

International migration of the workforce from the Republic of Moldova - between the East and the West

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Международная миграция рабочей силы из Республики Молдовы - между Востоком и Западом

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Abstract: *this paper addresses the issue of the international workforce migration from the Republic of Moldova. Due to the high international migration of the domestic labour force in the last 15-18 years, the issue under consideration has become one of major importance for the Republic of Moldova both economically and socially.*

Аннотация: *в данной статье рассматривается вопрос о международной миграции рабочей силы из Республики Молдовы. В связи с высокой международной миграцией отечественной рабочей силы в последние 15-18 лет рассматриваемый вопрос стал одним из важнейших для Республики Молдовы как в экономическом, так и в социальном плане.*

Keywords: *migration, international migration, labour force, emigrant, immigrant.*

Ключевые слова: *миграция, международная миграция, рабочая сила, эмигрант, иммигрант*

Introduction

In recent years, the international migration of the workforce has been one of the most important issues of concern for international organizations and governments worldwide. Massive waves of migrants from the East to the West, particularly to the European Union countries have put forward unique, economic and social problems, which the community governments must face by joint efforts. However, there is an increasingly vivid discrepancy between the sovereign right of the EU member states who want to protect the domestic labour market and the fundamental human rights. People are forced or choose to migrate in search of a job for various reasons.

The international migration of the domestic labour is a problem for the Republic of Moldova that has been worsening in the last 5-8 years. The giant waves of the local labour force emigration have led to a shortage in the human resources with different skill levels. Currently, the number of organizations that are having problems in the process of attracting suitably qualified human resources is increasing in the Republic of Moldova.

The theoretical approach to international workforce migration

The international migration of the labour force can, directly or indirectly, influence the practices and methods applied in the human resources management, according to the existing trends at national and international levels. However, several authors claim that international migration can influence the labour force supply and demand at regional or national level.

The international migration of the labor force is determined by a number of causes, having different economic and social effects on society. The study of the international migration phenomenon, the movement of the labor force from the less developed countries to developed countries has forced the governments of the sending countries to develop and implement different public policies on:

- the country's economic development by attracting investments;
- regulation of the illegal migration of the labour force;
- social protection of migrants and their family members [6, p. 28].

The international migration of the labor force performs two economic functions [3, p. 112]. The first function offers a quantitative and qualitative correlation between the supply and demand of the labor force. International migration is mostly determined by the opportunity to find, a legal or illegal job, in the countries with a higher standard of living and also contribute to reducing unemployment in the sending country. The second function of migration contributes to increasing the reproduction of the work force. Thus, immigrants improve the demographic situation of the developed countries affected by the population's gerontology.

A large number of developed countries directly interested in increasing their economic and social potential, opened their borders specifically for the immigration of highly qualified people, primarily focusing on the components of R&D and innovation, state-of-art information technologies and communication, propellant factors in the contemporary process of globalization [1, p. 56]. The international migration of the highly skilled labor force is a current feature of the labor force migration, known as the "**brain drain**" [4, p. 8]. For the sending countries, the international migration of labor is a real loss of intellectual capital. Most economists believe that the direct impact of a major brain drain will reduce the economic growth in the sending countries [2,

p. 47]. A number of developing countries have lost as a result of the brain emigration, up to a third of the workforce belonging to the professional elite.

The brain drain is a form of spatial movement that may be of temporary or permanent departure from the sending country and the establishment for a fixed or permanent term in another country. This represents a segment of human capital migration that caused and is still causing many economic, social and ethical problems. Obviously, for the sending country it is an unacceptably dramatic loss of highly competent and competitive human capital. Its underutilization in the sending country directly influences the quality and sustainability of economic growth. For the host country this is a cheap way to increase their own competitiveness, to cover, with relatively low costs, the shortage of highly skilled workforce, the shortage of expertise that developed countries have been facing for a good while. Beyond the economic and social aspects, the issue carries a **moral** aspect of inequity: These countries benefit more or less for free, from a highly qualified workforce whose education and development cost was born by another state.

The international migration of the labour force, mostly, takes place as **chain or network migration** [5, p. 89]. This form of migration is generated and supported by the previous emigrants who, in their turn, appeal to other family members, relatives, friends and acquaintances etc. The phenomenon is widespread, even inducing the processes of depopulation or almost absolute feminization of the poor people. It is the most spread form of migration from the Republic of Moldova.

Thanks to international migration, the first and immediate loss for the sending country is related to the non-recovery of investment in the migrants' education and training along with the loss in budget contributions in the form of taxes and fees that they paid. Indirectly, the loss of the emigrating human capital leads to an increase in the share of medium and low-skilled staff in the sending country.

The migration flow of the labour force from the Republic of Moldova

Since 1993, the migration of the domestic labour force to the West, especially to the EU countries, but also to the East, especially in the Russian Federation, has increased dramatically. The social and economic crisis and the lack of well-thought government programs regarding the domestic policy on labour employment has even more increased the emigration trends of a large part of the domestic labour force. According to a study, the economic factors such as poverty, unemployment and low wages constituted over 72% of the factors that have led to an increase in the international migration of the domestic labour force.

In order to analyse the migration flow of the local labour force, the Labour Force Survey research carried out by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, is referred to. Although some unofficial sources reveal that between 500, 000 and 1, 000, 000 of the working population from the Republic of Moldova work abroad, the National Bureau of Statistics provides other information regarding this issue. *Table 1* presents the top 9 countries the most Moldovan citizens lived in and had carried some professional activity during 2009-2015.

Table 1. The population of the Republic of Moldova aged 15 and over who were working or looking for a job abroad during 2009-2015- thousand people

N o.	Countries	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	Total	294,7	311,0	316,7	328,1	332,2	341,9	325,4
2	Greece	3,2	2,6	2,4	2,1	1,5	2,0	1,4
3	Israel	8,4	8,2	6,5	7,9	7,1	8,4	9,2
4	Italy	54,7	57,5	58,3	54,4	50,7	49,6	49,2
5	Portugal	6,3	5,1	4,4	3,3	3,9	2,0	2,4
6	Romania	2,3	2,2	2,4	2,9	3,5	3,8	2,7
7	Russian Federation	177,1	191,8	204,7	223,3	223,4	232,8	206,2
8	Turkey	8,4	9,1	7,3	5,8	7,6	7,5	11,0
9	Ukraine	8,6	6,6	5,1	3,9	5,4	4,4	4,6
10.	Other countries	25,5	27,0	25,5	24,1	29,0	31,4	38,7

Source: Developed by the author based on the information from the National Bureau of Statistics.

The data presented in *Table 1* show that a large number of the local labor force is abroad in search of a job or working legally or illegally, having a certain job. Out of the total working population aged 15 and over, most of

them are on the labor market in the Russian Federation. While in 2009, in the Russian Federation there were 60.9% of the total number working abroad aged 15 and over, then in 2014 this indicator reached 68.1%, decreasing to 63, 3% in 2015.

The large share of the domestic labour force on the labour market in the Russian Federation was due to the unrestricted access to the country, but also to the good knowledge of the Russian language, which enables a faster integration of the Moldovan citizens into the labour market from this country. The restrictions forwarded by the Russian Federation to the domestic workforce reduced the number of Moldovan citizens working in this country by over 25, 000 people compared to 2014. The economic crisis in 2008 largely led to increased unemployment in the EU countries, which resulted in the labour force reorientation from the community countries to the Russian Federation.

Analysing, by gender, the domestic labour force who works abroad we can find that men take the largest share (Figure 1).

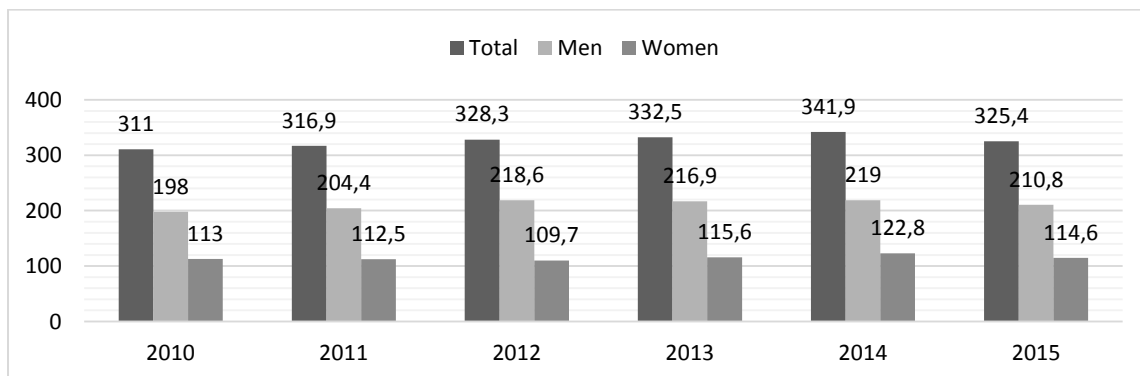


Fig. 1. The structure of the domestic labour force working abroad in terms of gender, thousands

Source: Developed by the author based on the information from the National Bureau of Statistics.

As shown in Figure 1, men occupy the largest share of the total labour force that are working or seeking employment abroad. In 2010, their share was 63.6% of the total working population declared to be gone abroad, increasing in the following years, in 2012 reaching even 2/3 of the total work force from abroad.

We also have to consider the structure of the labour force that has gone abroad in terms of education. Considering that the largest part of the domestic labour force is on the labour market in the Russian Federation, Figure 2 presents its structure against its total in terms of education.

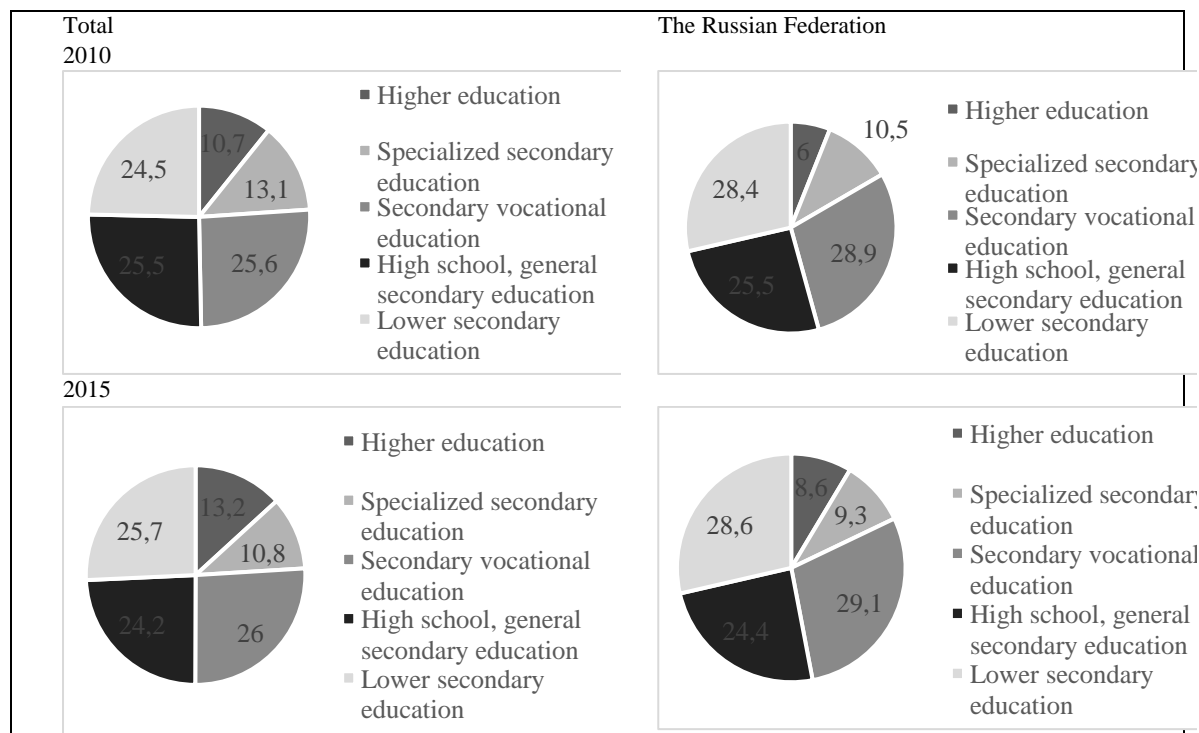


Fig. 2. The structure of the domestic labour force reported to work abroad, according to studies, %

Source: Developed by the author based on the information from the National Bureau of Statistics.

Analysing the information shown in Figure 2, the percentage of people with higher education reported to work abroad is over 4% lower in the Russian Federation compared to that recorded in general. This shows that people with higher education are more oriented towards the European labour market. This situation is characteristic of the both analysed periods. Nevertheless, the share of people with lower secondary education who work in the Russian Federation is higher than that recorded overall.

Conclusions

For over 15 years, The Republic of Moldova has been an "exporting" country of the labor force. In search for a job, the domestic workers have headed for both the EU and the Eastern countries, especially the Russian Federation. The large number of the domestic labor force that is temporarily emigrating to the Russian Federation is determined by the greater access opportunities to the labor market and a faster adaptation to the cultural environment of the country. The smaller number of the local labor force in the EU countries was due to:

- difficulties to reach one of the EU countries legally;
- the lack of cooperation agreements between the Republic of Moldova and EU member states on the employment of the domestic labour force for a specified period;
- restrictions to the access on the labor market in these countries for the non-citizens of the EU;
- not knowing an international language, which would have made it much easier to enter the EU labor market and adapt faster to the new cultural environment etc.

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