have previously had that right in the framework of the law on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic. This legislative innovation, as well as inability for many to leave for the Russian Federation to acquire citizenship, resulted in significant increase of users of Russia's program for repatriation of compatriots, which remained the only plausible way of obtaining citizenship of the Russian Federation. Since the "compatriot" concept in the context of this program has a broad definition, many labor migrants have set themselves a goal of obtaining citizenship of the Russian Federation in the context of this program while staying in Kyrgyzstan.

Upon the results of in-depth interviews, it is evident that many migrants will know in advance and will still go for a low paid job under worst labor conditions. There is a risk of a large outflow of the able-bodied population from the Kyrgyz Republic to the Russian Federation and to the Republic of Kazakhstan. It is not excluded that some will agree to work in the economy's shady sector, which will negatively affect the ability to secure their rights by the state and by non-profit organizations alike. And it can also in general move them to the category of illegals staying in the country of destination.

The existing mechanisms of well-organized employment of the labor migrants in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan have only insignificant advantages in comparison to other methods of looking for work, which makes such services uncompetitive.

...I used to dream of going to Europe for work, and I have heard that some people get jobs in flower plantations for example, it would be nice to work with tulips in Holland, but this is just a dream, I do not know the language, so how am I going to function there, plus my parents won't let me go. So, for the time being I am staying here, I want to try to enter a medical school

⁹⁴ EAEU: <https://portal.eaeunion.org/ru-ru/public/main.aspx>

and if that will come to pass then my life will be pretty settled, I will have a good job, and then eventually I will have a family of my own. How do you like these plans of mine?

...Never mind the fact that I am a taxi driver here, I know Saint-Petersburg quite well, I worked there in a construction materials warehouse, which were marketed in bulk, I have had a decent wage, none was offended. And I lived a decent life, sharing lodging with an older lady on the outskirts of Saint-Petersburg, she is a child of the WWII blockade, I really feel sorry for her, and once the pandemic will end, I will go to her again and this time around I will bring my own family with me, she is alone, and she is inviting me. I became like a son to her, and my parents are not worried about me since I'm sharing a place of living with her. She said she will help me with my citizenship.

From the in-depth interviews

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21. Money transfers from Kazakhstan to Kyrgyzstan: <http://kabar.kg/news/v-kakie-strany-kazakhstantcy-perevodiat-bol-she-vsego-deneg/>
22. Website: <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/31035686.html>
23. Website: <https://www.azattyk.org/a/kyrgyzstan-migrant-eshelon/31061426.html>

RUSSIA

Brief migration profile

As it is indicated by the migration registry data *according to the place of residence* in the year 2020, in the Russian Federation over the year there was 9,341,000 residing foreigners (in 2019 it was 18,951,000, in 2016 it was 13,714,000), out of that number 4,181,000 people were there *for the first time* (in 2019 it was 13,864,000, in 2016 it was 9,678,000) including those with the purpose of work - 2,359,000 foreigners (in 2019 it was 5,478,000, in 2016 it was 4,284,000), for *private visit* - 870,000 (in 2019 it was 2,524,000, in 2016 it was 1,907,000), *to study* - 265,000 (in 2019 it was 682,000, in 2016 it was 406,000), *for tourism* - 384,000 (in 2019 it was 4,188,000, in 2016 it was 2,245,000), *for other purposes* - 303,000 (in 2019 - 992,000, in 2016 it was 835,000).

According to the MDMA of MoI RF, as of December 1st, of 2020, at any one time 6,196,500 citizens of the CIS countries resided in the Russian Federation, including 1,460,100 citizens of Uzbekistan, 1,012,200 citizens of Tajikistan, 599,300 citizens Kyrgyzstan, and 365,600 citizens of Kazakhstan.

In the year of 2020, there were 1,132,600 *work licenses (patents)* issued to the foreign citizens and persons without citizenship, 62,700 *work permits* for foreign citizens and persons without citizenship, including highly qualified specialists - 20,500 and 7,600 to highly skilled specialists.⁹⁵

The share of arriving citizens to the Russian Federation from Central Asia with the *purpose of work* in the total number of such arrivals has increased from 63% in 2016 (which is 2,700,000 people in absolute numbers) to 71% in the year of 2019 (3,900,000 people) and 75% in the year of 2020 (1,800,000 people) accordingly. In the year 2020, most of those who arrived in the Russian Federation with the stated *purpose of work* were the citizens of Uzbekistan - 1,011,000 people (43% of the total mass of the arrivals with such declared purpose), afterwards the next on the list is Tajikistan - 507,300 people (22%), Kyrgyzstan - 190,300 people, Kazakhstan - 60,500 people (2.6%) and Turkmenistan 3,900 people (0.2%).

According to data for January and December of 2020, 594,100 people have arrived in the Russian Federation from other countries *for permanent residence or an extensive stay*, and in 2019 - more than 701,000 people, which is 24% more than in the year 2018⁹⁶.

According to data for January and December of 2020, the number of people who departed from the Russian Federation due to the change of residence was 488,000 people (in 2019 it was 411,000 people), including to the neighboring countries, which is 86.7% and to the countries of CIS it was 85.5%.

The number of *refugees and internally displaced persons* by the beginning of 2021 was not exceeding 3000 people; by the beginning of 2016, it was 313,700 people who have received the status of temporary asylum; by the beginning of 2020 it was 41,900 people⁹⁷, and by the beginning of the year 2021 it was 19,800 people.

In the year of 2020, the number of migrants who have *resettled within territory of the Russian Federation* made up 3,527,000 people, which is 520,000 people, or 13% less than in the previous year of 2019.

⁹⁵Statistical information on the migration situation. Website of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation. <https://мвд.рф/Делятелност/statistics/migracionnaya>

⁹⁶Shcherbakova E.M. (2021) Migration in Russia, preliminary results of 2020. Demoscope Weekly. 895-896. URL: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2021/0895/barom01.php>

⁹⁷ Shcherbakova E.M. (2019) Migration in Russia, preliminary results of 2019. Demoscope Weekly. 849-850. URL: <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2020/0851/barom05.php>

The main stimuli for the migration inflow to the Russian Federation are the better economic situation within the Eurasian migration system and the aging of the population⁹⁸, which is resulting in demand for labor force, including the unskilled labor force. Concerning the demand for low-skilled labor, it is indicative of sustainable labor migrants' inflow of many years that are employed mainly in the unskilled, hard labor.

Over the past decade, the external migration to the Russian Federation has gone through some significant changes, which are consisting of differentiation of the arrivals' flow (increased share of family-based migration, of women and children migrants, increased diversity of the migration according to age categories), growth in the number of migrants from smaller towns and rural areas, deterioration of levels of education and well-being of the newly arrived migrants and the growth of their cultural diversity (including in aspects of languages and religions), as well as in the structural change of the flow itself, with predominance of the migrants from Central Asia.

The labor migrants are an integral part of the Russian labor market, with gradually changing structure, with a "parallel community" and with the "migrant-related" services and infrastructure. For many migrants, the Russian Federation has already become a second homeland and the hope for a better future. Nevertheless, a part of the labor migrants, especially those from Central Asia, has returned to their homeland in 2020, although in their donor countries the opportunities of supporting the returnees are extremely limited.

Migration to the Russian Federation is largely uncontrolled in its nature, which leads to unofficial employment of the migrants, it is disrupting the balance of the Russian labor market, it is creating the grounds for the labor exploitation of the migrants, including the cases of trafficking in human beings as well as the forced and slave labor.

Incomplete comprehension of the real scale and structure of the migration inflow, as well as of the place of labor migrants in the Russian economy comes out of insufficient detailed break-down of the migration statistics. The change in the statistical recording methodology, which took place over the recent years⁹⁹, decreased the figures of officially published data on the migration processes, is complicating comprehension of these processes.

That is what the interviewed experts during the survey were talking about.

The statistical structure has been changed. In addition, the current statistics is keeping track of registration, the number of residence permits and citizens. This is all useful. And it became available with distribution according to the countries, etc., which is a good thing. However, the fact that instead of the current actual number, they started presenting the data on those who have got registered, which definitely significantly deteriorated the perception of immigration.

The biggest disadvantage is that no distribution according to age and gender is provided. In reality, this is a particularly significant bit of data for the survey specialists. Perhaps for the public opinion and for the politicians this is not a substantial issue, but for the survey specialists and for comprehension of the migration situation those are fundamental pieces of data.

From the experts' interviews

State policy and state programs in the area of migration

In the year 2016, the management of the migration processes was transferred from the civil federal agency (FMS of the Russian Federation) to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of

⁹⁸Demographic forecast until 2035 (2020) Rosstat. 26.03.2020 URL: <https://www.gks.ru/folder/12781>

⁹⁹O.S. Chudinovskikh, A.V. Stepanova (2020) On the quality of federal statistical observation over migration processes *Demographic review* vol. 7, no. 1, p. 54-82 URL: <https://demreview.hse.ru/article/view/10820>

Interior of the Russian Federation (MDMA of MoI RF)¹⁰⁰, which has weakened the social and economic and humanitarian component in the migration management. As it is evident from the Regulation on the Main department for migration under the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation,¹⁰¹ in its functions the development and implementation of integration and adaptation programs are not included.

Now, the strategic decisions in the migration area are made by the officials of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, while mechanisms of public discussion are not engaged.

Almost all migration cases from the legislative and institutional structures were handed over to the Administration of the President, which means that it was literally handed over for manual control. There is no strategy, but only mere manual control. We already see how it is working, basically we are now bringing the migrants on a pinpoint basis, according to schemes that are unclear to us.

From the experts' interviews

Management of the migration related processes is part of responsibility of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation (MDMA of MoI RF), of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, and of the Border Guard Service under the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSS).

One is unable to assess the interdepartmental interaction and distribution of responsibility areas in the area of migration policy as a comprehensive action. The multilateral cooperation during discussion of the migration policy prospects is implemented in the form of restricted and randomly conducted working conferences of the state agencies' representatives, while the experts' community and non-governmental organizations are invited to these activities in a selective and limited way.

The state strategy for migration management in the Russian Federation is set forth in the Concept of the state migration policy of the Russian Federation for the years 2019 to 2025, which was ratified in the year 2018. The purpose of the migration policy is to create a migration situation that would assist in solution of problems in the areas of (1) social and economic, (2) territorial and (3) the demographic development of the country, (4) improving the population's standard of living, (5) provision of security of the state, (6) protection of the national labor market, (7) support of peace and harmony amongst ethnicities and religions in the Russian society, as well as (8) in the area of protection and preservation of the Russian culture, the Russian language and the historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation, which make up the basis of its cultural (civilizational) code.

In the Russian Federation, there is only one active state program in the area of migration management, it is the State program of rendering assistance the voluntary resettlement of compatriots living abroad to the Russian Federation, and as of January 1, 2020, 76 regions of the Russian Federation are taking part in it. This immigration program, which supports repatriation is designed to attract new citizens for permanent place of residence who have direct or indirect historical ties with the Russian Federation and the ethnic and cultural commonality with its population, as well as for promotion of the social and economic development of the regions and for solution of the demographic issues, primarily in the territories of priority-based settlement (eastern depressed regions of the Russian Federation that are in need of labor

¹⁰⁰Decree of the President (2016) 156 of 5.04. On improvement of the state management in the area of control over the circulation of narcotic substances, psychotropic substances, and the precursors and in the area of migration. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201604050050>

¹⁰¹Order of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation (2016), *On approval of the regulation on the Main Department of migration affairs of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation*. Dated by April 15th URL: <https://media.mvd.ru/files/embed/795036>

resources)¹⁰². In the program, the principle of territorial distribution of immigrants is established and it is suggesting a decision on relocation of the immigrants based on their conscious choice concerning the places of residence, work¹⁰³, and study. This state program has helped to over 899,000 people to move to the Russian Federation¹⁰⁴.

The increased interest amongst the fellow countrymen towards this State program as a channel for a quick obtainment of the Russian passport has happened starting the year 2010, due to complication in the access conditions for the Russian citizenship. In the year of 2014, for refugees from Ukraine, a special procedure was established for consideration of applications for provision of temporary asylum, and by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation the amendments were made that would allow these people to participate in the State program upon receiving of the temporary asylum status¹⁰⁵. This has allowed for the tens of thousands of people to settle in the Russian Federation and to obtain citizenship in a simplified process and has become the main reason for the drastic upward spike in State Program's figures over the years of 2014 to 2015.

Relieving of the migrants' situation, which was introduced in the context of the pandemic¹⁰⁶, the legislative strengthening of capability of retaining the previous citizenship while receiving citizenship of the Russian Federation, simplification of the citizenship obtaining mechanism for the certain categories of foreigners, simplification of the residence permit receiving, simplification of the employment procedures for foreign students, legal status adjustment for the persons without citizenship, registration of work licenses without necessity of leaving the country, introduction of electronic visa procedure with 52 countries, gradual digitalization of the provided migration services seem to be the connective links of a slow, but gradual process of liberalization for the migration-related legislation over the last three years.

The main directions of the migration-related legislation reform are provided in the List of orders on the issues the state migration policy Concept document implementation for the years 2019 to 2025 dated by March 6th, 2020. This is an enhancement of the permanent residence and citizenship of the Russian Federation's institutions, creation of a unified migration regime for the long-term residence on the territory of the Russian Federation, modernization of the labor migration regulation mechanisms, improvement of security and the law-and-order provision mechanisms in the areas of migration and information-oriented operation of the migration management area.

Intergovernmental cooperation

The Russian Federation is actively involved in inter-state cooperation on combating illegal migration and trafficking in human beings, it has ratified the UN Convention against transnational organized crime in the year 2000 and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish

¹⁰²Decree of the President of the Russian Federation (dated by 2012) On implementation of the State program of assistance to the voluntary resettlement of compatriots living abroad to the Russian Federation. Dated by 14.09.2012 N 1289. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201209170003>

¹⁰³State program of assistance to the voluntary resettlement of compatriots living abroad. (2006). Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated by 22nd of June 2006. N 637. URL: <https://rg.ru/2006/06/28/ukaz-pereselenie.html>

¹⁰⁴Donets E.V, Chudinovskikh O.S. (2020) Russia's policy with regards to facilitating the resettlement of compatriots in the context of international experience. Population and economy. 4(3): 1–32 DOI 10.3897/popecon.4.e54911

¹⁰⁵Decree of the President of the Russian Federation (dated by 2014) On introducing amendments to the State program of assistance to the voluntary resettlement of compatriots living abroad to the Russian Federation, ratified by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation as of June 22nd, 2006. N 637. Dated by 25.07.2014 N 531. URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201407250008>

¹⁰⁶ Decree concerning the measures on resolution of the foreign citizens' legal status and persons without citizenship in Russia with regards to the threat of the COVID-19 infection spread (2020). Kremlin.ru Dated by April 18th URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/63216>

Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, both supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The necessary amendments were made to the national legislation of the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation has supported adoption of the Global Compact for safe, orderly and legal migration in 2018, but the conceptual basis of the Global Compact is largely not corresponding to the principles and objectives of the Russian migration policy of the Concept document of the state migration policy of the Russian Federation for the years 2019 to 2025 where the main idea is to ensure the social-and-economic and demographic interests of the country and its security, protection of the national labor market, support of inter-ethnic peace, while the issue of the migrants' rights is however not taken in to consideration. The migration policy Concept document is technocratic in nature, which is viewing migrants as a resource, and it is different from the globally established approach that puts value of a human being at the center of the international legislation¹⁰⁷.

One can call as priorities of the Russian Federation's international cooperation in the area of migration the interaction with the former USSR republics. And at the same time, the migration-related regional and inter-state cooperation, both on a multilateral basis (in the context of the CIS and EAEU) and on a bilateral basis is primarily concerns the issues of counteracting the illegal migration and also the regulation of the labor migration processes.

On the CIS level over the recent years the Russian Federation is moving away from a conceptual approach in the format of "migration – security" to a "migration – development" approach on the basis of four principles: organization, protection, integration, and cooperation. The baseline document is the Agreement on cooperation in the area of labor migration and social protection of the migrant workers dated by 1994.

One of the goals for creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (year 2014) is a freedom of the labor force movement. The EAEU¹⁰⁸ agreement is regulating development of a common policy in the area of labor migration, which includes provision of the social security, medical service of the member states' workers, accumulation of the labor (insurance) length of service, export of retirement plans, while helping in formation of a common labor market.

Over the recent years the Russian bilateral international cooperation is developing in the following areas: improvement of the organized recruitment mechanism of the labor migrants for temporary work in the Russian Federation (the Russian Federation's agreement concerning Uzbekistan of 2017, and of Tajikistan of 2019), mutual recognition of education and qualifications, and academic degrees (Agreement with Uzbekistan of 2019), mutual establishment of the competent authorities' representative offices in the area of migration (Agreement with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan as of 2017).

Protection of the migrants' rights

In the Russian Federation, the challenges for the migrants are largely related to the *institution of registration*¹⁰⁹ at the place of residence, which has a nature not of the notification but of oversight and has a component of corruption.

*In the area of the migrants' employment*¹¹⁰, the challenges are associated with the search for work (insufficient development of official services and well developed "shady" mediation

¹⁰⁷ Ivakhnyuk I.V. (2018) Migration and International Law: RIAC Workbook No. 45. RIAC. Moscow.

¹⁰⁸ Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union (2014) the EAEU website. URL:https://docs.eaeunion.org/docs/ru-ru/0013611/itia_05062014_doc.pdf

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¹¹⁰ Nasritdinov E.Z., Olimova S.K., Poletaev, D.V. (2016), Analysis of the labor market situation in the Russian Federation in order to effectively employ the labor migrants from the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan. Labor migration in the RF, KR and RT. Analytical report. Tien Shan Analytical Center. Bishkek.

in the search for work, including that within the diasporas, which is involving the migrants to the “shadow” economy), making of legal agreement and its official registration, widespread of unofficial employment, low quality of labor protection (dangerous working conditions without personal protective equipment, unstable time of the work shifts and lack of vacations and the absence of sick leaves), “waste” of the labor migrants’ competences, non-payment of wages by the employer (completely or partially), non-compliance with the contract conditions by the employer.

In the area of social needs and services, one can point out challenges with finding a place to live and xenophobia of landlords as well as the underdeveloped real estate market in the Russian Federation. The migrants’ health issues are connected with limited services provided under the health insurance certificate issued for obtaining a work license (VMI) or by the absence of the medical certificate. The migrants are not paying enough attention to their health and preventive measures, they visit doctors only when it is unavoidable, they are insufficiently aware of their health condition, including that in relation to such diseases as tuberculosis and HIV. The ban for any foreigner living in the Russian Federation with HIV or tuberculosis leads to their movement to some shady areas and to an untimely appeal for medical care. Another problem is access to social benefits, including alimony and retirement plans (except for the migrants from EAEU states, starting from 2021).¹¹¹.

Challenges of adaptation and integration of the migrants are conditioned by the fact that in the Russian Federation there is phobia towards the migrants, and at the moment there is no comprehensive system of integration and assistance to the migrants, although there are some free elements of it, namely education of the migrants’ children in public schools of general education, emergency medical care and free medical services for childbirth. The migrants have a poor knowledge of the Russian language, have limited access to educational services (including retraining and professional advanced education) and to the vital information for them, they are stigmatized and discriminated¹¹² by the citizens and state authorities of the Russian Federation, they do not trust the Russian state institutions and have quite a limited social capacity. Mutual assistance of the migrant workers in the Russian Federation (especially amongst those who are from Central Asia) considering a poor efficiency of services that are provided to the migrants eventually has led to origin of a series of institutions that formed the basis for creation and strengthening of the “paralleled”¹¹³ migrant communities in the Russian cities and towns. The long-term studies in the migration area in the Russian Federation are indicative of the fact that the labor migrants from Central Asia are expecting assistance only from relatives and friends¹¹⁴.

Such vulnerable groups of migrants like women, children, and forced migrants have their own specific issues (access to antenatal clinics, to schools and kindergartens, to psychologists, translation services, etc.).

The protection of labor rights of the migrant workers is still remaining outside the EAEU priorities’ scope. The civil society institutions have limited capabilities of rendering assistance

¹¹¹Information on implementation of the Agreement concerning the retirement provision of workers of the Eurasian Economic Union member states dated by December 20th, 2019. Retirement fund of the Russian Federation. https://pfr.gov.ru/grazhdanam/pensionres/pens_zagran/~7884

¹¹² Xenophobia and nationalism by “Levada” center (2020) 23.09.
url:<https://www.levada.ru/2020/09/23/ksenofobiya-i-natsionalizm-2/>

¹¹³Tyuryukanova, E.V. (2009), Labor migrants in Moscow: A “second” society in the book of Zayonchkovskaya J.A. (ed.). *Immigrants in Moscow*. 148-175. Moscow.

¹¹⁴ Poletaev, D.V. (2018), From vigilance to hostility: dynamics of attitudes in Russia towards the cross-border labor migrants over the period of 2002–2016, in the book of Panarin S.A. (ed), *From the bronze age to the digital age: the phenomenon of the time migration*, 267-284. Institute of oriental studies of the RAS. Altai state university. Barnaul: Publishing by the Altai state university URL:<https://book.ivran.ru/f/fen-migr.pdf>.

to the migrants¹¹⁵ and such assistance is most often having a form of legal advice or psychological aid. The diaspora organizations and religious associations are not necessarily taking a very active position, they would disseminate information about themselves through the migrant's channels of "word of mouth" and social networks, aiding the migrants on an individual basis.

Migrants' money transfers

From the years 2015 to 2020 private money transfers from the Russian Federation to the countries of Central Asia have been increasing (except for Turkmenistan) since the year 2016 (Kyrgyzstan - US\$ 1,743,000,000, Tajikistan – US\$ 1,929,000,000, Uzbekistan – US\$ 2,741,000,000, Kazakhstan – US\$ 559,000,000, Turkmenistan – US\$ 8,000,000 and in total for these countries it was US\$ 6,980,000,000) by the year 2018 (for Kyrgyzstan it was US\$ 2,400,000,000, Tajikistan – US\$ 2,553,000,000, Uzbekistan – US\$ 4,082,000,000, Kazakhstan – US\$ 797,000,000, Turkmenistan - US\$ 500,000 and in total for these countries it summed up to US\$ 9,833,000,000) and decreasing in the years of 2018-2020 (for the year 2020, concerning Kyrgyzstan it was US\$ 1,716,000,000, Tajikistan – US\$ 1,741,000,000, Uzbekistan – US\$ 4,420,000,000, Kazakhstan – US\$ 447,000,000, Turkmenistan - US\$ 100,000 and in total for these countries it made up US\$ 8,324,000,000). The decline in the scale of private money transfers in the year 2020 in comparison to the year 2019 (Kyrgyzstan - 88% of the 2019 scale, Tajikistan - 68%, Uzbekistan - 94%, Kazakhstan - 89%, Turkmenistan - 52% and in total for these countries it made up 85%), which was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, however, for all the countries of Central Asia, except for Uzbekistan, such a drop in figures was not exceeding the drop in the year 2019 in comparison to the year 2018. The most dramatic in the year 2020 was the decline in money transfers to Tajikistan (by one third) and to Turkmenistan (by a half).

According to the IOM survey in the Russian Federation, which was conducted in November through December of 2020 (the migrant workers from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan that have been working at the time of the survey), and only 12% of all migrant workers were not sending money at all to their homeland in the year 2020. Half of the respondents (possibility of multiple answers was provided) were sending money through the money transfer operator office (for instance, "Zolotaya Korona", etc.), a third of them (34%) were using the bank's website or mobile application, and 27% of them used the website or mobile application of the money transfer operator (for example, "Zolotaya Korona", etc.). The COVID-19 pandemic did not affect the method of the money transfer to their homeland (96% of the migrants retained their previous preferences) but did affect the amount of money transferred by the respondents to their homeland: 38% in April-June of 2020 they have transferred less money than they would normally do, 39% have transferred nothing at all, and less than a quarter of the respondents have transferred the same amount as they would usually do (23%). Roughly a half of the interviewed migrants from the three Central Asian countries are the main providers in the family (48%), another third of them (35%) provide for their family jointly with another family members, the financial support provided by the interviewed migrants from these three countries of Central Asia in the Russian Federation is of a critical significance for two thirds (65%) of their households in their homeland. Men are the main family providers in 65% of the cases and in 28% of cases they provide for their family in the financial area jointly with another family member. Women are the main family providers in 30% of the cases, and 42% of them provide for the family jointly with another family member, that is, in 72% of the cases they are extremely significant workers in the family.

¹¹⁵ Poletaev D.V. Best practices in assisting Kyrgyzstan's labor migrants in Russia (2013) Analytical report. URL:https://auca.kg/uploads/Tian%20Shan%20Policy%20Center/TSPC%20Publications/Best_practices_in_assisting%20LM_in_RF_RUS.pdf

Migration and the COVID-19

The shocks of the pandemic and of the 2020 economic crisis¹¹⁶ have placed many migrants from Central Asia in a tough situation of waiting for the end of restrictive measures, with uncertain prospects for returning to their homeland (because of the closed borders on the one hand and unemployment in their homeland on the other).

Entry restrictions for the foreigners and persons without citizenship that were introduced by the Government of the Russian Federation starting March 18th, 2020¹¹⁷, have partially and at times completely suspended the activities of many enterprises, especially in the “migrant” industries, such as: catering and hotel business, cleaning services, trade, and partially construction activities. Just like the citizens of the Russian Federation some of the labor migrants lost their jobs or have gone to part-time work, which has led to a decrease or complete loss of income.

The limited effective demand, which was caused by the economic crisis has also seriously changed the shadow sector of the economy, by reducing the number of vacancies even in businesses that evade taxes (or partially paying taxes) and minimizing their costs due to the over-exploitation of foreign workforce.

According to the IOM survey’s data, which was conducted in the Russian Federation in the fall and winter of 2020 (the migrant citizens of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan)¹¹⁸, due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the general situation has deteriorated for 69% of the migrants’ families in the Russian Federation. The main challenges were decrease in salaries and insufficient volume of income amongst the 44% and psychological stress amongst the 36% of the migrants. Amongst them 28% have lost their jobs during the pandemic and 11% were burdened by the debt over the year of 2020. Another 9% started experiencing deterioration in their daily diet, while the 2% experienced worsening of accessibility to the healthcare system. For the 28% of the survey’s respondents nothing has really changed. The women were more prone to speak about their psychological stress (44%) than men (28%).

According to the randomized surveys in 2020, amongst the Russian workers since introduction of the self-isolation mode, according to different estimates, from 10% to 25%¹¹⁹ of the workers have lost their jobs, and amongst the migrants this figure amounted up to 40-45%¹²⁰.

The Russian authorities have taken a series of measures that are improving the migrants’ situation in the Russian Federation during the pandemic¹²¹, by extending the validity of the documents granting permission to the migrants to stay in the Russian Federation and to be

¹¹⁶ Poletaev D. (2020) Migration consequences of the “perfect storm”: what will be the impact of the coronavirus pandemics on the migration problems? RIAC. May 7th. URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/migratsionnye-posledstviya-idealnogo-shtorma-kakim-budet-vliyaniye-pandemii-koronavirusa-na-problemy/>

¹¹⁷ Order of the Government of the Russian Federation (2020) dated by 16.03. No. 635-r URL: <http://government.ru/docs/39179/>

¹¹⁸ Impact reduction of the social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemics on the migrants and communities in Central Asia and the Russian Federation (2021). IOM, Moscow.

¹¹⁹ Pipia K. (2020) From isolation to migration. Vedomosti, 03.06. URL: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/articles/2020/06/03/831861-izolyatsii-migratsii>

¹²⁰ Denisenko M., Mukomel V. The labor migration in Russia during the coronavirus pandemics. Demographic review of 2020, vol. 7, no. 3: 84-107 URL: <https://demreview.hse.ru/article/view/11637>

¹²¹ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation (2020) dated by 18.04. No. 274. On temporary regulation measures of the legal status of foreign citizens and persons without citizenship in the Russian Federation in connection to the threat of further spread of the novel coronavirus infection (COVID-19) URL: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202004180001> ; Letter from the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation (2020) dated by 19.03. No. 1/2964. On additional preventive measures against the coronavirus infection spread (2019-nCoV). URL: <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/73754036/>

engaged in the labor activity¹²², and validity of these temporary measures is partially extended until June 15th, 2021.

Non-governmental organizations also helped migrants during the pandemic, although their resources were very limited.

International and non-governmental organizations

International organizations in the area of migration in the Russian Federation are insufficiently involved in the processes of comprehensive interaction with the Russian agencies that are implementing management of the migration-related processes. In the Concept document for migration policy, it is declared that “participation of the Russian Federation in the international organizations’ activity” “in order to improve regulation of the quality of international migration flows” and “to ensure fruitful participation of the Russian Federation in interaction with... the international organizations... in establishment of a positive, well-balanced and unifying international agenda and in development of solutions on the migration issues”.

In the Russian Federation, the following international organizations are present in the migration area, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the Russian Federation (UNHCR UN).

The migration policy of the Russian Federation as of yet does not have mechanisms for comprehensive inclusion of the NGOs in the migration area and there is a need for sustainable state funding for this, the state does not involve NGOs as partners in rendering of state services in the migration area (including in the programs of integration) and in the systematic work over the draft laws with continuous monitoring of the migration policy in the Russian Federation.

That is what the interviewed experts were talking about as well.

...The Ministry of Interior will not be up for such an interaction, well, because of its institutional nature, namely the closedness... and due to some kind of police logic, which is built into it... on top of it considering its level... it is just a department, which is not that influential to work independently... Nowadays the Ministry of Interior has only technical functions, and its main strategy has been transferred to the Presidential Administration, which is a specialized structure. It is a closed institution. This structure also does not have institutional instruments of interaction. There is not an institution that would be dealing with issues of strategic interaction, it simply does not exist on an institutional basis... I think this is the problem.

From the experts’ interviews.

In the Concept document of migration policy, it is mentioned “participation of civil society institutions in implementation of the migration policy, while observing the principle of non-interference in activity of the federal state agencies, state agencies of territorial subjects of the Russian Federation and the local government agencies”. It is also mentioned that “provision of participation possibilities by the civil society institutions in practicing public monitoring over the migration legislation implementation of the Russian Federation”. This means that the non-governmental organizations are excluded from the processes of development and management of the migration policy.

In the Russian Federation, there are several hundred non-governmental organizations that work in the migration area¹²³, and their number is gradually decreasing due to the lack of

¹²²Dokuchaeva A. (2020) New migration rules over the pandemics period dated by 08.04. (2020) URL: <https://migrant.ru/novye-migracionnye-pravila-na-period-pandemii-dlya-ig-i-lbg/>

¹²³The Migration field of Russia (2013) RIAC Handbook URL: <http://ir.russiancouncil.ru/migration/>

funding and the risk of being classified as “foreign agents”¹²⁴. A number of analytical NGOs (Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), Center for Strategic Research (CSR) and others) are actively involved in the process of knowledge formation concerning the migration and its management at the public and state levels. The study has indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic did not lead to a large-scale shutdown of the NGOs in the migration area of the Russian Federation.

No one from amongst the migration-related NGOs has left the scene. Perhaps, the ones that bailed out were intermediaries, because the amount of their work has decreased and most likely over this time period, they started losing money and terminated their activity. While the sustainable institutions have been working for a long time. We do not have a single partner in the migration area who have shut their public organization down.

From the experts' interviews

A practice was formed up of involving of mainly the official diaspora associations to the public dialogue as representatives of the migrant communities, in cooperation with the authorities of all levels, which is excluding the Russian NGOs from full-fledged cooperation with the authorities, and is involving the ethnic and cultural associations (diaspora) that are ineffective for these issues in the migrants' adaptation and integration processes, which were originally created not so much for adaptation and integration of the migrants, but rather for preservation of their national culture, traditions and native language.

Prospects and forecasts of the migration processes in the Russian Federation

Surveys of the specialists that analyzing the pandemic' effects¹²⁵ on labor migration in the Russian Federation are focused on the short-term prospects and for comparison use the 2008 and 2014 crises¹²⁶.

In the mid-term and in the long-term prospects, there will be continuation of the migration-related legislation's liberalization¹²⁷ and increased flexibility in the migration processes' management.

The 2020 pandemic will increase the number of foreigners that are wanting to obtain a residence permit or citizenship of the Russian Federation, acquiring of a better protection status will help them minimize the risks of work and residence, while the intention of a longer stay in the Russian Federation has being recorded by random surveys over the recent years¹²⁸.

After re-opening of the borders there will be continuation of partial compensation of highly skilled workers' emigration from the Russian Federation due to the “brain drain” of the

¹²⁴ Federal law № 121-FZ (2012) dated by July 20th. On introducing amendments to certain legislative texts of the Russian Federation regarding the regulation of non-profit organizations that perform the foreign agent functions. “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” Dated by July 23rd. URL: <https://rg.ru/2012/07/23/nko-dok.html>

¹²⁵ Abashin S. (2020) Coronavirus and migration. April 10th. URL: <http://liberal.ru/migration/koronavirus-i-migraciya?fbclid=IwAR0JowXAmBBiL1QJSK2I5cdbaeLrgp7kvdsxFK6LcEiCD9MwoIVSZvztYWE>

¹²⁶ Florinskaya Yu. (2020) Labor migration in the Russian Federation at the stage of closing the borders, monitoring of the economic situation in Russia No. 7 (109) April. URL: https://www.iep.ru/files/text/crisis_monitoring/2020_7-109_April-1.pdf?fbclid=IwAR35eQN-xfk-HKbMcPM7DE965xuoiKV5wLEyuPUJiVW8BkynZ5LPI73OIa8

¹²⁷ Poletaev D. (2019) Global migration forecast for the short-term and mid-term future. RIAC Global forecast 2019–2024: Collection / [compiled by Timofeev I.N., Makhmutov T. A., Tolstukhina A. Yu., Teslya A. L., Smekalova M. V., Pylova O. A.; Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC). - M.: NP RIAC. pp. 258-263 URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/library/library_rsmd/globalnyy-prognoz-rsmd-2019-2024/

¹²⁸ M. Denisenko, V. Mukomel (2020) Labor migration in Russia during the coronavirus pandemics. Demographic review. Vol. 7, no. 3: 84-107 URL: <https://demreview.hse.ru/article/view/11637>; Reducing the impact of the social-and-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemics on the migrants and communities of Central Asia and of the Russian Federation (2021) IOM. Moscow.

talented and better educated part of population of the former Soviet Union countries, first and foremost the younger people, which will also be taking place through educational mobility. But such a compensation will not be able to fully replenish for the Russian Federation's "brain drain" losses, a small spike of which can be expected in the nearest future, mainly because of the narrowing of the opportunities' window for the younger people amidst the stagnation time in the Russian Federation¹²⁹.

Educational mobility from the countries of the former Soviet Union that are migration donors for the Russian Federation will be increasing, and in that influx the education migrants to educational institutions of secondary vocational education of the Russian Federation, the graduates of which are having some good employment prospects in the Russian Federation, will become more visible.

Growth of terrorism threats that are caused by the mass migration to the Russian Federation, both in the short-term and in the mid-term, prospects have a low probability index. However, in the long run with the lack of comprehensive funding of integration measures for the migrants of all categories as it has been the case, the challenges of terrorism will become more pressing.

In the nearest several years, vulnerability of the migrants in the Russian Federation will remain (the main vulnerable migrants' groups are the migrant children, the migrant women, and refugees), since a comprehensive system of the migrants' integration and adaptation has not yet been established, subsequently there is no state funding for it.

Within the EAEU framework, the partnership development in the short-term period will take on much more pragmatic shape (the creation of a common retirement system and harmonization of the tax law is in the process), while the migration flows in the migration system of Eurasia will gradually return to the pre-pandemic' level.

This is what interviewed experts were talking about:

In the near future, when the transportation restrictions will be lifted, the labor migrants will return to the Russian Federation. And with them there will be the return of all the challenges of the foreign labor's influx to the Russian economy, namely unregistered employment, violation of the migrants' labor and social rights, wages dumping, and loss of qualifications by the migrants...

From the experts' interviews

In the long-term future, the migration resource of the CIS countries will be decreasing. The population in the countries of Central Asia for some time will remain young, with a higher proportion of able-bodied population and the migration capacity. In these countries (especially in Uzbekistan) there are some prospects of economic development (including those that are conditioned by investments of the Russian Federation) and for creation of the new jobs, including for the young people, therefore, the population, instead of migration, will more often be choosing work in their homeland.

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TAJIKISTAN

Contemporary migration situation and its development trends in Tajikistan

Over the past couple of decades in the Republic of Tajikistan a relatively sustainable migration model has been formed up, which is characterized by a low intensity of the migration-related exchange with other countries, by insignificant level of internal migration, including the rural-to-urban migration, and by a rather significantly high level of the male labor migration, which has a temporary nature and is mainly directed to the Russian Federation. The main migration flows are external labor migration, emigration, i.e., external movement of the population with the permanent residence change as well as educational mobility. According to the migration status, Tajikistan is mainly the country of migration outflow.

A long-term effect of the main migration tendencies and trends in Tajikistan is including their certain variability and adaptability to the changing conditions. From year to year, a number of certain migration flows is somewhat fluctuating, and to a certain degree their demographic structure is changing, the amount of money transfers is going up and down, and this is also true for the impact on the economy of the households and of the country as a whole. Thus, the number of labor migrants from Tajikistan working in the Russian Federation was increasing until the year 2014 and then started to go down. At the same time, in the year 2019, the net emigration and educational mobility to the Russian Federation has drastically increased. Over the recent years, the share of women in the migration movements has slightly increased, and the migration exchange with Uzbekistan has grown significantly. However, on a bigger scale the migration trends and tendencies were pretty much sustainable. The year 2020 was a year of drastic changes in the area of migration and mobility. The changes were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the response measures to it, including the reaction of the migrants, their families, their societies, and the countries. Mobility has been restricted to various degrees, which is creating barriers for migration, and creating some new forms of the foreign labor force participation in the labor markets, modeling the social processes, and influencing legal development in the migration regulation area.

Characteristics of migration tendencies and trends in Tajikistan as a whole over the years 2015-2019

A. External migration

The most significant trend for development of the inter-state migration ties of Tajikistan up to the year 2020 was the low gross volume of external migration. At the same time, the immigration has decreased from 600 people in the year 2015 to 300 people in 2019, and emigration has increased from 2,900 people in the year 2015 to 9,700 people in 2019¹³⁰.

The main migration flows of the population are connecting Tajikistan with the Russian Federation and its neighbor states in the Central Asian region. Countries that are not part of the CIS are practically not participating in the migration exchange of population with Tajikistan. Over the last three years, there has been a change in the main migration partners of Tajikistan. While until the year 2017 the main population exchange has been taking place with the Russian Federation, then after arrival to power of the President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Uzbekistan, the Uzbek-Tajik relations have improved, Uzbekistan has become the main migration partner of the Republic of Tajikistan. At the same time, the emigration from Tajikistan to Uzbekistan has tripled, and immigration from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan has slightly decreased. According to the official data, starting the year 2015, the number of emigrants to the Republic of Uzbekistan has

¹³⁰ Statistics yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020:35 (2020). Dushanbe: State Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan p. 35

tripled from 316 people in 2015 to 974 people in the year 2018. At the same time, the number of immigrants from Uzbekistan to the Republic of Tajikistan has slightly decreased from 137 people in 2015 to 111 people in the year 2018¹³¹. (Demographic Yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020: pp 266-267).

The second significant partner in the migration processes of Tajikistan is the Russian Federation. The volume and the structure of the migration exchange between Tajikistan and the Russian Federation is going through some substantial fluctuations. According to the State Statistics Agency of the Republic of Tajikistan, net migration from Tajikistan to the Russian Federation has been decreasing over 13 years' span. The lowest level was in the year 2018. In 2007, 9,407 people moved to the Russian Federation for permanent residence, in 2015 it was 1,160 people, and in 2018 it was 813 people. Since the year 2019 the flow of emigrants to the Russian Federation has noticeably increased and continues climbing up.

The number of immigrants from the Russian Federation to Tajikistan is consistently insignificant from 287 people in 2015 to 235 people in 2018¹³².

As for the external migration, mainly the citizens from the capital city of Dushanbe and residents of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region are taking part in it, and to a lesser extent the residents of the Sughd province. The negative migration balance in 2019 was 9,400 people¹³³.

Problem of data. There is a problem of differences between the data provided by the statistical agencies of Tajikistan and of the Russian Federation. The Statistical Agency under the President of Tajikistan indicates a decrease of a migration cycle with the Russian Federation, which lasted from 2006 to 2018, including its growth since 2019¹³⁴. (Demographic Yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan-2019, 2020: 266-267)

At the same time, the "Rosstat" Russian statistical agency is recording the steadily increasing migration exchange between the Russian Federation and Tajikistan throughout the 21st century. According to the Russian statistical yearbook, in the year 2016, 52,676 have people arrived in the Russian Federation from Tajikistan, and 25,388 of them left the country, in 2017, 63,467 people have arrived and 28,828 of them left the country, and in the year 2018, 67,929 people have arrived and 36,901 left the country¹³⁵.

In the year 2019, the migration-related increase of the Russian Federation in the population exchange with Tajikistan made up 48,400 people. In order to have a relatively adequate assessment in the volume of arrivals and departures, one should take into consideration the migration-related statistics of both countries participating in the migration exchange. Concerning the differences in statistics, for instance it is indicative by the fact that while the Tajik State agency on statistics in 2018 indicated that 813 people went to the Russian Federation, the "Rosstat" agency is reporting 67,929 arrivals from Tajikistan for permanent residence.

¹³¹ Demographic Yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan (2019). Dushanbe: State Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan p.266-267

¹³² Statistics yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan, (2019). Dushanbe: State Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan p. 266-267

¹³³ Statistics yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan, (2020). Dushanbe: State Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan p. 35

¹³⁴ Statistics yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan, (2020). Dushanbe: State Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan p. 266-267

¹³⁵ Rosstat. Available at: https://rosstat.gov.ru/bgd/regl/b19_13/Main.htm

B. Internal migration

As far as the domestic migration of the country, concerning its scale until the year 2020 it was consistently insignificant. In the years 2018-2019, 40,000 to 42,000 people have changed their place of residence within the boundaries of the Republic of Tajikistan¹³⁶.

Relocations between the provinces prevail. There is an insignificant extent of the rural-to-urban migration, which is why the share of the urban population in the Republic of Tajikistan continues to drop. This process started in the year 1974 when the share of the urban population was 37.4%, which has considerably intensified in the early years of independence during the civil war of 1991-1997. In the year 1997, when the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the United Tajik opposition signed the peace treaties, around 26.8% of the Republic of Tajikistan's population lived in cities and towns of the country. Over the past several years, the share of the urban population has practically been unchanged. It is slightly decreasing due to higher natural population increase in the rural areas, from 26.4% in 2018 to 26.2% in the year of 2020¹³⁷.

C. Labor migration

The main migration trend, which is defining the content, volume, and direction of the migration processes in Tajikistan remains to be the labor migration to the Russian Federation (RF). Both the economy of Tajikistan and the well-being of the households in the Republic of Tajikistan are largely associated with the labor migration and money transfers. From the years 2006 to 2015, the dependence of the money transfers from migrants, which is measured as a GDP share, has been the highest in the world.

The main factor, which is pushing the migrants to the foreign labor markets is limited employment opportunities in the domestic labor market of the Republic of Tajikistan. The economy of Tajikistan is unable to provide jobs for the rapidly increasing labor force¹³⁸, therefore, a considerable part of the younger people of Tajikistan are searching for work abroad. According to the Survey of households¹³⁹, around 55% of the migrants had no prior work experience before leaving abroad to make money, and 10% have left the country right after graduating from a public school. The main reasons for leaving abroad were the search for work (92%), family-related situation (4%) and studies (2%)¹⁴⁰. In addition to the search for work, low wages in Tajikistan and evasion of military service are amongst the factors for leaving the country.

According to official data, over the last five years, approximately a half of million citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan has been leaving the country every year in search of work (From an interview with an official of the Migration service under the Ministry of labor, migration, and population employment of the Republic of Tajikistan. These data figures are confirmed by the information obtained earlier at the Annual press conference of the Minister of

¹³⁶ Statistics yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan, (2020). Dushanbe: State Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan p. 35

¹³⁷ Statistics yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan, (2020). Dushanbe: State Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan p. 35

¹³⁸ ADB (2019) Skills and Employability Enhancement Project (SEEP), Republic of Tajikistan; TA Draft Final Report. Manila.

¹³⁹ Surveys of Research Institute of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA RI) "Research on Migration, living conditions and skills: Panel survey: Tajikistan, in which the chapter's author has participated. In total 2000 households were covered by the survey, there were focus group discussions conducted in Tajikistan in the year 2018, with the drawing up of the follow-up report. JICA. (2019). *Household Survey: Migration, Living Conditions and Skills: Panel Study—Tajikistan*, Tokyo.

¹⁴⁰ JICA. (2019). *Household Survey: Migration, Living Conditions and Skills: Panel Study—Tajikistan, 2019*. Tokyo.

Labor, Migration, and Employment of Population of the Republic of Tajikistan with the media representatives on February 6, 2020).

Largely, this was a cyclical or seasonal migration. It is hard to get reliable data on the labor migrants' number from the Republic of Tajikistan to the Russian Federation because of some serious discrepancies between the Tajik and Russian statistical information. The Tajik authorities are trying to underestimate the number and significance of the labor migration, while the Russian authorities, on the contrary, overestimate the data¹⁴¹. Therefore, the data of the official statistical sources are supplemented with the data from social studies' surveys. Thus, according to the JICA RI study of 2018, approximately 14% of the able-bodied population of Tajikistan have been working outside the country. This is around 780,000 people and 97.6% of them have been in the Russian Federation, and a bit more than 2% have been working in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, USA, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, and Germany. According to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), there are about 800,000 Tajik migrants working in the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation is the main destination country for the migrants from Tajikistan for multiple reasons. The Russian Federation is experiencing a need for a labor force that is willing to work on tough, dirty, and dangerous jobs that do not require high qualification. At the same time, the average monthly salary of an unskilled worker in the Russian Federation is four times higher than that in the Republic of Tajikistan (in the Russian Federation it is US\$ 281, while in the Republic of Tajikistan it is US\$ 78¹⁴²). The labor migration from the RT to the RF is also motivated by a shared history within the USSR, visa-free entry, knowledge of the Russian language, which is common in Tajikistan, and the presence of the Tajik migrant networks and diasporas in the Russian Federation.

Main trends in the labor migration development from Tajikistan over the last 5 years.

Until the year 2014, the Russian Federation and its growing economy have attracted hundreds of thousands of migrant workers from Tajikistan. The economic recession of 2014, inflation of the national currency and the changeover in the migration policy of the Russian Federation in the year 2015 have collectively affected the migration from Tajikistan to the Russian Federation¹⁴³. Starting from 2014 up to 2018, the number of people leaving for the Russian Federation has decreased by 28%, and the amount of the money transfers have decreased down to US\$ 2.300,000,000 in the year 2017, which is equivalent to 32% of Tajikistan's GDP¹⁴⁴. However, in the year 2019, the scale of labor migration from the Republic of Tajikistan to the Russian Federation is on the rise again, thus 16% more migrants left their homeland place to work in the Russian Federation in comparison with the year 2018¹⁴⁵. At the same time, the labor migration to Kazakhstan has reduced to a bare minimum.

Demographics figures of the labor migrants¹⁴⁶.

According to a number of surveys, the migrants' profile is characterized by predominance of younger men: 92% of the migrants are able-bodied men. According to the JICA survey, women make up 8% of all migrants. Other studies over the last 5 years indicate fluctuations of women's share in the migration from 12 to 15%.

¹⁴¹ IOM (2019) *World Migration Report 2020*. Geneva

¹⁴² ADB, 2020 Strengthening support for the labor migration in Tajikistan. Assessment and recommendations. December of 2020.

¹⁴³ JICA. (2019). *Household Survey: Migration, Living Conditions and Skills: Panel Study—Tajikistan*, Tokyo

¹⁴⁴ ADB, 2020 Strengthening support for the labor migration in Tajikistan. Assessment and recommendations. December of 2020.

¹⁴⁵ JICA. (2019). *Household Survey: Migration, Living Conditions and Skills: Panel Study—Tajikistan*, Tokyo

¹⁴⁶ JICA. (2019). *Household Survey: Migration, Living Conditions and Skills: Panel Study—Tajikistan, 2019*. Tokyo.

Age. Amongst the labor migrants the predominance belongs to the younger people. The share of the young people under 30 years of age makes up for 45.7% of the migrants, of 30 - 65 years of age is 54.2% and over 65 years of age makes up for 0.1% of the migrants (JICA, 2019).

The majority of migrants are married (71%), but do not have status of the households' heads (79%). Most of the migrants are the sons and daughters of the household heads. Majority of the migrants come from rural areas of Tajikistan (71%). (JICA, 2019).

Education. Around 12.9% of the migrants have higher education and 13.8% have a secondary vocational education (tech schools and colleges). The largest group of the migrants, namely 57.2% are limited to completed secondary education (11 classes) and 16% have incomplete secondary education (9 classes) (JICA, 2019).

Labor migrants from Tajikistan work in construction projects (47%), trade (12%), transportation industry, communications (5%) and in communal services (5%). The migrant women work in the Russian Federation mainly in the service sector (as cleaners, waitresses, nurses, babysitters, sales representatives, bakers, and cooks). As opposed to men, the women often work in accordance with their experience and education but doing so in the low-paid and unskilled jobs (for instance, a nurse usually works as nanny in kindergarten) (From an interview). Upon their return to the homeland, the labor migrants are not always able to find a job that requires qualifications and skills that were acquired during the migration experience. The results of a series of studies show that the migrants both abroad and at home were mainly engaged in temporary work, while frequently changing jobs. None of those who have a professional education ever worked according to their specialty. The main reasons for them being fired in the Russian Federation are either the end of a construction project, end of their term of stay or deportation. The migrants quit jobs and go back to their homeland among other things also because of family issues, injuries, deterioration of their health, or due to vanishing of the need to make money. In general, the migration experience amongst the families with migrants forms up a lifestyle strategy, which is adapted to the needs and conditions of the labor market and residence in the Russian Federation. It involves doing hard, dirty, and dangerous work in the Russian Federation for some time, and then returning to their homeland. In their homeland, the migrants are normally engaged in agricultural labor or a small business in the construction, sales of the construction materials industry, trade, and services, primarily the transportation services (car wash, car repairs, taxis, freight transportation, etc.).

Legal status. A series of surveys show that by the year 2020 the number of the labor migrants from Tajikistan that have worked in the "shadow" has significantly decreased. According to the JICA Survey of 2019, more than 70% of the migrants that leave their country for work have the paperwork and employment contracts prepared in advance. Majority of the labor migrants live and work legally in the country of destination. And about 14% of them work illegally outside of their homeland. Although the majority of the migrants from the Republic of Tajikistan are getting to the Russian Federation legally, some of them become illegal migrants for different reasons, ranging from some minor administrative offenses, such as breaking of road traffic rules, and ending with illegal employment or residence in the Russian Federation with expired documents. In accordance with the Russian Federation's legislation, the migrants are being deported to their homeland without the return right for a certain time period or indefinitely. Up until December of 2019, the number of the deported Tajik migrants with revoked right to ever enter again the Russian Federation was 267,324 people. (From an interview with an officer of MLMPE).

D. Educational mobility

In Tajikistan educational mobility is quite popular, i.e., university students, post-graduate students, participants in educational programs of various kinds are going abroad to study. The popularity of educational mobility in the Republic of Tajikistan is shown by the results of the 2015 survey, according to which 56.5% of the interviewed young people pointed

out that provided they have an opportunity, they would prefer to study abroad. And only 29.3% of the young people are willing to study in their country. The most attractive country for education according to 42.2% of the respondents is the Russian Federation, the USA for 16.1%, China for 8.3%, EU countries for 7.7% and the countries of Central Asia for 6.8% of the respondents¹⁴⁷. In the year 2020, more than 20,000 citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan have studied in the Russian Federation's higher educational institutions¹⁴⁸.

More than 28,000 citizens of Tajikistan study in higher educational institutions of just the Russian Federation¹⁴⁹.

E. "Brain drain"

Is a migration of highly skilled workers. The "brain drain" within the labor migration context is the most numerous of the trends of the "brain drain" from Tajikistan. The size of this group can be estimated by the data of the labor migration surveys. We are unable to operate with absolute figures since there is no official information of this kind, but the data obtained during the household surveys and interviews provide at the very least an approximate idea concerning the group of migrants with higher and secondary vocational education, as well as of its size, main demographic characteristics and the dynamics of changes. In particular, over the decade of 2003 to 2012, the share of the migrants with higher education in the migration influxes that are directed towards the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan has decreased from 18.6%¹⁵⁰ down to 10.7%¹⁵¹. By the year of 2019 this figure has gone up to 13.4%¹⁵², which made up approximately 90,000 people. The most noticeable drop in share of the migrants with secondary specialized and the secondary technical education took place from 27.9% in the year 2002¹⁵³ down to 15.9% in the year 2012¹⁵⁴. In 2019, this group was making up for 15.3% of total labor migration¹⁵⁵.

The number of the labor migrants from Tajikistan with a higher level of education and qualifications in the USA, EU, China, Afghanistan, UAE is insignificant and throughout the years was 1.5% - 2% of all labor migrants from Tajikistan. However, it is namely this group that moves about within the "brain circulation" pattern. Normally these are some highly qualified specialists who, without changing their citizenship, work on a contractual basis in different countries. Usually, these people are employees of the international organizations or the specialists participating in the international organizations' projects. For instance, from amongst them there are many medical doctors, mid-level healthcare system workers, NGO

¹⁴⁷ Olimov M.A., Sakhilov Sh.K. 2017. Youth of Central Asia. Tajikistan. Almaty: p. 396

¹⁴⁸ Vecherka, 2020 "Almost 7000 people left Tajikistan for the Russian Federation last year under the resettlement program". "Vecherka" news agency. 01/03/2020 Available at: <https://vecherka.tj/archives/41640>

¹⁴⁹ Kozlova N. 2021. Builders to Moscow, teachers to Dushanbe. Labor migration in the era of COVID-19 // "Rossiiskaya Gazeta" newspaper - Federal issue № 262 (8316) 02/08/2021 Available at: <https://rg.ru/2020/11/19/sattorov-bolshinstvo-grazhdan-tadzhikistan-vernulis-k-rabote-v-rossii.html>

¹⁵⁰ Olimova S. and Bosc I. (2003) Labor migration from Tajikistan. International Organization for Migration, World Bank. *Migration and Remittances Data; Annual Remittances Data*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data> c.29

¹⁵¹ Danzer A., Ditz B., Gatskova K. 2013. Tajikistan household survey: Migration, money transfers and the labor market. Institute for East and Southeast European Studies. Regensburg.

¹⁵² JICA RI (2019) Migration, Living Condition, and Skills Survey.

¹⁵³ Olimova S. and Bosc I. (2003) Labor migration from Tajikistan. International Organization for Migration, World Bank. *Migration and Remittances Data; Annual Remittances Data*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data> c. 28

¹⁵⁴ Danzer A., Ditz B., Gatskova K. 2013. Tajikistan household survey: Migration, money transfers and the labor market. Institute for East and Southeast European Studies. Regensburg.

¹⁵⁵ JICA RI (2019) Migration, Living Condition, and Skills Survey.

workers, engineers, construction site specialists from Tajikistan who worked under several temporary contracts in Afghanistan.

I have worked for eight years in the office of an international organization in Kabul. Later I returned to my homeland and taught at the Polytechnic university. I have defended my doctoral thesis. I have completed analytical projects and research work for the international organizations in Dushanbe. Later I left the country again, this time around for Burma, and worked there for some time. And after difficulties with health conditions, I had to return to the homeland. M., 49 years old, Ph. D. in Economics.

The migrants of this category, in the process of working abroad gain some extensive professional experience and knowledge and, in turn, make contributions to the world of science, education, culture, public health and safety. Upon return to their homeland, they are ready to transfer their knowledge and experience to their compatriots, and to assist with the development of their country. But unfortunately, this experience is not always in demand in necessary proportions.

In general, over the past fifteen years, the “brain drain” dynamics from the Republic of Tajikistan has shown a decline up until the year 2019, when a new spike in emigration of the qualified personnel has started to appear.

Characteristics of the migration tendencies and trends in Tajikistan in the year 2020

External migration of the population to a permanent place of residence

In the year of 2020, amidst the pandemic, there is a continuous rise of emigration from Tajikistan to the Russian Federation, which has increased by 8% in the first half of 2020 in comparison to the same time period in 2019, which made up 43,100 people. At the same time, the outflow of people from the Russian Federation to Tajikistan over the first six months of 2020 has increased by 32%. The migration exchange with the neighboring countries of Central Asia retains the nature and dynamics of the year 2019.

In 2020, a record high number of citizens of Tajikistan, more than 63,000 people received Russian citizenship. Tajik citizens obtain Russian citizenship both after an extensive stay in the migration and on the basis of the Russian state program to assist the voluntary resettlement to the Russian Federation of compatriots living abroad.

Some researchers believe that the desire to obtain Russian citizenship is instrumental in nature, i.e., it is an ambition to work in the Russian Federation without artificial barriers and to avoid paying large sums of money for a work license. Indeed, this was the case up until the year 2020, but the pandemic has significantly changed the situation. The challenges of the transportation process, extremely high price of airplane fares have contributed to the increased popularity of emigrating with an entire family.

Migration and the COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and the measures of response by the governments and international institutions have had a major influence on the migration in Tajikistan. Starting March 11th, since the moment when the WHO announced the pandemic, mobility restrictions have been established, including closing of the borders, quarantines, and termination of transportation routes¹⁵⁶. Over the course of the pandemic, 40% of the labor migrants from Tajikistan to the Russian Federation have lost their jobs, and the rest faced lay-offs and failures in payment of salaries, deterioration of work conditions, increased duration of work shift hours

¹⁵⁶ IOM (2020) IOM Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (February–December 2020) 15 April.

and the work intensity as well as the limited access to medical services. Despite this fact, the COVID-19 infection rate amongst the migrants was low.

Slowing down of the migration due to closing of the borders, termination of the transport communication and the lockdowns have affected not only the migrants themselves but also the process of their legalization, namely obtaining of documents that regulate legal stay of the migrants, including work licenses, work permits, certificates, tests, etc. Based on the interviews' materials, the cost of migration has drastically gone up. Thus, in order to have initial settlement in Moscow in the year 2020, one needed at least from US\$ 500 to US\$ 600: *“it costs RUR 15,000 for preparation of the paperwork package in order to obtain the work license, medical examination, tests of the Russian language knowledge and registration of the voluntary health insurance policy. Cost of the work license is around RUR 5,500. It must be paid in advance on a monthly basis”*. (From an interview with a migrant that returned to their homeland).

Migrants from the Republic of Tajikistan who settled down in the Russian Federation have mostly retained “their own” areas of labor activity. They returned to their workplaces and still are working in construction projects and in trade business. Some of them went to the agricultural sector. Demographic characteristics of the migrants have slightly changed, the share of the young people has decreased, while the share of women has slightly increased.

In the context of noticeable deterioration of situation, the migrants in the Russian Federation were sticking to three main strategies: 1) they sought to obtain the Russian citizenship at any cost, looking for any work and have planned in the future to move their entire family to the Russian Federation; 2) they decided to make a move towards working and living in the “shadow sector”; 3) they returned to their homeland to wait out the tough times or to permanently reside in their homeland.

Return of the migrants

The migrants that decided to go back during the first wave of COVID-19 have experienced significant difficulties in returning to their homeland because of the movement restrictions.

They (the migrants) were going back for two reasons: a) it was already a time for them to do so (end of seasonal work or the time period, which was allocated to work abroad was ending); b) they have lost their jobs, or they had nowhere to stay in the context of income loss, etc., everything related to the Covid-19 and self-isolation. (Interview with a migrant that returned to their homeland. Dangara district)

In March of 2020, hundreds of labor migrants from the Republic of Tajikistan got stuck at airports of the Russian Federation, since the travel by air was halted, and there were not that many departure flights. Some migrants have tried to return to their homeland by road across the borders that got closed. Many of them have got stuck at the border crossings with Kazakhstan for a month or more. It was especially hard for the people with children and for those who were transporting bodies of the deceased migrants to their homeland. Over the first six months of the year 2020, more than 90,000 people have returned to Tajikistan. On behalf of the President Emomali Rahmon of the Republic of Tajikistan, starting from June 25th, 2020, in order to implement gradual return of the citizens of Tajikistan, every single day the charter flights of Tajik airlines from Moscow and other cities of the Russian Federation were carried out. Over the period of several months, more than 60,000 citizens of Tajikistan were able to be transported to the Republic of Tajikistan¹⁵⁷.

The regular transport communication has not been completely restored as of this day.

¹⁵⁷ Kozlova N. 2021. Builders to Moscow, teachers to Dushanbe. Labor migration in the era of COVID-19 // “Rossiiskaya Gazeta” newspaper - Federal issue № 262 (8316) 02/08/2021: <https://rg.ru/2020/11/19/sattorov-bolshinstvo-grazhdan-tadzhikistan-vernulis-k-rabote-v-rossii.html>

Departure of seasonal workers

Consequently, the seasonal workers were unable to go to work in the Russian Federation during the springtime. Starting from March to April of 2020, about 350,100 citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan have tried but were unable to travel abroad to earn money.

The number of the outgoing labor migrants from the Republic of Tajikistan over the first six months of 2020 in comparison to the year 2019 has gone down by 30%. In general, in the year 2020, 129,000 citizens of Tajikistan have left for the Russian Federation to work, which is more than three times less than in the year 2019¹⁵⁸.

Out of the total number of migrants in 2020, 95% went to the Russian Federation, 2% to Kazakhstan, and the rest to the other countries. (From an interview with an employee of the Ministry of Labor, Migration, and Employment of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan).

Despite the challenges related to the means of transportation, the entry points to the country remained practically unchanged. According to the “Rosstat” data concerning the border crossing methods from amongst the citizens of Tajikistan who arrived in the Russian Federation in the year 2020, 64% of the travelers arrived by plane and 30% by automobiles (for comparison, in the year 2019, 54% of the travelers arrived by plane and 38% by automobiles).

Money transfers

Tajikistan is one of the world’s leading countries in terms of correlation of the received money transfers to GDP¹⁵⁹. Therefore, decline in money transfers, which was caused by restriction of the workforce mobility and by economic activity inside and outside of the country has made a painful hit to the economy of Tajikistan. According to the National Bank of Tajikistan, in the year 2020 the influx of money transfers from private individuals have decreased by 6.3% in comparison to the previous year¹⁶⁰. Thus, the correlation of the money transfers to the GDP of Tajikistan in the year 2020 has dropped down to 22%, which is a record low figure since the 2000s. The volume of money transfers one year prior, in 2019, made up to US\$ 2,700,000,000 which is equivalent to 33.4% of GDP of Tajikistan¹⁶¹.

The decrease of money transfers has negatively impacted the household’s wellbeing, consumer demand and investments. The number of households that slashed their food consumption has increased. The inability of previously returned migrants to go to work abroad has led to unemployment rise, as well as intensification of poverty figures.

The labor migrants do not have financial savings that allow them to survive the crisis, therefore they are forced to look for any type of work. The migrants that stayed in Tajikistan used their reserves, borrowed money, and applied for loans. The markets of so called “mardikors”, the daily laborers have spiked up. The returnee migrants are involved in randomly available jobs: driving taxi, transport services, freight services, work in catering services, which is including production and delivery of food items. The employment in brick production factories and in construction sites is increasing. The migrants are getting involved in a small-scale wholesale of agricultural products and in transportation of this produce. Despite the fact that the service sector of the Republic of Tajikistan has suffered greatly during the pandemic, the returning migrants are offering new services, especially online-based services. Overwhelming majority of the seasonal migrants in Tajikistan are the village residents. Agricultural sector is absorbing and providing support to the seasonal workers remaining in

¹⁵⁸ REGNUM, December 17th, 2020. Available at: <https://regnum.ru/news/society/3144470.htmlb>

¹⁵⁹ IOM (2019) *World Migration Report 2020*. Geneva.

¹⁶⁰ The Russian TASS News Agency. Available at: <https://www.finanz.ru/novosti/aktsii/denezhnye-perevody-v-tadzhikistan-za-2020-god-sokratilis-bolee-chem-na-6percent-nacbank-1030068200>

¹⁶¹ ADB, 2020 Strengthening support for the labor migration in Tajikistan. Assessment and recommendations. December of 2020.

Tajikistan, while the production of food for domestic consumption on the household allotments has been supporting the migrant households that have lost their income. In general, the GDP growth in the year 2020 was 4.5%, which was connected with an increase in the industrial production rates in Tajikistan by 9.8% and in agricultural production by 8.8%¹⁶².

State policy and state programs in the area of migration

The legislative basis for migration is provided in Article 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan, according to which a citizen has the right to free movement and of choosing a place of residence, including departure from and return to the country.

The main document that is regulating the migration processes for the population of the Republic of Tajikistan is the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On migration” as of December 11th, 1999, with amendments and additions.

The state policy of Tajikistan in the area of migration is directed at supporting the workforce export. There were 2 sectoral programs adopted concerning the labor migration of the Republic of Tajikistan’s citizens abroad for the period of 2003-2005 and for 2006-2010, as well as the National Strategy of Labor Migration of the Republic of Tajikistan’s citizens abroad for the period of 2011-2015. Further development of the Republic of Tajikistan’s policy in the area of migration is described in the National development strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan until the year 2030¹⁶³.

In this document, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan is setting forth the goals of increasing domestic income by 3.5 times by the year 2030 and reducing poverty in half (NDS, 2030). Amongst other things as goals there have been identified such things as diversification of the external labor migration, including from a gender-oriented perspective and strengthening of state regulation process of the migrants’ return (NDS 2030:11) Services that will be developed under the NDS 2030 include professional development (NDS 2030:36), training of the migrants (NDS 2030:75), provision of retirement plans for the labor migrants (NDS 2030:56) and the special programs directed at improvement of the returning migrants’ qualifications.

Policy in the area of migration is also reflected in the State strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan’s labor market until the year 2020. In this document there is recognition of the fact that the labor migration is helping to reduce tensions in the domestic labor market, and that it will only be increasing in the future. In the Employment assistance program of 2020-2022, some concrete points were defined concerning the increasing of labor migrants’ numbers, the civil society involvement, and assisting the migrant workers in search and creation of favorable conditions for employment.

In addition, an updated version of the National migration strategy has been developed, but as of yet it has not been approved.

With regards to protection of the labor migrants’ rights, Tajikistan has ratified all the relevant Conventions concerning the protection of the migrants’ rights. On December 17th, 2019, the National Action Plan was ratified on implementation of the UN Committee recommendations on protection of the labor migrants’ rights for the years 2020-2024.

Migration management institutions

The Ministry of labor, migration, and employment (MLMPE) is dealing with issues of labor, migration, and professional and technical education. The Migration department and the Migration service under the MLMPE are solely responsible for dealing with the migration issues. The Migration service under the MLMPE has created four Advisory and training centers

¹⁶² Statistical yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020. Dushanbe.: State statistics agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2020.

¹⁶³ Government of Tajikistan (2016). *National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up to 2030*. Dushanbe

for the labor migrants prior to their departure in Dushanbe and in regions of the Republic of Tajikistan, namely in Bokhtar (Khatlon province), Khorog (Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous province) and in Khujand (Sughd province).

Besides that, the labor migration is also managed by the Labor and employment agency under the MLMPE, vocational-and-technical education and training institutions under the different state agencies. In the Russian Federation, the MLMPE Representative office in the Russian Federation is dealing with labor migration issues. Its central office is located in Moscow, and besides that, there are some offices in St. Petersburg, Khabarovsk, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Krasnodar, and Kazan. In each of those offices there are active support hotline services.

Other state institutions that are directly or indirectly participating in the migration management process of Tajikistan are: Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Agency for Social Insurance and Retirement, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science, National Bank of Tajikistan (NBT).

State migration policy and the COVID-19 pandemic

Over the course of the pandemic, the Government of Tajikistan has taken a series of measures related to regulation of the migrants' time of stay and work. In order to implement the activities' plan for impact prevention of possible risks of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labor migration, the Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment of the Republic of Tajikistan (MLMPE) has developed an "Anti-crisis plan on the COVID-19 pandemic's influence reduction on the labor market and migration" (dated by June 3rd, 2020). The program is designed for protection of the rights and interests of the labor migrants abroad, in particular, for the Republic of Tajikistan's citizens that work in the Russian Federation's territory, as well as of the citizens who during the COVID-19 pandemic were unable to leave for work in other countries (the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan). The program included the following measures:

For protection of rights and interests of the citizens involved in labor activity on the territory of the Russian Federation:

- Ability for legalization of the labor migrants' stay and labor activity on the territory of the Russian Federation;
- Extension of the work license registration validity term for the labor migrants that are temporarily living in self-isolation in the Russian Federation;
- Exemption of the labor migrants that are staying in self-isolation from payment of the work license fee during the time of self-isolation.

For protection of the citizens' rights who were unable to depart for work to other countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, the following measures were envisaged:

- Organization of some short-term courses on professions in demand on the labor market of the Republic of Tajikistan,
- Organization of remote learning activities,
- Provision of loans with benefits for those who are involved in self-employment,
- Involving of the returning labor migrants in the seasonal works,
- Engaging of the labor migrants that came back in the public works,
- Conducting of training courses (folk crafts),
- Certification of the labor skills,
- Material and financial support for women that are coming back from migration, and
- Improvement of entrepreneurship skills.

Actions within the framework of the anti-crisis plan, which became an integral part of the comprehensive Plan of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on containment of the

disease and combating the pandemic' consequences, which is linked to programs of the World Bank and other international organizations, have allowed to mitigate the COVID-19 influence on the labor market and migration. According to the Minister of labor, migration, and employment of the Republic of Tajikistan, in Tajikistan they were able to maintain a sustainable situation on the domestic labor market¹⁶⁴.

Besides that, the Minister Amonzoda has pointed out some fervent actions that the government of the Republic of Tajikistan has been taking with regards to the fellow countrymen, the labor migrants who have lost their work in the Russian Federation and have been trying to return to their homeland. She has stated that "...during the time of pandemic in the Russian Federation, where approximately 95% of all Tajik labor migrants are going to, many fellow countrymen have lost their jobs in times of crisis... The Representative office of the Ministry of Migration in the Russian Federation in cooperation with the Embassy of Tajikistan in Moscow, with the Tajik diasporas and public organizations have regularly provided financial assistance and necessary advisory support to the labor migrants from amongst the citizens of Tajikistan¹⁶⁵.

Although Tajikistan has been providing some social support functions during the pandemic peak, nevertheless, there is still a contradiction between the declared norms and their implementation in real life. These contradictions are compensated by the widespread use of compulsory and voluntary charity activity (so called "Peshraft" in the Republic of Tajikistan), and by mutual assistance of traditional tribal and community-based institutions and the migrant networks as well as. The migrant networks, communities and community institutions have acted as equal partners of the state authorities, both in the country of origin and in the Russian Federation, in assisting the labor migrants and their family members.

Intergovernmental cooperation

A retrospective view of the Republic of Tajikistan's history of inter-state cooperation in the area of migration is demonstrating the challenges in formation and development of the nation-state and its economy. The efforts of the Republic of Tajikistan's government of in the area of intergovernmental cooperation in the area of migration over the first decade since gaining of independence were directed at solving of issues of the refugees and internally displaced persons during the civil conflict in Tajikistan in 1992-97, as well as their return and reintegration. Simultaneously, the issues of formation of the national legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan were taken to consideration in the area of migration, including creation of the relevant structures and institutions, as well as establishment of cooperation with specialized international organizations.

From the beginning of 2000s and up to the years 2018 - 2019, the main direction of intergovernmental cooperation in the area of migration was the cooperation in the labor migration realm, and it was taking place in the context of the "migration and security" issue. The main efforts were directed at combating illegal migration. This was most vividly manifested in the context of multilateral format of the CIS, in which Tajikistan has always been taking an active part. Similar challenges were also in the center of attention of the SCO.

Significantly greater importance for the migration management had the making of bilateral treaties and agreements. Their main objective was protection of the migrants' rights and expansion of their employment opportunities in the labor market of the host countries. In this way, in the year of 2004, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has signed a bilateral

¹⁶⁴Interview with Minister of Labor, Migration and Employment, Mrs. Shirin Amonzoda, available at: <https://tj.sputniknews.ru/migration/20210227/1032904325/Vezd-amnistiya-pensii-migranty-tajikista-russia.html>

¹⁶⁵Interview with Minister of Labor, Migration and Employment, Mrs. Shirin Amonzoda, available at: <https://tj.sputniknews.ru/migration/20210227/1032904325/Vezd-amnistiya-pensii-migranty-tajikista-russia.html>

agreement with the government of the Russian Federation on regulation of migration and the migrants' rights from both of these countries. The agreement regulates issues of labor and the labor migrants' rights protection from amongst the citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan and of the Russian Federation, who are temporarily working on the territory of any of these two countries. At the present time, the draft agreement between Tajikistan and the Russian Federation on the provision of retirement plans for the labor migrants is still being discussed. The draft document preparation has been underway since the year 2016.

Regional cooperation between Tajikistan and regions of the Russian Federation in the migration area is actively developing. Over the past 10 years, a number of cooperation agreements have been signed between the provinces of the Republic of Tajikistan and the constituencies of the Russian Federation. The most active positions of involvement in cooperation are taken by the city of Moscow, Altai, Krasnodar, Krasnoyarsk, Perm regions, Ivanovo, Irkutsk, Orenburg, Saratov, Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk, and Moscow provinces¹⁶⁶.

There is a noticeable progress in cooperation of the Republic of Tajikistan in the migration area at the regional level, which was associated with the settling down of relations with Uzbekistan. In the year 2018, during his visit to Tashkent, President the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon has signed 26 documents, amongst which was the "Agreement on strategic partnership between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan"¹⁶⁷.

The most significant document in the migration area was an agreement "On mutual travels of the citizens of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan", which was signed in 2018 that allowed reunification of separated family members and made life easier for millions of citizens in both countries, it assisted the development of trade and economic relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Over the past several years, the Republic of Tajikistan and the countries of destination, primarily the Russian Federation, are making significant efforts to create a coordinated mechanism for migration management in the form of the migrant workers' organized recruitment. In the year 2018, a Memorandum of understanding on labor regulation issues was signed with the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In the year 2019, an intergovernmental agreement on labor regulation was signed, according to which Qatar has agreed to accept Tajik workers in the form of organized recruitment process. In January of 2020, the Russian Federation has ratified an Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on the organized recruitment of the Republic of Tajikistan's citizens for temporary work on the territory of the Russian Federation¹⁶⁸.

The work is conducted on preparation of a similar agreement with South Korea. However, so far, the organized recruitment has not become a widespread phenomenon in the labor migration practice from the Republic of Tajikistan. The main reason for that is the increased probability for exploitation and violations of the migrants' rights as well as trafficking in human beings. The experience of sending of smaller well-organized groups of women migrants to Qatar and to the UAE has shown that they are often facing fraud, violations of

¹⁶⁶Kozlova N. 2021. Builders to Moscow, teachers to Dushanbe. Labor migration in the era of COVID-19 // "Rossiiskaya Gazeta" newspaper - Federal issue № 262 (8316) 02/08/2021 Available at: <https://rg.ru/2020/11/19/sattorov-bolshinstvo-grazhdan-tadzhikistan-vernulis-k-rabote-v-rossii.html>

¹⁶⁷ Agreement between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan on strategic partnership. (Electronic resource). URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/4108695>

¹⁶⁸ Karaev, S. 2021. The Ministry of labor of Tajikistan is stating that the number of labor migrants is growing // Asia-Plus, February 6th, 2021. Available at: <https://asiaplustj.info/news/tajikistan/society/20200206/mintruda-chislo-trudovih-migrantov-rastet>

agreements, confiscation of documents, as well as trafficking in human beings and sex-related crimes.

Intergovernmental cooperation in the year 2020

The main content of the intergovernmental cooperation in the year 2020 was reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the states have been taking measures of prevention and reduction of the coronavirus spread rates, including imposing an entry ban for the labor migrants. In late March, the Russian Federation shut its borders down with all the countries, including Tajikistan, due to the rapid spread of the coronavirus. All air travel was suspended, except for the export flights. During this time period, intensive intergovernmental and interdepartmental consultations and negotiations related to the migration situation were taking place.

Role, participation, and relevance of the international and non-governmental organizations in the migration area during the COVID-19 pandemic

The international organizations that are working in Tajikistan in the migration area have actively participated in response to the pandemic in the year 2020. The UN Country Team has developed and adopted a “Comprehensive response program for the social-and-economic consequences of the COVID-19”. The program is linked to all plans of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan for containment of the disease and combating the pandemic’ consequences. In that program the negative impact of this infectious disease on social-and-economic development are highlighted with formulation of comprehensive response measures from fifteen UN agencies. During the year 2020 and in the first quarter of 2021, the program was at the stage of active implementation.

In general, the attention focus of the international organizations and the development agencies that are working in the migration area in Tajikistan was an assistance in reintegration of the returning migrants and their family members, mobilization of financial and human resources for investment in small and medium-sized businesses, in income-generating activity, as well as training of the migrants and members of their families who came back to their homeland the entrepreneurship skills, new professions, acceleration of digitalization of the Republic of Tajikistan’s economy. The most scaled-up projects include the following:

IOM. In the context of its work on stabilization of communities, the IOM is focusing its attention on reintegration of the migrants who returned to their homeland with re-entry ban, on providing opportunities for the younger people and on supporting the migrant families that are led by single women. The IOM is providing money grants to community members in the regions bordering Afghanistan in GBAO and Khatlon province. In partnership with adult training centers of Tajikistan (this center is an integral part of the MLMPE), the IOM has provided vocational training sessions for over 800 people, most of whom are the migrants that returned to their homeland.

ADB. In July of 2020, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a grant of US\$ 30,000,000 for Tajikistan for professional development of the young people, women, and labor migrants in the country, in order to improve their employment opportunities and salary figures, as well as for expanding capabilities of employment and migration agencies. This grant is accompanied by an additional grant of US\$ 1,500,000 from the Japan Information and Communication Technology Foundation, which is administered by the ADB. This project is especially crucial for the migrants and unemployed people that have returned home since the COVID-19 pandemic. One of its priorities is to accelerate the digitization process of the

economy of the Republic of Tajikistan. The project will be implemented over a six-year period with expected completion in the year 2026. MLMPE was appointed as an executive agency¹⁶⁹.

FAO. Tajikistan has developed a pilot project in the town of Gissar and Jaloliddini Balkhi district. The project is being implemented by an oversight committee with participation of different state agencies, the IOM, and the FAO. And it is funded by the Russian Federation. The project is directed at promotion of inclusive economic growth through provision of grants to the migrants that are returning to their homeland. Jointly with their own funds, the migrants invest grants to the agricultural sector and agribusiness' development. The pilot project is directed at mobilization of money transfers and human resources of the labor migrants, their families, repatriates, and communities in order to improve their livelihoods.

The **JICA** project on creation of business incubators. Starting in April 2020, the JICA has been creating a network of business incubators that will allow the younger people, women, and the returning migrants to develop small and medium-sized businesses and thus create the new jobs.

Public organizations (PO) in Tajikistan are working in different areas of assistance and support to the migrants and their family members. In the area of protection of the migrants' rights, the best public organizations (POs or NGOs) are awarded with the "Best defender of the migrants' rights" prize on yearly basis. In the year 2020, a well-known in the Republic of Tajikistan human rights defending NGO "Center for Human Rights" has organized a ceremony for awarding of this prize. The best in their activity, which is directed at social and economic reintegration of the returning migrant workers became the PO "Afif" from Khatlon province and the PO "Zanoni Shark" (Sughd province of the Republic of Tajikistan), which have successfully provided reintegration assistance to the victims of trafficking in human beings. The prize was awarded to the PO "Nuri Umed" (Sughd province of the Republic of Tajikistan), which aided the migrants' spouses. Special gratitude for the contribution in the work of rendering the labor migrants' support was expressed to the PO "Dilafruz", "Gulrukhsor", and "Madad".

According to the interviews' materials, a notable direction of the PO activity in the Republic of Tajikistan in the year 2020 was the migrant families' support. For example, the PO "Gamkhori" in the year 2020 has implemented a project of supporting vulnerable groups of the Khatlon province population, amongst which were the migrant families that have lost their income due to the pandemic.

Conclusions, prospects, and recommendations:

- The gradual removal of barriers for movement will unlikely lead to quick and complete restoration of the migration opportunities that existed prior to the pandemic.
- Labor migration will remain the largest migration trend in the future. At the same time, it is safe to predict an increase in net emigration (departure for permanent residence) to the Russian Federation.
- The main migration trend in Tajikistan in the year 2020 was a change in the migration model. A sharp substantial increase of transportation costs (airplane fares), increase of the migration cost in general (increased costs of paperwork, certificates, tests, etc.), tightening of the migration regime in the Russian Federation and deportations has led to the fact that increasing number of the migrants in the Russian Federation are postponing return to their homeland for an extensive amount of time or deciding not to go back to their homeland in the foreseeable future, and are also doing all they can to obtain citizenship of the Russian Federation. All this leads to a change in the migration patterns, to transition from seasonal and circular temporary migration to a long-term, net emigration. As a matter of fact, in the year of 2020 there was a steep decline in the

¹⁶⁹ ADB, 2020 Strengthening support for the labor migration in Tajikistan. Assessment and recommendations. December of 2020

seasonal and temporary migration cycle of the workers in favor of resettlement to the Russian Federation along with their families.

- The demographic structure of migration will be changing. Proportion of women and younger people will grow, along with the proportion of well-aged persons, of elderly parents who will be moving closer to their children.
- Experience of the pandemic has shown that despite of digitalization and introduction of robots to the economy, the vast niches of toilsome, dangerous, low-skilled, and low-paid labor still remain in the countries of destination, as well as the demand for low-skilled labor in packaging, processing, and delivery of goods is on the rise. One might assume that these niches will remain with the migrants from the Republic of Tajikistan, who will continue to build up their professionalism in this capacity, having lost incentives to acquiring professional knowledge and skills, and building their career.
- In such conditions, there is a danger of the situation's deterioration concerning the migrants' rights, an increase in the exploitation of the workers, as well as growth in trafficking in human beings. The migrants will remain amongst the most vulnerable groups in the aspect of economy, as well as in terms of basic services consumption in case of a novel pandemic' emergence.
- Recommendations: it is necessary to develop a strategy on the migrants' protection regardless of their legal status. The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan should work in close cooperation with the governments of the countries of destination and with other development partners in order to develop strategies and tactics of safer migration during and after the time of pandemic.

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TURKMENISTAN

Brief migration profile

As of this day, Turkmenistan, just like many other countries, is experiencing a shortage of information concerning migration processes, especially regarding such directions as undocumented migration and victims of trafficking in human beings. The domestic Internet resources of Turkmenistan provide scarce information about the migration processes and as a whole, are not producing a comprehensive picture. For example, the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan is stating with regards to the number of persons without citizenship who have obtained the citizenship of Turkmenistan since 2005: it is 25,510 people.¹⁷⁰

At the same time, in the statistical agencies of other countries, for example, in the Russian Federation and in Turkey, as well as in the OECD¹⁷¹ database, the information is available about the migrants from Turkmenistan to other countries.

On the basis of the official statistics of Turkey, of the Russian Federation, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and other countries, one can state that in the year 2019 the exit from Turkmenistan reached the highest rates, up to 110,000 people left the country.¹⁷²

According to official data of Turkey (Turkish Statistical Institute)¹⁷³, 80,003 citizens of Turkmenistan arrived in Turkey in the year 2019, of which there are 52,146 men (65.2%), and 27,857 women (34.8%), 14,067 citizens of Turkmenistan left the country, including 6,334 men (45%) and 7,733 women (55%). In the year 2018, 34,915 citizens of Turkmenistan have arrived in Turkey, out of which 16,862 men (48.3%), and 18,053 women (51.7%), 10,096 citizens of Turkmenistan left the country, of whom 4,431 men (43.9%), and 5,665 women (56.1%). In the year 2017, 20,317 citizens of Turkmenistan have arrived in Turkey, of which 8,093 men (39.8%), and 12,224 women (60.1%), 4,001 citizens of Turkmenistan left the country, out of whom 1,595 are men (39.9%), and 2,406 women (60.1%). As a result, over the years 2017-2019, 135,235 citizens of Turkmenistan arrived in Turkey, of which there was 77,101 men (57%), and 58,134 of women (43%), in total 28,164 citizens of Turkmenistan left their country, out of which there was 12,360 men (43.9%), and 15,804 women (56.1%). Net migration in the year 2019 made up 65,936 citizens of Turkmenistan, in the year 2018 it was 24,819 citizens of Turkmenistan, and in the year 2017 it was 16,316 citizens of Turkmenistan, while as a whole, over the years 2019-2017 the net migration made up 107,071 citizens of Turkmenistan.

Thus, we are observing a gradual growth in the proportion of male migrants to Turkey. In the year 2019, there were two-thirds of men in the overall migration influx of Turkmen citizens to Turkey; in the year 2018, the number of male and female migrants was approximately the same, while in the years 2017 and 2016, there were significantly more women migrants from amongst the entire influx.

According to data of the Russian Federation (Main Department on Migration Issues of the Ministry of Interior)¹⁷⁴, in the year 2020, 83,838 citizens of Turkmenistan were registered at the place of stay in the Russian Federation, including 43,784 citizens of Turkmenistan who got registered for the first time. Out of this number, there were 2,456 people for the purpose of tourism, for studies 29,293 people, for work 3,906 people, for private business 3,632 people,

¹⁷⁰ Website of the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan URL: <https://migration.gov.tm/ru/gosudarstvennaya-migratsionnaya-sluzhba-turkmenistana/>

¹⁷¹ International Migration Database OECD. stat <https://stats.oecd.org/viewhtml.aspx?datasetcode=MIG&lang=en>

¹⁷² In the year 2019, about 110000 people or 2.2% of the country's population emigrated from Turkmenistan (2021) Meteojournal. 01.05 URL: <http://meteojournal.ru/stati/v-2019-godu-iz-turkmenistana-emigrirovalo-poryadka-110-tysyach-chelovek-ili-22-naseleniya-strany/>

¹⁷³ Turkish Statistical Institute. URL <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Kategori/GetKategori?p=Population-and-Demography-109>

¹⁷⁴ Website of the MDME of MoI: <https://мвд.рф/Deljatelnost/statistics/migracionnaya>

and for other purposes 4,497 people. In the year 2020, a temporary residence permit (TRP) was issued to 2,085 citizens of Turkmenistan, while the long-term residence permit was given to 2271 citizens of Turkmenistan, while 2,451 people were given the citizenship of the Russian Federation. For comparison, in the year 2017, a short-term temporary residence permit was issued to 1,000 citizens of Turkmenistan, a long-term residence permit was issued to 1,021 citizens of Turkmenistan, while 729 people were granted Russian Federation citizenship. In general, over the years 2017-2020, temporary residence permit was issued to 6,374 citizens of Turkmenistan, a long-term residence permit to 6,572 citizens of Turkmenistan, the citizenship of the Russian Federation was granted to 5,585 citizens of Turkmenistan.

According to the data of the joint sample survey of the “Turkmenstat” and UNICEF¹⁷⁵ dated by 2019 “Cluster survey of multiple indicators”¹⁷⁶, one can learn about the internal migration of women in Turkmenistan (N = 7558). According to this survey, 75.9% of the women that were subjects of the survey permanently lived in the same place, 1.3% have migrated less than one year ago, 5% did so 1 to 4 years ago, 6.6% of them 5 to 9 years ago, 11.2% did it 10 years ago and earlier. The migration activity is the highest amongst the rural women (26.9% of them migrated over their entire life) than amongst the urban women (20.5% of them migrated over their entire life). Amongst those who migrated over their entire life, the least of all it was the residents of Ashgabat (11.4%), and most of all are the residents of Mary Province (32.3%). Normally the women migrate more often after 25 years of age, the most frequent migration age is 30 to 34 years old. Almost all of those who migrated are the women who have ever been married (un)officially, amongst them 32.1% have been relocating previously, while amongst the women who have never been married (un)officially, only 2.7% have migrated. Amongst those women for whom the native language of the head of household is Turkmen 25.7% have migrated, and among those whose native language of the household head is Uzbek it is 16.2%, for those whose native language of the household head is Russian, only 6.6% migrated.

The main flow of internal educational mobility in Turkmenistan takes place from the regions of Turkmenistan to the capital city of Ashgabat, where the majority of the universities are located. In Turkmenistan there are students from 10 other countries¹⁷⁷ as well, including from Afghanistan (about 200 students), Tajikistan, China, the Russian Federation, and Belarus. A part of the foreign students is studying in Turkmenistan under an agreement between the Government of Turkmenistan and the governments of their countries (for example, students from Afghanistan) and some of them on a basis of tuition fee¹⁷⁸. Students from Turkmenistan are also studying abroad, both within the framework of intergovernmental agreements and on a free basis. According to expert estimates, their number might make up about 95,000 people in 61 countries of the world.

The official website of “Turkmenstat”¹⁷⁹ almost does not publish any migration data. Thus, the latest data on migration can be found in the Voluntary national survey of Turkmenistan on the SDGs and the data relate to the number of persons who have been granted

¹⁷⁵ Demoscope -Weekly (2021) No. 905 - 906 June 15th to June 28th. URL:

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¹⁷⁶ Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2020). Year 2019, Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, State Committee of Turkmenistan on Statistics, and UNICEF, 2020, 367 pages pp. 41-43. URL https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS6/Europe%20and%20Central%20Asia/Turkmenistan/2019/Survey%20findings/Turkmenistan%202019%20MICS%20SFR_Russian.pdf

¹⁷⁷ The expert spoke about foreign students in universities of Turkmenistan (2019) centralasia.news. 6th of December. URL <https://centralasia.news/5715-jekspert-rasskazal-ob-inostrannyh-studentah-v-turkmenskih-vuzah.html>

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¹⁷⁹ Website of “Turkmenstat”. URL: <https://www.stat.gov.tm>

Turkmen citizenship in the context of efforts to eliminate lack of citizenship. In the section on statistical summaries, one can only see the photos of their covers¹⁸⁰, but there is no way to download the summaries themselves.

In general, statistical information on external and internal migration in Turkmenistan is available in limited quantities both on the websites of Turkmenistan's official departments and in the Internet resources of countries that receive migration influx from Turkmenistan. The randomized sample surveys in the area of migration in Turkmenistan are rare.

In 2022, Turkmenistan is planning to conduct a population census¹⁸¹, which will also include migration issues (country of birth, country of citizenship, residence abroad and year of arrival in the country, place of birth, previous place of normal residence and date of arrival instead of the current residence, country of birth of parents, acquisition of citizenship, country of previous normal residence abroad, total length of residence in the country, reason for migration, place of normal residence five years prior to the census, internally displaced persons (IDPs)) and ethnic-and-cultural traits (ethnicity, nationality, religion, and language).

State policy and state programs in the area of migration

The main link in the migration management system and collection of data on migration in Turkmenistan is the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan¹⁸². In this system there is also the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of Turkmenistan (internal migration)¹⁸³, the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan (external and internal educational mobility), and the "Turkmenstat" included.

According to provisions of the Law "On Migration"¹⁸⁴ of Turkmenistan (Article 5), the authorized state agencies of Turkmenistan in the migration area are the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, the Ministry of National Security of Turkmenistan, the Ministry of Interior of Turkmenistan, the State Border Service of Turkmenistan, and other state agencies that are dealing with migration issues.

The work of the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan is defined by the Law of Turkmenistan "On the Migration Service"¹⁸⁵, according to which the service is the central executive agency, which is regulating the migration system of Turkmenistan, implementation of the state policy in the migration area, compliance with international treaties of Turkmenistan on the migration issues.

The sixteen main tasks of the Migration Service include (extraction):

- 1) Implementation of the state policy of Turkmenistan in the area of migration;
- 2) Coordination of the activity of the state agencies and of the other legal entities on regulation of migration issues, and work with the international organizations in this area;
- 3) Identification, prevention, and elimination of illegal migration;
- 4) Creation of a data system (database) concerning the migration processes and incorporation of automated data processing system;

¹⁸⁰ Website of "Turkmenstat". Section: Publications. <https://www.stat.gov.tm/publication/1>

¹⁸¹ Organization, methodology and the main provisions of the 2022 Population and housing census of Turkmenistan (2019), State committee on statistics of Turkmenistan. September. Presentation. URL: https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.41/2019/mtg2/13_TKM_Mamiliyeva_RUS.pdf

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¹⁸⁴ Law of Turkmenistan (2012) on migration. Newsreel of the Mejlis (Parliament) of Turkmenistan, No. 1, p 41. URL: <http://minjust.gov.tm/mcenter-single-ru/215>

¹⁸⁵ Law of Turkmenistan (2009) on the migration service. Newsreel of the Mejlis (Parliament) of Turkmenistan, No. 4, p 79. URL: <http://minjust.gov.tm/mcenter-single-ru/246>

...7³) Interaction with the authorized state agencies on registration of the citizens of Turkmenistan according to their place of stay and keeping of the general statistical records for these issues;

...14) Protection provision for the national interests of Turkmenistan in the area of migration.

In Turkmenistan so far there is no strategic document developed in the area of migration (such as, for example, Migration policy concept) and all issues in the migration area are being resolved in an operational manner, as they arise. No specialized national programs in the migration area have been adopted.

Out of the latest novelties in the area of educational mobility, one can point out the new “Procedure for diplomas legalization on obtaining of higher and secondary specialized education abroad”, which was approved based on the President of Turkmenistan’s Decree No. 1176, ratified as of March 16, 2019.

Intergovernmental cooperation

Turkmenistan is a country that proclaimed permanent neutrality (on December 12, 1995). Turkmenistan has associated membership in the CIS.

Turkmenistan, within the framework of the national development plans has set an objective for inclusion in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals¹⁸⁶ (SDGs) and has joined the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Legal Migration (GDM).

Protection of the migrants’ rights

Turkmenistan is participating in elimination of the lack of citizenship status, thus 25,510 persons without citizenship have received Turkmen citizenship starting the year 2005¹⁸⁷.

In Turkmenistan there is an experience in using the digital environment to support the migrants from other countries. Thus, the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan has a multilingual (Turkmen, English and Russian) website, which has useful information section for the foreign citizens¹⁸⁸ with the following subdivisions: the list of necessary documents for registration of foreign citizens, useful memos (migration registration process, information for employers, etc., as well as responsibility of foreign citizens and their employers for violation of the migration legislation); useful information for students that are the citizens of Turkmenistan studying in other countries; obtaining a visas (list of the required documents); obtaining a biometric passport for travels abroad (list of the required documents); the procedure for Turkmenistan’s border crossing for foreign citizens. The site also has a section on “for foreign citizens”¹⁸⁹ with the following subdivisions: visa processing and extension; residence permit in Turkmenistan; processing of an invitation letter; implementation of labor activity in Turkmenistan; citizenship of Turkmenistan; foreign citizens’ registration.

The migrants’ money transfers

According to information of Central Bank of the Russian Federation¹⁹⁰, cross-border transactions of private persons, the citizens of Turkmenistan, which are done with and without

¹⁸⁶ Sustainable development goals’ website. URL: <https://sdgs.un.org/>

¹⁸⁷ Website of the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan. URL: <https://migration.gov.tm/ru/gosudarstvennaya-migratsionnaya-sluzhba-turkmenistana/>

¹⁸⁸ Website of the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan. URL: <https://migration.gov.tm/ru/information/pamyatka/>

¹⁸⁹ Website of the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan. URL: <https://migration.gov.tm/ru/inostrannym-grazhdanam/>

¹⁹⁰ Data of Central Bank of the Russian Federation: https://cbr.ru/statistics/macro_itm/tg/

opening of a bank account through loan providing organizations, including the money transfers, which were implemented via money transfer systems from the Russian Federation over the period of 2015 to 2020, have been steadily decreasing. So, in the year 2015 the transfers made up US\$ 16,000,000, in the year 2016 it was US\$ 8,202,500, in 2017 it was US\$ 1,603,000,000, in 2018 it was US\$ 470,000, in the year 2019 it was US\$ 234,000, and in the year 2020 it was US\$ 121,000. The drop in 2020 in comparison to the year 2019 made up 52%.

Migration and the COVID-19

The government of Turkmenistan has imposed travel restrictions and closed down the borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and even prior to introduction of the restrictive measures, the international flights were directed to the domestic international airport in the city of Turkmenabad, with special zones where the arriving passengers had to go through a two-week quarantine in specially equipped room for this¹⁹¹.

Turkmenistan is not providing official statistical data on the COVID-19 spread in the country.

International and non-governmental organizations

Turkmenistan is a member of 42 international organizations, including the UN and a number of its specialized agencies (UNESCO, UNIDO, ICAO, etc.); as well as OIC; OSCE; IBRD; IMF; IFC; EBRD; ECO; OIC; Asian Development Bank, and so forth. The country is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement¹⁹².

Turkmenistan has a working representative office of the International Organization for Migration| (the UN Migration Agency).

In Turkmenistan there are several functional non-governmental organizations, including those in the area of combating trafficking in human beings. For example, the public organization Yenme (Ashgabat) Ashgabat Club¹⁹³, which is maintaining a 24/7 “hotline” on issues of migration, prevention, counteraction and combating the trafficking in human beings.

Prospects and forecast assessment of the migration processes

One can make a forecast that in the short-term future Turkmenistan will continue to be a migrants’ supplier country, the main influx of migrants will be directed to Turkey and the Russian Federation. Educational mobility from Turkmenistan to Russia and to other countries and back to Turkmenistan from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, China, and other countries will also continue to take place, both based on inter-state agreements and in a private order.

With regard to educational mobility to Turkmenistan from the other countries, one can make a prediction that in the mid-term or long-term future there is a differentiation probability of the educational migrants’ flows, namely if nowadays the foreign students are admitted only to the universities of Turkmenistan, later in the future, the secondary specialized educational institutions may also start admitting the foreign applicants, since Turkmenistan has such a capacity, which has not yet been realized.

¹⁹¹ Why are there no COVID-19 cases in Turkmenistan? (2020) UN News. June 24. URL: <https://news.un.org/ru/interview/2020/06/1380802>

¹⁹² Website of the Plenipotentiary representation office of the Republic of Tatarstan in Turkmenistan. About Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan within the international community. URL: <https://tatturkmen.tatarstan.ru/constitution.htm>

¹⁹³ Website of the Ashgabat Club “Ynam” council. Hotline phone number (+993 12) 46-35-14 URL: <http://ynam.info/old/migration>

One can also make a prediction that the migrants-oriented Internet services in Turkmenistan (for example, the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan's website) may expand their range of services to the migrants from Turkmenistan that are residing in other countries (the labor migrants, educational migrants, etc.).

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UZBEKISTAN

The modern migration situation and the new trends of its development in Uzbekistan

General characteristics of the migration processes in Uzbekistan

Migration is one of the most significant areas of the population's mobility. It covers an entire range of territorial movements of the population, including the internal and international movements. It is closely interacting with all social-and-economic and demographic characteristics of the country's development. Migration is conditioned by an entire set of influence factors and at the same time it is reflecting its unique challenges of the economy's condition and of demographic development. At this moment, the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on the country's migration processes by disrupting the well-established formats and directions.

According to some calculations, the population of Uzbekistan is characterized by a relatively low migration mobility and has a tendency for its decrease. In the year 2000, the migration intensity, considering all of the migration movements, was 5.8 ppm, and in the year 2019, it was 5.1 ppm. In the year 2019 in Uzbekistan, 172,000 people have changed their place of permanent residence, including: 156,300 people (90.9%) who were moving within the country's borders. Foreign migration made up around 15,700 people (9.1%), including 13,200 people (7.6%) that departed for other countries, 2,500 people (1.4%) have come over from abroad. The main migration flows are the population movements with change of the permanent place of residence (within the country and abroad) and for the labor migration. According to its migration status, Uzbekistan is mainly a country of origin, both for the permanent relocation and for the labor migration.

External migration ties

The main external migration movements of the population of Uzbekistan are taking place within the CIS countries. The non-FSU countries in the overall bulk of external migration movements make up for a small share of 2-3%. The largest scale and sustainable migration ties have been established with the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. In the year of 2017, out of the entire number of those who left the country, 37.7% accounted for the Russian Federation, and 37.5% for Kazakhstan, while in the year 2019 it made up 37.2% and 57.9% accordingly. The ethnic composition of external migration movements has changed significantly. In the early 90s, the emigration movements were characterized by a greater ethnic diversity: Russians 45-48%, Tatars 16-17%, Uzbeks 7-8%, Ukrainians 5-6%, Jews 5-9%, Germans 2-3%. Over the recent years, the ethnic Kazakhs predominate in the number of the groups of departure, and the share of ethnic Russians is noticeably decreasing. The external migration processes mainly cover the non-native groups of population. The participation of the titular population (Uzbeks and Karakalpaks) is relatively small. According to the number of the departed people, the share of the titular ethnic group is 10-11% versus 6-7% at the beginning of the century. However, this relative growth is taking place with an overall decline in emigration scale.

The most significant trend in the modern migration situation of the country is the reduction in gross volume of external movements of the population. The number of arrivals to the country has drastically dropped (down to 3,000 - 4,000 people a year), especially in comparison with the previous decades (71,900 in 2000). Emigration movements have also significantly declined. In the year 2018, some 19,000 people left the country, while in 2019 it was 13,200 people versus 128,000 people in the year 2000. As a result, there is a consistent reduction in the gross volume of external migration. According to the estimates, in the year 2018 the share of the total migration volume was 13.9%, and in 2019 it was 9.1%, while at the end of the Soviet Union's time it was 50-60%, while in the early 1990s it was 45-50%. In the

year 2019 the total number of arrivals for external migration has made up to 1.6%, and for the departures it was - 7.8%.

In Uzbekistan, it has been quite some time when emigration movements were exceeding the immigration flows. In the early 90s, the negative balance of the country's population migration was quite significant (in 1994 - 128,500 people, and in 1995 - 71,100 people), and in the year 2000 it has dropped down to 57,800 people. The current negative balance of migration is in the range of 20,000 people. Over the recent years, the outflow of the population has been consistently decreasing, thus in the year 2016 it was 26,200 people, in 2017 it was 20,600, and in 2018 it was 16,200 people. In the year 2019 the negative balance of the migration made up about 10,700 people, which is the lowest indicator over the past half a century.

In external migration processes, to a large degree it is the population of the capital region and large cities that is involved. In 2019 in a number of provinces, the share of external migration accounted for only 0.1-0.3%. The current negative balance of migration is in the range of 11,000-20,000 people.

Internal migration

Population of Uzbekistan is relocating mainly within the country's boundaries. In internal migration movements, the local movements are significantly predominating, i.e., within the provinces' boundaries (in 2019 it was 60.4%). The local migration movements are directed from district centers, town-like settlements, and small towns to the larger areas. Rural - urban migration is taking place on a relatively smaller scale. According to some estimates, the outflow of rural residents to the cities is making up 5 - 6% of the total growth of the rural residents' numbers. Out of the country's districts, the most intensive migration mobility of the population is in the city of Tashkent, provinces of Navoi and Syrdarya, with the lowest numbers in the Fergana Valley, as well as Samarkand and Khorezm provinces.

The age composition of the migrating population in internal and external movements is somewhat different. In all movements the predominance is taken by the able-bodied population (85 - 88%), but it is the younger people who are a lot more actively involved in the internal migration processes. In the years 2018-2019 in the number of arrivals, the share of people under 30 years of age was 65-70%, and of the group of over 60 years of age is 3 - 3.5%, and in the external migration it was 46 - 47% and 15-16%, respectively. Nowadays the low mobility of population is contradicting the strategy of social-and-economic development until the year 2030, which is envisaging considerable changes in the structure of both rural and urban economies.

Labor migration of population

The labor migration in Uzbekistan is the most numerous migration movement. In many regions, creation of new jobs is lagging behind the workforce growth, which is resulting in unemployment, especially amongst the younger people. Over the transformation period, this situation was aggravated by the costs of the market economy formation, by the balance disruption in the labor market and by the relatively low cost of the labor. According to some surveys' data, these factors have formed the main incentive motives for looking for some work outside of the country, which were quite strong at the time. According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the average monthly wage in Uzbekistan in the year 2018 was US\$ 219, which is significantly less than the foreign earnings in the recipient countries.

According to a survey by the Higher School of Economics (the Russian Federation), the average salary of an Uzbek labor migrant working in the Russian Federation was US\$ 460.3 working legally in 2018, and US\$ 431.7 working illegally, including in Moscow, it was

respectively US\$ 555-636¹⁹⁴. In hotels of Turkey, the labor migrants make an average of US\$ 430. From the USA, South Korea, and the UAE, the labor migrants are wiring significant amounts of money to their families every month, mainly through the banks' payment systems. The majority of the interviewed migrants were making on average US\$ 500 - 600.

According to different estimates, the external labor migration is covering 3,000,000 - 4,000,000 people. According to the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of Uzbekistan, in the year 2018 the migration was estimated to be 2,600,000 people. According to the unanimous opinion of the experts, it is necessary to establish a registration process of the *labor migration in the country, which is currently done by different agencies and does not always reflect the actual situation.*

The main migration partners are the Russian Federation (about 80%) and Kazakhstan, where there are about 500,000 labor migrants engaged in work, and on a relatively small scale in the non-FSU countries. Over the recent years, there has been a rise of departures to work in Afghanistan and Tajikistan (in 2018, it was 11.0 and 5.900 people respectively)¹⁹⁵. The labor migrants are working at construction sites, industrial enterprises, in transportation, in communal services, in the area of services like, hotels, catering enterprises, in marketing, etc., mainly in unskilled types of labor. Many of them are not employed officially. According to the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation, in the beginning of 2021, there were 330,000 migrants from Uzbekistan without official residence registration.

The labor migration is affecting the quantitative and qualitative indicators of the workforce and the formation of labor markets in places of departure and arrival. In the countries of destination, the main effect of labor migration is replenishment of the workforce gap. In the Russian Federation, this was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when decrease in the labor migrants' influx has created massive problems in provision of construction site workers, communal services personnel, etc. In the countries of origin, the consequences are mixed. On the one hand, the massive departure of people to work outside the country evens out the unemployment rates (*20% of the interviewed migrants were previously unemployed*). In addition, the labor migration is affecting the qualitative aspects of the national labor market's development. Many of the migrants during the migration, master new professions, develop market skills that are expanding their professional and labor potential, especially working in industrial areas of employment.

These aspects of the labor migration were emphasized by the respondents. In their opinion, the labor migration is helping in reduction of poverty, especially in rural areas of the country, since the labor migrants working in the Russian Federation are mostly rural residents without any skill qualification. In addition, the migrants that are returning to their homeland, *bring about with them the knowledge that they have acquired in the countries of destination. So much so, that even any know-hows that they see there in the area of entrepreneurship, healthcare, and tourism, upon their return, they are making efforts to incorporate these know-hows and the knowledge. And most importantly is to use these skills for the good.*

Labor migration has some significant economic effects in the form of money transfers. According to the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of Uzbekistan, in 2018, money transfers of the labor migrants made up US\$ 5,100,000,000, or 10% of the GDP. In the year 2019, from the Russian Federation alone there was US\$ 4,700,000,000, of which US\$ 3,300,000,000 by non-residents of the Russian Federation (data from the Central Bank of the Russian Federation). Money transfers are mainly used for fulfillment of immediate needs, providing a boost in the standard of living of the migrants' families. According to the experts, *Uzbekistan, just like in many other countries, needs to use as fully as possible its demographic assets to accelerate economic growth. It is worthwhile to take measures to increase the investment activity of the money transfers.* Out of the interviewed migrants, only one had their

¹⁹⁴ Makhmudov R. Free economic zones. Economic Review №. 9 (237) 2019

¹⁹⁵ Makhmudov R. Free economic zones. Economic Review №. 9 (237) 2019

own small business entity (in the animal husbandry area) and another one is just starting their own business, upon returning to their homeland (on plastic windows and doors assembly), having received the equipment from an NGO.

However, with all of its economic significance, mass labor migration processes bear considerable losses of the labor potential in the national labor markets. The labor migration involves young, capable, and able-bodied people who have received professional education on a massive scale in the system of boarding schools and colleges. Amongst the migrants there are many people that have certain specialties and professions, who got themselves involved in the unskilled types of labor in the countries of destination and are missing out on their professional skills. Besides that, in the process of migration, there is a transformation of values amongst the younger people, especially amongst those who are employed for an extensive amount of time in unskilled kinds of jobs, because it is crucial for the younger generation at this age to establish themselves in the profession, to build up their career, and to grow in their professionalism. In addition, according to the experts, *in the process of the mass labor migration movements, one can see “washing-out” of traditional family values.* In the context of the mass labor migration, there are some real threats emerging for the formation of the national labor market, as well as for the demographic and social security of the country.

Qualitative composition of the labor migrants

In the labor migration, the main participant is the titular population. A considerable part of the migrants are men. According to the FMS of the Russian Federation (2016), out of 1,646,000 working people at that time, men accounted for 82.2%, and women for 17.8%¹⁹⁶. According to the experts, the high proportion of men is conditioned to the fact that *the need for labor force in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan prevails in industries that are engaging predominantly men’s labor. In Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, on the contrary, due to the higher demand of service personnel in the labor market, the proportion of women amongst the migrants is significantly higher.*

The majority of the migrants are younger people. According to the FMS of the Russian Federation (2016), amongst the number of workers from Uzbekistan, men of 18-29 years of age accounted for 54.0%, and women were 35.9% and at the age of 30-39 there was 23.3% and 30.4% respectively. The share of migrants aged 40 years and older is making up for 22.7% and 33.7%, respectively¹⁹⁷. According to the experts, *at present time, the share of the younger people amongst the migrants is increasing, including women. On the one hand, this is related to the increased number of younger people that have different certificates in knowledge of a foreign language (IELTS, CEFR, etc.), and of those who study in universities and work at the same time. On the other hand, there is an active continuous exchange of information amongst the migrant workers in the countries of destination and the potential migrants in their original countries, due to which a higher number of new younger people are getting involved in the migration processes.*

The main bulk of the labor migrants from Uzbekistan that are working in the Russian Federation had secondary general (18%) and secondary professional education at the college level (61%). Every fifth migrant (21%) had a higher education. According to professional groups, the trade and service industry workers prevailed (36%) as well as the skilled workers engaged in manual labor (22%). A small share of highly qualified specialists amongst the

¹⁹⁶ Varshaver E., Ivanova N., Rocheva A. The situation of the migrants in the Russian Federation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: survey results. July of 2020 c.25

¹⁹⁷ Varshaver E., Ivanova N., Rocheva A. The situation of the migrants in the Russian Federation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: survey results. July of 2020

migrants: 5% with higher and 2% with secondary types of qualifications¹⁹⁸. In their majority the interviewed migrants had secondary professional education at the college level (40%) or the education on the basis of secondary school, without any special qualifications.

Consequences of the coronavirus for the migration of the country's population

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the nature and extent of the labor migration. First, this has manifested itself in the demand decrease for labor both in the places of departure, and in the countries of destination. According to the survey data, conducted by Evgeny Varshaver, the head of the Migration and ethnicity research group, amongst the Russian citizens 42% have lost their jobs and 23% of them lost all sources of income. For the migrants, these consequences were much harder. According to the OECD, the migrants have been hit by the COVID-19 twice as hard as the local residents have. *According to the expert, this is conditioned by a number of reasons. First of all, not all migrants have a complete financial access to the healthcare system in the countries of destination. Secondly, not all migrants are covered by health insurance in order to afford certain services. And thirdly, not in every country the emergency medical assistance is free of charge, which is the case in Uzbekistan. Factors of social nature are also of great significance. The migrants in majority of cases are positioned or living in the conditions where they contact a higher number of people either in one apartment, or in the same work site. This also puts them at risk from a medical point of view. The migrants are working in the sectors that have been economically affected by the COVID-19. Those are the areas of customer services, tourism, trade, cafes, restaurants, and construction sites, which are the areas that were the first to lose their income and were forced to lay-off their workers. As a result, many migrants were left without income and were forced to either look for alternatives or to go back to their home.*

The pandemic started in springtime, at the time of traditional mass departures for work. According to estimates done by the head of the Federation of Migrants of the Russian Federation (FMR), in the beginning of the pandemic, in the Russian Federation there were about 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 labor migrants from Uzbekistan. They got employed in the city of Moscow (12%), in Moscow province (6%), in city of Saint-Petersburg (24%), as well as in the Volga region, in the Urals, in Siberia and in the Far East¹⁹⁹. With further development of the pandemic, many of the migrants have lost their jobs, have lost the income, and had no way of going back to their homeland. According to the Main Department for Migration Issues of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation, by the autumn the number of labor migrants in the Russian Federation has shrunk in half (down to 1,800,000 people). In addition, thousands of seasonal migrants were unable to enter the Russian Federation. According to the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation's data, approximately a half of the labor migrants (46%) have lost their jobs at the outbreak of the pandemic, more than a quarter (28%) took unpaid leave, and 17% had their salary cutbacks. Half of the migrants have lost all sources of income, while for the 19% of them the income level has dropped²⁰⁰. In the city of Moscow, under the quarantine, 76% of the migrant workers were deprived of their jobs, and 58% have lost all their income. The COVID-19 has even worsened the already poor status of the migrant workers: opportunities to stay in the workers' dormitories have diminished. According to experts, due to overcrowding of residential areas, the migrants' risk propensity of becoming infected have

¹⁹⁸ Varshaver E., Ivanova N., Rocheva A. The situation of the migrants in the Russian Federation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: survey results. July of 2020

¹⁹⁹ Varshaver E., Ivanova N., Rocheva A. The situation of the migrants in the Russian Federation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: survey results. July of 2020

²⁰⁰ Varshaver E., Ivanova N., Rocheva A. The situation of the migrants in the Russian Federation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: survey results. July of 2020

increased, while the medical care was not always accessible. According to the OECD data, the migrants were hit by the COVID-19 twice as hard as the local residents were.

The suspension of transport communication with other countries because of the COVID-19 has deprived people of opportunities to go back home. Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, there were more than 15 daily flights from Moscow to Uzbekistan. By the fall of that year, there were only two charter flights a week remaining. Gradually, by the mutual joint efforts of the governments, there was an organized departure of the migrants of Uzbekistan from the Russian Federation. In total 952 citizens of Uzbekistan were transported by train from the Samara province of the Russian Federation and 32000 people from the Rostov province, as well as from other provinces of the Russian Federation. The similar situation has developed in Kazakhstan, where at the beginning of the pandemic there were more than a million migrants from Uzbekistan, and later on they have faced the similar issues: loss of work and income, closed borders, etc.²⁰¹ A number of issues of assistance to the labor migrants on procedures of departure for work and on return to their homeland in Uzbekistan were resolved by joint efforts with South Korea.²⁰² About 80% of the interviewed migrants have returned to their homeland via charter flights at the beginning of the pandemic, 40% of them have lost their jobs, and 40% reckoned it would be best for them to stay at home during the pandemic.

Reduction of the labor migration has significantly been reflected on the economy and on the labor market situation in Uzbekistan as well, which had especially strong impact on the situation of socially vulnerable groups of people. As it was indicated by the public opinion survey materials within the context of the project “Listening the citizens of Uzbekistan”, decline in the employment was most noticeable amongst the self-employed groups of population (by 67% in April of 2020)²⁰³, in this area the income levels are already relatively low as it is.

According to the World Bank experts, the volume of money transfers to Central Asia has decreased (by more than a quarter in the year 2020)²⁰⁴. In the Russian Federation, in the normal migrant niches, a labor shortage started to be noticed especially vividly. No less serious consequences happened in Uzbekistan as well. Due to the lockdown restrictions, almost 400,000 enterprises have temporarily stopped working or reduced their workload, and about 150,000 people have lost their jobs against their will. In addition, the labor migrants started returning to their national labor markets from different countries, and they too needed to work. According to the statement of the First Deputy Minister of Employment and Labor Relations, Mr. E. Mukhitdinov, almost half a million of labor migrants²⁰⁵ have returned to Uzbekistan by the beginning of the summer. (2) The migrants that have come back to their homeland believe that the lack of work is their main problem. According to Mr. E. Mukhitdinov, “coronavirus-related unemployment” has become a big trial for the country. During a webinar organized jointly with the ILO, he has especially emphasized that the labor market is under some serious pressure due to an increase of the number of unemployed people. “About 498,000 citizens of Uzbekistan who have returned to their homeland are the labor migrants with no permanent income”²⁰⁶. There is an urgent need to create new jobs, but in the current circumstances this is associated with limited opportunities, despite the enormous efforts.

Thus, the COVID-19 has created considerable difficulties and problems with regards to the situation of the labor markets and the labor migrants. The consequences of this pandemic

²⁰¹ Electronic resource. News of Central Asia. July 4th, 2020

²⁰² Electronic resource. UzDaily.uz, 30.07.2020.

²⁰³ Economic and social impact of the COVID-19 as of June 2020. Updated information as of June 2020

²⁰⁴ COVID in countries of Central Asia: consequences and political response measures. World Bank edition, June 4th, 2020

²⁰⁵ Almost half a million citizens have returned to Uzbekistan due to the pandemic. INTERFAX.RU Moscow. May 29th

²⁰⁶ Shekun V. How many labor migrants have returned to Uzbekistan? Tashkent, Sputnik, 05/30/2020.

might turn out to be deeper for both sending and the destination countries, however, these issues require special research efforts, which should be conducted after the quarantine is over.

State policy and state programs in the area of migration

With gaining independence, Uzbekistan has taken certain steps concerning management of population migration. Under the Ministry of Labor an Agency for external labor migration was created, in the following years regional offices of this Agency were established. However, the measures undertaken have mainly concerned organized export of the workforce, the scale of which did not exceed 3,000 people a year, mainly to South Korea. The main bulk of the labor migrants in search of work have been going out in an unorganized way, on an individual basis, often receiving unofficial employment on an illegal basis with all the related consequences. Despite the big scale of unorganized labor migration and the considerable difficulties associated with it, which affects millions of citizens, up until the year 2016, this problem seemed to have not been noticed by the official authorities. As a result, the main volume of the migrants of Uzbekistan did not have support and social protection from their state.

Over the recent years in Uzbekistan, some noticeable positive changes in the migration policy are taking place. At the state level, there is a realization of the ongoing migration processes' objectivity, as well as of the need for making it orderly. Based on this, new approaches have been identified regarding the population migration and some real steps have been undertaken to make the migration processes in an orderly way. Resolution of the President "On additional measures of further improvement of the external labor migration system of the Republic of Uzbekistan" was adopted on July 5th, 2018. Right after this the Presidential Decree "On additional measures of further strengthening of the protection guarantees for the citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan that implement temporary labor activity abroad, and for their family members" was issued (№. UP-5785 dated by August 20th, 2019), hereinafter "On measures of introduction of the safe, orderly and legal labor migration system" (PP 4829 as of September 15th, 2020).

These fundamental documents have served as a starting point for the relevant decrees of the Cabinet of Ministers and for the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, and in general for modernization of the country's migration policy. The main priorities of the modern migration policy are incorporating orderly process and reduction of unorganized labor migration's scale and of illegal employment, creation of incentives to fend off the drain of skilled labor from the country, expansion of the inter-state cooperation, and strengthening of the labor migrants' social protection.

In development of this strategy, a series of specific measures and governmental decisions were made. There are 13 international conventions on migration and human rights that have been ratified, joining the Convention on Protection of the Migrants' Rights has taken place, private labor migration agencies have been created and their interaction with the relevant state institutions has been established. According to the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, over the past two years, 103 private employment agencies officially employed 3,214 citizens of Uzbekistan abroad²⁰⁷. The country's commission on external labor migration was formed. A decision was made concerning creation of intergovernmental working groups on organization of the labor migration. At the level of the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, a Commission was established for development of a cooperation mechanism with the migrants on the issues of stimulating the investments' potential of the money transfers.

According to the experts' assessments, *each annex of Resolution 4829 is a separate program, in particular, the Program of activities that are implemented by diplomatic missions and consular offices of the Republic of Uzbekistan abroad, the Program of cultural and*

²⁰⁷ Electronic resource. To Russia with work: in Tashkent, a branch office of the Moscow migration center was launched. Sputnik, Uzbekistan, March 16th, 2021

educational activities in other countries over the year of 2021. Implementation of these short-term and long-term programs is indicative of various forms for the labor migrants' social protection.

Modern labor migration is oriented on attraction of highly skilled workforce, and the countries of destination are developing different incentives for this. In the world's labor markets there is a competition for skilled human resources. On the basis of this, one of the most important directions of the modern migration policy is creation of incentives to fend off the qualified labor drain, which is important for the country's economy, and for attraction of the highly educated specialists from abroad, including those from amongst the fellow countrymen who have left their homeland for various reasons to other countries.

Attempts to limit the brain drain were made in the country in the early 1990s. Over the recent years, these processes have intensified and gained a new essence. With the state's support, a number of foundations have been created, the activities of which are directed at training the human resources from amongst the talented younger generation and on strengthening the country's intellectual capacity. The practice of intellectual volunteer work from amongst the local highly qualified specialists is incorporated in the midst of the fellow compatriots that are living abroad. Besides that, some real measures are being taken on expansion and quality improvement of the human resources' training in the systems of higher and secondary specialized education as well as for ensuring some in-depth changes in the quality of professional education. Over just the last three years, 35 new higher educational institutions have been established in Uzbekistan, including branches of prestigious foreign universities.

Changes in migration policy also apply to internal migration processes, in particular, the rural to urban migration. Such types of migration in Uzbekistan take place on a relatively small scale. As of this day, low mobility of the population is contradicting a well-established strategy of social and economic development. With adoption of the urbanization processes' acceleration strategy, the issues of population's increased mobility were brought up to the state level. By the Decree of the President of Uzbekistan as of January 11th, 2019, amongst the main directions for solution of this problem, is the creation of conditions for the people's movement from rural to urban areas.

Thus, in Uzbekistan, there are some tangible changes taking place in the area of state migration policy, the large-scale work has been started on creation of instruments for legal, financial, and material support of the labor migrants, which is expressed in involvement of the state in solving the most pressing migration issues. *Uzbekistan did not join the global agreement on labor migration, however, according to the experts, the country's migration policy is based on the main principles and objectives of this agreement.*

Social protection of the labor migrants

The labor migrants that are working in other countries need to be protected by their state. Due to their status, they are often discriminated against in issues of salary, in mode of operation and in working conditions. In particular, one of the interviewed migrants from the Kashkadarya province who worked in Kazakhstan on the manufacture of 100-tonne scales and searchlights, pointed out vivid example of discrimination. *He was registered unofficially, his employers took away his passport, and he lived in a workers' trailer without any commodities, he was working hard from dawn to dusk, 12-13 hours a day, while the local workers clocked in only 8 hours. In the end he was not given any money.* A labor migrant from the Bukhara province who worked in the Russian Federation found herself in pretty much the same situation. *She is 32 years old, divorced, and has two children. She left the children in her parents' care. While in the Russian Federation, she was assisted by her cousin and his wife. She worked as a baker, 15-16 hours, seven days a week. She was lied to by her employer and would not always or regularly get her*

paycheck. With the financial help of her parents during the pandemic, she was able to return to her homeland.

The need of strengthening the migrants' protection was declared at the International Forum with the topic of "Latest migration trends, migration management and the migrants' protection in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic", which took place in Tashkent on the International migrants' day. At this point the issues of the labor migrants' social protection are being addressed at the government level. The types of activities of the state in this direction are set out in the Presidential Decree "On introduction measures for the system of safe, orderly and legal labor migration". For the first time in the history of independent Uzbekistan, on August 17th of 2020, the President held a meeting, which was dedicated to creation of decent conditions for the citizens working abroad and to systematic work with these people. In this meeting at the state level the issues of the labor migrants' life and health insurance, allocation of mortgage loans for their family members were raised.

In the country measures of financial support to the labor migrants, expanding the possibilities of obtaining loans, small loans, and payment off the insurance policy are being implemented. The status of the labor migrants is defined as self-employed persons with appropriate rights, including retirement benefits. The state is ready to assist the migrants, considering that the employment outside of the country is, in fact, a segment of the national labor market, so while even staying abroad, the migrants are playing significant role in the development of the country and its economy. In the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, a support fund to protect the rights and interests of citizens working abroad has been created, the assets of which will be used for provision of life and health insurance of the labor migrants. A system has been developed to ensure the employment and adaptation of the returning labor migrants. Gradually it is becoming a practice to attract long-term benefit loans from the international financial institutions and the foreign governmental financial organizations for construction of apartments in multi-apartment buildings for the labor migrants.

For strengthening of the citizens' legal protection abroad, an online platform and a hotline call center have been created, with involvement of some highly qualified lawyers. Gradually a system of the migrants' interaction with the state agencies and local authorities is being created in order to increase the investments' activity of the money transfers. A dialogue is being established between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and leaders of the Uzbek diaspora in the Russian Federation and in other countries. Experts are noting an increase of Uzbekistan's representation in the countries of destination.

In order to render legal services to the migrants in Moscow, Samara, Vladivostok, Ufa, Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg, some representative offices of the Agency for external labor migration were established, and it is planned to establish such offices in Turkey and in Kazakhstan. The labor migration attachés work in three regions of Kazakhstan (Almaty, Nursultan and Aktau). This Agency is implementing monitoring of both organized and the targeted sending of the workforce (i.e., according to agreement with foreign employers without the Agency's mediation). While filling out their registration form as "Labor migration" the migrants indicate their gender, age, area of employment, country of destination, etc. Address-oriented migrants get free life insurance. Besides that, while leaving for work outside the country, a migrant receives appropriate instructions and all the necessary contact information, through which they can contact their homeland, as necessary. There are some measures identified for legal protection of the migrant workers in the host countries on issues related to violations of migration and labor laws.

The most important area of the labor migrants' social protection is expansion of organized transportation of workers and their professional training prior to the departure. In order to achieve these objectives, special educational courses are being created in some training centers in all regions of the country, which increases possibilities for work in qualified types of labor with much higher degree of wages.

All of this is evident of the fact that currently at the governmental level, the issues of assistance to the citizens of Uzbekistan are being addressed in realizing of their rights to work abroad on fair and safe working conditions, provision of their social and legal protection, as well as reintegration and adaptation upon their return to their homeland. The adopted documents create legal foundations for development of relevant measures in the relevant directions of making labor migration processes in a consistent and orderly way.

Inter-state cooperation

Attempts to establish inter-state cooperation on population migration issues have already been made in Uzbekistan. The Agreement that was achieved in 2007 with the Russian Federation provided for a number of measures on social protection of the labor migrants and on prevention of illegal employment, even with the launching of the FMS branch office in Tashkent. But in practice it was not working. Neither Uzbekistan, as the most interested party, nor the Russian Federation have shown sufficient initiative for its implementation. Modernization of the current migration policy includes the achievement of much more effective inter-state cooperation, and in order to do this, the country's government has taken some quite effective measures.

By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated by July 5th, 2018, it is provided for "establishment of cooperation with authorized state agencies of other countries on issues of external labor migration, consideration of proposals for joining (ratification) of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the international treaties in the area of rights and legitimate interests of the labor migrants' protection". Based upon the experience of many countries, implementation of such measures is possible only based on effective inter-state cooperation. Various practical steps have been taken in this direction, including a number of agreements on key issues of labor migration with the governments of countries of destination, especially with the Russian Federation, where the majority of the labor migrants from Uzbekistan are working.

At this point in time, the inter-state cooperation with recipient countries is taking on some real forms. The international agreements on the labor migration have been made with the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates. The position of adviser to the Prime Minister on external labor migration was introduced. In the framework of preparation of a new inter-governmental agreement with the Russian Federation, some transparent mechanisms of organizing the work of Uzbekistan's citizens are already being introduced. In seven regions of the Russian Federation some representative offices of Uzbekistan in the migration area have been established. In the COVID-19 context, the most important area of cooperation is now the joining of both countries' efforts for professional training of the labor migrants.

The Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of Uzbekistan, in cooperation with the WorldSkills Uzbekistan Association, the WorldSkills of the Russian Federation Union and the Peoples' Friendship University of the Russian Federation, are implementing a project on rendering free vocational training for the labor migrants. Within the project's framework, in five cities of the Russian Federation, namely Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Yekaterinburg and Novosibirsk, free daily, monthly, and two-month courses are being organized on studying of the Russian language and on familiarizing with much needed professions on the Russian labor market²⁰⁸. As it has been pointed out by the experts, *currently there are 8 intergovernmental agreements have been made (with the Russian Federation, Korea, UAE, Kazakhstan, and Turkey), and 51 contracts with recruiting companies in the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Poland, Turkey, Latvia, Bulgaria, Kuwait, and the Czech Republic have been signed.*

²⁰⁸ Electronic resource. Tashkent, Sputnik, September 16th, 2020

Between the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan, a special agreement is signed on involvement of the citizens for temporary work based on a well-organized recruitment, with prior training of potential migrants in the proposed profession and in Russian language. The Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations is creating centers of prior training before leaving for work for the labor migrants, that are aimed at training and retraining of younger people in 12 working professions and teaching them the Russian language. The advantage of this system is that a labor migrant is arriving in the destination country for a specifically identified job, with knowledge of the language, culture, and legal basics of the destination country. In the country a special program for well-organized migration is under development, which will provide incorporation of economic, financial, organizational, and legal assistance systems.

It covers a whole range of issues related to this: professional and training of knowledge of the language, formation of work skills in this particular specialty abroad, covering travel costs, obtaining of the work license and insurance plan, securing of retirement benefits, bank loans, etc. In this Program, under the auspices of inter-governmental commissions, measures are being elaborated on creation of decent living and working conditions for the migrants as well as of some loan-based financing mechanisms through the foreign banks. The experts pointed out *that recruitment of the migrants in the year 2018 has been increased 4 times as much, and in the year 2019 up to 1.5 times. It is a delight to know that Uzbekistan is adopting the experience of the Philippines, where they were able to build an exemplary system of organizational recruitment of the labor migrants to work in other countries.*

In the agreement on organizational employment a selection procedure of the citizens of Uzbekistan is identified for them to work on the territory of the Russian Federation including the mutual responsibility of the ministries and departments of the two countries for implementation of well-organized export of the workforce. In Uzbekistan, the work is underway on the labor migrants' training under the programs of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation as well as medical examination of these people, which is assigned to the Agency for external labor migration. Some positive changes have also been taking place in matters of organized export of the workforce to the Republic of Korea. Previously created Center of professional training of the migrants with participation of the Republic of Korea, over these years was transformed into a modern educational institution, with classrooms and a comfortable residential area, in which the professional training is taking place alongside teaching of languages, such as English and Korean.

The results of inter-state cooperation were clearly manifested in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the outbreak of the pandemic, the Senate of Oliy Majlis (the Parliament) of Uzbekistan has appealed to the Federation Council of the Russian Federation with a request for assistance to the Uzbek labor migrants and the needed assistance was indeed received. The heads of 64 regions of the Russian Federation have offered to Uzbekistan some promising proposals on the employment issues. Through some joint efforts, a complex work was carried out on returning of the labor migrants from the regions of the Russian Federation to their homeland. A number of inter-governmental meetings were organized, at which a wide range of issues was discussed, such as trade and economics, investment-based and industrial cooperation between the two countries.

It is planned to establish a representative office of the Passport and visa service of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation in Uzbekistan. The staff of this institution will render services for preparation, processing, and provision of the work licenses to the potential migrants. In March of 2021, in Tashkent a branch office of the Moscow migration center (MMC) was established. So far, the main directions of the MMC activity are in assistance provision to the people that are willing to work in Moscow and its adjacent districts in filling out of the preliminary paperwork, as well as in rendering of services for acquiring of the work license, including the assessment of their professional qualifications, in organization of interviews with employers, in provision of information on available job posts. Further on, the MMC will be conducting an organized inflow of the labor migrants, it will be dealing with

individual cases of the citizens' migration that are willing to work in the Moscow region. Within the framework of the organized recruitment, an agreement will be made between the employer, the Moscow migration center, and the Agency for external labor migration of Uzbekistan.

International and non-governmental organizations

On November 27th, 2018, at the 109th session of Council of International Organization for Migration (IOM) Uzbekistan has become a full IOM member. However, Uzbekistan's partnership with the IOM has started back in 2003, when the IOM began providing direct assistance to the victims of trafficking in human beings and to vulnerable migrants from Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia, through the non-governmental and nonprofit organization "Istikbolli Avlod" (Future Generation), which is dedicated to work of combating trafficking in human beings. As of this day, in accordance with agreement on cooperation with the Government of Uzbekistan, the IOM representative office is rendering assistance in implementation of joint projects in the area of migration of population. In particular, it is assisting in implementation of one national and four regional projects in Uzbekistan, whose total amount is worth over US\$ 1,000,000.

The IOM is rendering assistance in solution of issues on expansion of well-organized labor migration from Uzbekistan to Poland (issuance of work visas), in development of the labor migration channels to the Czech Republic, Slovakia, as well as to Canada, Australia, and Nordic countries²⁰⁹. The IOM is aiding the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations in its work on provision of protection concerning the rights of citizens that are temporary working in the CIS countries. Upon the IOM initiative, the migrants' rights protection was included in the Samarkand declaration on human rights, which was adopted at the first Asian forum on human rights (in November of 2018). According to the experts, at present time, the international organizations are successfully interacting with the government and with some other state institutions in resolution of issues that are related to their scope of work. Currently Uzbekistan is demonstrating readiness, openness, and willingness to develop cooperation with the OSCE, IOM, UNFPA and the other UN agencies in resolution of some urgent migration-related issues. The IOM is also cooperating with non-governmental organizations. In particular, it is working with "Barkaror Hayot" (Sustainable Life) NGO and in 2020 they have implemented 12 projects, providing the returning migrants with significant sums of money (thousands of US\$) in order to start their own business in their homeland.

Assistance programs for the labor migrants who found themselves in difficult situations are implemented by the OSCE. Development and realization of adaptation programs is one of the most significant activity directions of this organization in the labor migration area. The programs envisage the labor migrants' training, assistance in their adaptation upon their return, development of business plans for their inclusion in business activity. Mobilization programs are implemented together with the Agency for external labor migration. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the OSCE is rendering financial assistance to the labor migrants in the Russian Federation who have lost their jobs, assistance is also rendered in restoration of the lost documents through mediation of public organizations of the Russian Federation, through the "Alternative" volunteers' organization, and some NGOs. All necessary legal, material, and social assistance to the migrants is also rendered through the Embassy of Uzbekistan in the Russian Federation, where the OSCE has its own special representative on the migration issues.

Some NGOs have also joined in their solution efforts with regards to the migration issues. The leading organization named "Istikbolli Avlod", which was established in Tashkent

²⁰⁹ The International Organization for Migration will launch several representative offices in Uzbekistan. <https://kun.uz/ru/94975355>

in the year 2001, which for about twenty years has been active in combating the trafficking in human beings, is rendering assistance to the people who got themselves in a tough situation outside of the country's borders. This organization is conducting preventive work with younger generation on the migration issues, with coverage of informational and legal aspects of this issue. The activity of "Istikbolli Avlod" organization is conducted throughout the entire territory of the country, its subdivisions were created in all provinces of Uzbekistan. At the present time the organization is dealing with problems of the labor migrants' adaptation, and in mitigating of the pandemic's impact on the migrants who have returned to their homeland, while also dealing with the internal labor migration issues.

Starting the year 2021 the "Istikbolli Avlod", together with the European Union, is launching a project development process on the topic of "Migration and the family", with coverage of 5 regions of the country. The civil society organizations are also rendering assistance in adaptation of the labor migrants upon their return to Uzbekistan. Alongside the OSCE, the "Barcarol Hayot" NGO, is organizing the labor migrants' return from armed conflict zones, as well as providing them with assistance in resolution of legal issues during the adaptation period. In context of the pandemic, the organization together with the OSCE and the relevant organizations in the Russian Federation and Ukraine, has been dealing with issues of the migrants' return and support. Since outbreak of the pandemic, the "Barcarol Hayot" NGO, with assistance of the Russian non-governmental and public organizations, have been sending food packages and money to the labor migrants who found themselves without work and sources of income.

The "Nihol" (Sprout) NGO is a center for support and development of initiatives in the area of the migration safety provision. The organization is working in cooperation with the IOM and the "Istikbolli Avlod" NGO on counteraction of trafficking in human beings; it is facilitating the migrants' return in the context of the pandemic, specifically to the migrants from other countries who got themselves trapped at the pandemic's beginning in Uzbekistan (such places as Ghana and Moldova). One significant area of its work is provision of charity-based assistance and psychological support to the migrants. Together with the law-enforcement authorities (Tashkent province Police Department), the "Nihol" NGO in time of crisis have rendered assistance in solving of administrative and organizational issues, it has created the volunteers' school, with involvement of the young people, and so the NGO' work is directed at increasing of migration safety. Besides that, the NGO has developed a Telegram bot on psychological support for the migrants. Over the recent years, NGOs that are dealing with gender issues have joined the process of solving of the labor migration problems, in particular, the "Ated" NGO, which is actively cooperating with the IOM on rendering assistance to the migrants who got into some crisis situations.

Assessment of the migration prospects from Uzbekistan

According to some surveys the labor migration in the years to come will retain its considerable scale. According to the expert's assessment, which was expressed during an in-depth interview, *based on demographic situation in Uzbekistan, as well as on expediency of a much more comprehensive gain of demographic benefits and improvement of the labor market's situation, one can state that the labor migration from the country will continue to take place. Every year 600,000-700,000 people who have graduated from universities and other educational institutions go to the labor market, while the labor market of the country is not able to absorb all this mass, which means it is possible to create no more than 300,000 on a yearly basis.*

The Russian Federation will remain the main destination for the labor migration. According to the country's specialists that are dealing with the migration issues, over the next 10 years there is no comparable alternative for the labor market of the Russian Federation. At the same time, one can expect an increase in labor migration movements to Kazakhstan, as well as to countries of the West that are already having some labor migration ties with Uzbekistan and where the diasporas started forming up, in particular, to the USA, Czech Republic, Germany, and Belarus. That can mainly be migration influxes of the younger people.

The scale of external labor migration in the future will largely depend on the national labor market's development. One of the strategic directions of the modern migration policy of Uzbekistan is to slow down the scale of the population's external labor migration. Based on this, the prospects of the labor migration development will be determined by the degree of a long-term state strategy implementation on social and economic development, which is aimed at development and quality-based changes in the economy, and in professional educational systems, which will expand the employment opportunities. Besides that, a demand decrease in the labor amongst the main receiving countries will contribute to reduction in the migration scale from Uzbekistan. In particular, in the Russian Federation at the end of the 2020s, the outcomes of the demographic situation improvement are already apparent, which is providing an increase in domestic labor capacity.

According to experts from amongst the government officials, *in Uzbekistan it is necessary to develop and to adopt the Concept document on the labor migration, which is designed for the short-term and long-term future, and being governed by it, then to adopt the state programs. It is worthwhile to consider the issue of creation of a single state agency on regulation of the entire range of issues, related to the migration, such as Migration Service.*

The development and the scale of external migration movements of the country's population with the permanent residence change in the future will determine the migration behavior and migration intentions of the titular population, which currently are not that large and do not have strong propensity of growth. In the coming years, multidirectional factors will influence these processes. On the one hand, in the country the factors that contribute to the growth of participation in external migration movements of the titular population, especially amongst the highly educated young people are increasing. This is facilitated by globalization of the economic processes and Uzbekistan's increasingly active inclusion in these processes.

Economic and business partnership with other countries is expanding. The number of young people that are going out to study in universities of the West is increasing, including a certain part of the younger folks who are determined to permanently stay there upon completion of their studies. All of this might strengthen the incentives and opportunities for involvement of the titular population in the migration processes. At the same time, the restraining factors are strong as well, such as a country's social stability, a noticeable acceleration of social and economic development, which have positive dynamics, as well as the national mentality.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Chapter about Kazakhstan

Delovarova Leila Fedorovna, PhD in International relations, Acting Associate Professor of the International relations and the world economy academic unit, Director of marketing and recruiting center, NJSC “KazNU named after al-Farabi”, delovarova@mail.ru, Leila.delovarova@kaznu.kz

Chapter about Kyrgyzstan

Zlobina Tatiana Aleksandrovna, Migration and human rights program’s coordinator of the Tien-Shan Analytical Center of the American University of Central Asia, zlobina_t@auca.kg

Chapters about Russia and Turkmenistan

Poletayev Dmitry Vyacheslavovich,

Ph.D. candidate in economic sciences, Director of the regional public organization “Center for Migration Research”, chief scientific researcher at the Institute of Economic Prognosing of the Russian Academy of Sciences, migration expert of the “Valdai” International Discussion Club (Valdai Club), migration expert of the Russian Council on International Affairs, expert of the Commission on Migration Issues of the Council of Nationalities under the Government of Moscow, dmitrypoletaev@yandex.ru

Chapter about Tajikistan

Olimova Saodat Kuzievna, Ph. D. candidate in philosophy, Director of the “Sharq” Research Center (Tajikistan), s_olimova@mail.ru; olimov@tajik.net

Chapter about Uzbekistan

Maksakova Lyudmila Petrovna, Ph. D. in Economics in the area of population settlement, academician of the Inter-state Academy of Labor and Employment, national expert of the project “Prospects for demographic development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the break-down of the regions over the period of up to 2050”, lyudmila.maksakova@gmail.com