

EEU: problems and perspectives of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan to Russia

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Abstract: Part of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan to Russia work in the black economy, and even within the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) there are difficulties with the legalization of their employment, which means their significant vulnerability to the employer. The EEU treaty between Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Armenia came into force in January 2015, with Kyrgyzstan joining in August 2015. The agreement provides for the free movement of goods, people, services, and capital. Migration between Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan makes up a small part of labor migrant flows, and therefore the provisions for free movement of labor are not particularly controversial for these three countries alone. However, the accession of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan could have a visible impact on labor markets in Russia.¹

Since Kyrgyzstan joined the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015, procedures for legal residence and work for migrants and their family members have been simplified, and access to health care and education for children has improved. However, since most Kyrgyz migrants remain undocumented and those who migrate legally often do not have a written employment contract, they cannot exercise these rights and therefore remain very vulnerable.

This article uses data official statistics of the National Statistic Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, Report of the State Migration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic (the first half of 2019), and two surveys: online surveys of women migrants from Kyrgyzstan, carried out by the author (2021), and surveys titled “EEU: problems and perspectives of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan to Russia” (2022). The dynamics and structure of employment spheres of labor migrants are analyzed, aspects of violation of labor rights of migrants are considered, and also the positive and negative consequences of joining EEU for the labor migrants are discussed.

Keywords: Kyrgyz labor migrants, the Russian Federation, EEU, causes of migration, Kyrgyzstan, violation of labor rights.

¹ Caress Schenk. *Labor Migration in the Eurasian Union: WILL FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT TRUMP DOMESTIC CONTROLS?* PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 378 August 2015.1.