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### **Expert Group on Migration Statistics**

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**Improvements in the use of administrative data for migration statistics**

## **Statistical registration of labour migration in the CIS region**

**Note by the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth  
of Independent States (CIS Stat Committee)\***

### *Abstract*

The importance of collecting qualitative data on indicators describing the scale of migration flows, the profile of international migrant workers, their situation in the labour market and employment structure, main countries of origin and destination has not lost its relevance over the decades.

For the CIS region, which has been the arena of large-scale labour migration for over 30 years, this problem has been consistently at the forefront. There are certain differences in national legislation in the Commonwealth countries, related to both definitions and accounting procedures.

Russia remains the main country of admission. Since January 2015, the main document allowing citizens of visa-free countries to work in Russia has been a patent. Work permits are issued for citizens of countries with visa entry procedures to Russia. At the same time, the statistics on permits does not take into account citizens of a number of countries that are granted the right of free access to the Russian labour market. These include citizens of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member countries.

Since labour migration is part of the migration process, both sources that provide statistics on migration in general (administrative systems of population records and documentation; data collected at the borders of states) and censuses and special sample surveys are used to study it.

Given the importance of the issue, the topic of labour migration statistics was specifically highlighted at the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians in October 2023. The International Labour Organization (ILO) presented plans for further work to develop methodological guidance on the measurement and valuation of migrant workers to ensure comparability of data across countries. This is of particular relevance in preparation for the 2030 census cycle.

The Expert Group Meeting on Migration Statistics will present information reflecting the main trends of external labour migration statistics in the CIS region in recent years.

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The importance of collecting qualitative data on indicators describing the scale of migration flows, the profile of international migrant workers, their position in the labour market and employment structure, and the main countries of origin and destination has not lost its relevance over the decades. In today's world, open borders policies are being replaced by various kinds of restrictions on movement, stricter migration legislation, and uncontrolled migration is becoming widespread. In these circumstances, the availability of information on migrants and mass movements is of particular importance.

### **A. Main trends in labour migration statistics in the CIS region**

2. For the CIS region, which has been the arena of large-scale labour migration for over 30 years, this problem has been constantly at the forefront. The movement of labour migrants from CIS countries mainly takes place within the Commonwealth.
3. Russia remains the main receiving country. It is the most important country in migration flows not only in the CIS region but also globally. International migrants come to Russia to work mainly from Uzbekistan (more than 1 million people), Tajikistan (about 1 million people) and Kyrgyzstan (more than 0.5 million people) (according to the data of the Border Service of the Federal Security Service of Russia for 2022).
4. The CIS Statistical Committee receives data on labour migration from national statistical services within the framework of interstate information exchange on the basis of questionnaires approved annually by the Council of Heads of Statistical Services of the CIS member states.
5. A common feature in the registration of foreign labour migrants in CIS memberstates is that their number is determined by the number of work permits issued. However, foreign migrant workers may obtain several work permits over a period of time, or, as in Russia, have a permit and a patent. At the same time, the statistics on permits do not take into account citizens of a number of countries that are granted the right of free access to the Russian labour market. These include citizens of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member countries.
6. Records of foreign labour migrants are also kept on the number of work permits issued in Azerbaijan (data from the State Migration Service); in Kyrgyzstan (Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Migration of the Kyrgyz Republic); in Tajikistan (Migration Service of the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of the RT), and in Uzbekistan (Agency for External Labour Migration).

Table1

Distribution of issued and extended work permits for gainful employment in Azerbaijan by country of citizenship of foreigners and permanent residence of stateless persons, persons

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	<b>9480</b>	<b>6602</b>	<b>5048</b>	<b>5466</b>	<b>5287</b>	<b>7698</b>	<b>7926</b>
Of which from the CIS	515	443	438	567	605	560	938
including from:							
Belarus	9	7	14	17	23	27	38
Kazakhstan	80	56	40	75	90	82	81
Kyrgyzstan	12	5	9	9	8	13	6
Moldova	8	6	9	11	8	10	9
Russia	180	181	176	239	274	225	506
Tajikistan	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Turkmenistan	14	16	21	47	39	17	109
Uzbekistan	112	88	80	59	40	48	56
Ukrainians	99	84	89	110	123	138	133
From other foreign countries	1275	984	881	844	759	721	685

Table2

Distribution of foreigners and stateless persons with extended permits for paid work in Azerbaijan by sex and age groups, persons

	2021		2022	
	total	including women	total	including women
total	<b>7698</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>7926</b>	<b>870</b>
including at the age of				
18-29	1111	159	1221	183
30-59	6250	618	6355	660
60-64	254	16	262	17
65+	83	4	88	10

7. A number of Commonwealth countries also keep records of migrant workers who have left to work abroad: in Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova - within the framework of the DIS, in Kazakhstan, Russia (Ministry of Internal Affairs), Tajikistan, Uzbekistan.
8. Of the citizens who worked outside the republic in 2021, 63% worked in Russia.
9. Since 2013, the CIS Statistical Committee has organized and maintained the "Monitoring of the State of National Labour Markets of the Commonwealth of Independent States". The collection contains statistical information describing the main processes in the national labour markets of the Commonwealth countries, including labour migration.

Table3  
Belarus (based on data from a sample survey of households to study employment problems)  
Number of citizens working outside the country (up to 1 year) by level of education, persons

Level of education		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Republic of Belarus	Total by level of education	59 530	82 988	95 359	98 421	86 678	87 642	96 028	110 297
	general basic education	1 187	898	1 326	1 113	693	1 009	1 045	1 564
	general secondary education	10 146	19 061	19 253	19 366	16 814	11 514	13 296	18 735
	vocational education	28 582	38 879	44 079	44 819	39 956	37 380	43 502	46 220
	specialised secondary education	12 363	13 146	17 081	18 747	18 396	19 977	20 656	24 168
	higher education	7 253	11 003	13 620	14 375	10 819	17 762	17 529	19 610

Number of citizens working outside the country (up to 1 year) by gender, persons

	2016			2022			2023		
	Both sexes	men	women	Both sexes	men	women	Both sexes	men	women
Republic of Belarus	59 530	55 966	3 564	96 028	92 190	3 838	110 297	106 378	3 919

Number of citizens working outside the country (up to 1 year) by age, persons

Age composition		2014	2016	2018	2020	2021	2022	2023
Republic of Belarus	All ages	62 152	59 530	95 359	86 678	87 642	96 028	110 297
	aged 15-29	17 911	15 796	24 783	17 383	12 272	14 095	15 774
	aged 30-39	22 487	18 759	31 104	29 093	35 574	39 091	45 468
	aged 40-49	13 279	15 121	23 081	23 053	23 110	24 847	29 434
	aged 50-59	8 094	9 596	15 313	15 363	14 355	16 036	16 951
	aged 60-74	380	257	1 078	1 787	2 331	1 960	2 671

Table4

Number of foreign citizens who have obtained the right to work in CIS member states (according to migration services or other agencies; persons; 2022)

	Profit for the year	Profit at the end of the year	Have valid work permits (patents) at the end of the year	Obtained work permits (patents) during the year
<b>Belarus, total</b>	7031			
from the CIS countries:	3489			
Ukrainians	1316			
Turkmenistan	825			
Uzbekistan	752			
Other countries	3542			
<b>Kazakhstan, total</b>	14296	13454		
from the CIS countries:	2076	723		
Uzbekistan	1736	468		
Other countries	12220	12731		
<b>Moldova, total</b>	2628			
from the CIS countries:	902			
Ukrainians	368			
Russia	199			
Other countries	1725			
<b>Russia, total</b>			2097847	2164567
from the CIS countries:			2051653	2104740
Uzbekistan			1222281	1255668
Tajikistan			761365	786089
azerbaijan			52843	
Other countries			45597	59724
<b>Tajikistan, total</b>		6700		
from the CIS countries:		187		
Russia		78		
Kyrgyzstan		31		
Other countries		6513		

11. Belarus: in 2022, 3,249 citizens of the Russian Federation, 348 of Kazakhstan, 334 of Armenia and 109 of Kyrgyzstan travelled to Belarus to work.
12. The main problem of migration statistics remains the issue of completeness of data provided by national statistical services. This is due to existing differences in methodology and capacity to collect the necessary data. In terms of the organisation of information exchange, it should be noted that not all countries manage to complete questionnaires on the requested list of indicators, and not always countries comply with the established deadlines for the submission of information.

## B. Sources of information on labour migration and accounting issues

13. Since labour migration is part of the migration process, both sources that provide statistics on migration in general (administrative systems of population records and documentation; data collected at the borders of states) and censuses and special sample surveys are used to study it.
14. There are many advantages to using administrative sources, especially in terms of cost-effectiveness, long-term sustainability, and timeliness.
15. However, statistics on work permits, work visas or residence permits issued for the purpose of work show only some aspects of labour migration. For a comprehensive study of this phenomenon, administrative data on labour migrants are quite often combined with survey data (various national household surveys, including specialised migration surveys and labour force surveys (LFS)). To record labour migrants in CIS countries, LFS data are used in Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova.
16. Specialised migration surveys have the advantage of being designed specifically to cover the target migrant population of interest in a way that contributes to obtaining nationally representative statistics on their numbers and characteristics. But they are expensive.
17. Specialized surveys on labour migration in CIS countries: Armenia (Comprehensive Survey on Migration of the RA Population, (2007-2013)); Belarus (Household Survey on External Labour Migration in the Republic of Belarus, (2015)); Moldova (Labour Migration Survey, (2012)); Russia (Sample Survey on the Use of Migrant Labour, (2014)).
18. Population censuses have an undeniable advantage in terms of coverage. Resolution 20 of the 20th ICLS recognises the population census as the main source of statistics on the number of international migrant workers residing in a country and their detailed characteristics. Most countries include basic recommended questions to support the identification of international migrants, using "country of birth" and/or "country of citizenship" as criteria.
19. Each source has its own advantages and disadvantages. For example, administrative data usually cover only "registered" persons, so that the resulting numbers and inflows may exclude irregular migrants and any immigrant who has not taken formal administrative steps since entering the country. The register of nationals residing abroad also covers only emigrants who have reported their absence to the relevant national or consular services. There are three most common major problems affecting the compilation of statistics on the numbers and flows of international labour migration: lack of available funding for this topic, quality problems of existing data, and the problem of inter-agency cooperation.

## C. International Recommendations on Labour Migration Statistics

20. Given the importance of the issue, the topic of labour migration statistics was specifically highlighted at the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians in October 2023. The International Labour Organization (ILO) presented plans for further work to refine the methodological recommendations for measuring and valuing migrant workers in the light of assessments and lessons learned, and in the light of the updated conceptual framework for international migration and mobility statistics and the accompanying system of indicators endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2021 and 2023 to ensure comparability of data across countries (Guidelines on International Labour Migration Statistics). This is of particular relevance in preparation for the 2030 census cycle.

## **D. Dissemination of labour migration data to the CIS Statistical Committee**

21. At present, the CIS Statistical Committee is implementing the EIAS system (unified information and analytical system) within the framework of the project "Development of CIS statistics". Creation of the automated information-analytical system based on quality data is conditioned by the necessity of collective use and providing the possibility to collect, store and process large amount of data. This will allow to display statistical data of CIS countries and all countries of the world on one portal and maximally harmonise the methodology based on the knowledge management system (KMS).
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