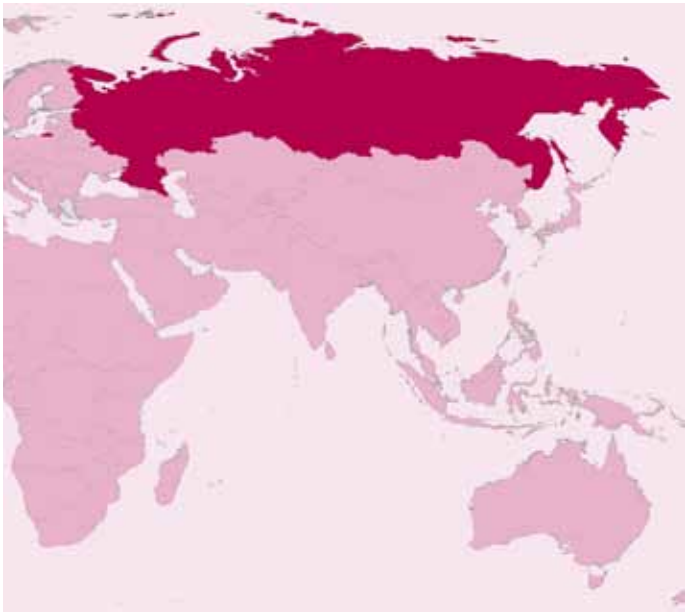
focus MIGRATION

COUNTRY PROFILE
Russian Federation
No.20 July 2010

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation (Russia) is the largest state in the world in terms of territory, occupying more than 11% of the land surface of the Earth, and is located in Eurasia. Russia shares borders with 16 countries; it has land borders with Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia, North Korea and maritime borders with Japan and the USA. Russia is a federal state consisting of 83[2] "subjects of federation" (like states in the USA or Laender in Germany). There are six different types of subjects of federation: 21 republics, 9 krais, 24 oblasts (cities of federal significance), one autonomous oblast and 4 autonomous okrugs. The population density in Russia is very disparate – 324.7 inhabitants per km² in Moscow and the Moscow oblast as compared with only 3.9 inhabitants per km² in Siberia and the Far East, for example. The European part of the country is home to the largest share of inhabitants. The population is both aging and declining; natural population decline is very high and came to 12.6 million people from 1992 to 2008. Immigration only partly compensates for this population decrease. In the first post-soviet decade Russia had a very high relative index of migration, it occupied the third place in the world during the period of 1989-2002, and was the second biggest immigration country worldwide in 2003-2006.[3] According to some experts,[4] immigration is the key measure for improving the demographic situation in contemporary Russia, possibly counteracting depopulation.



International migration in Russia is composed of the inflow of immigrants from other countries of the former Soviet Union and an outflow of emigrants into economically more developed countries, such as Israel, the USA, Germany and other EU-member states. Russian academic and political discourses have adopted the term *ethnic repatriation* to refer to the inflow. Irregular labour migration evolved as a central problem during the ten years from 1996 to 2006. The majority of irregular migrants in Russia are labour migrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),[5] who came legally to Russia under the visa-free regime, but stayed and worked illegally. Internal migration is very low and has not exceeded 3 % of the population during the 2000s. The vector of internal migration has changed in the post-Soviet time. Traditionally the main direction was towards the centre and eastward, but in the second half of the 1980s migration towards the periphery, the west and south increased.

Russian migration policy was significantly changed two times. First it became more restrictive in 2001 and then liberalized in 2006. Russian migration policy has also undergone conceptual changes. It was mainly reactive during the first 15 post-Soviet years and has become gradually proactive.

Background Information

Capital: Moscow

Official language: Russian

Area: 17 075 400 km²

Population (2009): 141 903 979 (FSSS[1])

Population density: 8.7 inhabitants per km²

Population growth (2008): -0.07 %

Foreign population as percentage of total population (Census 2002): 1.9 % (2 724 327 persons)

Labour force participation rate (2008): 53.4 % (ILO)

Unemployment rate: 7.6 % (2006), 6.6 % (2007), 6.2 % (2008)

Ethnic groups (2002): 79.8 % Russians, 19.2 % other ethnic groups, 1 % ethnic group not stated (Census)

bpb: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
NETZWERK MIGRATION IN EUROPA
HWWI Hamburgisches WeltWirtschafts Institut

Historical Trends in Migration

Major migration trends in contemporary Russia have deep historical roots. Population movement during the time of the Tsars (1547-1917) and Soviet (1917-1991) period provided the preconditions for the post-Soviet migration, including both internal and international migration processes. The majority of contemporary migration flows involve the movement of people considered to belong to a particular ethnic group (e.g. Russians, Germans, Finns) in response to settlement policies, shifting borders and, more recently, repatriation policies.

17th to 19th Century

The territorial expansion of the Russian Empire can be divided into three historical phases. The first phase took place in the 17th century and was connected with the exploration of Siberia and the Far East. Russian speakers had become a demographic majority in these regions by 1678. The second expansion started in the beginning of the 18th century, and Russian territory increased with the acquisition of Belarus, the Baltics, parts of Poland and parts of the Ottoman Empire (including Bessarabia – contemporary Moldova). The inclusion of North Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia and Central Asia took place in the 19th century, during the third phase (the last expansion).[6] One of the consequences of the territorial expansion was the penetration of Russian speakers into new geographic areas. Furthermore the state authorities encouraged the peasants to move from the European to the Asian part of the country in the second half of the 19th century.[7]

Russia was probably the first country in the world to establish a specialized State Migration Management Department (in 1763). The main goal of this institution was to promote migration from Western Europe to Russia. As a result of this policy thousands of immigrants – most of whom were skilled (e.g., scientists, professors, military men, engineers, architects and businessmen) – settled in Russia. The most significant share of migrants was ethnic Germans. According to historical data, there were about 1.8 million Germans in the Russian Empire by the end of 19th century.[8]

The Soviet Era

In the Soviet period there were two contradictory factors affecting migration: restriction of the freedom of movement provided by the residence permit system (*propiska*)[9] on the one hand, and voluntary and involuntary large-scale population movements on the other.[10] The idea of total state control of migration by means of the propiska system had its foundation in many respects in the experience of failure by the authorities to manage the spontaneous and uncontrolled movements of the population during the 1917 Revolution and the 1917-1923 Civil War. The voluntary but strictly state-regulated migration in the Soviet time was driven by industrialization.

A special labour recruitment system was established during the first five-year-plans (*piatiletkas*)[11] with the aim of industrial development in different regions of country. As a result of this policy, about 28.7 million people were re-settled across the USSR during the 1930s.[12] Moreover, the special mechanism – so-called "northern wage increments" (*severnaya nadbavka*) – designed to attract the population to move to Northern Russia, Siberia and the Russian Far East was introduced in 1933. In the late Soviet period the system of "distribution of graduates" (*raspredelenie*)[13] was commonly used in the USSR. Under this policy, university graduates were assigned to work in other parts of the country for 3 or 4 years. Some people came back after the end of the obligatory working period, but many people stayed in their assigned destinations. Graduates could also be required to move to other Soviet republics; a graduate from a Russian university could have been redistributed to work in Ukraine or Estonia, for example. In the late Soviet time, migration was mainly voluntary but strictly controlled by the authorities. In the 1980s, about 15 million citizens changed their place of residence within the USSR each year.[14]

Compulsory resettlement was a part of Soviet totalitarian policy, an instrument of political repression. The first victims of compulsory resettlement were wealthy farmers (*kulaks*), who were deported to underdeveloped northern areas.[15] In the years from 1940 to 1959 the Soviet authorities used compulsory resettlement as a way to punish people who were officially declared "suspect elements". Many people from the Baltic States, West Ukraine and Moldova were the victims of such punishment. In that time not only individuals, but also entire ethnic groups were considered "suspect" such as Germans (after the beginning the war with Germany in 1941), Crimean Tatars, Chechens, or Ingushs. As a result of that policy, many people had to live very far from their places of birth, such as in Siberia or Central Asia.

International migration in the USSR was very limited. Especially during the times of the Cold War, mobility between countries of the 'Soviet block' and countries of Western Europe and North America was nearly impossible. Soviet citizens had to get an exit visa to go abroad. There were only a few, strictly controlled channels for coming to the country, such as working in politically significant projects or to study. Irregular migration was effectively stopped by highly developed security and border controls.[16]

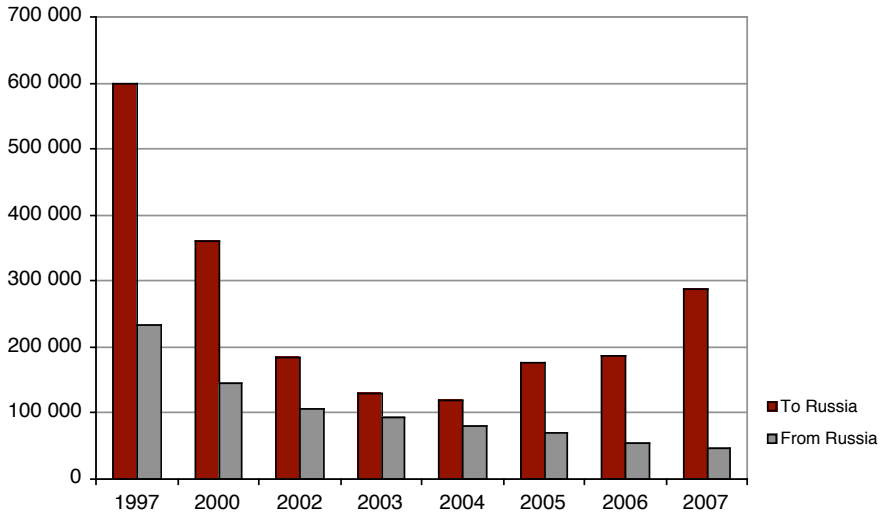
As a result of imperial and Soviet policies, the composition of the population in the various parts of the country was not homogeneous. Ethnic Russians lived in all Soviet republics and their number varied from 2.5 % (in Armenia) to 38 % in Kazakhstan. They resided mainly in the capitals and other urban centres, where they had access to culture and education in their mother tongue and good job opportunities. As Russians were the dominant ethnic group in the Soviet Union (often referred to as "elder brothers") and Russian was the lingua franca, ethnic Russians were encouraged to feel "at home" in the whole territory of the USSR. The popular song of the era of "stagnation" in the 1970s illustrates the attitudes of ethnic Russians very well: "Not some house, not some street – my address is the Soviet Union". At the same time many non-Russian ethnic groups from republics other than Russia lived in Russian regions. According to the last Soviet population census, conducted in 1989, ethnic Ukrainians and Belarusians were the second and the third largest groups after Russians in the dominant part of Russian regions. Ethnic Moldovans lived mainly in the central regions. Ethnic Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians lived in the North-Western regions and Siberia.[17] Ethnic Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians resided predominantly in the big cities like Moscow and Lenin-

grad, and in the South regions. Ethnic Kazakhs lived in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) – Kazakhstan border regions like Kurgan, Astrakhan or Orenburg oblast'.[18]

The Post-Soviet Era

After the Soviet system collapsed there were about 25 million ethnic Russians who lived in the former Soviet Union (FSU)[19] countries other than the Russian Federation. Over three million ethnic Russians settled in Russia between 1991 and 1998.[20] In general, 2/3 of immigrants in 1998-2007 were ethnic Russians and about 12 % were representatives of other ethnic groups originating from Russia (dominated by Tatars).[21] The repatriation of ethnic Russians and the difficulties of economic transition in most of the FSU countries determined the nature of migration trends.

Figure 1: International Migration to and from the Russian Federation



Source: Federal Migration Service of Russia (FMS)[23].

There was a migration inflow in half of the subjects of Russian Federation in 2008. According to the data of the Institute of Demography SU-HSE, the largest migration inflow was in Moscow oblast – about 75 000 people, among them about 55 000 in Moscow. Sankt-Petersburg and Krasnodar krai were also important regions receiving migrants.[22] Due to unregistered migration, the official numbers underestimate the real amount of migration.

Inflows from Former Soviet Union countries

Russia accepts migrants from more than 100 countries worldwide. However the flow from "near abroad" is dominant and growing, while the share of main "far-abroad"[24] donors (China, Turkey, and Vietnam) is declining.[25] All FSU countries except Belarus[26] are migration donors for Russia. Kazakhstan is the most significant country of origin of new immigrants with about 1.9 million people during 1989-2007. A comparable number of people arrived from other countries of Central Asia (Kirgizia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) in the same period. The Transcaucasian countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) were the third most significant source region, with about 1.1 million people migrating to Russia between 1989 and 2007.[27]

In the 1990s, the issue of Chinese migrants moving across the border into Russia's Far East received a great deal of attention in the Russian media.[28] Nationalist activists warned that millions of Chinese would "occupy" Siberia and the Russian Far East in the wake of improved Russian-Chinese political relations and improved opportunities for economic gain by Chinese traders. The inflow of Chinese migrants combined with the significant outflow of Russians from Siberia and the Far East lead to fears that Russia would "lose" the Far East to its neighbour. According to one public opinion poll of the inhabitants of Primorsky krai, (a border region to China) in 1998, almost 50 % of respondents were sure that Chinese migration posed a threat to Russian sovereignty in the East. Another poll showed that Russian citizens believed the number of Chinese migrants entering Russia to be about 885 times higher than it actually was.[29]

In reality the number of Chinese citizens in Chinese-Russian border regions has been relatively small. For example, Chinese comprised a maximum 1.1 % of the population of Primorsky krai (a border region to China) in 1996-1998,[30] and their number in Khabarovsk and Vladivostok (the capitals of the border regions to China) was not more than 10 000 persons in 1999.[31] Furthermore, Russian citizens were more active than Chinese in the cross-border movement in the second part of 1990s.[32] Nowadays the fear of Chinese' expansion is not so intense, but some alarmism still lives in public perception and is still to be found in political rhetoric.

Temporary labour migrants[33]

Temporary labour migrants became a commonplace in the 2000s. According to official data, 40 % of construction workers are immigrants, 19 % of workers in the trade sector, and 7 % both in agriculture and production.[34] Moreover, migrants from specific countries of origin work predominantly in specific occupations. For example, the majority of labour migrants in the construction sector are citizens of Ukraine and Turkey. Among migrants from Moldova, drivers and construction workers predominate.[35] Half of labour migrants in Russia have no professional training and are only suited for unskilled labour.[36]

A specific feature of the Russian economic system is a significant informal and shadow economy, which demands cheap and legally unprotected labour. According to official data, 53 % of *legally residing* labour migrants worked in the shadow economy in 2007. Rights violation by employers, such as the confiscation of a migrant's passport in order to increase control over employees, incomplete wage payment, limitation of freedom of movement, absence of social guarantees and involuntary work occur among both legal and irregular migrants.[37] According to Russian official estimates, elements of forced labour can be observed for 10 % to 30 % of migrants.[38] The studies indicate that only 9 % of labour migrants in Russia were never confronted with any form of coercion like debt bondage, involuntary work, limited freedom of movement, and so on.[39] The experts note that almost all victims of forced labour do not believe in the authorities' ability to assist them and show little interest in bringing their exploiters to justice.[40]

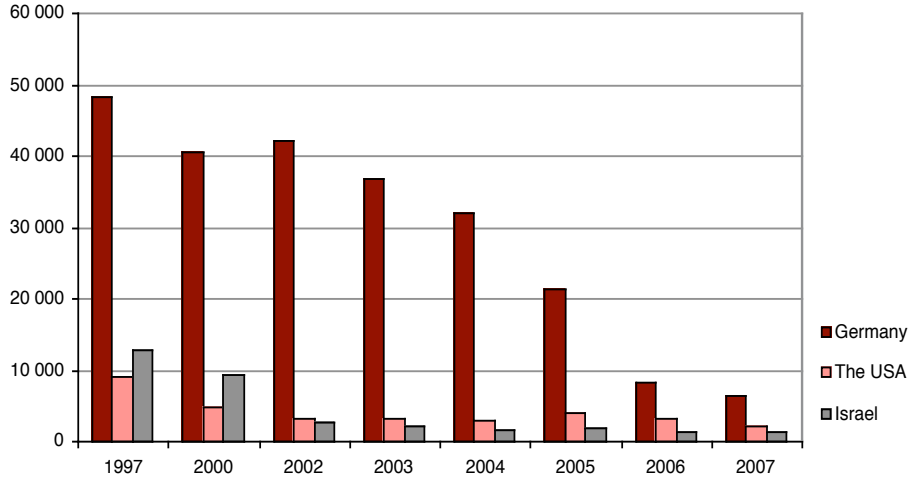
Emigration

Emigration from Russia to the FSU countries decreased from 690 000 people in 1989 to 40 000 in 2004. Experts have pointed at two major reasons for the decrease: the exhaustion of the ethnic repatriation potential and economic and political changes in the FSU countries.[41]

Large numbers of highly-skilled Russian emigrants moved to the USA, Norway and Germany following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1993, every fifth emigrant from Russia had post-secondary education. This "brain drain" has continued. In 2005, an estimated 30 000 Russian scientists were working abroad.[42] Currently, the United Kingdom, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands and Cyprus are considered to be favoured destinations for highly-skilled Russians seeking employment abroad.[43]

The majority of emigration to Germany, Israel and Greece has taken place in the course of ethnic repatriation programs. The peak of migration from Russia to Germany was in 1995 (about 80 000).[44] Relative exhaustion of the migration potential as well as increasing restrictions in Germany's policy have reduced these flows drastically in recent years. Ethnically-based emigration to Israel has varied in response to socio-economic and political conditions in both countries. Following the financial crises in Russia in 1998, the number of emigrants to Israel doubled; with tensions increasing between Palestine and Israel in recent years, it has declined by 75 %.[45] The volume of emigrants to Israel was about 1 200 in 2007.[46] The emigration to the USA has gradually decreased from 4 000 in 2004 to 2 000 in 2007 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Main Countries of Emigration from Russia



Source: Federal Migration Service of Russia (FMS).

Economically motivated circular migration (shuttle traders or chelnoks)

This kind of migration was typical for Russia in the 1990s. The collapse of the planned economy resulted in unemployment and the loss of professional status for many Russian citizens. People who had previously worked in, for example, the military industry or Soviet research institutions had to seek new jobs, but the transition to a market economy did not provide them with many opportunities. As a result, a large number of Russian citizens were involved in a very specific business-commercial trips to other countries (primarily Poland, Turkey, and China) in order to buy and import small batches of consumer goods to sell back home. These entrepreneurs, called "shuttle traders", contributed substantially to the development of small and medium businesses in Russia.[47] This kind of migration was typical in the first part of the 1990s and had become outdated by the 2000s.

Internal migration

During the Soviet era, significant numbers of people moved from the Central-European part of Russia to the northern regions, Siberia and the Russian Far East. But the vector of migration changed in the second half of the 1980s, with more people moving westward and southward. In the post-Soviet era, movement from the eastern and north-eastern regions to western regions has intensified.[48]

Migration out of the Far East and East Siberia to the Central-European part of Russia began on a large scale in 1991.[49] As a whole, the Russian Far East lost 14 % of its population between 1990 and 2005.[50] The main reason for these movements was the change in the economic situation. The Soviet planned economy together with state-regulated migration had created and maintained large populations in these regions. The residents of these regions enjoyed some special privileges, such as the so-called "northern wage increments" – extra-money for working in the remote regions with a harsh climate. The state also provided special support for migration, paying for the costs of travel, transportation of belongings, accommodation, etc. Many people took advantage of these incentives to work in these regions temporarily to earn money. The population of the North, Siberia and the Far East was not constant, as migrants generally engaged in circular migration instead of settling permanently.[51] Once these incentives disappeared, so did the supply of new migrants.

In the wake of the planned economy, several "ghost towns" have emerged in outlying regions. These are generally former "monotowns" – towns with one factory providing employment to the majority of the inhabitants– which could not sustain their populations once the major employer went bankrupt.

According to official statistics, internal migration in contemporary Russia is currently low. Only 1.4 % of the population changed their places of residence in 2007, and fewer than half of these people moved across the borders of their respective regions.[52] The key receiving region in Russian migration is Moscow. According to the Moscow government, there were almost 1.3 million Russian citizens from other parts of the country temporarily registered in the Russian capital in 2007.[53]

Migration policy

The basis for Russia's current migration policy was laid in the early 1990s. Legislative acts in Russia can be differentiated into "concepts" and "laws". *Concepts* state the general principles of regulations, while *laws* lay down concrete realizations of such principles. Thus, the importance of concepts is similar to the importance of laws in many other countries, and Russian laws often encompass features that Western states would leave to administrative regulations.

In 1992, the Federal Migration Service (FMS) was created in response to the mass movements of people following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1993, the laws "On Refugees" and "On Forced Migrants" were adopted, but policies were not very effective, due to a lack of experience and expertise in managing migration flows which were not state-initiated or state-approved as well as the general chaos caused by the transitional process in the country's economic, social and political spheres.[54]

In the late 1990s, attention turned to the issue of irregular labour migrants from the CIS countries (see also "Irregular Migration"). At the time, Russian experts estimated that three to four million migrants were working in the country illegally.[55] In order to legalize these labour migrants, an attempt was made to adopt the *Concept of the State Migration Policy of the Russian Federation*, which was to lay the basis for stabilizing migration processes and conveying positive messages about migrants and their economic contributions to the general population.[56] However, this and other attempts to legalize labour migration were ineffective, due to the scale of the shadow economy and informal labour market. In 2000, the FMS was abolished and responsibility for migration matters handed over to the *Ministry of Federation and Ethnic Policy*, which itself was abolished a year later.

In 2002 the FMS was re-established, not as an independent structure, but as a part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. For the next several years, migration was treated as a security issue, in line with popular public perceptions of migrants as potential criminals. The number of staff at FMS grew rapidly, from 3 000 at the beginning to 18 000 by 2006. There is a lack of transparency with regard to which tasks the additional staff members are primarily deployed. At the same time, its relations with migrant-supporting NGOs deteriorated and cooperation with academic experts was minimal.[57] In 2002 the law *On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens on the Territory of the Russian Federation* was adopted. This law was eagerly anticipated as a tool for legalizing irregular migrants, setting transparent procedures for migration control and granting legal status for different groups of migrants. Instead of meeting these expectations, it established a number of bureaucratic barriers complicating the procedures for registering foreign citizens[58] and introducing a quota for foreign workers from non-CIS countries. The subsequent yearly reduction in the quota led to an increase in the number of irregular migrants and a growth of corruption. The policy drew strong criticism from NGOs, human rights organizations and the scientific community, aimed not only at the authorities' activities, but also at the law's negative impact on public opinion towards migrants. The xenophobia in Russia today is in many respects the consequence of Russian migration policy from 2002 to 2005.

Starting in 2006, there was a radical shift towards liberalization in Russian migration policy. In the face of a declining and aging population, Russian authorities began to consider migrants as an important resource for economic and demographic development. Policy reforms were directed primarily at regulating immigration from FSU states. For foreign citizens from the 10 FSU countries that signed agreements on visa-free entrance with Russia, the procedures for registering and acquiring work permits were facilitated. As a result, more than 1.2 million work permits were issued to migrant workers from the CIS countries, twice the number issued in 2006 and three times the number issued in 2005.[59]

Other changes in this period included the introduction of a centralized database for the registration of foreign citizens and for border movements. Additionally, Russia began cooperating with the European Union in the field of migration, adopting the *EU-Russia Road Map for the Common Space of Freedom, Internal Security and Justice* in May 2005. The most visible effects of this cooperation are two EU-Russia agreements concerning visa facilitation and readmission, which were signed in 2006 and came into force in June 2007.

Kaliningrad transit

One specific Russian migration issue concerns transit migration to and from Kaliningrad oblast, the Russian exclave in the Baltic region. The most direct land route between the main part of Russia and Kaliningrad oblast runs through the territory of Lithuania, a former USSR republic. During the 1990s the issue was solved by an interim agreement between Russia and Lithuania, which was signed in early 1995. This agreement allowed all citizens of the Russian Federation permanently residing in Kaliningrad oblast to spend up to 30 days on Lithuanian territory and to travel through it without a visa. All Russian citizens (and also the citizens of other states) could travel to Kaliningrad oblast on the trains running through Lithuanian territory without a special permit.

However, Lithuania's accession to the EU in 2004 put the Kaliningrad question on the agenda once again, because, according to the EU visa regulations, third country nationals (which include Russians) are required to have visas to enter the EU or to travel through its territory. In September 2002 the European Commission adopted a Communication that led to the introduction of a special Facilitated Transit Document (FTD), issued to those Russian citizens who need to travel frequently to and from Kaliningrad. This document is free and can be issued on trains; however, Russian citizens have to buy train tickets in advance, because of the time needed to prepare the FTD.

Russian Policy on Compatriots Abroad[60]

Mass ethnic migration after the collapse of the USSR put the issue of compatriots abroad (the Russian-speaking population in the FSU countries) on Russia's political agenda. In the beginning, the policy on compatriots had two aims:

1. Facilitation of the return of "old" emigrants (who emigrated after the 1917 revolution and during the Soviet period to the "far abroad") and their descendants, including their re-acquisition of citizenship,

2. Prevention of members of the Russian-speaking population of the former Soviet Republics from migrating to Russia.

To further the second objective, measures were introduced in 1994 to provide economic, social and cultural support to those living in the FSU countries.

The first legal definition of Russian compatriots was given only in May 1999 in the *Law on the State Policy of the Russian Federation Concerning the Compatriots Abroad*. Basically, the descendants of former citizens of Russia and of the USSR, who were ethnic Russians or ethnic Tatars, were recognized as "compatriots" because they didn't have any other state then Russia which could declare its responsibility to protect their cultural rights. At the same time, the descendants of ethnic Armenians, Germans, or Jews, who also were nationals of the USSR, were excluded from recognition as compatriots because they could be protected by other states (Germany or Israel etc.).

In 2002 the official discourse on compatriots abroad gradually started to change. Whereas the inflow of these migrants had long been considered a "problem", it was slowly being perceived as a resource to counteract negative economic and demographic developments.

It is important to note that the majority of ethnic Russians or Russian-speaking people who decided to move to Russia did so before a proper framework for these movements was developed. Initially, these persons were only awarded the status of "forced migrant" (*vynuzhdenny pereselenets*, see Refuge and Asylum). The first real migration framework was approved only in 2006: "*The National Programme for Supporting Voluntary Migration of the Compatriots Residing Abroad to the Russian Federation*". This Programme clearly prioritized Russia's own economic and demographic interests, by introducing a resettlement plan to distribute new arrivals across areas where they were most needed, providing them with some benefits on the condition that they stay in these regions for at least two years.

The program has been unsuccessful: the actual number of people who moved to Russia in 2007 was 682 compared with the target of 23 000 persons for that year.[61] In the mid-2000s, experts[62] estimated that there were between 2.4 million and 4 million people living in the FSU states who could be eligible to migrate under the program. However, 15 years after the collapse of the USSR, most people who wanted to move to Russia from other regions had already done so. Those who remained abroad have since developed their own adaptive strategies. Furthermore, the unveiled motive for the repatriation of compatriots (i.e. to solve Russian domestic problems, not address issues faced by compatriots abroad) likely alienated potential migrants.

Integration policy and measures against xenophobia

Despite its significant immigrant population, Russia lacks a coherent integration policy. One reason for this is that the majority of immigrants come from the FSU countries. They usually know the Russian language and are familiar with the historical and cultural background of the country. Thus, politicians have assumed that they do not need any support for integration. A limited amount of government assistance has been made available to resettle ethnic Russian immigrants under the Federal Migration Programme. However, the assistance is so limited that many migrants do not bother to apply for it.[63] The biggest problems faced by new arrivals are in securing housing and employment.[64]

In the past ten years, xenophobia has been a growing problem in Russian society. The main reasons for it are the Chechen wars and the acts of terrorism in Moscow, Volgodonsk, Buinaks, and Beslan which happened between 1999 and 2004. As a result, many Russians fear that migrants from Caucasia and Muslim countries could be potential terrorists. Another reason for the growing xenophobia is the activity of radical nationalists. The collapse of the USSR and the loss of the superpower status served as a basis for mass feelings of deprivation. The idea of "Great Russia" is a basis for xenophobia in radical nationalistic ideology and has its embodiment in the slogan "Russia for Russians". The activity of radical nationalistic and neo-Nazi organisations is officially illegal, but the authorities have turned a blind eye to the public actions and also the acts of aggression against non-Russians, including the "native Russian citizens" with non-Slavic appearance.[65] Acts of aggression – sometimes fatal – against foreigners are relatively common. Human rights organizations have expressed concern about this situation, and the issue has been discussed in public and political debates. In 2000, the government enacted a program entitled *"The Forming of the Aims of Tolerant Perception and Preventive Measures against Extremism in Russian society"* (*Tolerance program*). In spite of its title, the program did not contain effective measures for prevention of extremism and xenophobia. It was limited to the declaration of the necessity of tolerance education for the different social groups. A number of federal and regional *Tolerance education programmes* have been implemented in the meantime, but they are not sufficient to solve the problem of xenophobia in contemporary Russia. For example, the *Tolerance Programme*, which has been started in St. Petersburg is aimed at presenting the cultural diversity of the city's population by means of many cultural events, but is unsuitable for preventing acts of aggression against foreigners.

Effective measures for the formation of tolerant attitudes towards migrants are still needed in contemporary Russia. According to an all-Russian survey of public opinion, only 12 % respondents had a positive attitude towards immigrants, while 22 % had negative or very negative attitudes.[66] The roots of it are not only in the activity of radical nationalistic or neo-Nazis organizations; many Russian politicians have used anti-migrant rhetoric in their political programs. The migrant-phobia is also based on the belief that migrants contribute to different social problems, such as the spread of diseases or involvement in criminal activities, two beliefs that are held by nearly half of the inhabitants of large Russian cities.[67]

Irregular migration

According to a World Bank report, the number of foreigners living irregularly in Russia in 2000 was between 1.3 and 1.5 million.[68] In some experts' opinion, this number was about

3.7 million in 2008.[69] The *Federal Migration Service of Russia* places the number at about 5 million.[70] High numbers of irregular migrants are caused in part by a complicated registration system. The residence permit system (*propiska*) was officially abolished in 1993, but it has continued to exist in another incarnation: the "residence registration system" (*registratsia*). All Russian citizens have to be registered at the local police departments. There are two kinds of registration for Russian citizens: permanent and temporary. The first one is obligatory for all Russian citizens, and they receive it in their own cities and towns. If Russian citizens leave their place of permanent residence and stay in another Russian city/town/village for more than 14 days, they have to get the temporary registration at the place of sojourn. The procedure of temporary registration is complicated, and Russian citizens prefer to avoid it, making them officially irregular internal migrants.

All foreign citizens have to be registered in regional branches of the FMS during the three working days after their arrival in Russia. The procedure of registration was streamlined in 2007, but it is still complicated for many kinds of migrants. As a result, the majority of labour migrants work in the shadow economy. This way, they lack not only the opportunity to have a legal job (legal status), but also to defend their labour and other rights, including their basic human rights.[71] The problem is intensified by the impossibility of seeking help from the official institutions for migrants who work illegally.

Transit migrants from Afghanistan, China, Angola, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Ethiopia and other countries who are heading to Western Europe make up another significant group of irregular migrants. Instead of moving on as planned, many end up staying in Russia. An estimated 1.5 million such migrants were staying in the country in 2006.[72] Their irregular migration is often related to asylum and refugee issues.

Refuge and asylum

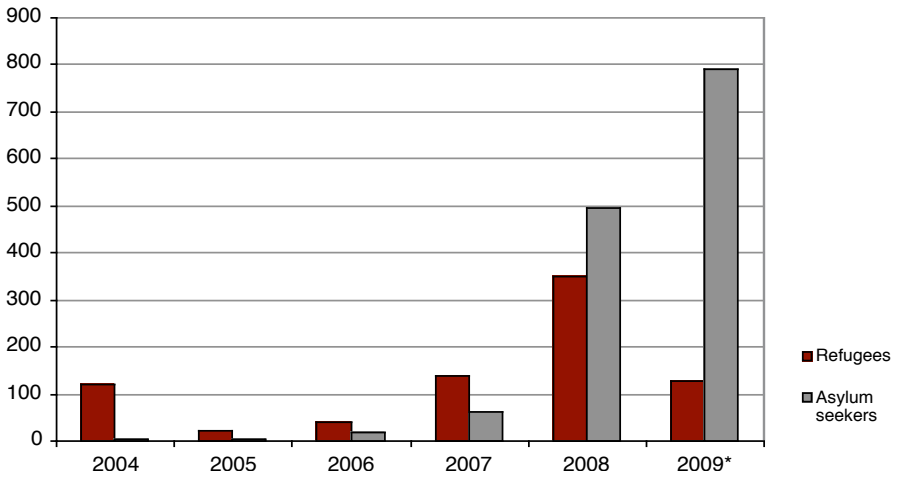
The first major influx of refugees into modern Russia took place in the period 1988 to 1989 as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanians. Other ethnic conflicts (e.g. the Abkhazian conflict 1992-1993, the Ossetin-Ingush conflict 1992, the Chechnya conflict 1994-1996), which took place in the post-Soviet area, increased the number of refugees. In Russia there are also a number of refugees and asylum-seekers from Afghanistan and some African countries like Somalia, Ethiopia and Angola.

In 1993 Russia signed the UN 1951 Convention on Refugees. As a result, Russia granted asylum to migrants from war-torn African and Asian countries. Many of them later attempted to move on to EU countries. In the same year the laws *On Refugees* and *On Forced Migrants* were adopted. These documents drew a line not only between internal "forced migrants" and international refugees, but also between "potential Russian citizens" and foreigners. The Russian definition of "forced migrant" is quite unusual in an international context, as it refers only to citizens of the Russian Federation or former citizens of the USSR who apply for Russian citizenship. "Forced migrants" in Russia are persons who, firstly, have Russian citizenship or apply for it, and, secondly, who left their residence because of an emergency situation (like an armed conflict). It is important to mention that in the 1990s the impossibility of naturalization in the FSU countries was considered, in Russia, to be an emergency situation. The status of "forced migrant" was to the Russian-speaking population of the FSU countries who had not acquired citizenship from one of the newly established states (for example from Latvia which did not grant citizenship to immigrants of non-Latvian descent who came after 1940), and therefore moved to Russia. In practice, because of this recognition the number of forced migrants was very high in the first half of the 1990s and vastly decreased in the 2000s.

The armed conflicts in Russia (especially the Ossetin-Ingush conflict in 1992 and the two wars in Chechnya) led to even higher numbers and directed the attention of politicians, the public and academics at this group of migrants. The issue of international refugees and asylum-seekers from other regions has received relatively little attention, due to their small numbers (see Figure 3).

The policy on refuge and asylum has been under-developed; the Russian authorities have granted asylum and the status of refugees only unwillingly. In 1996, for example, 4 840 persons applied for asylum, but only 78 persons were granted 1951 Convention status.[73] The situation has changed gradually over the last several years. According to the FMS, refugee status was granted to 802 people from 2004 till 1 May 2009, and 4 195 people were granted asylum in the same period (see Figure 3). It may well be that the policy on refuge and asylum will improve in the near future, because the Russian Government wants to adopt a new refugee law and is drafting it with the help of the UN Refugee Agency.[74]

Figure 3: Numbers of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the Russian Federation (persons)



*May
Source: Federal Migration Service of Russia (FMS).

Citizenship

The first *Law on Citizenship* was adopted in November 1991. According to this law, persons who were permanent residents of the Russian Federation before the law came into force in February 1992 were automatically recognized as RSFSR citizens. Russian citizenship could also be acquired by birth, registration, naturalization, restoration of citizenship, opting and following parents' citizenship. Article 3 allowed dual citizenship or more than one citizenship. The central condition for naturalization was a permanent residence on the territory of the Russian Federation totalling a time of five years or three uninterrupted years before the beginning of the naturalization procedure. As Russia declared itself the legal successor of the USSR, this law also established a facilitated naturalization procedure for former citizens of the USSR residing in FSU countries, which meant that the same, by taking permanent residence in Russia, were granted Russian citizenship by registration. This procedure was particularly relevant for stateless persons who were residing permanently on the territory of the USSR before the 1 September 1991 and expressed their wish to naturalize within one year after February 1992.

A new *Law on Citizenship of the Russian Federation* was adopted in May 2002. It complicated the naturalization procedure for ethnic Russians from FSU countries. The explanation for this more restrictive policy was based on the fact that persons willing to become Russian citizens had been able to do so freely over a transition period of 10 years and, now that the transition time is over, the Russian state has to carefully examine the citizenship claims from the FSU countries. Nevertheless the citizenship acquisition was still much easier for former USSR citizens than for citizens of other states until 1 July, 2009.

Future Challenges

The main challenge for current Russian migration policy is the global economic crisis. The slowdown in economic growth leads to a substantial quota reduction for labour migrants.[75] This reduction was caused by the decline in demand for labour and the attempt to create preferences for Russian citizens in the labour market in the crisis situation.

The decline in labour demand will change not only the external, but also the internal migration flows. People tend to leave their place of residence and turn to economically more successful regions. This constitutes a particular problem for the monotowns, which depend on one primary employer. About 10 Russian monotowns are confronted with considerable economic and social difficulties, which may lead to the emergence of new ghost towns in Russia.

The economic crisis has also intensified alarmism in Russian society, with further increases in xenophobia. There is no comprehensive integration policy to counteract such developments.

The second challenge is connected with the non-democratic political regime in Russia. The role of civil society in political decision-making is weakened. The concrete migration policy measures depend mainly on bureaucratic decisions, which fall short of being a political strategy, the tendencies of which vary from liberalizing to restrictive.

Endnotes:

1 According to Federal State Statistic Service (FSSS).

2 There were 89 subjects of federation from 1992 to 2004. The federal reform, which began in 2000, has led to the gradual decrease of the number of subjects. But importantly, the reform aims to reduce only the number of autonomous okrugs, and not all kinds of subjects.

3 Mansoor A., Quillin B. (eds.) (2006), p. 1.

4 Vitkovskaya G, Panarin S. (eds.) (2000), p. 77.

5 The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was founded on 8 December 1991 by the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. 8 former Soviet Republics – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan jointed the CIS two weeks after that. Georgia joined two years later, in December 1993 and left CIS after the South Ossetian war. Three former Soviet Republics – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have never jointed CIS.

6 See Heleniak T. (2004).

7 Ivakhnyuk (2009), p. 5.

8 Ibid, p. 4.

9 Resident permit system (*propiska*) was introduced in 1932 and "certified by a stamp in a person's passport made by a territorial department of the Ministry of Interior. Every person was registered at particular address, and in accordance with registered residency he/she got access to employment, primary and secondary education, healthcare, and other social benefits": Ivakhnyuk (2009), p. 2.

10 Ibid.

11 Beginning in 1928, the economy in the USSR was directed by a series of five-year-plans (*piatiletkas*).

12 Ivakhnyuk (2009). p. 7.

13 Distribution of graduates (*raspredelene*) - "an administrative mechanism of the migration policy used in the USSR (…) and aimed at providing economic projects and remote areas with required number of specialists (engineers, technicians, architects, teachers, doctors etc)": Ivakhnyuk I. (2009), p. 3.

14 Cutris G.E. (1996).

15 Ivakhnyuk I. (2009), p. 8.

16 Ibid, p. 11.

17 The residence of Estonians, Letts and Lithuanians in Siberia was the consequence of the forced deportation of Baltic countries' native populations after the Soviet annexation in 1940.

18 See: http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_nac_79.php?reg.

19 FSU (Former Soviet Union) countries – all 15 former Soviet Republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan).

20 Ibid.

21 See: The National Human Development Report (2008), p. 92.

22 See: http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2009/0367/barom03.php.

23 Unfortunately, for data published by the Federal Migration Service of Russia, there is no detailed documentation on the collection and aggregation procedure so it is not exactly clear what is covered.

24 There is a differentiation between "near abroad" and "far abroad" in Russia. The first definition means the FSU countries, the second one refers to all other states.

25 See: The National Human Development Report (2008), p. 94.

26 Only in 1990 and 1994-1996 did Russia have a positive net migration with Belarus. See: Rybakovsky L., Rayzantsev S. (2005), p. 6.

27 According to dates Rybakovsky L., Rayzantsev S. (2005) and FMS.

28 For instance, 150 articles about the threat of Chinese expansion were published in Russian mass media in 1993-1995. See: Alekseev M. (2000), p. 97.

29 Alekseev M. (2006), p. 47-48.

30 Ibid. p.99.

[31] Vitkovskaya G, Panarin S. (eds.) 2000, p. 208.

[32] Vitkovskaya G, Panarin S. (eds.) 2000, p. 207.

[33] "Labour migrants" is the official term for the guest workers in Russian Federation. But it is common in Russia to use the German word "gastarbeiter", not only in ordinary language and the mass media, but also in public speeches delivered by officials.

[34] See: The National Human Development Report (2008), p. 96.

[35] Rybakovsky L., Rayzantsev S. (2005), p. 14.

[36] See: The National Human Development Report (2008), p. 95.

[37] Ibid. p. 99-100.

[38] Doklad (2006), p. 50.

[39] Tyuryukanova E (2005), p. 74.

[40] Tyuryukanova E (2005), p. 86.

[41] Rybakovsky L., Rayzantsev S. (2005), p. 6.

[42] Ibid, p. 12.

[43] Ibid. p. 16.

[44] Rybakovsky L., Rayzantsev S. (2005), p. 10.

[45] According to FMS.

[46] According to FMS.

[47] Ivakhnyuk I. (2009), p. 17.

[48] Ivakhnyuk I. (2009), p. 23-24.

[49] Rayzantsev S. (2005), p. 39.

[50] Ivakhnyuk I. (2009), p. 24.

[51] Romanov I.A. (2006), p. 53.

[52] Ibid, p. 23.

[53] See: The National Human Development Report (2008), p. 80.

[54] Ivakhnyuk (2009), p. 30.

[55] Ibid, p. 32.

[56] Ibid, p. 35.

[57] Ibid, p. 38.

[58] All foreign citizens who came to Russia for more than three days have to register with the authorities.

[59] Ivakhnyuk (2009), p.57.

[60] For more information see: Nozhenko M. (2006).

[61] See: The National Human Development Report (2008), p. 93.

[62] Mukomel V. (2004), Rybakovsky L., Rayzantsev S. (2005), p. 9.

[63] Flynn, M. (2003).

[64] De Tinguy, A. (2003).

[65] For example, the Russian chess player Sergey Nikolaev, who was Yakut by birth, was killed by neo-Nazis in Moscow in 2007. The killers were found guilty of racist crime and sentenced to three to ten years imprisonment only because of the activity of Russian and international human rights organizations.

[66] See: The National Human Development Report (2008), p. 102.

[67] Ibid. p. 104.

[68] Mansoor A., Quillin B. (eds.) (2006), p. 104.

[69] Rayzantsev S. (2008), p. 73.

[70] Fadeicheva M.A. (2008), p. 169.

[71] Tyuryukanova E (2005), p. 86.

[72] Ivakhnyuk I. (2009), p. 22.

[73] According to UNHCR: http://www.unhcr.org/4641bebd11.html.

[74] According to UNHCR: http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e48d456.

[75] Ivakhnyuk (2009), p. 71.

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