

Challenges of Social Integration of Young Temporary Migrants from Russia in the Republic of Kazakhstan in the Context of Geopolitical Instability



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Abstract. Modern social reality is characterized by a significant level of uncertainty, which creates risks both in a global and local context. This led to a temporary outflow of a large number of the male population from Russia in the autumn of 2022. The Republic of Kazakhstan was among the countries that received the largest number of temporary migrants from Russia. The article presents a brief analysis of the conditions existing in Kazakhstan for the integration of temporary migrants from Russia; we also provide findings of a survey we have conducted with the help of an in-depth interview method; the survey considers social integration of young men who temporarily left Russia. The resource approach was chosen as the main theoretical approach, and the social capital of temporary migrants was considered as a key resource.

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To address the research tasks, we conducted 20 in-depth interviews with temporary male migrants from Russia who had arrived in Kazakhstan. As a result, we have revealed that social capital plays a significant role in the social integration of temporary migrants. First, the formation of new ties contributes to the formation of a community of migrants from Russia, which is supported by mutual assistance practices. Second, the accumulated social capital in the transnational social space allows temporary migrants to receive assistance from the country of origin, which greatly simplifies the integration process. Third, the social capital formed in the offline and online space is actively transformed from one form to another, which helps to address migrants' issues in the process of social integration. However, a lack of financial and personal resources in the first place can hinder successful social integration in a new environment.

Key words: social integration, temporary migrants, Russia, Kazakhstan, social risks, social capital, uncertainty.

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Introduction

For Russia and for the whole world, 2022 is marked by the emergence of new global risks and uncertainties. One of the signs of such uncertainty was the temporary migration from Russia. Migration, especially among young people, often serves as a way to achieve personal goals (Thulin, Vilhelmson, 2016), which an individual cannot achieve or has limited prospects for them in the country of origin. Among the main factors, influenced the departure of young Russians, we can mention political, financial and economic risks, social and technological factors associated with sanctions restrictions (Taisheva, 2022). Researchers also consider the departure of male Russians abroad as a strategy of self-preservation behavior (Saraliev et al., 2023) due to the desire to avoid uncertainty and overcome new social risks. A large number of migrants from among Russian citizens arrived in visa-free countries of the post-Soviet space, including the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Russia and Kazakhstan have a long history of cooperation in different contexts. Currently, relations between the two countries continue

developing, with the states engaging in business, economic, cultural and political interaction within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Common Economic Space (CES) and other international organizations. Russia and Kazakhstan also support cultural and scientific exchanges, which has an impact on the migration policy of both countries. Given the high level of socio-economic development of the Republic of Kazakhstan compared to other Central Asian states, citizens of countries in this region also consider it for labor migration, especially citizens of Uzbekistan (Ryazantsev et al., 2020). At the same time, due to the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of the so-called new (near) abroad in 1992, internal migration flows between Russia and the former Soviet republics were transformed into international ones, which is reflected in statistical data. For instance, in 1991–2014, irreturn migration (classical emigration) from Russia amounted to 4.9 million people. Among them, 3.3 million people (67%) were from the countries of the near

abroad. Along with general emigration, including its new forms (labor, shuttle, business migration, educational, etc.), significantly increasing its scale, the outflow of high skilled specialists is increasing (Iontsev et al., 2016). However, until recently Russia was clearly the leading country in receiving migrants from EAEU countries, including Kazakhstan. For example, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the inflow of migrants to Russia from the Republic of Kazakhstan was five times greater than from Russia to Kazakhstan. At the same time, citizens of Kazakhstan more often than citizens of other CIS countries focused on long-term migration to Russia (Ryazantsev, 2016; Gaeva, 2019; Yugai, 2022). At the moment, there is a significant change in the structure of migration, not only with regard to the direction, but also the purposes of migration. Purely economic reasons are not dominant, which is confirmed by the data on the intensification of temporary migration from Russia precisely during the period of partial mobilization under the Special Military Operation (SMO).

For instance, the intensified migration of Russian citizens to Kazakhstan is confirmed by the statistics of the International Organization for Migration: in 2022, the number of international labor migrants arriving in Kazakhstan from Russia almost doubled compared to 2021, which amounted to 8% of the total number of foreign labor force¹. During the mass departure of Russians abroad, the media published various estimates of the number of those who left: 100 thousand people a week after the announcement of partial mobilization²,

¹ Kazakhstan – Baseline assessment and surveys: international migrant workers in Kazakhstan (December 2022 – February 2023). Available at: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/kazakhstan-baseline-assessment-and-surveys-international-migrant-workers-kazakhstan> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

² Nearly 100,000 Russians have entered Kazakhstan since the beginning of partial mobilization. Available at: <https://www.forbes.ru/society/478195-v-kazahstan-s-nacala-casticnoj-mobilizacii-v-ehali-pocti-100-000-rossian> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

200 thousand – in 2 weeks³, etc. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan as of the end of November 2022, more than 400 thousand Russians entered Kazakhstan after mobilization, but only 100 thousand of them stayed in the country⁴. At the same time, according to statements by Russian authorities in February 2023, more than 60% of all those who left returned to Russia⁵.

In this regard, it is possible to consider the occurred mass migration as temporary, i.e. not implying a change of permanent place of residence. However, we should note that temporary migration can be both short-term and long-term. Temporary migration is often not associated with the need for social integration, which is reflected both in the deliberate exclusion of temporary migrants from the sphere of integration policies and in the lack of social integration mechanisms at the state level, including in countries such as Canada and the UK, which are active recipients of temporary migrants (Samuk, 2020). However, researchers note that temporary migrants face the need for social integration and social support in the new society to be able to fully function in the receiving country. At the same time, social integration is understood as a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation of all immigrants and residents of recipient states (Alencar, Tsagkroni, 2019). Integration is a continuous process and the notion of an integrated society is difficult to visualize because the integration process requires

³ About 700,000 citizens left Russia after September 21. Available at: <https://www.forbes.ru/society/478827-rossiu-posle-21-sentabra-pokinuli-okolo-700-000-grazdan> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

⁴ About 100,000 Russians remained in Kazakhstan after the end of mobilization. Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/rbc_freenews/6385ab1e9a794704354b1a34 (accessed: September 26, 2023).

⁵ “There was no longing for birch trees”: Why relocants return to Russia. Available at: <https://news.ru/society/obratnaya-volna-pochemu-rossiyane-relokanty-vozhayutsya-iz-za-rubezha/> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

continuous efforts on both sides (Phillimore, 2011). It means that this study also takes into account the adaptation of temporary migrants, which is seen as a necessary stage of the integration process. It is worth noting that at the moment there is a lack of studies in the scientific field that describe the process of integration of temporary migrants who arrived in the receiving country primarily due to external circumstances arising in the country of origin, whereby the recipient of temporary migrants is a country that was previously primarily a donor of migrants for the country of origin. Thus, the aim of our study is to identify the specifics of integration of temporary migrants from Russia in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The objectives of the research are related to the consideration of resources, barriers and opportunities for social integration.

Opportunities for social integration of Russian citizens in Kazakhstan

Social integration of migrants implies both their activity for inclusion in the local society and the creation of institutional opportunities at the state level. Thus, the integration policy of the

country of immigration plays a significant role in the process of social integration. It largely depends on two groups of factors: on the one hand, on the characteristics of the host community, and on the other hand, on the characteristics of migration flows (Varshaver, Rocheva, 2016).

The characteristics of the host community are often considered through the prism of social cohesion and social inclusion (Taylor, Foster, 2015), which reflect the readiness of representatives of different cultures for intercultural dialog. According to UNESCO data, the level of social cohesion in Kazakhstan in 2022 was one of the highest in the world and exceeded the global values of this indicator by almost 1.5 times. In turn, the level of social inclusion in Kazakhstan also exceeded the global value of the indicator, but by 1.17 times⁶. At the same time, according to the results of a mass survey conducted in November 2022, 38% of Kazakhstan residents did not support the Russians' migration. At the same time, most of those who did support it were more often guided by considerations of humanity rather than pragmatic interests⁷.

Table 1. Ranking of CIS countries by quality of life indicator in 2022

Country	Include in CIS	Include in the CES	Include in the EAEU	Place in the global ranking of countries by quality of life	Total value of the quality of life indicator
Armenia	+	+	+	71	52
Moldova	+			74	52
Kazakhstan	+	+	+	76	51
Uzbekistan	+			90	47
Russian Federation	+	+	+	92	47
Azerbaijan	+			99	46
Kyrgyzstan	+	+	+	100	46
Belarus	+	+	+	109	43
Tajikistan	+			110	43
Turkmenistan	+			-	-

Source: Comparison of quality of life worldwide. Available at: <https://www.worlddata.info/quality-of-life.php> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

⁶ Kazakhstan Framework for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue Profile. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/enabling-interculturaldialogue/kazakhstan-country-profile> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

⁷ DEMOSCOPE Bureau conducted another survey of citizens of Kazakhstan. Available at: <https://demos.kz/opros-tret-kazhastancev-stala-huzhe-otnositsja-k-rossii-posle-nachala-vojnny/> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

Although Kazakhstan was one of the countries that received the largest influx of temporary migrants from Russia after the announcement of partial mobilization, most of the migrants who arrived left for other countries or returned to Russia. Kazakhstan proved attractive to Russian citizens as the first or only country for temporary stay for a number of reasons. First, as of 2023 it was characterized by the second highest quality of life indicator among the EAEU and CES member states, and the third among all CIS countries (*Tab. 1*).

Second, access to the country is easier for Russians, as entry with a Russian passport is possible, and there is no visa requirement when crossing the state border with a foreign passport, which is stipulated by the terms of the Agreement on Visa-Free Travel of Citizens of CIS States⁸. Until January 27, 2023, citizens of the EAEU member states, including Russians, had the opportunity to stay in Kazakhstan for up to 90 days, but to make a “border run” (a short trip out of the country and back in order to restart the countdown of the permitted period of stay) to re-enter the country and stay in it for another 90 days. However, this rule was changed in early 2023⁹, and now longer stays in Kazakhstan require a temporary residence (TR) or a residence permit (RP).

Third, Russian citizens often do not need to make significant efforts in connection with language adaptation. Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic country with population of 19.76 million

at the beginning of 2023, of which 70.7% are Kazakhs, 15.2% Russians, and 3.3% Uzbeks¹⁰. Also, given the shared history of Russia and Kazakhstan, the Russian language is still quite widespread in the Republic. This is facilitated by the fact that, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, it is possible to use the Russian language on equal footing with the state Kazakh language.

Fourth, in accordance with the Agreement on Mutual Recognition and Equivalence of Documents on Education, Academic Degrees and Academic Titles in the EAEU¹¹, Russian diplomas are valid in the territory of its members, which creates opportunities for employment and continuing education, bypassing bureaucratic costs. At the same time, migrant workers from the EAEU countries and members of their families have the same social security (except for pensions) as citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as the right to receive emergency and urgent medical care. Thus, migrant workers can claim all types of benefits for temporary disability and maternity. Children of labor migrants, in turn, have the right to receive preschool and school education in the country of employment of their parents (Gaeva, 2019).

Despite these benefits associated with the social integration of Russian migrants in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the net migration balance of the ethnic group “Russians” remains negative: at the end of 2022, the migration

⁸ Agreement on visa-free movement of citizens of the Commonwealth of Independent States within the territory of its members. Available at: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1900412> (accessed: November 5, 2023).

⁹ Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan 1146, dated December 31, 2022 (2022). Available at: <https://primeminister.kz/ru/decisions/31122022-1146> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

¹⁰ Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (at the beginning of 2023) (2023). Available at: <https://stat.gov.kz/ru/industries/social-statistics/demography/publications/6373/> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

¹¹ On signing the Agreement on mutual recognition and equivalence of documents on education, academic degrees and academic titles in the Eurasian Economic Community: Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan 114, dated February 11, 2013. Available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P1300000114> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

balance amounted to -41.4 thousand people¹². However, there are no official statistics on the movements of Russian citizens arriving in Kazakhstan in 2022. Anyway, it can still be stated that Kazakhstan turned out to be unattractive for a number of Russian migrants in the long term, as evidenced by the empirical data obtained in the course of our study, which, although not statistically significant, confirm this statement. Among the main reasons are: limited conditions for long-term (more than 90 days) stay in the country; unfavorable environmental situation in the region, which also provokes environmental migration within the country (Koldobskaya, 2022); predominance of the population practicing Islam (69.3%)¹³, which may be a problem for some Russians, as migrants practicing Islam are often associated with the terrorist threat (Borodkina et al., 2017), although in reality they are not its source. In addition, Kazakhstan does not imply the possibility of having a second citizenship, which is important for migrants who are focused on expanding their opportunities by obtaining a second citizenship in addition to Russian citizenship.

Thus, in the context of a significant inflow of migrants from Russia, Kazakhstan has a number of limitations for long-term temporary migration. In this regard, it seems relevant to consider the possibilities of social integration of Russian citizens in the Republic of Kazakhstan, taking into account the emerging new limitations in the context of modern social policy, as well as taking into account the resources that temporary migrants possess.

¹² Migration of the population of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Available at: <https://stat.gov.kz/ru/industries/social-statistics/demography/publications/6356/> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

¹³ Census 2021. National composition of the population. Available at: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiYmJiNjU5NzItNWYyZi00Mjc2LTg5OWQtN2I2Y2QxY2I0NzEzIiwidCI6ImRlNzAxMmMyLTI0M2MtNDFljMi04NjRmLWE5YmEyMGY0YzUxOSIsImMiOiJl9&pageName=ReportSection7e0131f57a0773bd8643> (accessed: September 26, 2023).

Theoretical framework of the research

There are many approaches to the study of social integration of international migrants: macro-sociological institutional approach (Soysal, 1994; Freeman, 2004), systemic approach (Esser, 2004; Heckmann, 2005), microsociological contact theory (Allport, 1979), the concept of cosmopolitan sociability (Glick-Shiller et al., 2011) and its adaptation (Ni, Lisitsyn, 2017), etc. However, in this study, we draw on a resource-based approach, which assumes that resources are accessed through multiple social ties – social networks of interaction. These resources influence the opportunities and outcomes of immigrants' purposive-rational actions (Lin, 2002), which are also oriented toward social integration. Here we should mention D. Massey's theory of network migration, according to which migrant networks are a set of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and people without migration experience in the country of origin through ties of kinship, friendship and common ancestry. Such ties increase the likelihood of international movement because they reduce the costs and risks of moving and increase the expected net benefits of migration (Massey et al., 1993).

In turn, social ties are understood as stable forms of interaction that can take place in both real and virtual formats. Their use as a resource refers us to the theory of social capital, first introduced into scientific circulation by French sociologist P. Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 2005). Later, social capital as a resource was considered by R. Putnam, defining it as ties between individuals, social networks and norms of reciprocity that arise from these networks. The author divided the norm of reciprocity into "balanced" and "generalized". Balanced reciprocity implies a simultaneous exchange of equivalent services, while generalized reciprocity implies a sustained provision of services even when the exchange is not simultaneous or equivalent, but involves the realization of mutual expectations in the future (Putnam, 1996).

In the context of temporary migration to Kazakhstan, in our opinion, Russians were situationally guided by the above norms of reciprocity, which united them primarily by the purpose of migration, namely by providing an opportunity to continue achieving personal life goals, but in other conditions. Thus, we assume that mutual assistance has become one of the key resources of social integration of Russians in Kazakhstan. In this case, mutual aid is considered as a series of acts in the system of reciprocity, each of which is altruistic in the short term (benefits are provided at the expense of the altruist), but which together benefit everyone without exception (Putnam, 1971). The purpose of migration is linked to rational calculations of the costs and benefits of moving and migrants' perceptions of the expected positive net benefits (monetary or otherwise) of moving (Massey et al., 1993). Therefore, we consider social capital as a relationship of the following components: resources (information and/or assistance), sources of resources (previous migrants) and recipients of resources (potential migrants) (Garip, 2008). Moreover, an additional resource for successful social integration for temporary migrants from Russia was the social capital of transnational social space, i.e. family, friendship and professional social ties that were maintained with people in the country of origin (Glorius, 2019). Research shows that maintaining and accumulating social capital in the transnational social space facilitates subsequent reintegration after returning to the country of origin of temporary migrants (Glorius, 2019).

We should take into account that modern migration processes are closely associated with the use of online social networks (Tregubova et al., 2021), which strengthens the connection of migrants with transnational social space. In the framework of this study, we consider networks as a tool for accumulating, increasing and utilizing resources of offline and online (virtual) social capital and their mutual transformation (Spottswood, Wohn, 2020).

Research methods

In our research, the main method of data collection is an in-depth interview conducted using a guide, which included the following blocks of questions: “adaptation in Kazakhstan”, “state support for migrants in Kazakhstan”, “receiving medical and social assistance”, “belonging to transnational social space”. To recruit informants, we used two methods of sample formation: the first one is the recruiting of informants through social networks (mainly Telegram channels for migrants in Kazakhstan), and the second one is a “snowball” method. It is important to note that the use of Telegram channels was not effective enough – it was possible to recruit only three informants to participate in the study, while most of them were attracted by “snowball” approach. We carried out data analysis using specialized software for qualitative data analysis – Atlas.ti using the method of thematic coding.

The informants include 20 young single men under the age of 35. This sample was determined by the structure of the migration wave that began at the end of September 2022. Although migration affected not only men, but also entire families, married men, men in unregistered partnerships, and women separately, the focus of our study is on young single men. The majority of informants were single when they moved to Kazakhstan and therefore moved alone (N = 15), while some experienced relationship breakdown during the integration process already in the country of arrival (N = 5). We should also say that the respondents were skilled migrants, which facilitated their integration due to skills that may be in demand on the labor market in the country of arrival. Both those migrants who planned to leave Kazakhstan in the near future (N = 7) and those who had received a temporary or permanent residence permit and planned to stay for a longer period of time (N = 13) participated in the interviews. The informants were mainly from Almaty and Astana, two of the largest cities in Kazakhstan that were traditionally attractive to

migrants, with one respondent each from Shymkent and Karaganda. Each of the informants had been in Kazakhstan for more than five months at the time of the interview. Before moving to Kazakhstan, the informants lived in the largest cities of Russia – Moscow and Saint Petersburg, 1 informant – in Togliatti. This is a limitation of the sample, as it does not represent all migrants who left Russia in September 2022. However, the inclusion of highly skilled migrants in the sample, who have more opportunities and chances for successful social integration, makes it possible to identify integration problems, which may be more pronounced for other temporary migrants.

Research results

Migrant community and mutual assistance as a key resource for social integration

Taking into account the fact that migration was of a mass character and a rather large number of Russians arrived in Kazakhstan in a limited period of time, a certain community of migrants who came from Russia was formed, who in one way or another interacted with each other, had some common goals and shared some common norms and values. In view of the limited nature of support for migrants from such a social institution as the state, in the Republic of Kazakhstan the most significant resource for social integration was mutual assistance, which was expressed primarily in solving everyday tasks related to finding housing, employment, financial self-sufficiency, solving psychological problems, and adapting to new living conditions. At the same time, Russians themselves stated that they had no expectations of support from the Kazakh authorities, noting positively the measure to open a separate public service center (PSC) in a number of cities in Kazakhstan in the fall of 2022 specifically for migrants. However, the question remains whether this measure was intended to reduce barriers to access to state social services for Russians or was a tool to prevent social tensions on the part of the local population.

Solution of housing problems

The primary task for migrants was to find housing. There were four main tactics that Russians used to solve the housing issue: 1) renting temporary housing (a room, apartment or hotel room); 2) temporary accommodation with acquaintances, friends or relatives; 3) temporary accommodation with previously unknown people; 4) living in a shelter opened within the framework of a non-profit project specifically to support Russians. When searching for accommodation for temporary rent, Russians turned both to the website *krisha.kz*, which was the main service for finding accommodation in Kazakhstan, and to *Booking* and *Airbnb* services for renting apartments or hotel rooms. In this case, Russians either cooperated to live together and reduce the financial burden, or rented larger premises than they needed, which provided an opportunity to help those Russians who, for financial reasons, could not afford to rent housing during this period, although they needed it. Given that there was a crisis in the rental housing market, it was difficult to find rental offers on the one hand, and on the other hand, if they could be found, they were priced above market value: *“When I first came to Astana, there were either really bad hostels or hotel rooms for 10,000 rubles a night. But I was lucky, I found an apartment for 3 thousand rubles per day <...> Then my friend came to Astana and stayed with me” (economist, Moscow – Astana, 27 years old).*

Some Russians turned to previously established social ties and stayed for a while with friends, acquaintances or relatives who were either citizens of Kazakhstan and had lived there since birth, or had migrated earlier due to work, personal circumstances or also in a situation of global uncertainty. This circumstance allowed, on the one hand, saving resources for further stages of integration, on the other hand, provided an opportunity for mutual assistance in crisis conditions.

Such an opportunity could be obtained by applying for assistance to non-profit projects that help with temporary residence, adaptation and integration in a new environment. Among them, informants mentioned “The Ark”* (Aktobe, Almaty, Astana) and “Logovo” (Astana). One of the informants, who learned about such a project from friends, applied for help to this project, where he received an opportunity to temporarily live in co-living¹⁴ in Almaty with other migrants from Russia. There were 30 beds in the project at the time of his application for assistance, but all of them were already occupied, so he was allocated a place in the common room where activities and meals were held. Accommodation was provided on different grounds - the informant received assistance as a “person without family”. At the same time, while living in the co-living, there were a large number of leisure activities (including drawing lessons, watching movies and discussing them, etc.) aimed at social integration of temporary migrants both among themselves and with the local community, whose representatives were periodically guests of the co-living residents. For instance, according to an informant: *“There were many creative people in “The Ark”* who organized some events... Then I myself started to hold English classes once a week. <...> Yes, I participated in a psychological support group... In group contact, people’s true feelings became clear” (IT specialist, Moscow – Almaty, 29 years old).*

In this way, not only opportunities were created for solving the most acute issues, such as temporary housing, but also opportunities for leisure, daily socialization and psychological support. In addition, gaining new social ties made it possible to more quickly find people to rent a house together in the

future after the expiry of the permitted period of residence in the co-living.

In a number of cases, Russians received support from the local population willing to provide their own housing for temporary residence of migrants from Russia: *“...one of my friends who came from Russia, he initially lived in a family that sheltered him...” (entrepreneur, Saint Petersburg – Karaganda, 25 years old).*

In the context of finding accommodation, it is also necessary to mention the obligation of Kazakh host individuals and legal entities to notify of the foreigner’s stay in the Republic of Kazakhstan within three days of their arrival, both by personally contacting the Migration Service office in their district and by filling out a form on the *gov.kz* website. In the absence of notification of stay, foreigners did not have the opportunity to issue a bank card. In this regard, Russians requested notification from both direct landlords, relatives and acquaintances, as well as third parties who offered unofficial services for a fee to issue notification of temporary stay in the territory of the Republic. The result of such applications was not only assistance in resolving bureaucratic issues, but also the strengthening of social ties between people, which are usually maintained throughout the entire period of stay of Russians in Kazakhstan.

Employment opportunities

Turning to the resources of social capital in a new environment helped not only to preserve resources for further integration, but also to find a job. For example, 5 informants reported that they were able to find a job in Kazakhstan thanks to social connections. At the same time, the context of receiving job offers was both spontaneous, when the offer came unexpectedly from strangers (e.g., in a queue at a service center) and planned (e.g., as part of a meeting with potential employers and/or customers).

One of the common tactics of social integration in the labor market is the registration by a foreigner

* The Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation recognized the project “The Ark” as a foreign agent.

¹⁴ A form of co-habitation of people with common intentions in a common space (house, apartment, room, etc.). A distinctive feature of this type of housing is joint activities of both domestic and interactive nature.

of a legal entity – a limited liability partnership (LLP), which subsequently also gives the right to hire employees. Migrants by themselves registered such LLPs in Kazakhstan primarily to ensure their own legality of long-term stay in the receiving country as an individual entrepreneur or general director of a legal entity. In some cases, managers of these LLPs are willing to employ the same temporary migrants. In such cases, employees' registration is often fictitious and imposes on "employees" the obligation to pay taxes and fees for their affiliation with the organization: "... the main thing is that they pay taxes themselves. It is unlikely that anyone will be hired there" (IT-specialist, Moscow – Almaty, 31 years old). This practice definitely creates risks for the person who formalized the LLP, and as a result, a sufficiently high level of trust between people is required for its application.

The informants note great demand for high skilled specialists in Kazakhstan. "I know that people with engineering and medical specialties find jobs in general [easily]. And high-paying ones at that... With other spheres... it is harder. It is clear that all sorts of IT-companies consume migrated specialists with great pleasure. So, in general,... there are no problems in the labor market... there is a staff hunger of high skilled specialists due to the fact that there are not many locals left" (higher school teacher, Moscow – Almaty, 27 years old).

In other words, high skilled specialists in priority economic sectors from among the citizens of Kazakhstan often migrate abroad themselves, while some of the migrating Russians fill the lack of labor force in these professional niches. At the same time, Russians who are considering long-term migration for themselves stated the positive effect of employment in Kazakhstan with a local organization. "...I started working with Kazakhs together, and due to this situation I got much closer to adapt somehow... I made friends there... Both in terms of language and in terms of understanding how

to [communicate]..." (engineer, Saint Petersburg – Almaty, 25 years old). In other words, employment helped to integrate faster into the local community.

Health care and medical services

One of the significant spheres influencing successful integration in a new environment is medical care. The majority of informants sought medical service mainly in private clinics: "I went to a private clinic, I didn't even consider looking for some kind of insurance or something like that. I saw that it was quite budget-friendly compared to Russia – appointments and treatment – everything was much cheaper, and I just found a good clinic, it was easy to do, given that there were a lot of Russian-language websites and Russian-language hospitals, so there were no problems at all" (entrepreneur, Saint Petersburg – Karaganda, 25 years old).

Temporary migrants noted the help of other migrants and local population in providing recommendations of specific specialists. However, in situations where the assistance of a narrow specialist was needed, the choice was usually made randomly. At the same time, the work of medical services, regardless of the availability of recommendations, was rated by Russians as high and above average, which contributed to integration in Kazakhstan. However, we should take into account that such an opportunity was primarily available to well-off migrants who had the financial ability to apply to a private medical center.

Among other things, informants repeatedly drew attention to assistance from both other migrants and the local population in everyday practices, including leisure activities, currency exchange, one-time household assistance, provision of information about bureaucratic procedures, and recommendations for seeking medical and psychological help. As a rule, such support was provided on a case-by-case basis as needed and contributed to strengthening of ties and social integration of Russians in Kazakhstan.

Social capital as a resource of transnational social space for social integration

It is worth pointing out that Russians' temporary migration has a transnational character, as social ties with Russia remain: temporary migrants continue working in Russian companies, study at Russian universities, and maintain contacts with relatives and friends living in Russia. Such social ties, on the one hand, help to cope with the stress caused by migration, and on the other hand, allow them to use resources to maintain their previous standard of living during the first stages of social integration.

Existence of labor relations in Russia

A significant part of migrants from Russia try to maintain employment in Russian organizations. One respondent noted: *"Yes, I continue studying and working at Russian university and in the Russian company, but I come to Russia only when necessary"* (political scientist, Saint Petersburg – Almaty, 28 years old). Employers in Russia often went along with and issued a remote employment contract, such cases were found even among state organizations or private companies affiliated with the state. However, we should say that when a Russian citizen stays in the country for less than 183 days during the last 12 months, they automatically lose the status of a tax resident of Russia¹⁵. This may affect both their current employment and potential employment in a Russian organization, especially because at the moment Russian companies are focused on the return of employees who have left, and in the long term may lead to the loss of employment in Russia.

Assistance of relatives from Russia in solving everyday problems

Most respondents counted on help from relatives and friends from Russia: *"I am very grateful*

¹⁵ P. 2.1., Art. 207. Tax Code of the Russian Federation 117-FZ, dated August 5, 2000. Available at: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_28165/c0d77f0e201172d5cd9978bf9dfa1ecd2ba4cf60/ (accessed: September 26, 2023).

to my parents because after the new year my contract in Russia ended, and they are sending me money now – it's a very significant support for me now. It is clear that I try to save money. It is clear that I rent not the apartment that I would like to rent, but the apartment that I can afford" (economist, Moscow – Almaty, 26 years old).

Due to the complexity of currency transfers and other financial transactions, cryptocurrency financial solutions began gaining popularity among migrants: *"...did it through cryptocurrency because it was very fast, easy, you don't need any communication with any services in general, and there was always a good exchange rate <...> everything is done through bank cards [and internet platforms]"* (anthropologist, Saint Petersburg – Almaty, 25 years old).

In addition to money transfers, transportation of belongings was in demand, as for many informants leaving Russia was unforeseen and rushed. Russians who left for Kazakhstan often turned for help to friends and relatives who had access to informants' housing or had received keys by mail: *"I just made a power of attorney for my parents. I did a significant part of the things I had to take care of by mail. Mail, parents, a little bit of interaction with friends"* (higher school teacher, Moscow – Astana – Almaty, 27 years old).

To successfully integrate into the new environment, Russians in some cases required documents that they could obtain only in Russia. To solve such legal and bureaucratic issues, the informants used their social ties in Russia by issuing a notarial power of attorney, since in accordance with the CIS Agreement of March 20, 1992 "On the Procedure for Resolving Disputes Related to the Exercise of Economic Activities", a notarial power of attorney issued in Kazakhstan is also valid in Russia without additional certifications.

Opportunities and experiences of receiving psychological help

Informants noted that family and friends in Russia helped not only in solving current issues,

but also provided psychological support. Often this format of interaction involved psychological mutual assistance because, as one informant said: “...now everybody needs support”.

For Russians in conditions of uncertainty, the issue of maintaining their own mental health has become one of paramount importance. The informants repeatedly mentioned psychological help, and many of them sought psychological help for the first time. At the same time, psychological help was provided, as a rule, remotely via videoconferencing, and the psychologists themselves were from Russia. Among the sources of psychological help were non-profit projects that provided a series of free psychological consultations, for example, the project “The Right Hemisphere of Introvert” in Saint Petersburg, which provided three free psychological consultations. Another resource was corporate services for obtaining certain services within the framework of voluntary medical insurance (VMI) and corporate well-being programs. Such assistance was available to employees of both Russian and transnational large companies. However, informants said that psychological consultations within the framework of corporate programs often did not satisfy the requests, as they did not deal with deep existential feelings. Although there were some exceptions: *“I have a VMI at work, and there is a platform called “I Understand” where all kinds of specialists are gathered for online consultations. My friend once told me that she goes to a great psychologist, although there are a lot of bad ones who start telling you that you are young, you need to go out and have a walk – everything will pass”* (economist, Saint Petersburg – Astana, 24 years old).

Among informants there were also those who had previously sought psychological help. They noted changes in their psychological requests after the move – requests to psychologists became related to the need for psychological adaptation to living in a new country: *“When I got a job, it was very hard emotionally, I had... a depressive state, such distress,*

dissatisfaction with myself, in general, with everything that was going on. It was a psychologist from Russia – online, he was recommended to me by my friend, a psychotherapist” (vehicle repair technician, Saint Petersburg – Taldykorgan – Almaty, 27 years old).

Intertransformation of social capital in online and offline spaces: resource of online social networks

In conditions of uncertainty and, in some cases, lack of social ties in a new country, it is social networks that play a key role in social integration, which allow maintaining social contact with already familiar people and establishing new useful social ties.

First of all, it is necessary to speak about the Telegram channels that were created in large numbers in the fall of 2022 to provide information to Russian migrants about life in Kazakhstan. Telegram channels were created both as part of personal initiatives of interested individuals and as part of non-commercial projects. Informants mentioned two types of channels: 1) channels that published information related to adaptation (receiving a notice of arrival, obtaining an individual identification number (IIN), border run, medical issues, etc.), and 2) channels aimed at bringing together different kinds of communities: professionals in certain fields, representatives of ethnic or sexual minorities, people with migration experience, and other vulnerable groups. For instance, one of the informants shares their experience of receiving help thanks to one of the chat rooms: *“I added myself to a huge number of chat rooms for people leaving. One of the chat rooms was called “Asians of Russia” – it was largely aimed at Kalmyks, Buryats, but other ethnic minorities too. And I’m a Tatar. And there... we found a driver in an Indriver’e who agreed to take us to Astana”* (economist, Moscow – Astana, 27 years old).

In a number of cases, Telegram chats were closed and required a personal invitation from one of the community members. In this case, migrants were assisted by both personal and already

established online contacts. Participation in these communities allowed them not only to receive help later, but also to integrate into local communities, including the Russian immigrant community: *“I was invited to a chat room for migrants by a friend we met in Almaty. As a result, I have already been to several events with them: a movie screening, we went to the countryside. There are also breakfasts on Sundays. Of course, everyone there is older than me – people are about 30–40 years old, but there is something to learn” (economist, Moscow – Almaty, 26 years old).*

Thus, social ties established in person contribute to the inclusion in the digital community of migrants linked by certain characteristics. This inclusion can be further transformed into personal acquaintance, accordingly, the real network of social contacts expands, which will contribute to social integration.

It is also necessary to pay attention to those cases when, due to the lack of legal ways to obtain a residence permit for long-term stay on the territory of Kazakhstan, some Russians resorted to registration of a partial or full package of documents through private individuals who provide assistance either in registration at the place of residence or in fictitious employment for further obtaining a residence permit. People often found such specialists through personal contacts, because in addition to financial costs, there are high risks of fraud: *“Yes, I saw a lot of advertisements in Telegram – that it is possible to prepare a full package of documents, but I was afraid that I [would be deceived] and I would only lose money. So, I talked to acquaintances who had used such services and had already chosen a suitable option for myself” (IT specialist, Saint Petersburg – Almaty, 27 years old).*

Social networks facilitated the search for jobs and helping professionals, including suitable psychologists. *“And here the second [psychologist] is also a guy from Russia, but now living in Georgia, who*

also left [the SMO]. I found him through Instagram, through my acquaintances... I wrote to him, I said, listen, so and so, let’s basically work” (vehicle repair technician, Saint Petersburg – Taldykorgan – Almaty, 27 years old).*

At the same time, it is important to say that the algorithms for issuing information to users in some social networks function on the basis of “friends’ recommendations”, i.e., what is of interest to the user’s friends or people their subscribes to in social networks is also broadcast in their news feed. In the case of mass migration of Russian men, it also facilitated the accidental finding of useful resources and information needed during the move.

Leave or stay: lack of resources as a social disintegration factor

Despite the significant contribution of social capital to the successful integration of temporary migrants in Kazakhstan, it is worth noting that this resource is often insufficient. Most respondents noted the need for financial resources, good health and successful social experience. In a number of cases, Russian citizens who considered Kazakhstan as a country for long-term stay were apprehensive about the prospects of their stay in the country. At the first stage, this was related to the risks of changes in migration policy toward Russians. After the abolition of the “border run” there were fears related to the lack of opportunities to obtain a residence permit. Some people managed to overcome fears and resolve issues related to long-term legal stay in Kazakhstan, but a number of informants stated about further plans to change their country of residence: *“Now I do not have a job in Kazakhstan, and most likely soon I will have to go somewhere else. For now, I plan to go to Turkey” (IT specialist, Moscow – Almaty, 29 years old).*

* The social network is blocked in Russia (it belongs to Meta, a company recognized as extremist and banned in Russia).

One of the informants, a pharmacist, said that it was necessary to collect a large package of documents for employment. Also, the difficulties of integration in the employment market are associated with different labor conditions compared to Russia, and problems in communicating with the local population: *“The salary is 100–120 thousand tenge – ours is about 20 thousand rubles. The pharmacy is half-empty, there are many things missing. I was handed a huge list of papers to collect for employment. But the most interesting thing is that [clients] come and speak Kazakh”* (pharmacist, Saint Petersburg – Shymkent, 35 years old).

In the context of mentioning the language barrier, we note that despite the prevalence of the Russian language in Kazakhstan, it is more widespread in the northern part of the country, which borders Russia, as well as in Almaty. In other cities, the local population is less proficient in Russian, which is certainly a barrier to the successful integration of Russians.

In the labor sphere, the most vulnerable situation was faced by Russians in precarious employment, i.e. those whose work is regulated by a temporary contract, or those who are on probation in organizations in Russia, in other words, those who do not have a stable position in the labor market (Golenkova, Goliusova, 2015). Some informants reported unilateral termination of cooperation at the initiative of employers and customers themselves. Such circumstances created risks for migrants to find themselves without means of subsistence. There were also cases when informants found a job already in Kazakhstan, but they lacked the competencies to keep a job or the resources to master these competencies: *“I understand that I am required to have skills that I am not ready to learn quickly, and looking for a new job is possible, of course, but I just don’t have the energy for it <...> We live with six people in a three-room apartment – in Saint Petersburg I at least have my own room”* (train driver, Saint Petersburg – Almaty, 24 years old).

Among other things, the financial situation of Russians is aggravated by the unstable ruble exchange rate, which is especially important for those who continue working in Russian organizations and receiving their salaries in rubles. The financial situation was also affected by the restriction of withdrawals from bank cards of the MIR payment system from March 6, 2023.

One of the main problems in the fall of 2022 was the search for housing. The large influx of Russians to Kazakhstan provoked a high jump in rental prices, which required significant financial resources from arriving Russians. The largest influx of migrants came to the cities of Almaty and Astana as administrative centers of the republic. At the same time, the problem was relevant not only for Russians, but also for Kazakhs renting and searching for housing, because in the narratives of informants we repeatedly encountered references to violations of rules in the institution of rental housing. For example, people were evicted from apartments because landlords raised the rent several times to accommodate wealthier immigrants from Russia. Established mechanisms of interaction were violated in the process of renting out housing: *“After viewing the apartment, the landlord approached us, bypassing the realtor, and offered to rent the apartment directly through him so that we would not have to pay a commission. It seemed strange to us that he wanted to scam her, so we refused”* (IT specialist, Moscow – Almaty, 28 years old).

Despite such situations, informants repeatedly noted: *“Those landlords who did not give in to panic won”*. At the same time, such situations contributed not only to a decrease in the level of social cohesion of the host society, but also to the formation of negative attitudes of the local population toward Russians. Nevertheless, in none of the interviews conducted did the respondents talk about negative attitudes on the part of the local population of Kazakhstan. In general, this circumstance testifies to the basic favorable conditions of social integration.

Conclusion

As a result of the study it is possible to determine that the migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan assumes an integration model that is predominantly socio-economic in nature, as the most accessible way of social integration in the country is to find a job or register a legal entity, which allows obtaining a residence permit and subsequently a residence permit for long-term stay. At the same time, the membership of Russia and Kazakhstan in the EAEU provides Russians with an expanded range of opportunities for social integration. However, the external migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan tends to gradually limit access to resources for long-term stay of foreigners who do not contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. Under such conditions, the main resource of social integration for Russians has become precisely social capital, which allows both solving current bureaucratic issues and supporting the necessary social activity.

Activation of already existing social ties and establishment of new contacts contributed to a more comfortable passage of the first stages of integration in the host society. For instance, thanks to the

existing social capital, the informants were able to find housing, employment, and pass the first stage of integration relatively successfully, including by receiving psychological assistance. Material and psychological support of the social environment in Russia proved to be a significant resource. The expansion of the network of social contacts and facilitation of the process of social integration was facilitated by active filling of the social network space with resources useful for migrants. In other words, the hypothesis that the key resource for social integration of Russians who temporarily left Russia for Kazakhstan was primarily mutual assistance was confirmed.

We should note that the majority of those who left maintain close ties with Russia not only for personal, but also for work and educational reasons, and also regularly maintain contact with the online social environment. In this situation, there is a clear need to create conditions for professional and personal fulfillment, in which young people can achieve their life goals despite the emergence of new risks. Such measures could contribute to reducing emigration from Russia and to the preservation and sustainable development of the country's human capital.

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