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VALENTINA SCHENSNOVICH. PROBLEMS OF ADAPTATION AND INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN RUSSIA: THE ROLE OF RELIGION. Condensed abstract.

Keywords: socio-cultural adaptation, adaptation and integration of migrants in Russia, state migration policy, intercultural interaction, stereotypes, perception of cultural differences among youth, religious factor, transnationalism, diaspora.

Valentina Schensnovich,

Research Associate,

INION RAN

e-mail: vl-lyuba9@yandex.ru

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1. Kulbachevskaya Olga V. Socio-Cultural Adaptation and Integration of Migrants in Russia: On the Issue of Intercultural Interaction // *Vestnik antropologii*, 2020, № 4 (52). P. 136–152.

2. Ledeneva Viktoriya Yu., Begassilov Bakytzhan T. Influence of Religious Factor on the Integration of Muslim Migrants in Russia // *Voprosy upravleniia*, 2021, № 1 (68). P. 118–130.

The article by Olga Kulbachevskaya, research associate, Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography RAS, [1] examines the relationship between migrants and Russian society, as well as its impact on integration processes. According to the Migration Policy Concept for 2019–2025, environment for adaptation of migrants is

set to be established through new mechanisms of social and cultural adaptation; measures to prevent segregation of migrants are also required.

The author notes that there have been improvements in the area of adaptation of migrants in Russia in recent years; however, there is still no state-based infrastructure covering the entire country, which would use common standards of training, information and socio-cultural programmes for migrants. To date, there is neither specific television channel focused on socio-cultural adaptation of labour migrants nor accommodation infrastructure for them. Adaptation and integration issues are mainly addressed by the public sector that possesses both experience and techniques, but lacks administrative and financial resources. Civil society institutions are thus unable to provide services to migrants to the extent necessary.

The researcher believes that migrants from rural areas who come to cities are the ones who need adaptation the most; this is basically social adaptation to urban space that has nothing to do with ethno-cultural characteristics. Language adaptation is also of essence, given that the more time has passed since the collapse of the USSR, the more migrants without sufficient knowledge of the language come to Russia from the former Union Republics.

The immediate tasks in the area of socio-cultural adaptation and integration are assigned to the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs (FADN), which is responsible for developing a comprehensive multi-level system of adaptation and integration of foreign citizens in Russia, taking into account different lifestyles of the population and national interests of Russia. FADN undertakes activities designed to promote social and cultural adaptation of migrants and therefore ensure interethnic and interreligious peace on the territory of Russia.

The author points out that from the standpoint of conflict-free interethnic coexistence, integration is the most preferable and efficient solution, which provides migrants with the opportunity to preserve their cultural identity and at the same time adopt foreign

cultural attributes. Integration suggests an intercultural dialogue between migrants and the ethnic majority; assimilation by newly arrived immigrants of the basic values and norms of the Russian sociocultural environment; and adjustment by the host community of social institutions to the needs and demands of new ethnic groups.

However, the level of interest in integration of migrants exhibited by the local population of Russia remains considerably low. The locals tend to put animosity of some migrants down to negative stereotypes about them. Negative stereotypes and migration risks are primarily formed in the context of differences in cultural backgrounds. Having analyzed multiple comments about online articles on migration, the author notes that most of the comments have a negative connotation and indicate hostility towards migrants. Only a few per cent of the total number of commentators are speaking up for migrants.

It should be noted that schools and universities bring migrant and local students closer together, make them find common ground during their studies. This makes educational institutions the best environment for acquiring the skills of intercultural dialogue and integration of migrant children into Russian society. In this regard, the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography RAS, together with the Network for Ethnic Monitoring and Early Warning (EAWARN), conducted a series of surveys in Moscow schools and universities in 2017–2018. The objective of the study was to establish whether there was a need for ethno-cultural education and define the nature of the relationship between foreign and local students. The polls were carried out by means of questionnaires in secondary educational institutions (schools, lyceums, gymnasiums) and universities of Moscow.

The study shows that more than half of the respondents are neutral about joint education with migrants, and one third of those surveyed welcome it. Only one tenth of the respondents express their negative attitude towards migrants in classes and

groups. At the same time, almost half of students believe that migrants are fully integrated into the educational process. All this generally indicates the existence of amiable interethnic and intercultural relations in schools and universities of Moscow. This is also confirmed by the overwhelming majority of respondents (almost 90 per cent) who have not encountered negative attitudes because of their language, nationality and religion. A little more than one tenth of the interviewees have received negative attention, with half of them because of nationality, the other half because of language and religion.

In general, the research shows that Moscow youth have a neutral view of cultural differences and little interest in national cultures of others. Those students who take into account cultural differences pay attention primarily to traditions and norms of behaviour of foreign students; language and nationality are the second and third most important factors for them, respectively. Fewer young people pay attention to religious differences. According to the results of the study, neutral stereotypical attitudes prevail in schools and universities of Moscow, with more than half of the students holding such views. The stereotypes are as follows:

- One third of the respondents: "I do not really trust them, but they do not bother me either";
- A quarter of the respondents: "I do not support them, but do not shun them either";
- A quarter of the respondents: "I get neither benefits nor problems from them";
- One fifth of the respondents: "I have no particular interest, but allow communication".

The author notes that students are most prejudiced about fellow students of other religion. The respondents feel that students with other native languages are more integrated into society than those of other religions. Half of the respondents believe that migrants of other faith are fully integrated; one fifth of them indicate significant or certain level of integration; and

only one tenth of the respondents feel that fellow students with other religious backgrounds are totally isolated from the society.

The author concludes that despite negative stereotypical views about students of different cultures, shared by more than one tenth of the respondents, most of the students are tolerant; positive developments of relations between students of different cultural and religious backgrounds are obvious. State institutions might find it helpful to use the educational process as one of the tools for adaptation and integration of migrants. It is vital to introduce a unified methodology for developing the skills of intercultural dialogue into schools and universities.

Despite the fact that proper environment for successful integration of migrants in Russia is yet to be created, there have been positive changes in this area over the past few years. Firstly, the efforts to teach the Russian language, history and fundamentals of law have been stepped up. Secondly, the authorities are actively supporting non-profit organizations that carry out activities to help adaptation and integration of migrants into the host society.

Viktoriya Ledeneva, DSc(Sociology), Institute of Sociology RAS, and Bakytzhan Begassilov, Narxoz University, [2] analyze the role of the religious factor in adaptation of migrants into socio-cultural, linguistic and ethno-religious environment of the host community, as well as the influence of religious practices on their integration in Russia. In globalizing world, migrants create new behaviour patterns and transnational practices (including religious ones) that may either facilitate or hinder their integration into a new society. According to transnationalism theories, immigrants of the 21st century belong to two communities at the same time – a native one and a foreign one – but they are gradually included in the institutions of the host country.

In the study, the authors are trying to assess the role of diaspora in shaping the religious identity of migrants. Diaspora is essentially a bridge connecting migrants with their homeland,

which means the collective memory of the homeland and strong ethnic awareness caused by a sense of discrimination in host communities. In September 2020, a survey of the members of the expert council of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs (FADN) was conducted; experts highlighted an important role of diasporas in everyday life of migrants in Russia. In recent years, there has been a qualitative change in the activities of diasporas. They have stepped up their efforts to facilitate adaptation and integration of migrants, have assumed greater responsibility for the actions of compatriots arriving from abroad and have set up the Russian language courses for them. However, sociological monitoring conducted annually by Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) show that Russians are still apprehensive of Muslim migrants.

In November 2019, at the request of FADN, VTsIOM conducted an all-Russian survey on interethnic relations in Russia. They specifically examined the attitude of Russians to religion, faith and migrants. According to the results, only 7.8 per cent of Russians dislike representatives of other religions: 9.2 per cent of Orthodox Christians, 1.6 per cent of Muslims and 7.2 per cent of people of other faiths have religious prejudices. The most frequent objects of hostility are 'Islamists' and 'Muslims', as the interviewees put it. It should be noted that the actions of migrants, as a rule, do not trigger interethnic and interreligious conflicts; however, the majority of respondents argue for some kind of control in order to prevent radicalization of Muslims. The poor are particularly alarmed by the huge number of migrants since they have to compete with them in the labour market; they are more likely to lose than benefit from the presence of migrants.

The authors note that those migrants who are successful in the job market prefer to do business with relatives and people of the same faith as theirs. Moreover, studies demonstrate a link between the religious activity among migrants and illegal business based on family and religious ties. The respondents critically assess the situation, pointing out that with the growing

number of migrants the likelihood of intense interethnic conflicts is increasing, which in turn hampers the integration of migrants into local communities. The local population, on the whole, sees migrants as carriers of an alien culture; a source of crime; a cause of unemployment and a decrease in wages; and a threat of spreading of infectious diseases.

Negative attitude from the bulk of the local population sometimes trigger a backlash from migrants, making them behave insolently and flout traditions, culture and laws of the host country. Cultural and socio-economic barriers and lack of social roots further alienate migrants from the local population, forcing them to unite in order to solve common problems. The regularization of migrants, which is obligatory in Russia, affects both the labour activities of a migrant and his choice whether to adapt to the host society or alienate from it. Official statistics do not allow monitoring the number of legal migrants from Central Asian countries, but only shows a general trend in the employment of migrants, many of whom live and work in Russia illegally. According to the officials from the Main Directorate for Migration Affairs (GUVM) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there are about 3 million illegal migrants in Russia. As a rule, newly arrived labour migrants from Central Asia have zero experience of living in a foreign cultural environment, which increases social and interethnic tensions. Migrants break away from familiar social environment and find themselves in a completely different ethnic, cultural and linguistic environment. They lack motivation to adapt to the environment where there is a developed network of ethnic diasporas with a high level of social autonomy; consequently, this gives rise to spatial segregation and enclavization – migrants choose to reside together in order to preserve their traditional religious patterns of conduct. Flouting of the law on the part of foreign citizens and the presence of illegal migrants among them create a favourable environment for shadow economy and corruption. Members of migrant families, especially children, face challenges that foster

their maladjustment; it should be noted that these problems are much more acute for the second generation, initially uprooted from their homeland. According to FADN experts, those territories where resettlers from Central Asia and Transcaucasia live in enclaves are of special concern. There is an increase in the number of representatives of non-traditional Islam who adhere to other values than those of traditional Islam. This naturally fuels local conflicts on religious grounds.

The authors point out that since there is no developed infrastructure for ethnic communities in Russia, kinship, clan and national ties serve as a major adaptation mechanism. Migrants join these social groups by choosing an ethnic community over a host society. Labour migration provides a breeding ground for the development of transnational religious networks. Religious networks, in large part, solve the problems of employment and livelihood of migrants.

The authors conclude that a thorough examination of the religious practices of Muslim migrants from Central Asian countries to Russia has identified the main reasons for their weak integration into Russian society. It is impossible to attain harmonious development of society without social, cultural, linguistic and legal education or integration programmes. Conceptual issues remain the same: creating a management model for migration processes with the objective of solving the problems regarding integration of migrants, as well as implementing effective practices to counter the emergence of ethnic enclaves. The major conclusion of the study is that the religious factor plays a crucial role in the lives of labour migrants. Growing tensions among migrants caused by unfair attitude at work and intolerance of Russian citizens may lead to isolation and consolidation of migrants coupled with the religious element; these tensions, moreover, could be used for political purposes. This should be taken into account when developing and implementing state migration policies.