

Legal factors influencing social integration of labour migrants from Central Asia

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Abstract. Investigation of the impact of legal factors on the integration of migrants provides an opportunity to understand how the legal environment in the receiving countries affects their social inclusion and integration into society. The purpose of this study was to analyse the legal aspects that affect the social adaptation and integration of migrants into the labour sphere. The study employed the following methods: structural-functional method, comparative-legal method, theoretical-predictive method, survey method. It was found that integration is a process that migrants must undergo, both as individuals and as a special socially differentiated group. Despite the existence of international and national laws, the migration of labour from Central Asia is often accompanied by various problems and challenges (illegal migration, lack of social protection, discrimination and inequality). It is necessary to create favourable social, legal, and economic conditions for labour migrants to remove obstacles to their social integration and adaptation by the host society. These conditions should include legalisation of their status, adequate housing, paid employment, social security, insurance, and legally guaranteed compensation payments, as well as ensuring social identification. Generally, it is critical to create a mechanism of integration-adaptation at a higher legislative level for effective support of social integration of labour migrants from Central Asia. To create a new culture of relations with migrants in the host society and to remove contradictions arising from socio-cultural and ethno-religious differences, its main components

Suggested Citation

Article's History: Received: 28.05.2024 Revised: 01.09.2024 Accepted: 25.09.2024

Askarov, U., Sultanova, M., Akbar kyzy, E., Salieva, D., & Dzheenbaeva, K.M. (2024). Legal factors influencing social integration of labour migrants from Central Asia. *Social & Legal Studios*, 7(3), 44-54. doi: 10.32518/sals3.2024.44.

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and content should have a clearly defined socio-cultural orientation. The practical significance of this study lies in the fact that all the theoretical provisions, conclusions, and recommendations can be used by the authorities responsible for migration processes to improve working conditions, protect rights, maintain social stability, stimulate economic development, and support intercultural understanding

Keywords: labour market; qualified professionals; social identification; employment abroad; mobility of labour force

Introduction

Labour migration is nowadays a fairly common phenomenon all over the world, which is considered in many countries as a serious problem, as it leads not only to an outflow of highly skilled workers and working population, but also to a decrease in national security. However, countries such as the Czech Republic, Japan, Singapore, on the contrary, encourage and accept labour migrants. In today's world, labour migration plays a key role in the economic development of many countries. Central Asian countries with considerable labour resources are among the largest regions of migrant workers. However, migration of workers from Central Asia to other countries is often accompanied by various legal problems.

Both in science and in practice, labour migration has many definitions. According to S. Zhumashbekova *et al.* (2023), there are two schools of thought that represent opposing scientific opinions on this issue. Labour migration can be broadly defined as any movement for the purpose of finding a job, even moving to a permanent place of residence, if the main driving force is the search for employment. The term "labour migration" can refer to movement associated with business ventures. Labour migration in the narrow sense refers to population migrations of short-term and temporary nature, with periodic return to the place of residence; in other words, labour migration does not mean permanent relocation to the area (region, country) of work.

The economic crisis is the main driver of labour migration as it has created labour shortages in Kyrgyzstan and consequently increased unemployment, especially in rural areas. I. Abdulloev *et al.* (2020), R. Ysmailova *et al.* (2020) addressed this problem. Researchers argue that the labour market is not balanced as there is a constant gap between the demand and supply of labour. The population is forced to seek better working conditions abroad to feed themselves and transfer some of their income back home due to low wages and lack of income. G.R. Azimova (2019) notes that the money that migrant workers bring into the country reduces poverty and helps migrant families spend more on goods and services. The researchers note considerable internal migration, especially from rural to urban areas, as well as external migration between Central Asian countries. The main source of labour migration in this case is seasonal trips to Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, and other countries. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are the source countries of migration flows from Central Asia. These countries are struggling with the challenges of rapid population growth and rural unemployment. Since there are not enough jobs in agriculture, it is the men and women who live in rural areas, and especially the youth, who are forced to migrate. Young people who migrate in search of work and income face particular challenges and risk factors. Furthermore, their departure leaves a demographic void that hinders the country's economic growth.

Migrants are a vital resource for human growth and also play a significant role in all Eastern European countries (Simpson, 2022). Nevertheless, it is the sector that most

affects the lives of nations and people. First of all, it concerns labour migration. The main obstacles in this area are the staggering amount of irregular migration, its helplessness, limited migration infrastructure, and informal and illegal activities related to a range of labour immigrant needs. D. Dzhususova and Zh. Ormokeeva (2023) note that illegal migrants, including labour migrants, lose legal protection in labour relations. As a result, this group of migrants is not subject to taxation and may even engage in criminal activities. Of these, half have purposes other than participation in labour relations. Foreign nationals who overstay their visa often work illegally in the country. It is clear that the uncontrolled entry of foreign nationals leads to more serious problems, in addition to social ones, which threaten the foundations of the economic stability of the state (Novak & Melnyk, 2022).

According to R. Urinboyev and S. Eraliev (2022), the majority of labour migrants from Central Asia are low-skilled workers performing heavy jobs that do not require higher education (construction, transport, catering, retail trade, agriculture, animal husbandry). Both positive and negative effects of labour migration are numerous. Remittances by migrants are crucial for improving the living conditions and quality of life of migrant families. One useful strategy for reducing poverty and impoverishment is labour migration. Large-scale labour migration raises the living standards of important demographic groups while easing pressure on the country's labour market. Labour migrants face many problems at the same time, they desperately need legal and social protection, as well as information and advisory support (Spytska, 2024).

Currently there are problems in studying the issues of contradictions and differences between the national legislation of the successor countries and international norms concerning the rights and protection of labour migrants, as well as how these differences may affect social integration and the legal status of migrants. Aspects of migration policy that could be improved to ensure better social integration are also understudied. According to the above, the purpose of this study was to examine the legal factors that affect the social adaptation and integration of labour migrants.

Materials and methods

The study employed a comprehensive approach, including both general scientific and special methods of research. Using the structural-functional method, the key terms of the topic, namely "labour migrant", "integration of labour migrants" were investigated, and the principal factors of labour migration from Central Asian countries were identified. The study explored what the process of labour migrants' integration implies in practice and identified the primary factors that affect the social integration and adaptation of labour migrants. The main planes in which the integration processes of migrants take place were identified. This stage of the study also considered the international law, national legislation, and

agreements between countries that play a vital role in the integration and adaptation of labour migrants. The opinions of other researchers on this issue were explored, which helped to formulate a unified idea about the legal factors that affect the social integration of migrants from Central Asia.

For an in-depth investigation of the topic, the study was conventionally divided into several parts. The first part investigated the social institutions that influence foreign nationals during their integration. The comparative legal method was used to investigate the structural features of both the countries of origin of migrants and the countries to which migrants arrive, which affect the labour integration of workers. The study identified the main legal problems and challenges in the migration of labour workers from Central Asia, which cause social integration of the studied category of persons. In the second part of this study, the theoretical and predictive method was used to investigate what factors determine the successful social integration of labour migrants, as well as what essential aspects should be considered upon developing migration policy. Recommendations were developed to successfully promote social integration and adaptation of labour migrants from Central Asian countries.

In addition, at this stage of the study, a survey was conducted among citizens of Central Asian countries that have experience of labour migration, namely Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The survey involved 150 people. 70% of respondents were male. 10% were aged 45 years and older, 65% of labour migrants interviewed were aged 30-45 years, and 25% were aged 20-30 years. On average, respondents had labour migration experience in the period from 2021 to 2022. As a result of the survey, information was obtained on the professional education of the respondents, the level of proficiency in the national language of the country where the respondents worked. The survey established whether the interviewed respondents have regular contacts with local residents, as well as how often and under what circumstances the contact takes place, as well as how local residents treated labour migrants. Information was obtained on how workers migrate (with family or alone) and for how long. Widespread violations of labour and social rights of migrant workers were identified. The

survey was conducted in March 2024. The sample for the survey of labour migrants from Central Asia, their contact details were obtained using online platforms and social networks. Many migrants actively use social media and online platforms to communicate and obtain information. Advertising the survey through such channels helped to attract participants. The survey involved 32 respondents from Kazakhstan, 49 respondents from Kyrgyzstan, 7 respondents from Tajikistan, 15 respondents from Turkmenistan, and 47 respondents from Uzbekistan. The survey was conducted anonymously in an online form, respecting all research ethics (WMA Declaration of..., 1975).

The investigation of this topic involved a review of the following sources: International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990); Law of Germany "On the Residence, Employment and Integration of Foreigners in Germany" (2008); Law of Turkey No. 6458 "On Foreign Citizens and International Protection" (2013); Canada Labour Code (1985); Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Kazakhstan, of the other part (2016); Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union, of the one part, and the Kyrgyz Republic, of the other part (2022), Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, of the other part (1998). The analysis of these sources helped to compare the legal status of migrants in different countries.

Results

Labour migration is an important aspect of the world economy and Central Asia plays a significant role in this phenomenon. Countries in this region, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, are major migrant sending countries and also receive considerable numbers of migrants from other regions (Table 1). However, migration processes are often accompanied by various legal aspects and problems affecting labour migrants from Central Asia.

Table 1. Number of labour migrants from Central Asian countries

Country of departure	Number of migrants abroad (thousand people)	Countries of employment of migrants
Kazakhstan	350-500	Russian Federation, Germany, USA, Canada, Israel, European countries
Kyrgyzstan	620-700	Russian Federation, Republic of Kazakhstan, Turkey, UAE, Qatar, Republic of Korea, USA, European countries
Tajikistan	700-850	Russian Federation, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Uzbekistan, Israel, USA, Canada, European countries
Turkmenistan	200-300	Russian Federation, Republic of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran
Uzbekistan	1,200-1,500	Russian Federation, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, USA, Middle East countries, European countries

Source: G.T. Alaeva *et al.* (2021)

A regional migration subsystem has emerged in Central Asia (Laruelle, 2013). One of the world's largest migration corridors in terms of population movements and remittances has developed between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan, on the one hand, and the countries of Central Asia, on the other hand. The three countries that are actively involved in migration processes in the region are

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan; these countries send considerable numbers of migrant workers abroad. Approximately 14% of the economically active population of Central Asian countries, or 3.8 million people, migrate between these countries and their host partners in search of work (Özer, 2022). The socio-economic, demographic, and political implications of large-scale migration processes in the

region are profound for both sending and receiving countries. Notably, labourers are a special type of migrant who cross national borders in search of employment opportunities or to buy or sell small quantities of goods. People migrate primarily for the following reasons: low wages, months-long delays in receiving payments, unemployment, poverty. Most often migrants are individuals with low status in society, representing unskilled or low-skilled workers. However, specialists with academic degrees, rare professions, and even academic titles can also become labour migrants. Three broad categories of labour migrants can be distinguished as follows: persons permanently leaving their country of residence; persons who work abroad for an extended time; so-called labour tourists who come to other countries for a short duration (a few days or months).

Several main categories of labour migrants were identified, including temporary labour migrants, migrant workers involved in project implementation, highly skilled labour migrants, seasonal labour migrants, and contract labour migrants (Şişman & Balun, 2020). Interns and students are two unique types of economically active labour migrants that need to be considered when analysing labour migrants. Moreover, it is important to remember that refugees and people who have chosen permanent residence abroad are entitled to freedom of labour. “Illegal labour market” consists of the vast majority of migrant workers who are also immigrants without documents.

The issue of integration and adaptation of labour migrants is crucial in this topic. By finding a solution, it is possible to improve current legal and socio-economic processes, increase understanding of the legal, economic, social, and cultural framework of modern society and create an effective immigration policy that accommodates the reality of the modern world. Migrant workers adapt to their new environment, making changes that better suit their needs and the needs of their new home, and work to maximise the relationship between the individual and their environment.

According to researchers, the term “integration” rather refers to external (international) migration, as it defines it as “the process of adaptation of an individual or social group (immigrant or group of immigrants) with socio-cultural, religious, and ethnic characteristics, different from the native population” (FitzGerald, 2022). Migrant integration entails two things: on the one hand, a specific set of administrative measures or attempts by the state and its apparatus to integrate a recently arrived population into the country’s institutions; on the other hand, migrant integration is an objectively ongoing process of integration or something that takes place without regard to anyone’s subjective efforts”. Experts believe that the establishment of assistance organisations and the integration and adaptation of migrants should be the main focus of the development of a new regulatory framework for migration policy (Nyberg-Sørensen *et al.*, 2002). The integration processes of migrants are simultaneously taking place on four planes:

1. Labour market and labour relations. The key indicators of integration in this context are employment and income.
2. Administrative legal sphere. It includes legal regulation of migration relations.
3. Social protection system covering all levels of education, medicine. The degree to which labour migrants have access to this system directly affects their integration. Exclusion from social protection is a clear barrier to integration.

4. Cultural sphere. The principal areas of tension arise in the cultural sphere, primarily related to different views on integration within the host country and among migrants. This includes publicly using one’s native language, demonstrating one’s cultural uniqueness to others, and maintaining behavioural norms associated with one’s country of origin (ranging from family relationships to culinary preferences) (Norris & Inglehart, 2012).

The process of migrants’ integration into society involves both their acceptance as members of the country’s citizens and the creation of favourable conditions, which depend on the host society’s willingness to welcome new immigrant groups and use their unique qualities to enrich the country. Upon investigating the integration process, it is crucial to determine whether the migration of skilled professionals is temporary or permanent. The characteristics of countries of origin and the policies pursued in relation to their skilled resources are linked to the temporal aspects of migration. The length of stay in these countries is also determined by analysing the conditions in the destination countries. At the same time, it is crucial to have a clear immigration policy on qualified labour force, chances to enter the qualified labour market, recognised citizenship rights. Structural features of migrants’ countries of origin influence the process of labour integration of qualified workers. These features include labour market conditions in the country of origin, the extent to which it responds to the dynamics of migrant flows, and the extent to which international mobility serves as a qualification mechanism within the country of origin. The political conditions of both the country of origin and the country of destination, the social dynamics of the migration process – all these should be factored in upon investigating the integration processes of qualified migration.

Various social institutions influence foreign nationals in their integration. Those who have more influence and help in day-to-day and professional matters will also influence the migrant’s motivation and attitudes towards the host country, the local population, and issues related to regularisation. Newly arrived populations isolate themselves in response to hostile interactions with the host community, confrontation with inequalities in labour and housing markets (i.e., discrimination) and hostility based on race, ethnicity, or religion. They alienate themselves from everyone except “their own” small group. “Their own” are willing to help solve problems in this case, but their help is not always gratuitous. Foreign nationals become hostages to their circumstances when faced with a lack of official legal aid, language barriers, and other obstacles. Therefore, experts state that “for migrant integration to be effective, it should not be assigned responsibility” (Gray, 2006). Labour migrants can make every effort for integration and adaptation, but they still have no chance if society rejects their integration.

Labour migrants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan often settle in groups with other citizens working in analogous fields. The language, traditions, customs, and worldview of migrants familiar with their home region stay intact in a closed ethnic homogeneous group. Working in multinational teams forces them to interact more in the local language, which makes them most active in forming social ties with the community. Making social connections with people outside the family and community through work facilitates adaptation to changing life circumstances. Over the last five years, labour migrants from Central Asia have

become less educated: about 40% have no professional education. Foreign language proficiency is one of the key markers of migrant's social adaptation. As a result of the survey, only 6 out of 15 respondents aged 45 years and older, 85 out of 97 respondents aged 30-45 years, and 32 out of 38 respondents aged 20-30 years speak foreign languages. Of all interviewed migrants, only one fifth have regular contacts with locals: some have contacts with locals outside of work, and have daily contact with locals at work (Fig. 1).

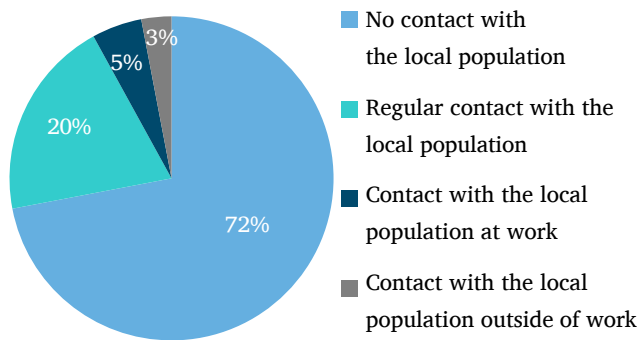


Figure 1. Contact of labour migrants with the local population

Source: compiled by the authors

Meanwhile, 48% of migrants reported experiencing domestic conflicts, compared to 52% of migrants who said they had no conflicts with locals. Thus, 5 respondents aged 45 years and older reported having minor conflicts with locals; 10 respondents aged 20-30 years also reported minor conflicts. Respondents aged 30-40 years had the highest number of conflicts (49 people). When asked how migrants feel about the local population, about half of the respondents gave a negative answer (78 people), only 48 people gave a positive answer and about 24 people found it difficult to answer. Such indicators are probably related to the fact that one third of the interviewed migrants have no interaction with the local population and, as a consequence, are unable to give any description of these relations (Fig. 2).

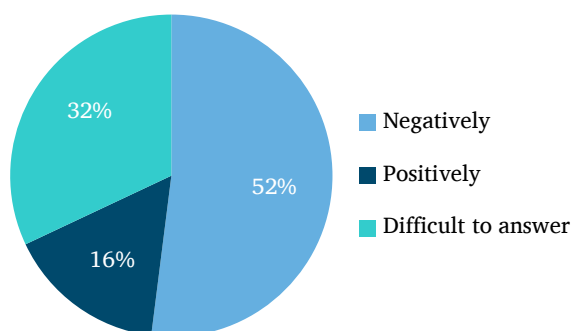


Figure 2. How migrants relate to the local population

Source: compiled by the authors

Migrants themselves are responsible for their integration, as well as for the integration of the government, organisations, and population of the host country; the host society is responsible for ensuring that the implementation of the legal status of migrants facilitates their involvement in the social, cultural, economic, and civil life of the society;

migrants themselves must respect the norms and fundamental values of the host country and take an active part in the integration process without losing their unique identity. These principles require communication between the migrant community and the host society, as well as the infrastructure necessary for integration measures, the establishment of various programmes for different categories of migrants, and the involvement of civil society institutions. All participants in the labour exchange process seek to derive a concrete benefit from it. Many countries benefit from international migration, which usually means redistribution of labour, rotation of personnel, exchange of production experience, increased demand for labour and increased competitiveness of national economies, all of which contribute to the development of technology and production in all spheres.

The evolution of global migration processes is closely linked to the practical and legal actions of international organisations. The primacy of international law over internal legislation is determined by countries that take an active part in migration movements and ratify various conventions, recommendations, and protocols. This is significant both for the state and for migrants themselves, as it affects both their ability to protect their rights and freedoms abroad and their ability to integrate into the global community. International law, national legislation, and agreements between countries play an essential role in integration and adaptation. International agreements play a vital role in regulating migration flows and protecting the rights of migrants. The UN General Assembly adopted International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990). This convention regulates international labour migration. The Convention defines a "migrant worker" as a person who works for pay in a country of which they are not a national. Individual categories of migrants are defined to clarify the general idea of a labour migrant. They recognise the right of migrants to protection from discrimination, equal opportunities, and social protection.

Apart from international agreements, the national legislation of the receiving countries is of great importance for Central Asian migrants. Different countries set their own rules and requirements for obtaining work visas, work permits, and other documents for foreign workers. For instance, the Gulf countries have a sponsorship system that makes migrants highly dependent on their employers, which can lead to violations of their rights (Valenta *et al.*, 2020). Law of Germany "On the Residence, Employment and Integration of Foreigners in Germany" (2008) sets out the rules for the residence of foreign nationals in Germany, including employment and integration. It contains provisions on residence permits, work permits, periods of stay, and the procedure for extending the status. Law of Turkey No. 6458 "On Foreign Citizens and International Protection" (2013) defines the general principles and rules regarding the entry, stay, and exit of foreigners from Turkey. It also regulates visas and work permits for foreign workers. Canada Labour Code (1985) regulates working conditions for all workers, including migrant workers. These include regulations on pay, working hours, holidays, safety and health at work, and other aspects of the employment relationship. Migrant workers may be transferred to countries with more developed economies, governments, and legal systems due to gaps in the laws of their home countries governing labour migration procedures. Unbalanced socio-economic development of individual

countries and liberalised access of foreign labour to other countries are the main reasons for modern labour migration.

Sending and receiving countries can conclude bilateral and multilateral agreements to regulate migration flows and protect migrants' rights. These agreements may concern visa regime issues, the legal status of migrants, labour conditions, and social protection. A crucial aspect of migration law is refugee law (Mourad & Norman, 2020). Thus, the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union, of the one part, and the Kyrgyz Republic, of the other part (2022), the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Kazakhstan, of the other part (2016), and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, of the other part (1998) establish a framework for cooperation between the EU and the Central Asian countries in various fields, including migration and human rights. They may contain provisions on mutual support in migration matters, including combating irregular migration and cooperation in ensuring the rights of migrants.

Many labour migrants from Central Asia may also be refugees or persons in need of international protection. In this context, it is essential to ensure compliance with international law regarding the protection of refugees and the provision of appropriate legal safeguards. Despite the existence of international and national laws, migration of labour workers from Central Asia is often accompanied by various problems.

Illegal migration is one of the principal problems. Many labour migrants are forced to resort to illegal border crossing methods due to restrictions and difficulties in obtaining official documents. This makes them vulnerable to exploitation and violation of their rights. Widespread temporary "circular" migration, which is often seasonal, is encouraged by the absence of visa regimes and the close proximity of the region's member countries (Constant, 2020). Migrants tend to have a low awareness of the laws of the countries to which they are travelling (Boswell & Badenhoop, 2021). Although they may enter the country legally, they often start working there without proper documentation (Segal, 2019). As a result, they are deprived of social protection and are not subject to income tax by the state. To promote legitimate temporary work, laws need to be passed, one of which should simplify the process of entering and leaving the country.

Irregular migration is defined as crossing a state border without authorisation, which includes passing through checkpoints, hiding from customs and border guards, using false documents or visas, acting alone or with the help of unauthorised persons, and residing in the territory of a foreign country without the official consent of the relevant state authorities (Donato & Massey, 2016). Individuals or organisations of individuals who organise irregular migration, assist in crossing borders in violation of legally established national and/or international regulations, and smuggle migrants to obtain benefits. Persons who forcibly enter a foreign country and their continued stay there do not pose such a threat to the law. The actions of organised criminal groups that import many irregular migrants and use them for various illegal purposes, such as forced labour, ensuring their stay as transit or as cheap labour (Campana, 2020). Irregular migrants may have limited access to services and

resources, leading to a sense of isolation in local society. This can create problems of understanding, integration, and community support.

Another significant problem and integration factor is the lack of social protection for labour migrants. Many are denied access to social services, healthcare, and other support. It is difficult for labour migrants to access social services enjoyed by the local population (Fig. 3). Migrants face unique challenges when trying to access healthcare. Without a medical examination, labour migrants working on patents are effectively excluded from the healthcare system (Loganathan *et al.*, 2020). According to the study, few migrants had health insurance.

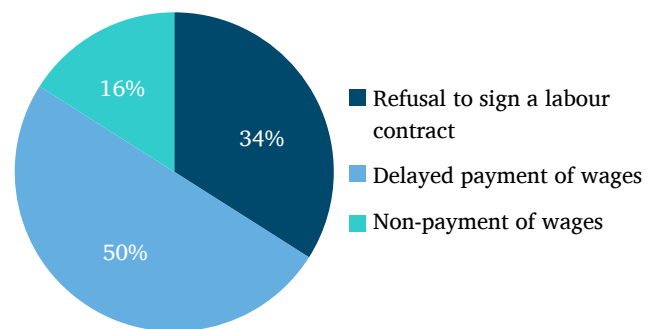


Figure 3. Types of violations of migrants' social and labour rights

Source: compiled by the authors

This dramatically increases the risks for both local populations and migrants. Legal, civilised migration requires respect for the rights of labour migrants, but these rights, according to the survey, are regularly violated. During the survey, 51 migrants reported that employers refused to grant them formal legal status by signing a labour contract; 75 reported that they were delayed in receiving their wages; and 24 reported that they had not received any wages at all. 37% of respondents had their passports cancelled, 46% were denied the right to leave their place of work, and 17% were denied access to medical care.

Discrimination and inequality can seriously complicate the integration of labour migrants into new societies. Migrant workers are often discriminated against in the workplace and in society because of their origin, ethnicity, or migrant status (Esses, 2021). It is difficult for migrants from Central Asian countries to enter the labour market. Discrimination takes the form of restrictions on immigrant workers' access to certain categories of jobs, as well as differences in pay and working conditions. Currently, over 70% of migrants rely on friends and family or well-established informal migrant networks to help them find work. To help migrants enter the labour market in destination countries, employment mechanisms need to be better institutionalised. Poor housing conditions for labour migrants continue to be a serious problem in large cities. According to the survey, many migrants (125 respondents out of 150) live where they work. These are unsuitable premises previously intended for residential use, but converted into residential premises: attics, basements, unfinished or to-be-demolished buildings, caravans, shacks. These facilities often lack electricity, heat, water, and sanitation. Many migrants spend many years living and working in major cities but never move beyond their

immediate neighbourhood (Mucci *et al.*, 2019). These living conditions make it difficult for migrant workers to adjust and they often develop a poor opinion of the local population. As for living and working conditions, 46% of migrants surveyed believe that they are worse than at their previous place of residence.

Labour migrants from Central Asia with higher education and professional training have difficulty finding jobs that match their qualifications. The responses of numerous respondents further confirmed this assumption: of the 105 people who have a college degree, 85% report difficulty in the job search process. More than half of the participants, including both current migrants and returnees, had higher education diplomas. Discrimination and inequality lead to social exclusion of labour migrants in the new society (Protosavitska, 2023). They feel “marginalised” or “unaccepted” in the local environment, which makes it difficult for them to integrate and causes psychological difficulties. The existence of a suitable institutional framework and inter-agency coordination is crucial for the successful implementation of measures to protect the rights of citizens while working abroad and maximise the benefits of labour migration. Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, three countries of origin in North and Central Asia, have established autonomous migration agencies that control, among other things, the movement of labour beyond their borders (Chudinovskikh & Denisenko, 2020). As a result, it is usually observed that these countries of origin attach great importance to migration policies when it comes to addressing foreign policy objectives.

Successful social integration of labour migrants depends on the effective consideration and implementation of these legal aspects that ensure equal opportunities and protection of their rights. Therefore, it is important to consider some aspects. Ensuring labour migrants’ legal status in the country of arrival is a priority (includes obtaining visas, work permits, and other necessary documents so that they can legally reside and work in the new country). Ensuring access of labour migrants to social services such as healthcare, education, and housing (includes the development of policies that facilitate migrants’ access to these services, regardless of their residence status). Developing and implementing integration programmes that help labour migrants adapt to a new culture, language, and society (this may include language courses, life skills training, cultural activities, and job search support). Providing labour migrants with access to legal support and counselling in case of problems or conflicts in the workplace or in the community. For instance, the following programmes have been successful in helping labour migrants from Central Asia in the United States: the H-2A programme provides temporary visas for seasonal agricultural workers and the H-2B programme for seasonal non-qualified workers. The EB-3 visa programme provides permanent resident status for certain categories of workers, including non-qualified workers.

Generally, to successfully promote social integration and adaptation of labour migrants from Central Asian countries, it is urgent to develop an integration-adaptation mechanism at the highest legislative level. Its main components and contents should have a clearly expressed socio-cultural orientation, be aimed at forming a new culture of relations with migrants in the host society, eliminating contradictions arising from socio-cultural and ethno-religious differences.

Discussion

Most Central Asian migrants making their way to EU member states have little opportunity to learn about the activities of host governments, to influence national, regional, and local decision-making processes, or to influence the implementation of integration policies, as evidenced by surveys of labour migrant respondents. Numerous factors contribute to this, such as poor inclusion of people in the information and communication space of host countries, narrow focus on higher earnings, job fatigue, lack of social interaction. This can be explained by the fact that labour migrants know very little about migration policies and practices and have very little knowledge of legislation.

Having investigated the effects of the global economic crisis on labour migration in Central Asia, E. Marat (2009) identifies a range of problems which, as his findings suggest, still exist. These include:

- ▶ lack of communication between countries on migration-related issues;
- ▶ inadequate regional and national migration policies;
- ▶ lack of mechanisms for migration data collection;
- ▶ poor coordination and understanding of migration issues by government agencies;
- ▶ insufficient capacity to manage migration and border crossing;
- ▶ widespread exploitation of migrants for labour and sexual purposes;
- ▶ lack of capacity to use migrant remittances for the economic development of their countries.

Asymmetric and metamorphic aspects of international migration are essential factors. Unlike internal migration, which affects a single social environment, migration movements involve multiple countries, each of which has established its system of treatment of labour migrants, as well as rules and guidelines regarding work, housing, social protection, education, and other areas (De Haas *et al.*, 2019). The fact that societies themselves differ in terms of origin and perception is another manifestation of asymmetry. At the same time, migration leads to metamorphoses in both migrant populations and societies of origin and reception. Changes in the demographics of both societies can be used as an illustration.

According to the findings of the researchers of current study, the problem of surplus labour force in the Central Asian republics is solved by the departure of labour migrants. Labour migration reduces unemployment, lowers the costs of social benefits, retrains the unemployed, organises public works for them, and helps their families. Thus, S. Piypromdee (2021) notes that labour migrants develop new productive and organisational skills while working abroad. Central Asian migrants raise their overall educational and cultural standards because they live in a country with more advanced technology, stricter regulations, and higher labour standards. In addition, they are expanding their personal ties with foreign partners. The experience and knowledge that migrants acquire is invaluable and will benefit them back home. Following T. Lang and R. Nadler (2014), migrants working abroad save start-up money to open small and medium-sized businesses upon their return. As a result, the development of the middle class is encouraged.

The degree of integration of labour migrants into the host society depends on the acceptance of these migrants and the availability of organisational, material, cultural and

legal resources for this purpose (Grosescu, 2023). It is determined not only by the intentions of labour migrants. Having investigated the ability of a migrant to adapt and integrate into the host country, K. Saguin (2020) notes that it largely depends on the availability and effectiveness of their legal and social protection. The conducted study confirms this: the most evident problems for migrant workers are those related to their pay as well as that of locals, the availability of health insurance, how they use their free time, and whether they can really defend their rights at the local level. It is worth adding that it is impossible to separate the adaptation of labour migrants from their integration. Although they are not the same thing, these ideas are related. The opposing processes of adaptation and integration can occur to varying degrees in a dynamic social context. There are many different cases of illegal, anti-social, and violent behaviour among irregular migrants, especially those who are deprived of employment, social, and legal protection (Shcherbatiuk *et al.*, 2024). The researcher points out that in recent years illegal migration has been used as a kind of mechanism for regulating migration. Such irregular migration is exclusively legal; its illegality is related to both regulatory mechanisms and the legal standards in place. Under such circumstances, migrant workers can be employed either legally or illegally.

According to A. Lochmann *et al.* (2019) and the migrants themselves, the success of finding and obtaining it is determined by several criteria. First of all, mastery of the national language. The employer's mentality against hiring a stranger is considered. In addition, the applicant's level of professionalism, legal status as a labour migrant, and availability of information about the position they hold are also important. As the researchers point out, activating social capital and migration networks (friends, family, and acquaintances who work in the EU or elsewhere) will help to find a job. It is also important to mention other spreading forms of job search, such as the use of the Internet and other modern means of communication (Spytska, 2023). It is essential to remember that labour migrants from Central Asian countries do not expect or hope for assistance in finding a job from the population of the host country or state institutions, as evidenced by the survey results.

According to S. Yildirim (2019), unlike other groups of migrants from other post-Soviet states, labour migrants from Central Asian countries face serious problems in social integration and are highly unwelcome in some countries. Cultural, linguistic, religious, and attitudinal differences hinder the successful integration of immigrants from these countries into the host society. The findings of the survey confirm this. Since the main purpose of the visit is to earn money to send home to relatives, citizens make no effort to establish social ties with migrants, and the visitors themselves often have no intention of engaging in active interaction with the local population, as they are determined to return to their country of origin after the visit. In this sense, labour migrants from Central Asia interact less with the local population than representatives of other ethnic groups who came from the former Soviet republics, even though they generally assess the attitude of the country's citizens towards them well (Palmer & Drbohlav, 2022). Furthermore, they are more likely than others to face negative attitudes based on nationality.

Learning the language of the country to which migrants move, as mentioned earlier, is the first step in the integration process for migrants. Exploring this issue, L. Rocca *et*

al. (2020) argue that language serves as the primary means of communication for both immigrants and the host community. The process of language learning is greatly influenced by the host nation. All major groups of characteristics of the integration index include the need to speak the language of the country of immigration. A. Pot *et al.* (2020) also argue that proficiency in a professional language is a prerequisite for both effective career development and implementation of the principle of labour mobility. Language proficiency is a prerequisite for citizenship and permanent residence status, as well as for family reunification (for immigrant family members). Most migrants, according to research, try to speak the language of their new nation fluently. Undoubtedly, the main reason for this is the realisation that being able to speak another language opens more job opportunities and increases the chances of securing a well-paid position. But it is also important to remember that mastering a language requires respect for the people who speak it, their customs, and culture.

Researchers look at various legal factors that affect the social integration of labour migrants from Central Asia. One of the key factors is the legislation regulating migration and the status of migrants. The flexibility, clarity, and fairness of laws affect migrants' ability to integrate into society and the labour market. Legislation concerning labour migration rights, such as the right to work, working conditions, and protection against discrimination, affects how successfully migrants can integrate into the work environment. The existence of programmes and policies for the integration of migrants, including language courses, professional adaptation, and access to education and healthcare, contributes to their successful adaptation and integration. Effective measures to combat discrimination and xenophobia create more favourable conditions for the integration of migrants, allowing them to feel accepted and needed in society.

Conclusions

Countries in the study region, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, are major migrant sending countries. "Migrant worker" is a person who works for pay in a country of which they are not a citizen. Individual categories of migrants are defined to clarify the general idea of a labour migrant. Migrants themselves are responsible for their integration, as well as for the integration of the government, organisations, and population of the host country. The host society is responsible for ensuring that the realisation of the legal status of migrants facilitates their participation in the social, cultural, economic, and civil life of the society; migrants themselves should respect the norms and fundamental values of the host country and take an active part in the integration process without losing their unique identity. Despite the existence of international and national laws, migration of labour workers from Central Asia is often accompanied by various problems and challenges (illegal migration, lack of social protection, discrimination, and inequality).

It is necessary to create favourable social, legal, and economic conditions for labour migrants to remove obstacles to their social integration and adaptation by the host society. These conditions should include legalisation of their status, decent housing, gainful employment, social security, insurance, and legally guaranteed compensation payments, as well as ensuring a social identification process. To achieve

this goal, it is necessary to establish and strengthen social ties with the indigenous population and to develop partnerships and collectivist social relations. Tolerance and multiculturalism are also important concepts to develop (recognising culturally distinct communities from mainstream society and giving them special rights, including the right to protect their cultural autonomy). It is crucial to give migrant workers important social roles and responsibilities, to promote close interaction with them in social structures and institutions, and to provide language training for foreign workers. The ability of a labour migrant to successfully integrate into the host society depends on their proficiency in the local language. Furthermore, it is crucial to promote intercultural communication and increase the local population's understanding of the customs and cultures of the peoples, ethnic and ethnographic groups to which the vast majority of labour migrants belong.

Generally, to successfully promote social integration and adaptation of labour migrants from Central Asian coun-

tries, it is urgent to develop an integration-adaptation mechanism at the highest legislative level. Its main components and contents should have a clearly expressed socio-cultural orientation, be aimed at forming a new culture of relations with migrants in the host society, eliminating contradictions arising from socio-cultural and ethno-religious differences.

The prospect for further research is to assess the effectiveness of various programmes and measures to support labour integration of migrants based on legal mechanisms. This may include analysis of training programmes, employment support, legal aid mechanisms.

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of interest

None.

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Юридичні чинники впливу на соціальну інтеграцію трудових мігрантів із Центральної Азії

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Анотація. Вивчення впливу юридичних чинників на інтеграцію мігрантів дає змогу зрозуміти, як правове середовище в країнах-приймачах впливає на їхнє соціальне пристосування і включення в суспільство. Мета цього дослідження полягала в аналізі юридичних аспектів, що впливають на процес соціальної адаптації та інтеграції мігрантів у трудову сферу. У процесі дослідження було використано такі методи: структурно-функціональний метод, порівняльно-правовий метод, теоретико-прогностичний метод, метод анкетування. У результаті дослідження було встановлено, що інтеграція є процесом, який мають пройти мігранти, як особистості, так і як особлива соціально вразлива група. Незважаючи на існування міжнародних і національних законів, міграція трудових працівників із Центральної Азії часто супроводжується різноманітними проблемами та викликами (незаконна міграція, брак соціального захисту, дискримінація та нерівність). Необхідно створити сприятливі соціальні, правові та економічні умови для трудових мігрантів, щоб усунути перешкоди для їхньої соціальної інтеграції та адаптації з боку приймаючого суспільства. Ці умови мають включати легалізацію їхнього статусу, гідне житло, оплачувану зайнятість, соціальне забезпечення, страхування і гарантовані законом компенсаційні виплати, а також забезпечення процесу соціальної ідентифікації. Загалом, вкрай важливо створити механізм інтеграції-адаптації на вищому законодавчому рівні для ефективної підтримки соціальної інтеграції трудових мігрантів із країн Центральної Азії. Для створення нової культури стосунків із мігрантами в приймаючому суспільстві та зняття суперечностей, що виникають через соціокультурні та етнорелігійні відмінності, її основні компоненти й наповнювачі повинні мати чітко виражену соціокультурну спрямованість. Практична значущість даної роботи полягає в тому, що всі теоретичні положення, висновки та рекомендації можуть бути використані органами влади, до компетенції яких належать питання міграційних процесів, для поліпшення умов праці, захисту прав, збереження соціальної стабільності, стимулюванні економічного розвитку та підтримці міжкультурного взаєморозуміння

Ключові слова: ринок праці; кваліфіковані фахівці; соціальна ідентифікація; працевлаштування за кордоном; мобільність робочої сили