



Holistic Assessment of Current Economic
Development Strategies, Labour Migration
and Remittances to Belarus

The conclusions presented herein are those of the authors Elena Krupa and Elena Maslenkova and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The designations employed and the materials presented in this study do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city, or district, or their authorities, or concerning the delimitation of their borders.

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This study was prepared within the framework of the international technical assistance project "**Maximizing the Impact of Migration and Labour Mobility in the Sustainable Development of Belarus**" implemented by the Representative Office of the International Organization for Migration in the Republic of Belarus in coordination with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) of the Republic of Belarus. The purpose of the study is to examine the current situation with labour migration flows and remittances to the regions of Belarus, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study contains an analysis of external labour migration flows and the impact of external labour migration on sustainable development, as well an assessment of the current challenges related to external labour migration. It is assumed that the recommendations proposed based on the results of the study will improve the efficiency of the external labour migration ecosystem, and maximize its capacity to ensure sustainable socioeconomic development of the Republic of Belarus.

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June 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION	v
1. THE PURPOSE AND THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY.....	1
2. ANALYSIS OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION FLOWS, INCLUDING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.....	5
2.1 Import of Labour Force.....	6
2.2 Export of Labour Force	10
3. THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.....	15
3.1 Measurement of Migrant Workers' Remittances.....	15
3.2 The Impact of External Labour Migration on the Labour Market and the Standards of Living of Migrants' Households.....	20
3.3 The Relationship Between Labour Migration and Development from the Perspective of the Gender Approach	24
4. THE ECOSYSTEM OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS.....	27
4.1 The Legal Framework.....	27
4.2 The Institutional Framework.....	33
4.3 The National Policy on Labour Migration. The Place of Labour Migration in the Policy Documents on State Development.....	37
5. CHALLENGES OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION: THE VIEWPOINT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR.....	40
6. ENTRY POINTS FOR EXPANDING THE USE OF THE POTENTIAL OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY	45
6.1 Recommendations on the Use of the Potential of Migrant Workers.....	45
6.2 Recommendations for Ensuring More Efficient Use of Foreign Labour Force.....	48
CONCLUSION	50
APPENDIX 1	51
APPENDIX 2	53
APPENDIX 3	56

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It should be noted that the authors are solely responsible for the conclusions and recommendations presented herein.

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INTRODUCTION

International migration is one of the most salient socioeconomic phenomena and at the same time one of the most pressing challenges of today's globalized world. While the creation of jobs within the country remains the best option to use the national workforce, many countries include employment abroad in their national development strategy. An increasing number of developing countries, as well as countries with economies in transition, are adopting action programmes, developing legislative acts, and creating institutional structures aimed at facilitating the employment of their citizens abroad, stimulating migrants' remittances to their homeland and at the same time ensuring the safety of migrants.

Both export and import of labour force play a significant role in the socioeconomic development of the Republic of Belarus. Economically feasible export of labour force contributes to financial stability at the macro level, determining such basic parameters of the country's economic security as the development of export potential, ensuring the balanced character of foreign trade, improvement of the balance of payments, use of migrant remittances for investment, and the development of entrepreneurship in the country. At the same time, the departure of skilled labour force that is in demand in the national labour market entails both a short- and long-term shortage of workers in some industries and regions, negatively affects family relations, the upbringing of children, and the birth rate.¹

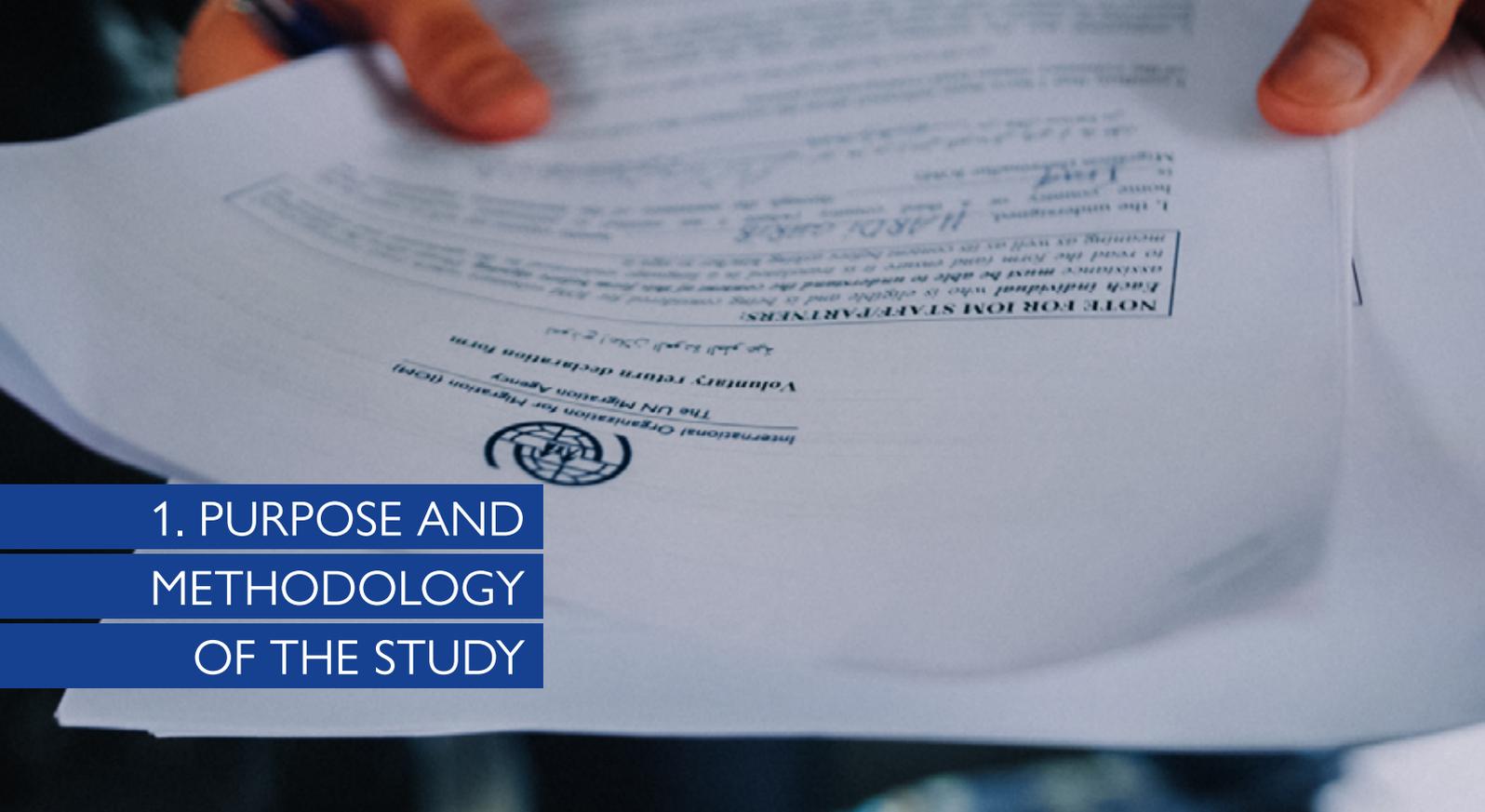
External labour migration also serves as a tool to ensure a balance between the supply and demand of labour in the national labour market. Both public administration bodies and employers of foreign workers seek to facilitate the attraction of foreign labour force and ensure its more efficient use.

The study, which comprehensively examines the ecosystem of labour migration in the context of the interests of the State, employers, and migrant workers themselves, is the first of its kind in the country. Its main idea is to promote sustainable socioeconomic development of the Republic of Belarus, expand international economic ties, strengthen the economic security of the State and create conditions for the realization of the rights of migrant workers and their comprehensive personal development. The study pays special attention to the relationship between labour migration and development in the context of a gender approach.

Being both a country of origin and destination, the Republic of Belarus can ensure effective use of labour migration potential through adequate assessment of its advantages and appropriate response to the challenges arising in the process of labour migration. It is important to align the policy on external labour migration with other socioeconomic activities of the state and ensure the transition from a policy of responding to internal and external factors in the field of labour migration toward a more proactive and purposeful policy.

It is expected that the study will serve as a basis for formulating the main directions of further activities of relevant state and public structures in the process of development and effective use of human resources of the Republic of Belarus.

¹ E.V. Maslenkova Approaches to assessment of the economic effect of external labour migration / E.V. Maslenkova // Employment Service. – 2017. – No. 2. – pp.50-55.



1. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Currently, external labour migration is an integral part of the national labour market. The main hypothesis of the study is that mobility (i.e. movement) of labour resources should be perceived as a resource, the effective use (or non-use) of which can largely determine the success of sustainable socioeconomic development of the country.

The purpose of the study is to conduct a holistic assessment of national economic development strategies from the point of view of labour migration and the current situation with labour migration flows and remittances to the regions of the country, including in the context of COVID-19.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- to analyse the flows of external labour migration;
- to assess the impact of external labour migration on the sustainable development of Belarus;
- to analyse the existing legal instruments and strategic documents related to labour migration;
- to determine whether the gender aspect and its relation to migrant remittances to households are taken into account in the national policy of Belarus in the field of external labour migration;
- to identify the challenges faced by Belarus on labour migration;
- to develop recommendations the on strengthening of the national labour migration system.

In the context of uneven economic and demographic development of individual countries and regions, international labour migration of the population has acquired a global character and has become an integral part of the modern system of the global economy. A characteristic feature of modern migration processes is the increasingly dynamic nature of migration movements, the emergence of new forms of employment, and the resulting difficulties of its accounting and study. In recent years, many traditional theories explaining the nature and driving forces of international migration have been revised. The very concepts of "labour migration» and "labour migrant» are expanding, and more complex and flexible migration classifications have been adopted.

The authors of the study used the terminology employed in the normative legal acts of the Republic of Belarus. In the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On External Labour Migration" of 30 December, 2010, external labour migration is defined as "departure from the Republic of Belarus for employment and engagement in labour activity under an employment contract in the State of employment, as well as entry into the Republic of Belarus for employment and engagement in labour activity under an employment contract and the engagement

in such activities in the Republic of Belarus". The Law distinguishes between the concepts of an immigrant worker and an emigrant worker:

- an immigrant worker is "a foreigner who does not have a permanent residence permit in the Republic of Belarus and entered the Republic of Belarus for employment and engagement in labour activities under an employment contract with an employer of the Republic of Belarus or is engaged in such activities in the Republic of Belarus";
- an emigrant worker is "a citizen or a foreigner who permanently resides in the Republic of Belarus and leaves (left) the Republic of Belarus for employment and engagement in labour activities with a foreign employer under an employment contract".²

In general, external labour migration is understood as an aggregate of relations that arise from the territorial movement of people and are associated with the crossing the state border, temporary stay, and employment in a foreign country. According to researchers, this definition takes into account socioeconomic and legal aspects related to entry, stay, entering into employment relations, as well as departure to a place of permanent residence. This approach allows for clear differentiation between separate forms of external labour migration and enables regulation of migration flows through the establishment of target parameters for specific migration flows.

The following methodological approaches were used in the research process:

A *systematic approach* that allows to consider external labour migration processes as a single integrated system, including causes, motives, strategies, forms, the degree of impact on the society and the economy, and the consequences for migrants themselves.

The *"pull-push" concept*, which allows to consider migration as a function of the relative attractiveness of countries of origin and employment. Migration – like goods, services, capital, and even technologies moved across state borders – is subject to the influence of "push" and "pull" factors. Potential migrants weigh the economic, social, and personal costs and benefits that influence their decisions about the expediency of departure and the choice of country. They change their place of residence and low-paid jobs to higher-paying jobs and move to those labour markets where employment opportunities already exist or will arise in future.

As for costs, the most important factors affecting mobility are geographical and cultural proximity. Geographical distances are associated with high transport costs, so most low-skilled workers experiencing budget constraints go to neighbouring countries or stay inside the same region. Cultural adaptation and relocation entail costs, therefore, migration flows are to a great degree determined by established public and private ties. National diasporas help migrants find jobs, build new social ties, and overcome legal hurdles.³ In addition, an important role is played by the regulatory environment – the regime of preferences for certain groups of people, strict border control, access to the health-care system, social benefits, and educational programmes.

The *gender approach* allowed to determine the impact of gender on people, families, social institutions, and society as a whole. From this perspective, we can identify the causes of inequality, as well as potential obstacles to achieving equality. The notion of gender should not be limited to sex or perceived merely as a factor that needs to be taken into account, like age or level of education, it is a hierarchical system that creates inequality affecting all aspects of migration and development processes.⁴

Research integrating a gender perspective is not just about disaggregation of data by gender or taking into account the gender factor along with other factors such as, for example, age or education. It means understanding that gender relations exert influence (and in turn are subject to influence) at every stage of the migration cycle. Gender analysis takes into account the differences between men and women, as well as how gender identity is shaped and changed in the process of migration. When developing recommendations, it is necessary to take into account inequality and differences between men and women, as well as allocate resources in such a way that programmes for the development of population mobility take into account inequality and are aimed at eliminating it.

² On external labour migration: The Law of the Republic of Belarus, June 17, 1998, No. 169-Z: as amended by the Law of the Republic of Belarus of 30.01.2010 // Consultant Plus: Belarus. Technology 3000 [Electronic resource] / OOO (LLC) "YurSpektr", the National Centre of Legal Information. The Republic of Belarus, Minsk, 2022.

³ The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / the World Bank [Electronic resource]: Migration and brain drain. – Published in 2019 Mode of access: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32481/211506RU.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.

⁴ UN-Women [Electronic resource]: The gender agenda in migration: the relationship between labour migration and development in the context of the gender approach. – Date of publication: 2015 Mode of access: https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/RESOURCES_LIBRARY/Resources_Centre/Gender%20on%20the%20Move%20-%20Russian.pdf.



Beneficiaries of the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme stand in line to check in for their flight to Iraq © IOM 2022.

To achieve the aforementioned goals and objectives of the study, the **following data collection methods** were employed:

Document analysis. The sources of information were the data of the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus, the National Academy of Sciences, regulatory legal acts of the Republic of Belarus, official documents, reports of various State bodies, as well as international organizations.

To assess the volume of labour exports, we used official data published on the websites of competent authorities of foreign States and integration associations, such as the Eurasian Economic Commission, the Ministry of Family, labour and Social Policy of Poland, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Lithuania, and the Statistical Committee of the Czech Republic (links to official sources are provided below in the relevant chapters).

In the course of the research, the following main strategic programme documents of the Republic of Belarus were studied: the National Strategy for Sustainable Development till 2030, the Program of Socioeconomic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021–2025, the main regulatory legal acts of the Republic of Belarus regulating issues of external labour migration, including the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 225 of 10.12.2010 "On External Labour Migration", Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 450 of 01.09.2010 "On Licensing of Certain Types of Activities", Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 105-Z of 4.01.2010 "On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons in the Republic of Belarus".

Qualitative research involving the following:

a) expert interviews. Expert interviews are a kind of in-depth interview, where respondents are highly qualified specialists in the field under study. This is a semi-structured, pre-planned face-to-face interview with an expert involving the use of methods that direct respondents to an in-depth and thorough discussion of a number of research topics. An in-depth interview implies receiving detailed answers to research questions, rather than filling out a formal questionnaire. In this study, in-depth interviews have a number of advantages in terms of collecting data from government representatives such as:

- obtaining high-quality information from experts in the field under study;
- the possibility to gain access to highly specialized industries;
- assessment of situations and data;

- the ability to predict the development of processes, phenomena, and events;
- there is no need for a large number of experts, as it is not the number of respondents that matters, but their quality.

As part of the study, 8 interviews were conducted with experts representing the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter interchangeably referred to as the MIA of the Republic of Belarus and the MIA of Belarus), the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, the Scientific Research Institute of labour of the Ministry of labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Taxes and Duties of the Republic of Belarus, the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus, the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers named after Professor M. S. Kunyavsky (hereinafter referred to as BSPN).

Guides for conducting expert interviews were developed as a part of the toolbox of the study (Appendix 1).

Synthesis of the results of the expert survey allowed to comprehensively consider the ecosystem of external labour migration in the Republic of Belarus, assess the impact of external labour migration on the labour market and the living standards of households headed by migrants and determine the relationship between labour migration and development in the context of the gender approach.

b) a questionnaire survey of legal entities and individual entrepreneurs providing employment services outside the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter referred to as licensees) (Appendix 2). The survey covers the most active licensees who provide employment in the countries that are most popular among Belarusians. In total, 11 representatives of licensees were interviewed.

c) a questionnaire survey of organizations in the Republic of Belarus employing foreign citizens (hereinafter referred to as foreigners) (Appendix 3). The respondents were representatives of the main industries in which there is the greatest demand for foreign labour force. These first and foremost include construction, industry, and trade.

Qualitative methods of data collection allowed to:

- collect reliable empirical data;
- record the opinions of representatives of organizations providing employment services to citizens (hereinafter referred to as citizens of the Republic of Belarus and foreign citizens permanently residing in the Republic of Belarus) outside the Republic of Belarus, as well as organizations employing foreigners;
- identify the key results of the study and provide generalized conclusions;
- provide recommendations on more efficient use of the potential of migrant workers on the one hand and foreign labour force on the other.

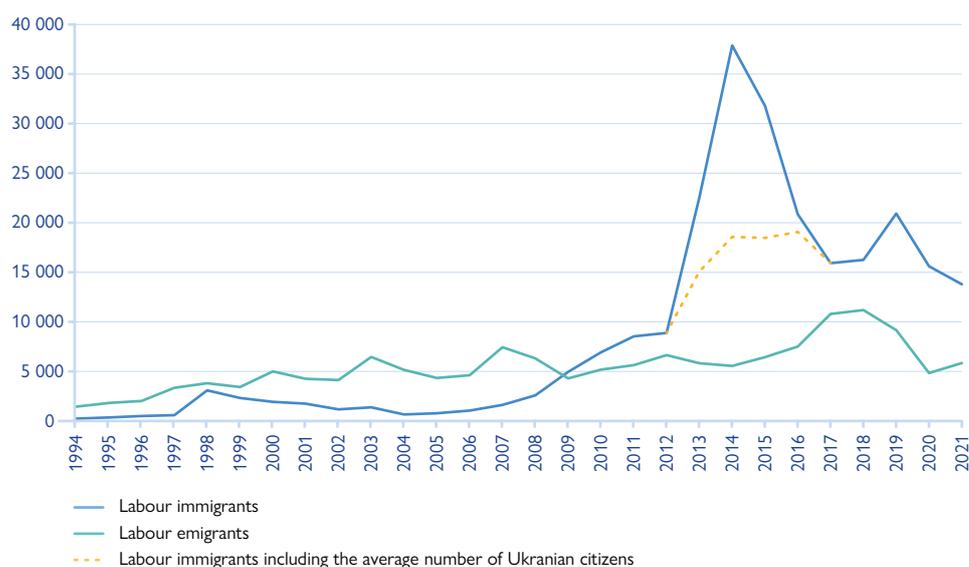
Based on the analysis, it is proposed to take measures of state regulation that will allow the country to benefit from the mobility of labour resources, on the one hand, as well as reduce costs, and address the challenges associated with external labour migration, on the other hand.

2. ANALYSIS OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION FLOWS, INCLUDING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Official statistics on external labour migration in Belarus appeared in 1994. It is from this year that it is possible to trace the main trends in labour migration flows, namely, how many foreign citizens came to Belarus to work, what their gender composition is, what their countries of origin are and in which sectors of the economy they were employed. Similar information was also collected about Belarusians and foreigners permanently residing in Belarus who went abroad with the assistance of licensees.

As shown in figure 1, from 1994 to 2009, the number of citizens who left for work abroad exceeded the number of foreign workers who entered the country. According to national data, later the situation changed: there were more foreign citizens entering Belarus than Belarusian citizens leaving the country.

Figure 1. Trends related to inflow and outflow of migrant workers (based on concluded agreements and contracts)



Source: National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, the MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

A surge in the number of labour immigrants in 2013–2015 was mainly due to the Ukrainian crisis, and if we consider in these years the average number of Ukrainian citizens who arrived in Belarus in the years preceding and following the crisis, the total number of foreigners who entered Belarus for work will look as shown by the dotted axis. In addition, Figure 1 shows that already in 2021 the numbers of labour emigrants and immigrants were equalizing. Most likely, this is due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which made it more difficult for Belarusians to go to work abroad, and foreign specialists also did not seek to work abroad.

2.1 IMPORT OF LABOUR FORCE

Figure 2 shows the quantitative and gender composition of labour immigration from 2017 to 2021. During this period, the number of male immigrant workers overwhelmingly exceeded the number of female immigrant workers (by more than 80%).

Figure 2. Trends related to inflow of migrant workers and their gender structure



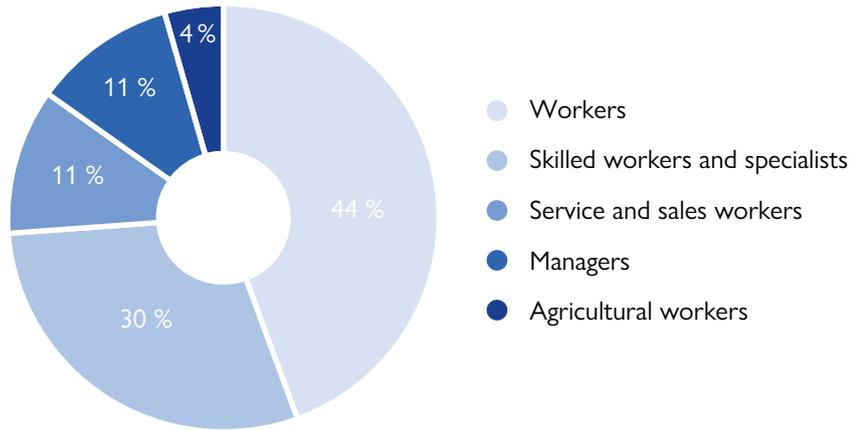
Source: MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

Labour immigrants arrived from more than 80 countries of the world. Traditionally, the top 10 donor countries whose citizens are required to obtain a special permit to work in Belarus are Ukraine, China, Uzbekistan, Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Lithuania, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Latvia and the Republic of Moldova. The leading countries whose citizens are exempt from the requirement to obtain a special permit to work in Belarus are the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan.

It is worth noting that China, the Russian Federation and Türkiye are among the leading countries because they are implementing large investment projects in the territory of Belarus, which require presence in the country and performance of works, including by their citizens.

During this period, labour immigrants were mostly engaged in blue-collar jobs, the second most numerous category being qualified workers and specialists; foreigners also came to work in the service, trade, and agricultural sectors (Figure 3).

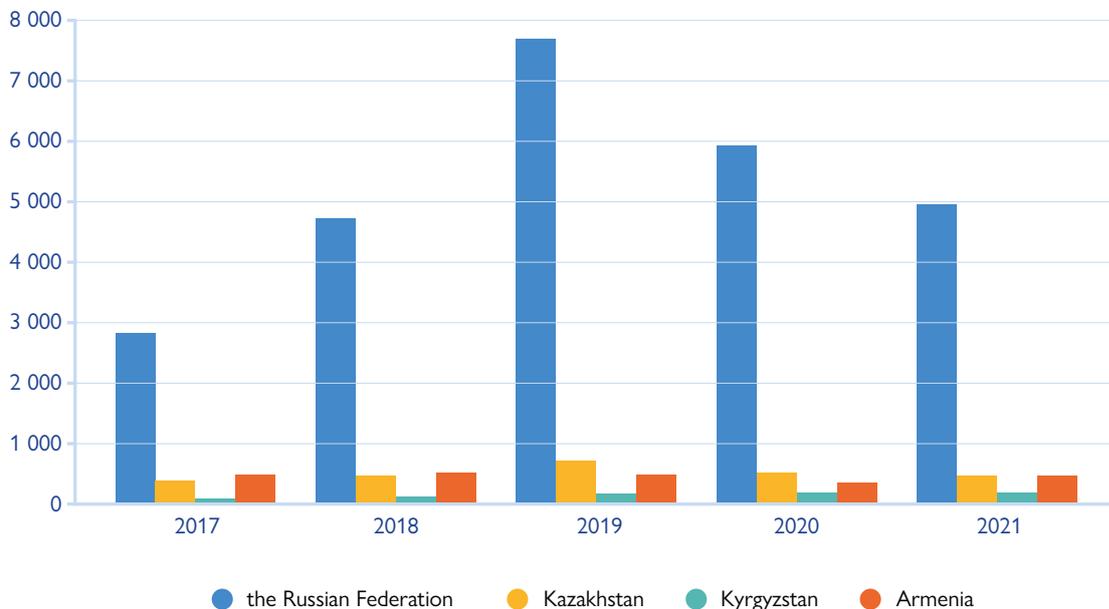
Figure 3. Occupational structure of immigrant workers in 2017–2021



Source: MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

Since 2018, some categories of labour immigrants working in the Republic of Belarus without special permits to engage in labour activity were included in the records maintained by the MIA. This opportunity is mainly used by citizens of the EEU member states: these are predominantly citizens of the Russian Federation (mainly involved in the construction of the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant), a little less often citizens of Kazakhstan and Armenia, and there is also a very small number of citizens Kyrgyzstan (Figure 4). In total, over the past five years, 27,354 citizens of the EEU have arrived in Belarus for work, including 22,834 citizens of the Russian Federation, 2107 citizens of Kazakhstan, 518 citizens of Kyrgyzstan, and 1895 citizens of Armenia.

Figure 4. Trends related to entry of citizens of the EEU member states to the Republic of Belarus for temporary employment in 2017–2021



Source: the MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

The records maintained by the MIA contain no information about the sectors of the economy in which they were employed, the types of activities in which they were engaged, or their gender identity.

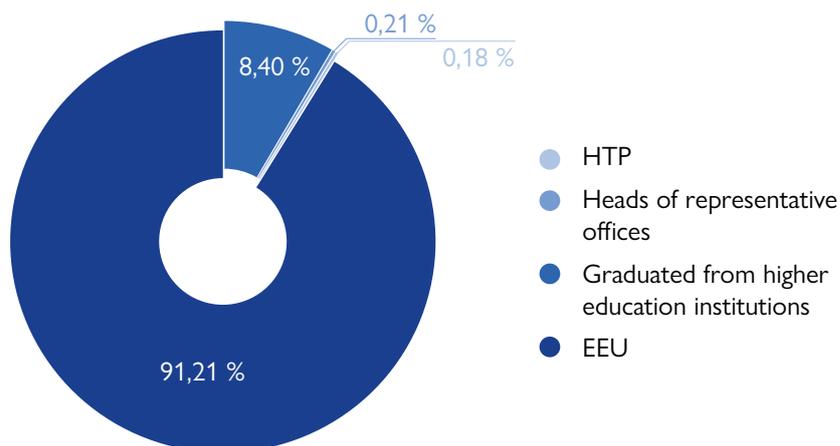
As for other labour immigrants enjoying simplified access to the labour market of Belarus, the most numerous group is specialists employed by the residents of the Hi-Tech Park (hereinafter – the HTP): over the

past four years (information about them has been summarized since 2018), their number has amounted to 2,519 people, 2,181 of them are men and 338 are women.

The number of heads of representative offices of foreign organizations for the same period has amounted to 64 foreigners, of whom 56 are men and 8 are women.

Foreign citizens who have received higher education in educational institutions of the Republic of Belarus and are employed in their specialty make up the smallest group in terms of the number of employees without special permits: a total of 54 people, of whom 33 are men and 21 are women (Figure 5).

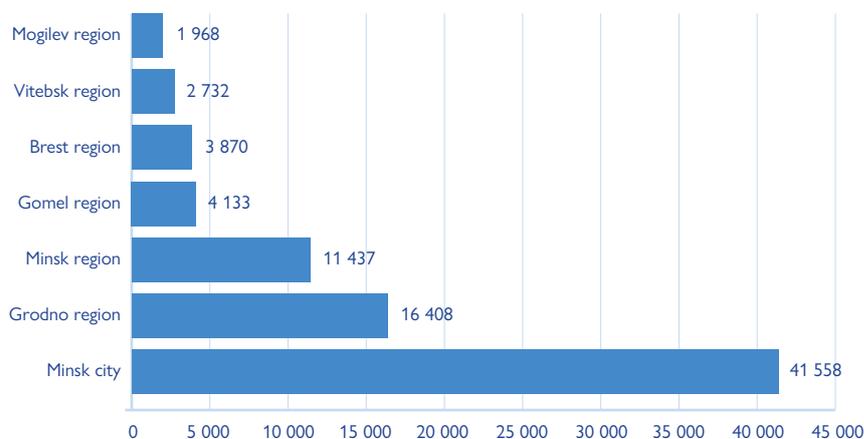
Figure 5. The ratio of labour immigrants enjoying simplified access to the labour market of the Republic of Belarus



Source: MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

From a regional perspective, the most attractive place for labour immigrants is the city of Minsk (41,558 foreign workers have entered in just 5 years), followed by Grodno region (16,408 foreigners) in the context of the construction of the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant, Minsk region (11,437 people), Gomel region (4,133 people), Brest region (3,870 people), Vitebsk region (2,732 people), and finally Mogilev region (1,968 people). The number of immigrant workers in the regions and the city of Minsk is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. The number of immigrant workers in the regions and the city of Minsk



Source: MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

As for labour immigration during the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak, it is worth noting that no state of emergency was declared in the territory of the Republic of Belarus in connection with this situation. In view of the current epidemiological situation at the national and global levels, the Republic of Belarus has

taken certain measures to minimize the risk of importation of the COVID-19 infection and its spread among the population. For these purposes, self-isolation rules were introduced in the territory of the Republic of Belarus under Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 208 of 8 April, 2020 "On the Introduction of Restrictive Measures". Paragraph 3 of this Resolution establishes that citizens of the Republic of Belarus, foreign citizens, and stateless persons infected with COVID-19 are subject to self-isolation. In order to ensure a timely response to changes in the epidemiological situation, the Government of the Republic of Belarus adopted Resolutions of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 624 of 30 October, 2020 "On Measures to Prevent the Spread of an Infectious Disease" and No. 705 of 7 December, 2020 "On Amendments to Resolutions of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 208 of 8 April, 2020 and No. 624 of 30 October, 2020".

From the beginning of the outbreak of the coronavirus infection to the present time, the State border of the Republic of Belarus has been open for entry by foreign citizens travelling to the Republic of Belarus for work upon provision of supporting documents. Also, due to the fact that the country has not imposed a lockdown and most enterprises and organizations of all forms of ownership have continued to operate normally with account of the recommendations of WHO and the Ministry of Healthcare of Belarus, no significant problems related to labour immigration in the Republic of Belarus have been identified. This is also evidenced by the results of the analysis conducted by the MIA of the Republic of Belarus in 2020 in order to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on labour migration in Belarus (the interviewed employers of foreign labour force in most cases agreed that there were no issues of concern related to the hiring of foreign workers during that period).⁵

The same conclusions are confirmed by the results of a study conducted by the IOM Representative Office in the Republic of Belarus with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway. The study showed that the COVID-19 pandemic did not have a critical impact on labour migration or the socioeconomic situation of immigrants. At the same time, the pandemic impacted them indirectly due to their lack of knowledge about their rights when applying to medical institutions, as a result of which labour immigrants were afraid to go there in principle, and led to a contraction of business activity of those immigrant workers who own businesses in Belarus.⁶

In order to help foreign workers in Belarus and reduce the administrative burden on legal entities and individuals in the Republic of Belarus, measures were taken to provide for the automatic renewal of work documents. In particular, Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 172 of 19.05.2020 "On the Extension of the Validity Period of Documents" was adopted, which provided for a three-month extension of the validity period of certificates and other documents issued to interested parties if the validity period of these documents had expired or would expire from April 30 to 31 July, 2020. Also, when foreigners were not able to leave Belarus due to border crossing restrictions imposed by foreign states and problems in transportation between states, the Ministry of Internal Affairs took measures to regulate their legal status in the territory of Belarus:

- extension of stay up to 180 days with the issuance of exit visas if necessary;
- issuance of temporary residence permits (if there are grounds);
- registration and issuance of exit visas at Minsk National Airport without referral of foreigners to departments for citizenship and migration of internal affairs bodies (if necessary).

The measures taken allowed most foreign workers to maintain labour relations with employers, and in general, helped to avoid significant problems related to a shortage of labour force.

⁵ On the state of labour migration in the Commonwealth with account of the restrictive measures taken by the CIS member States during the COVID-19 pandemic [Electronic resource]: the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, 07.06.2021 – Mode of access: https://cis.minsk.by/news/19222/o_sostojanii_trudovoj_migracii_v_sodruzhestve_s_uchetom_ogranichitelnyh_mer_prinimaemyh_v_gosudarstvah_-_uchastnikah_sng_v_period_pandemii_covid-19.

⁶ The IOM Representative Office in the Republic of Belarus conducted a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socioeconomic situation of migrants [Electronic resource]: the IOM Representative Office in the Republic of Belarus, 15.04.2021 – Mode of access: <https://belarus.iom.int/ru/resources/vliyanie-pandemii-covid-19-na-polozhenie-trudyaschikhsya-migrantov-v-belarusi>.

2.2 EXPORT OF LABOUR FORCE

It is more difficult to analyse labour emigration in full, as citizens of the Republic of Belarus can go to work abroad both with the assistance of licensees and independently. In this regard, the analysis is based on the records maintained by the MIA of Belarus, as well as statistics of the Eurasian Economic Commission and competent authorities of the neighbouring countries that are most popular among Belarusian working migrants.

As the analysis shows, while in 2017 the number of citizens leaving on the basis of signed contracts exceeded 10,000 people, by the end of 2021 it halved (Figure 7). This is due to the global COVID-19 pandemic: in just a year – from 2019 to 2020, the number of people who left with the assistance of licensees almost halved.

Figure 7. The ratio of emigrant workers who left and returned in 2017–2021



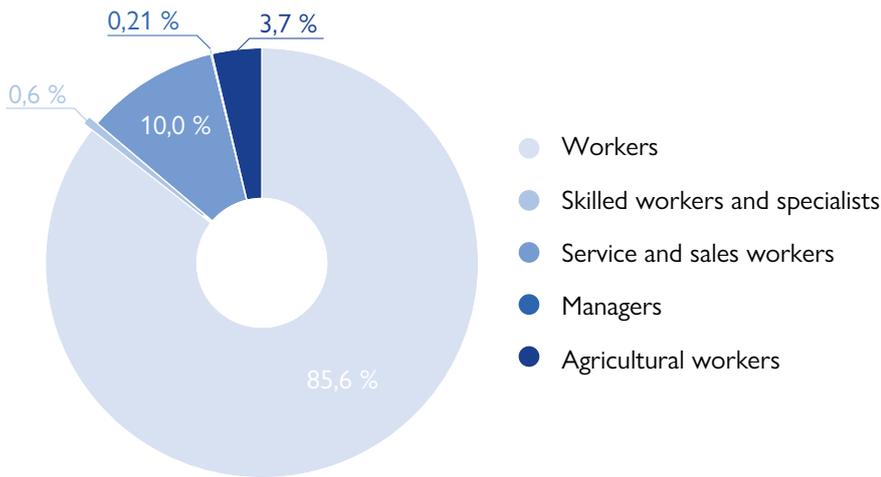
Source: MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

However, it should be understood that, as a rule, these emigrant workers return after finishing their work abroad. And most likely, these same citizens leave again after some time and thus are included in the statistics of the following periods. The existing gap between emigrant workers who have left and returned (according to the MIA of Belarus) is shown in Figure 7, which shows that approximately 30 per cent of emigrant workers either do not return, or they are already part of the quantitative indicators of the upper axis. In terms of exit from the country, the situation during 2017–2021 remained largely unchanged: the most popular country for employment among Belarusians is the Russian Federation (a total of 19,456 people left with the assistance of licensees), followed by the Republic of Poland (10,202 people), the Republic of Lithuania (5,879 people), the Czech Republic (1,705 people), and the United States of America (1,266 people). In general, licensees have partners in more than 20 countries.

In recent years, Belarusians have also started to emigrate to eastern countries which are most popular among women. Thus over the past five years, 907 women have been employed in countries such as Qatar, China, Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Thailand and Japan, where they were employed as models, and flight attendants, as well as worked in trade, entertainment, and hospitality sectors, etc.

On the international labour market, Belarusian blue-collar emigrant workers are in demand in the service, trade, and agricultural sectors (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Breakdown of emigrant workers from the Republic of Belarus by type of activity, %



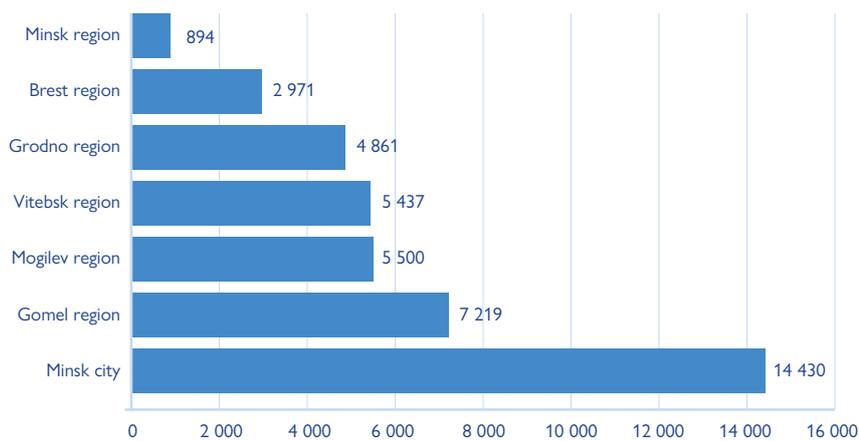
Source: MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

This breakdown by professions allows us to conclude that the Belarusian labour market is losing mostly blue-collar citizens.

Belarusians most often leave the country for employment abroad for up to 6 months: in 2017–2021, 23,234 people left for up to 6 months, 12,331 people left for more than one year, and 5,747 workers left for a period of 6 months to a year.

At the regional level, the most significant outflow of workers is experienced by the city of Minsk (14,430 people have left in just 5 years), followed by Gomel region (7,219 people), Mogilev region (5,500 people), Vitebsk region (5,437 people), Grodno region (4,861 people), and Brest region (2,971 people). Minsk region is in the last place in terms of the number of emigrants who have left over the past five years (894 people). The numbers of emigrant workers leaving the regions and the city of Minsk are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9. The numbers of emigrant workers leaving the regions and the city of Minsk



Source: MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

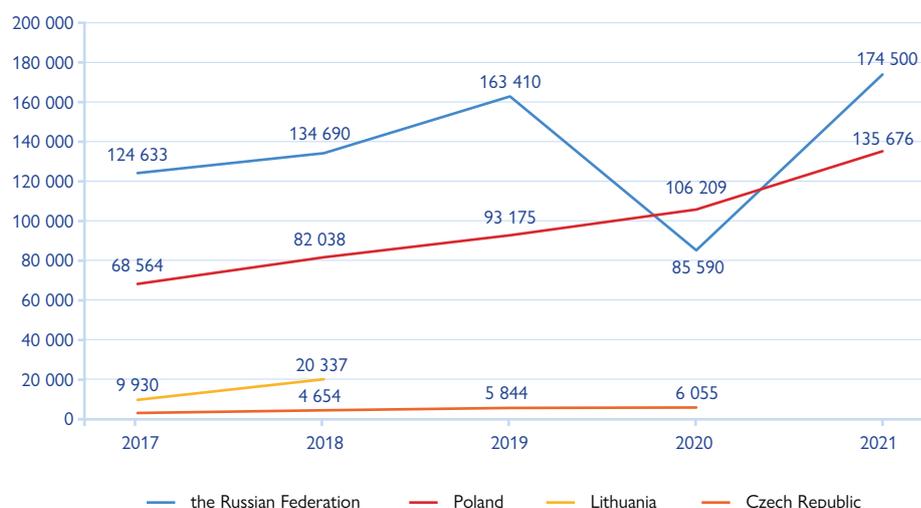
It should be noted that the presented data reflect not so much the activity of emigrant workers but rather the activity of licensees providing the services related to employment of citizens abroad.

As already noted above, the MIA of Belarus maintains records of only those emigrants who left with the assistance of licensees. Most Belarusian citizens leave on their own. Surely, in today's world, it is impossible

to calculate the exact number of such emigrants, but it is quite possible to trace how many Belarusians have received official permits or registered for work in the most popular countries of destination.

Thus the Eurasian Economic Commission regularly publishes information on the number of citizens of the member states working in the territory of the Eurasian Union.⁷ The official website of the Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Policy of Poland also publishes twice a year information about foreigners working on all grounds.⁸ The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Lithuania systematically updates such information, but it includes only data on those who have received work permits. Meanwhile, the majority of Belarusians receive national D-type visas allowing them to work for up to a year, and temporary residence permits for needed professionals exempt from the requirement to obtain a work permit.⁹ The Statistical Committee of the Czech Republic also maintains records of foreigners employed in the country.¹⁰ The trends related to unassisted labour migration to the Russian Federation, Poland, Lithuania and Czechia are reflected in Figure 10.

Figure 10. The trends related to unassisted labour migration of Belarusian citizens to certain countries in 2017–2021



Source: Eurasian Economic Commission, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Poland, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, the Statistical Committee of the Czech Republic.

Both official information of the MIA of Belarus and statistical data from foreign countries indicate that over the past five years the direction of labour emigration of Belarusian citizens has changed from East to West. Belarusians are increasingly interested in employment in Poland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, etc. It is noteworthy that even in 2020 when there was a decline in labour emigration, the most popular destination for labour migration of Belarusians and foreigners permanently residing in Belarus was Lithuania followed by the Russian Federation.

These data cover workers who left annually, but it should be understood that, as noted above, those who left in the previous year are most likely to return in the following year. For example, Polish legislation is being improved to facilitate temporary access of foreign citizens to the labour market (for citizens of Belarus a simplified application procedure of employment is applied, which allows them to work for 6 months in a 12-month period without obtaining a work permit, and for 9 in case of seasonal works), therefore normally Belarusians return at the end of this period. Belarusian migrants going to the Russian Federation normally do short-term rotational shiftwork there. Thus Belarus does not necessarily lose from two to three hundred thousand of its citizens annually.

⁷ Statistical data [Electronic resource]: the Eurasian Economic Commission, 2022 – mode of access: http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/act/finpoll/migration/Pages/statistical_data.aspx.

⁸ Employment of foreigners in Poland [Electronic resource]: the Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Policy, 30.06.2014. – Mode of access: <https://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/statystyki-i-analizy/zatrudnianie-cudzoziemcow-w-polsce>.

⁹ Migration trends [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://123.emn.lt/en/#foreigners>.

¹⁰ Foreigners: Employment – data [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/3-ciz_zamestnanost.

As for the impact of COVID-19 on labour emigration, the situation here is somewhat worse compared to labour immigration. The aforementioned study conducted by the MIA of the Republic of Belarus on this issue showed that potential employees also faced a number of problems related, for example, to the refusal of a foreign employer to employ them even though all the documents had been issued, and many Belarusian citizens who were already abroad were forced to return home due to quarantine and other restrictive measures imposed by the states of employment.

The IOM Representative Office in the Republic of Belarus came to the same conclusions in its study "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the situation of Belarusian migrant workers that returned home" conducted in 2021. According to the results of this study, the COVID-19 pandemic created significant risks for the socioeconomic situation and legal protection of Belarusian emigrant workers and their families: many of them faced the problems of unemployment, loss of a permanent source of income, and violation of their labour rights by employers. In the face of social and economic risks, emigrants were significantly less protected than the local population.¹¹

When analysing the processes related to the departure of the Belarusian labour force abroad for the purpose of employment, the potential of external labour migration is of considerable interest. During the population census held in 2019, the National Statistical Committee of Belarus studied the attitudes of citizens to possible planning of departure from the Republic of Belarus.¹² A total of 145,793 people were interviewed, 58,387 (40%) of whom replied that they planned to travel abroad for work, which was the most popular option of all proposed (education, family circumstances, medical treatment and rehabilitation, asylum-seeking, etc.). 48,610 people, which is 83 per cent of the respondents, belonged to the labour force (43,130 are employees, 3,198 are self-employed) and 9,613 people did not belong to the labour force (students, retirees, persons waiting for the start of the season, family caregivers, persons who lost hope of finding a job, etc.). From the perspective of labour force participation, the respondents fell into the following categories: 332 people were below the working age, 38,397 people were of working age and 189 people were above the working age. As can be seen, there are almost 10,000 fewer working-age citizens than the ones who are employed, which indicates that the group of those who want to find work abroad includes respondents below and above the working age who are employed in the country's economy.

The survey showed that, unfortunately, it is educated citizens who plan to emigrate for employment (38,867 respondents). And most of them live in Minsk (15,766 people). According to the results of the survey, the leading region of the republic in terms of the number of those wishing to leave is Grodno region (8,945 people), followed by Brest region (8,115 people), Gomel region (7,338 people), Vitebsk region (7,055 people), Minsk region (5,814 people), and finally Mogilev region (5,354 people). Interestingly, if we consider the data from the records maintained by the MIA of Belarus with a regional breakdown, we shall see that regions characterized by large numbers of Belarusian workers who actually left may have a small percentage of those who want to leave according to the National Statistical Committee. For example, Mogilev region ranks third in terms of the number of citizens who have left in five years while having the smallest number of respondents who confirmed their intention to leave.

The Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Belarus also annually conducts a representative republican sociological study of the trends in migration behaviour of the main social and professional groups of the population. The analysis of the results of this study shows that in 2017–2021 the share of respondents who answered positively to the question if they would like to leave for temporary work changed as follows: 2017 – 14 per cent (17.1% men, 11.3% women), 2018 – 9.7 per cent (12% men, 7.8% women), 2019 – 7 per cent (9.8% men, 4.5% women), 2021 – 8 per cent (10.7% men, 5.7% women).¹³

According to this study, the intention to go abroad for work was most often demonstrated by residents of Grodno region (11%), followed by Minsk region (10.4%), Brest region (9.7%), Mogilev region (8.7%), Vitebsk region (6.8%), and Gomel region (6.4%); interestingly, the city of Minsk had the smallest percentage of those who answered affirmatively to this question (4.8%). If we consider different types of settlements, we shall see that urban residents (8.7%) want to go abroad for work more often than rural residents (6.3%).

¹¹ The IOM Representative Office in the Republic of Belarus conducted a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socioeconomic situation of migrants [Electronic resource]: the IOM Representative Office in the Republic of Belarus, 15.04.2021 – Mode of access: <https://belarus.iom.int/ru/resources/vliyanie-pandemii-covid-19-na-polozhenie-trudyaschikhsya-migrantov-v-belarusi>.

¹² The National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus [Electronic resource]: Belstat. – Mode of access: https://census.belstat.gov.by/saiku/?guest=true&lang=ru&default_view_state=edit#query/open/public/F604N_ru.saiku.

¹³ Data from the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.

During the survey, respondents were also asked to tell which country they would choose for employment, and the majority of respondents chose Poland (22.2%), followed by the Russian Federation (20.1%), Germany (13.9%) and Lithuania (12.5%).

In terms of occupational breakdown, construction workers make up the largest share of those wishing to leave for employment (20.2%), followed by those working in the culture and leisure sector (16.7%), industry sector (12.1%), ICT sector (10.8%), consumer services and catering sector (7.7%), etc.

In general, it should be noted that there is a significant gap between the desire to leave for work abroad and the actual migration behaviour of Belarusian citizens. Constraints include a lack of foreign language skills, lack of skills related to the independent search for employment abroad, and reluctance (fear) to turn to the services of licensees. At the same time, the widest gap between the desire to work abroad and the opportunities for employment abroad is observed in women. Labour mobility of Belarusian women is limited by their family duties forcing them to make a choice in favour of low-paid jobs in the Belarusian labour market instead of applying for higher-paying jobs abroad.

Thus the analysis of the above statistical and other data in the field of labour migration for the past five years shows that the number of labour emigrants (leaving both with the assistance of licensees and independently) traditionally exceeds the number of migrants entering Belarus for work. This trend will continue, judging by the migration attitudes of the population. At the same time, it should be noted that most labour emigrants from Belarus tend to return to the country (at least those leaving with the assistance of licensees).

The signs of the influence of external factors on the mobility of individuals are also indicative: labour migration flows in both directions slightly decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic. The peculiarities of migration policies pursued by receiving countries can also be attributed to external factors that do not depend on migrant workers. For example, when Poland introduced the regime simplifying the access of Belarusian citizens to its labour market, the flow of Belarusian citizens to this country significantly increased. Similarly, after the crisis in Ukraine, the number of labour immigrants in Belarus also increased.

Regarding the gender component of external labour migration, there is also a long-term trend towards the predominance of male migration over female migration due to several structural factors that are presumably associated with family duties.



3. THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 MEASUREMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS' REMITTANCES

Remittances have the potential to stimulate development in developing countries. At the macro level, remittances contribute to the stabilization of the balance of payments in recipient countries, while being an important financial resource for poverty reduction. At the micro level, remittances flow directly to poor households and stimulate the growth of the local economy, increasing the turnover of funds in the community.¹⁴

Remittances from migrant workers are a significant and often the only source of income and support for their families.

Remittances stimulate aggregate demand, increase consumption and, as a result, accelerate economic growth. Remittances increase household disposable incomes, lead to poverty reduction and increase investment in human capital.¹⁵

The most common approach to measurement of remittances of migrant workers is the study of data related to the balance of payments.

Personal transfers as an integral part of the indicator "remittances" are defined as the sum of current and capital transfers in cash or in-kind between resident households and non-resident households, plus compensation of employees, minus taxes and social security contributions paid by non-resident employees in the country of employment, minus transportation and travel expenses related to work abroad. In other words, personal transfers include all transfers between households and the net remuneration of non-resident workers.

The data are generated based on the methodological recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) contained in the sixth edition of the **Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (IMF, 2009)**, and the **Manual on International Transactions in Remittances: Guide for Compilers and Users (IMF, 2009)**.

In its statistics, the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus (the National Bank) takes into account remittances made through the following international money transfer systems: Western Union, Unistream, Zolotaya Korona, Money Gram, BLIZKO, Contact, Kolibri, Faster, Ria Money Transfer.

¹⁴ https://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/financial-instr-report-2018-interactive-pdf_pj.pdf.

¹⁵ Remittances of migrant workers in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: contradictory effect and pitfalls. – Access mode: <https://www.caa-network.org/archives/9341#:~:text=Денежные%20переводы%20стимулируют%20совокупный%20спрос,увеличивают%20инвестиции%20в%20человеческий%20капитал.>

According to the analysis, in the period 2017–2021, the volume of personal transfers decreased from USD 1,112,700,000 in 2017 to USD 876,600,000 in 2021 (Table 1).

Net compensation of employees also decreased from USD 467,400,000 in 2017 to USD 322,900,000 in 2021 (Table 1). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on external labour migration is demonstrated by the fact that while in the period 2017–2019 the volume of net compensation of employees remained at approximately the same level, in 2020 net compensation of employees received abroad decreased by more than 30 per cent compared with 2019. In 2021, compensation of employees slightly increased, but there was no return to the pre-Covid level. It will take some time for the indicators of personal transfers to return to the previous values specific to external labour migration in the Republic of Belarus. The same conclusion is confirmed by the data of the World Bank, which annually monitors the volume of remittances from migrant workers around the world, including to the Republic of Belarus.¹⁶

Table 1. Information on personal transfers to the Republic of Belarus for 2017–2021, USD million

Indicator	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Growth rate in 2021 compared to 2017
Personal transfers received	1,112.7	1,061.1	1,049.8	740.8	876.6	78.8
1. Net compensation of employees, received	467.4	479.3	448.8	311.4	322.9	69.1
1.1. Compensation of employees, received	608.5	864.5	817.8	584.3	583.1	95.8
Minus						
1.2. Income taxes and social security contributions, paid	29.5	225.6	214.6	156.5	155.0	525.4
1.3. Import of services falling into the category of "travels" and passenger transportation services	111.6	159.6	154.4	116.4	105.2	94.3
2. Personal transfers, received	645.3	581.3	601.0	429.4	553.7	85.8
2.1. Workers' remittances	523.8	466.3	492.3	375.0	464.2	88.6
2.2. Other transfers between households	121.5	115.0	108.7	54.4	89.5	73.7
3. Capital transfers between households, received	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	X

Source: National Bank of the Republic of Belarus, Balance of Payments of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

The share of net compensation of employees decreased from 42 per cent in 2017 to 36.8 per cent in 2021, while the share of the second component of personal money transfers – workers' remittances – increased (Figure 11).

¹⁶ A holistic assessment of the current economic development strategies and integration of labour migration issues in them, as well as the current situation with labour migration flows and remittances to Belarus, including gender aspects [Electronic resource]: International Organization for Migration, 2022. – Mode of access: https://iomint-my.sharepoint.com/:w/g/personal/vvolkava_jom_int/EZdZA0la17dJndGuHtrcmLMBJAjuCITfdKR6NeFbp-fVcg?e=UCT5x1.

Figure 11. Structure of personal transfers to the Republic of Belarus in 2017–2021



Source: National Bank of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

The Russian Federation, the United States, Germany, Poland, and Cyprus are the top five source countries of officially registered personal money transfers to the Republic of Belarus.

The study of the impact of remittances of migrant workers on the economy illustrates the insignificant share of personal transfers from abroad in the structure of the GDP. In 2021, it amounted to 1.29 per cent, having decreased by 0.74 percentage points compared to 2017 (Table 2).

Table 2. The share of personal transfers received in the GDP of the Republic of Belarus

Years	GDP, USD million	Personal transfers, USD	Including		The share of personal transfers in the GDP, %	Including	
			NET COMPENSATION OF EMPLOYEES	Workers' remittances		Net compensation of employees	Workers' remittances
2017	54,697	1,112.7	467.4	523.8	2.03	0.85	0.96
2018	59,954	1,061.1	479.3	466.3	1.77	0.80	0.78
2019	64,506	1,049.8	448.8	492.3	1.63	0.70	0.76
2020	60,846	740.8	311.4	375.0	1.22	0.51	0.62
2021	68,171	876.6	322.9	464.2	1.29	0.47	0.68

Source: Eurasian Economic Commission, the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

It should be noted that increasing the share of remittances in the global GDP and reducing their cost are one of the objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the field of migration. Thus, in the 35th edition of the Report on Migration and Development, special attention is paid to events related to the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals that are connected with migration and are supervised by the World Bank, namely: an increase in the volume of remittances as a share of the total GDP (indicator 17.3.2), a reduction in the cost of money transfers (indicator 10.c.1), and a reduction in employment-related costs incurred by migrant workers (indicator 10.7.1).¹⁷

The Republic of Belarus is actively working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The progress towards SDG 17.3.2 is shown in Figure 12.

¹⁷ Migration and Development Brief 35 [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Migration_Brief%2035_1.pdf.

Figure 12. Personal transfers received from abroad as a share (percentage) of GDP in 2005–2021



Source: <http://sdgplatform.belstat.gov.by/sites/belstatfront/index-info.html?indicator=17.3.2.1>.

The SDG related to the reduction in remittances (Goal 10.c1) is irrelevant for the Republic of Belarus.¹⁸

It should be noted that a few years ago, the issue of the cost of remittances, i.e. the transfer of earned funds to the homeland, was quite a pressing one. Labour migrants used a wide range of formal and informal money transfer schemes: from electronic bank transfers, transfers through operators of international money transfer systems, and post offices to personal delivery of money by migrants themselves, their friends/relatives or third parties (couriers, bus drivers or train conductors). According to the survey conducted by the National Bank of Belarus, presently the problem of the form of money transfers and their high cost is no longer relevant. The introduction of digital financial services, first and foremost the development of the market of bank cards, has opened new opportunities to reduce the cost of money transfers. Emigrant workers are actively mastering modern financial instruments and improving their financial literacy. Currently, an employee receives a bank card in the country of employment and hands it over to relatives in Belarus, which eliminates the problem of money transfers via bank cards or personal delivery, as the costs associated with money transfers are reduced to card servicing.

As part of the efforts to meet the indicator on the reduction in employment-related costs incurred by migrant workers (indicator 10.7.1), the Republic of Belarus is developing recommendations on amendments to the questionnaire for international household surveys. After the recommendations are formulated, the country will work on the adaptation of the international methodology to the national specifics.¹⁹

As noted by experts from the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus, as well as a representative of the Ministry of Taxes and Duties, within the framework of the management of migrant remittances as resources for economic development and economic growth, Belarus is pursuing an active policy of concluding bilateral agreements on avoidance of double taxation and prevention of income tax evasion. As of 01.01.2020, 71 agreements of this type were concluded.

As a rule, households mainly spend migrant remittances to meet their basic consumer needs such as the purchase of durable goods, improvement of housing conditions (purchase or repair of a house/apartment), education and less often debt repayment, savings, and medical care.²⁰ Only a small percentage of remittances received by households is directed to business investments. International experience shows that investments in productive capital made by family members and returning migrants can increase only after households satisfy their more pressing needs and the business and investment environment in the country improves.²¹

¹⁸ The Sustainable Development Goals in Belarus. Reducing inequality within and between countries. [Electronic resource]: the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2018. – Mode of access: <http://sdgplatform.belstat.gov.by/sites/belstatfront/target.html>.

¹⁹ The Sustainable Development Goals in Belarus. Reducing inequality within and between countries. [Electronic resource]: the National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2018. – Mode of access: <http://sdgplatform.belstat.gov.by/sites/belstatfront/index-info.html?indicator=10.7.1>.

²⁰ Labour migration in the CIS: social and economic effects: a collection of articles / ed.-in-chief Z.A. Zayonchkovskaya. – M.: The Centre for the Study of the Problems of Forced Migration in the CIS, 2003. – p. 285.

²¹ Development and side effects of migrant remittances in the CIS countries: Ukraine. [Electronic resource]: Olga Kupets, 2012. – Mode of access: https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/26634/CARIM-East_RR-2012-06.pdf.

The results of the conducted analysis showed a significant impact of the epidemiological crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the volume of personal transfers from abroad. At the same time, in 2021, positive trends in their recovery were already noted.

It should be emphasized that the indicator of personal transfers does not reflect the direct contribution of migrants to the economic development of the country. The indicator of received compensation of employees demonstrates the amount of money earned by Belarusian citizens abroad, but certainly not the amount of money imported by them. Meanwhile, the indicator of remittances includes all types of personal transfers made by citizens and does not allow to single out the share of remittances from temporary migrant workers. The indicator of personal transfers received, both in absolute terms and as a share in GDP, should be considered as a resource for the sustainable development of the Republic of Belarus, while realizing that the temporary departure of Belarusian citizens for employment abroad not only relieves the situation on the domestic labour market but also improves the balance of payments of the country. At the same time, when employees who are in demand on the national labour market leave, their remittances to a certain extent compensate for losses related to the decrease in the labour potential of the country.

Therefore, in the short term, one of the main tasks related to the use of migrant remittances is to maintain their flow, especially through digital channels, improve the financial literacy of migrant workers, and facilitate their access to financial and banking services. In the long term, the use of the potential of migrant remittances can be improved through the support for small and medium-sized businesses, and the development of investment opportunities within the country. Meanwhile, an effective mechanism for the transformation of remittances into investments in the real sector of the economy can give an impetus to the stable development of the economy in Belarus.



IOM staff helps a migrant find the necessary information about the flight © IOM 2022

3.2 THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION ON THE LABOUR MARKET AND THE STANDARDS OF LIVING OF MIGRANTS' HOUSEHOLDS

The volume of both incoming and outgoing external labour migration directly affects the size of the labour force and its use, as well as the possibility to satisfy the needs of the economy for workers in certain professions and specialties. External labour migration can not only compensate the existing labour force deficit but also generate it.

Migration of the population is caused by traditional push and pull factors that are specific to migration movements of the population of the studied countries. The main push factor shaping migration flows is economic reasons. However, a number of researchers are noting the increasing complexity of the economic motivation of migrants: while earlier economic migration was caused by such push factors as unemployment and poverty, at the present stage there is an increase in the number of prosperous citizens migrating to improve their material well-being and quality of life abroad.^{22,23} Thus there is a change taking place in the forms of migration (an increase in the number of permanent migrants) as well as the diversification of migration directions towards countries with high living standards and social policies.

The significant economic gap between countries is reflected by the position of countries in the ranking on the Human Development Index. For example, in 2020, Germany ranked 6th, the United States of America ranked 17th, and Estonia ranked 37th among all countries on the Human Development Index. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan, Belarus, the Republic of Moldova, and Uzbekistan ranked 51st, 53rd, 90th and 106th respectively (Table 3).

Table 3. Ranking of countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2020

No.	Country	Index
6	Germany	0.947
17	United States	0.926
29	Estonia	0.892
31	United Arab Emirates	0.890
34	Lithuania	0.882
37	Latvia	0.866
45	Qatar	0.848
51	Kazakhstan	0.825
52	Russian Federation	0.824
53	Belarus	0.823
54	Türkiye	0.820
85	China	0.761
90	Republic of Moldova	0.750
106	Uzbekistan	0.820
125	Tajikistan	0.668

Source: Human Development Index (HDI), 2022.

Another indicator reflecting the economic gap between countries is GDP per capita at purchasing power parity. In 2020, GDP per capita in the countries receiving Belarusian labour force was higher than in Belarus (Table 4).

²² Moşneaga V., Moşneaga G. Moldovan labour migration into the European Union // *Moldoscopy*. 2019. № 1 (84). pp. 154-186.

²³ Titarenko L. Motives for migration of Belarusians to Scandinavia and the Baltic States in the context of westward and eastward emigration flows // *the Third International Congress of Belarusian Studies. Working materials*. 2014. Vol. 3. pp. 152-156.

Table 4. Ranking of countries by GDP per capita (at purchasing power parity) in 2020

Position in the rating	Country	GDP per capita, the United States (USD)
4	Qatar	89,949
7	United States	63,544
16	Germany	53,694
30	Czechia	41,737
32	Lithuania	38,735
34	Estonia	38,395
38	Poland	34,265
41	Latvia	32,019
46	Russian Federation	28,213
50	Kazakhstan	26,729
62	Belarus	20,200
86	Ukraine	13,057
88	Republic of Moldova	13,002
115	Uzbekistan	7,378
139	Tajikistan	3,858

Source: Ranking of countries by GDP (PPP), 2020.

The analysis of the gap in compensation of employees at the beginning of 2022 shows a significant gap in the size of average wages in the Baltic States on the one hand and in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan on the other hand (Table 5).

Table 5. The level of wages in countries worldwide at the beginning of 2022

Position in the rating	Name of the country	Average monthly wage, the United States (USD)	Average yearly wage, the United States (USD)
6	Germany	4,392	52,704
9	United States	3,921	47,052
32	Estonia	1,560	18,720
34	Czechia	1,454	17,448
37	Lithuania	1,419	17,028
41	Poland	1,253	15,036
42	Latvia	1,217	14,604
49	China	995	11,940
50	Türkiye	961	11,532
54	Russian Federation	788	9,456
61	Belarus	545	6,540
65	Kazakhstan	486	5,832
71	Republic of Moldova	437	5,244
85	Tajikistan	155	1,860

Source: How Good it is Abroad or Average Salaries in the World, 2022.

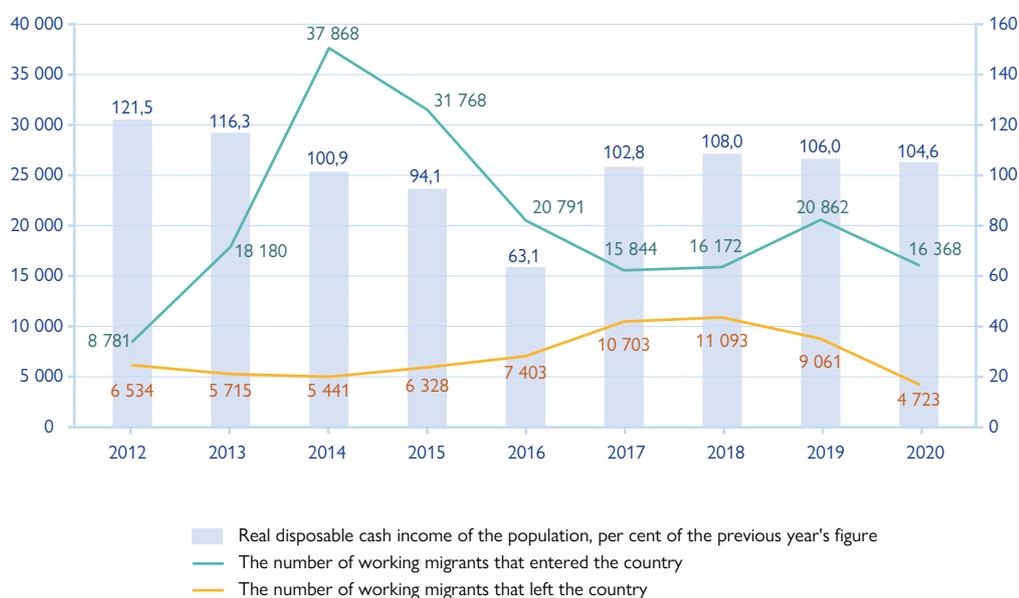
Thus at the current stage, migration from Belarus to European countries, as well as to the Russian Federation is shaped by both pull factors (the state of the labour market, income level and quality of life) and push factors (lack of jobs, low income, poor working conditions, dissatisfaction with the conditions of the country's political development, etc.).

Labour immigration is a factor affecting the size of labour resources, the significance of which depends on its scale. Analysis shows that, in quantitative terms, the share of migrant workers who annually enter for work on the basis of signed contracts is no more than 0.4 per cent of the workforce. This volume of the attracted foreign labour force cannot have a noticeable impact on the size of labour resources in Belarus.

The volume of external labour immigration and emigration directly depends on the standard of living of the country's population in comparison with other countries. A significant constraint on the development of the national economy is the existing gap in the income level of the population of Belarus with other, primarily neighbouring countries, which results in the loss of the country's labour potential, and increased labour migration flows to countries with higher incomes.

As shown in Figure 13, the growth of cash incomes of the population stimulates the entry of foreign labour into the country and reduces the departure of emigrant workers from the country. A decrease in the income of the population is associated with a tendency toward a reduction in the number of immigrant workers entering the country and an increase in the number of those leaving the country.

Figure 13. Changes in the number of migrant workers who entered the Republic of Belarus and the number of migrant workers who left the Republic of Belarus and the real disposable cash incomes of the population of the Republic of Belarus in 2012–2020



Source: National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

The direct correlation between the processes of external labour migration and the living standards of the population becomes evident when comparing wages in countries according to the purchasing power parity (PPP). Belarus has relatively low salaries in US dollars but at the same time even lower prices. As a result, Belarusians can buy more with their salaries than Russians. It should be noted that the current dynamics of labour migration processes are influenced by factors shaping the demand and supply of labour in the national labour market. And in turn, the processes of labour force import and export also have an impact on the balance of the labour market of the Republic of Belarus. Thus, external labour migration is able not only to compensate the existing deficit in labour force in certain professions and specialties, as well as reduce the disparities in labour supply and demand experienced by the labour market in terms of the professional qualification and territorial composition but also to exacerbate this deficit.

According to the data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, 6,300 people were registered as unemployed as of 1 February, 2022. In January 2022, 7,800 people applied for employment assistance. 4,500 people were permanently employed. At the same time, as of 1 February, 2022, 95,800 job vacancies were advertised, of which about 6,000 came with accommodation provided. The demand for employees of working professions amounted to 64.2 per cent of the total number of vacancies.

If we look at the demand for labour force in the Republic of Belarus (top 10 vacancies), we shall see that the most popular working professions on the labour market are the ones of a bus driver, a tractor driver, a cleaner, a salesman, a seamstress, and cook. In the category of specialists and employees, the most popular professions are a doctor, a nurse, an engineer, a security guard, and a director (Table 6). At the same time, the available level of compensation of employees is extremely low.

Table 6. The demand for labour force (top10 vacancies) as of 1 April 2022

Professions (specialties)	Number of vacancies advertised by employers	Average wage, rubles
WORKING PROFESSIONS		
Car driver	4,033	796
Tractor driver-operator of agricultural production	2,059	776
Cleaner of premises (industrial and office)	1,898	517
Salesman	1,816	612
Seamstress	1,491	686
Cook	1,514	612
Electrician for repair and maintenance of electrical equipment	1,426	720
Nurse	1,387	536
Milking machine operator	1,033	759
Electric and gas welder	1,008	814
SPECIALISTS AND EMPLOYEES		
Medical specialist	2,862	926
Specialist nurse	2,452	660
Veterinarian	786	753
Engineer	725	796
Specialist	718	829
Accountant	545	718
Guard	457	652
Director	460	1,231

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

It should be noted that the structure of the demand for labour force in the countries that most actively receive Belarusian labour force is quite similar. Considering this it could be inferred that a certain part of Belarusian workers who can close these vacancies instead choose higher-paying jobs abroad.

What is more, taking into account the fact that the labour market of the Republic of Belarus is less attractive in terms of the level of compensation of employees, it seems hardly possible to fill the existing vacancies by attracting foreign labour force.

Currently, in quantitative terms, the share of migrant workers entering the Republic of Belarus annually is about 0.25 per cent of the workforce. This size of attracted foreign labour force cannot have a noticeable impact on the size of labour resources in Belarus, it exerts no noticeable pressure on the national labour market, and labour immigrants themselves cannot be considered as serious competitors for available jobs.

As for the strategic issues of further socioeconomic development of the Republic of Belarus in the near and longer term, the formation of labour potential, the cessation of migration outflow of the population, the consolidation of labour resources, and the attraction of in-demand personnel are the most important problems that require special attention.

However, one should understand that there are no simple solutions to increasing the migration attractiveness of the Republic of Belarus. Despite the measures taken for the economic and social development

of the territories, the level of compensation of employees in some areas remains extremely low, while the potential for migration outflow of the population from certain areas, on the contrary, is high.

It is also necessary to take into account the fact that the possibilities of retaining the much-needed resident population in the regions by measures of migration policy alone are extremely limited. These measures should be supported by a policy aimed at improving the level and quality of life of the population at the level of individual regions. For Belarus, it is urgent to consistently implement measures minimizing the adverse effects of various forces and structural factors that force people to leave the country.

This can be achieved if the volume of the labour force leaving the country contributes to a decrease in the number of people who are not employed in the economy or are not in demand in the national labour market. The fulfilment of this condition will allow to reduce tensions in the domestic labour market, minimize the existing imbalances in its structure, and save money spent on passive employment policy measures (payment of unemployment benefits and various types of material assistance). The money earned by migrants will, on the one hand, help to stimulate the employment of the population at home through its investment in the domestic economy, and on the other hand, will increase the total income of migrants' family members remaining at home. The use of these funds for personal consumption will increase the efficiency of aggregate demand, thereby boosting economic activity in the country. The export of labour force will allow to improve the country's balance of payments due to the inflow of funds from abroad, replenish the budget through taxes on the profits of intermediary firms engaged in the employment of Belarusian citizens abroad and attracting foreign labour, and facilitate the structural and technological transformation of a number of sectors of the national economy. In the long term, the economic effect of external labour migration will manifest itself in the development of small and medium-sized businesses with the direct participation of former labour migrants who will bring in their experience and money accumulated in the process of working abroad.

3.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LABOUR MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT FROM THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Recognition of the importance of gender mainstreaming makes it necessary to introduce gender approaches into strategic documents aimed at strengthening the relationship between migration and development. This approach is in demand, as gender affects all aspects of the life of migrants, both women and men. Gender determines the causes of migration, influences the decision on who exactly will become a migrant, affects the social networks that migrants enter in the process of moving to another country, and shapes the experience of integration and entry into the labour market of the destination country, as well as the relations with the country of origin. Gender also affects the size and frequency of remittances, money transfer mechanisms and the overall impact of remittances in the countries of origin of migrants.²⁴

The Republic of Belarus is implementing the National Action Plan for Ensuring Gender Equality in the Republic of Belarus for 2021–2025. Meanwhile, migration issues are included only in the section "Information and educational support of measures aimed at ensuring gender equality" as part of the work to raise the awareness of citizens on safe travel abroad.

Currently, about 90 per cent of migrants leaving and entering for temporary employment are men (Figures 14 and 15).

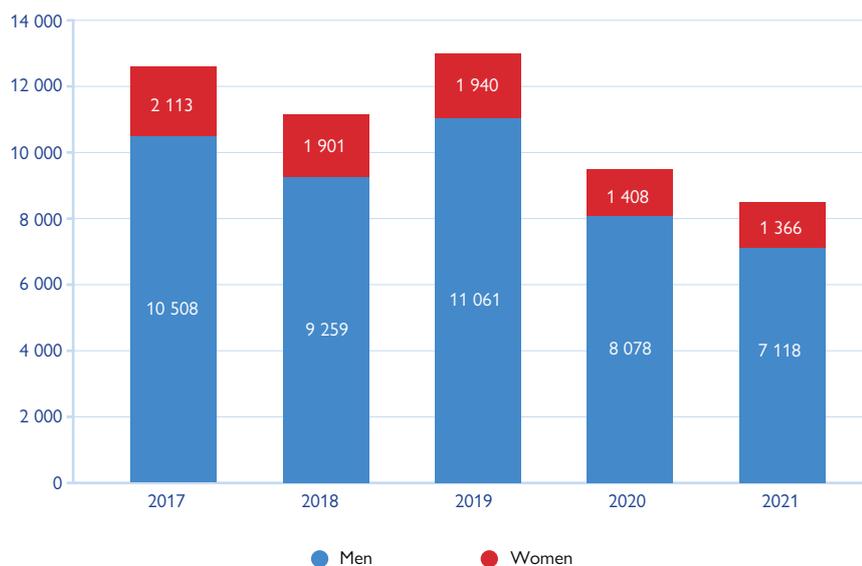
The results of expert interviews conducted with representatives of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Research Institute of Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, as well as a number of studies conducted in the territory of the Eurasian Economic Space²⁵ revealed the following standard gender roles, stereotypes, and inequalities that are also characteristic of labour migration in the Republic of Belarus:

- in the traditional division of labour, men are assigned the main duty to engage in productive work (paid work), while women are prescribed to engage in reproductive labour (including unpaid or low-paid care work);
- men are more likely to occupy leadership positions, and women are assigned auxiliary roles;

²⁴ THE GENDER AGENDA IN MIGRATION: the relationship between labour migration and development from the perspective of the gender approach.

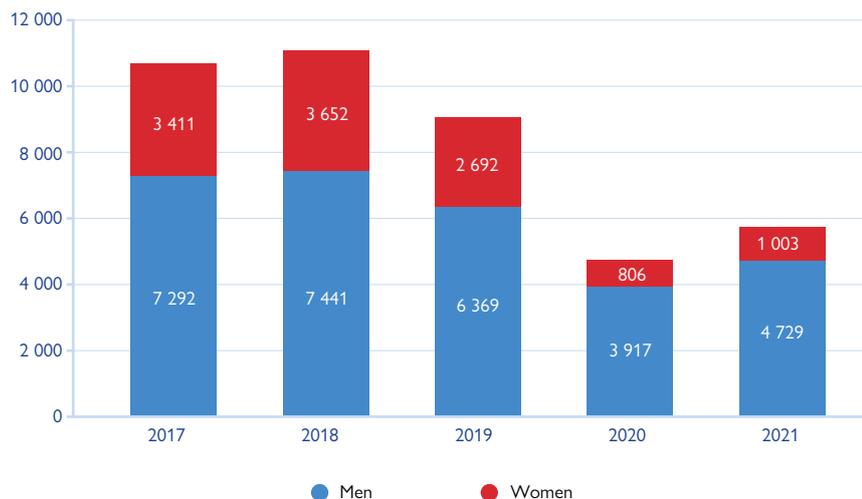
²⁵ Migrant women from CIS countries in Russia / E.V. Tyuryukanova (ed.), Z.A. Zaiionchkovskaya, L.B. Karachurina, N.V. Mkrtchyan, D.V. Poletaev, Y.F. Florinskaya / edited by E.V. Tyuryukanova – M.: MAKSS Press, 2011. – 119 p.

Figure 14. The gender structure of immigrant workers in 2017–2021, people



Source: MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

Figure 15. The gender structure of emigrant workers in 2017–2021, people



Source: MIA of the Republic of Belarus, 2022.

- professions that are considered male are often given more importance, and therefore they are paid better than female professions; in this connection, it is easier for a man to find a job abroad than for a woman;
- when a woman emigrates and leaves her children in the custody of family members in the country of origin, the responsibilities of caring for them (reproductive work) are more often delegated to her mother, sister or elder daughter than to her husband.

It should also be noted that women who head households are dependent on remittances of their husbands working abroad. As a result, they become vulnerable when the volume of these remittances decreases or the migrant worker becomes disabled. Thus, the decrease in remittances to the Republic of Belarus caused by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the inability of some migrants to return to their homeland, inevitably affected the level and lifestyle of households. Provided that in the Republic of Belarus men make up more than 90 per cent of emigrant workers, it can be unequivocally concluded that this situation has definitely increased the burden on women and further narrowed their financial opportunities.

In the course of the study, experts pointed out another problem related to work abroad, which should also be considered from the gender perspective.

The lack of access to health services for migrants in their host countries can have more serious consequences for women than for men. Women are more likely to use the services of the health-care system due to biological and social characteristics. In order to address the social exclusion of migrants from health services, it is necessary to take measures ensuring equal conditions for access of all migrants, both men and women, to medical care. At the same time, special measures are needed to improve the access of migrant women to medical services in the field of sexual and reproductive health.

In general, migration can lead to both positive and negative changes in gender roles and the organization of households. Among other things, migration experience can help to improve the social status of women, as it allows them to earn their own money, start their businesses, and/or improve their position in the household.

It should be noted that to date, the issues of gender-related (un)equality of migrant workers are not receiving attention from Belarusian researchers.

At the same time, using the example of many development sectors, it has been proved that the implementation of the gender-oriented approach increases the effectiveness of political strategies and programmes. Ample evidence and practical experience accumulated in more developed sectors (for example, health and education) confirm that "if development is not gender-oriented, it is under threat. And if strategies aimed at reducing poverty do not lead to the empowerment of women, they do not empower the society as a whole" (UNDP, 1997: 7).²⁶

Ignoring gender relations not only leads to the development of ineffective strategies and programmes that are poorly correlated with the real lives of men and women but also hinders the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal No. 5: Gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.²⁷

²⁶ THE GENDER AGENDA IN MIGRATION: the relationship between labour migration and development from the perspective of the gender approach.

²⁷ Sustainable Development Goal 5. Ensuring gender equality and empowering all women and girls . [Electronic resource]: Sustainable Development Goals in Belarus. – Mode of access: <https://sdgs.by/targets/target5>.



4. THE ECOSYSTEM OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

4.1 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework regulating the processes of external labour migration in the Republic of Belarus, the main element of which is the Law of the Republic of Belarus of 30.12.2010 "On External Labour Migration" (hereinafter referred to as the Law), can be divided into two categories: the acts regulating the employment of foreign workers within the republic and those establishing the procedure for employment abroad of Belarusian citizens and foreigners permanently residing in Belarus.

The first group consists of a fairly large number of regulatory legal acts, both applicable to all labour immigrants and concerning certain issues of attraction of foreign labour:

- Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 200 of 26.04.2010 "On Administrative Procedures Carried out by State Bodies and Other Organization upon Application of Citizens" (which identifies the authorities responsible for issuance of permits to individuals for employment in Belarus, as well as the documents required for obtaining such permits);
- Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 548 of 24.09.2021 "On Administrative Procedures Carried out in Relation to Business Entities" (which identifies the authorities responsible for issuance of permits to legal entities for employment of foreigners in Belarus, as well as the documents required for obtaining such permits);
- Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 885 of 30.06.2011 "On Approval of the Procedure for the Provision of Services of Recruitment from among Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons Having no Permanent Residence Permit in the Republic of Belarus by Legal Entities and Individual Entrepreneurs " (which establishes who and how can provide these services, and defines the obligations of all parties to the process of employment of foreigners in Belarus);
- Resolution of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus of 06.24.2016 No. 173 "On the Procedure for Issuance of Work Permits to Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons" (which establishes the algorithm of actions related to the issuance of work permits to foreigners in Belarus by the Department of Citizenship and Migration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus and its territorial divisions);
- Resolution of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus No. 30 of 06.28.2016 "On Approval of the Instructions on the Procedure and Conditions for Issuance of

Certificates Confirming the Possibility of Attracting Foreign Citizens or Stateless Persons and Engagement of a Foreign Citizen or a Stateless Person in Labour Activities in the Republic of Belarus" (which establishes the algorithm of actions of the Labour, Employment, and Social Protection Committees on the issuance of certificates for the subsequent issuance of permits for the employment of foreigners in Belarus).

The following separate legal acts regulate the issues of employment of foreign workers within the framework of investment projects: Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 10 of 06.08.2009 "On Creation of Additional Conditions for Investments in the Republic of Belarus", Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 349 of 27.09.2016 "On the Implementation of Investment Projects", as well as some others. These regulations provide for a simplified procedure of admission of foreign workers to the labour market, for example, in the form of exemption of their employers from the state fee for the issuance of special permits, or expedited consideration of documents submitted for obtaining special permits. As a rule, these regulations are adopted on an ad hoc basis by competent authorities regulating relevant sectors of the economy for the implementation of specific investment projects within a certain time frame. Other legal acts regulating the issues of special conditions for employment of foreigners include:

- Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 8 of 21.12.2017 "On the Development of the Digital Economy" (which allows foreign specialists of the residents of the Hi-Tech Park to work without obtaining special permits and obtain a temporary residence permit for the entire term of the employment contract;
- Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 7 of 23.11.2017 "On the Development of Entrepreneurship" (according to which special permits are not required for foreigners who are winners (laureates) of national (international) competitions in the field of their professional activity);
- Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 420 of 30.08.2014 "On the Stay of Ukrainian Citizens in the Republic of Belarus" (which was adopted to support residents of Donetsk and Luhansk regions who arrived in Belarus for the first time by exempting employers of such citizens from the state fee for the issuance of special permits, free issuance of temporary and permanent residence permits to these citizens, as well as exemption from the established procedure for the recognition of educational documents issued by educational institutions and other organizations of Ukraine).

Thus the adoption of the above-mentioned legal acts demonstrates that with the existence of a clear general framework for the employment of foreign labour force, legislation can be flexible in some cases, adapting to the needs or accommodating national interests.

As noted above, the main legal act regulating external labour migration is the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On External Labour Migration". Chapter One of the Law defines the terms used in it and the scope of its application. The law defines an immigrant worker as a foreigner who does not have a permanent residence permit in the Republic of Belarus and entered the Republic of Belarus for employment and engagement in labour activities under an employment contract with an employer of the Republic of Belarus or is engaged in such activities in the Republic of Belarus. Therefore, any foreigners who work in Belarus are considered labour migrants and must comply with the provisions of this law. However, article two of this chapter provides for exceptions and contains a list of categories of foreigners to whom the law does not apply. And it should be noted that this list is quite extensive.

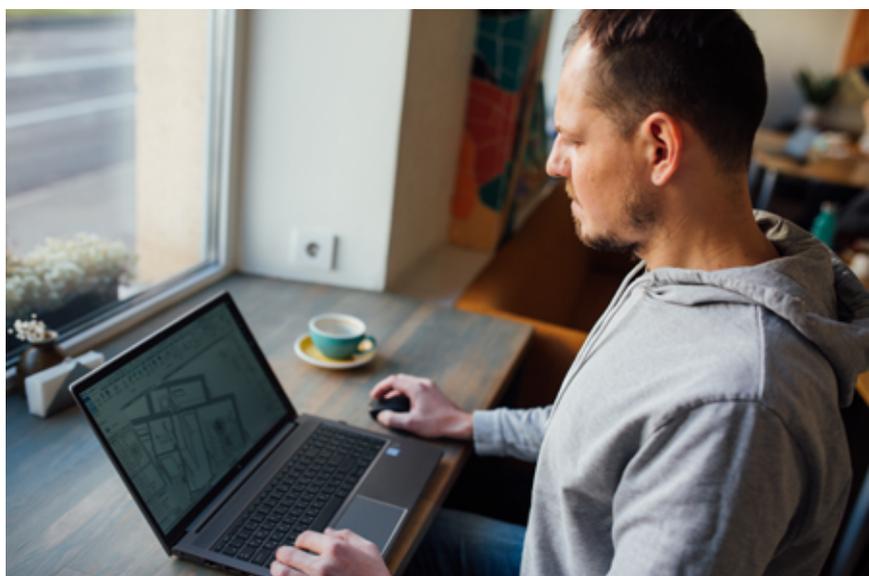
One of the reasons for the exclusion of some categories of foreigners from the scope of the law is the short-term nature of specialized work performed in the territory of the republic (for example, the law is not applied to foreigners invited for no more than 90 days to give lectures or perform other educational work in educational institutions of the Republic of Belarus, or accredited foreign journalists, which is quite understandable and logical). However, this approach has some drawbacks. Taking into account the rapid technological and information progress, the list of professions and types of work in which specialists can be involved is changing very quickly: some professions disappear due to their irrelevance and lack of demand for them, and some, on the contrary, appear and most often they require mobility, that is, frequent movements. Thus enumeration of specific categories of professions may result in the inclusion of specialists that are not in demand or vice versa exclusion of new categories of specialists who, as a result, will not be able to come to Belarus to perform specific short-term work or provide services. And since it is unprofitable for them to receive special permits for a year, Belarus will lose the opportunity to receive modern services and will fail to meet the modern requirements for the mobility of specialists. In this regard, one of the recommendations emanating from the study is not to list in Article two of Chapter one of the Law specific categories of foreigners that are outside of

its scope but instead to define the conditions for the performance of short-term work or provision of services for which obtaining permits and all related procedures are not be required.

Some of the categories of foreigners listed in the same article are also for obvious reasons exempt from the requirement to obtain special permits, for example, refugees and applicants for refugee status or additional protection, diplomatic personnel of foreign states or clergymen performing religious activities. However, according to the authors of the study, their enumeration is also unnecessary, since exemption from the requirement to obtain work permits is already provided for by special legal acts such as the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Granting Refugee Status, Additional and Temporary Protection to Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons in the Republic of Belarus" (Articles 20, 23, 26, and 34), as well as the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961.

And the last group of foreign citizens who do not fall under the scope of the Law includes those in whose involvement and retention in the labour market the Republic of Belarus is interested. However, exemption of such foreigners from the necessary procedures for their admission to the labour market alone does not make working and living conditions substantially easier and more attractive for them. In this regard, it seems expedient to adopt separate regulations for foreigners required by the country and to stipulate in these regulations all the conditions for their admission to the labour market, as well as what they will be provided if they work in Belarus. For example, in addition to the exemption from the need to receive work permits, it is advisable to issue temporary residence permits for the entire term of the concluded contract (by analogy with foreign employees of HTP residents), provide medical care on an equal basis with citizens of the Republic of Belarus both in ordinary health-care institutions and sanatorium and resort facilities, and recognize their educational documents without appropriate recognition procedures. That is, to apply the national legal regime to them. It is also important to extend a similar regime to family members of such categories of foreigners.

In general, it should be noted that there are no regulatory legal acts in the Republic of Belarus that would establish special working and living conditions for those categories that are urgently needed by the country's economy. For example, the Law contains the definition of a "highly qualified specialist", who, if complying with the conditions stipulated by this definition, receives a special work permit in Belarus for two years instead of one. However, it is quite clear that the issuance of two-year permits is not enough to increase the flow of highly qualified foreign specialists to Belarus. Such a single "benefit" does not make Belarus attractive and does not motivate a foreign specialist to choose Belarus as a country to move to. Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 8 of 21.12.2017 "On the Development of the Digital Economy" with its wide range of preferences for both HTP employers and foreign workers was implemented quite successfully, attracting about 3,000 foreign programmers in only one branch of the economy, therefore it can serve as an example and a guideline in this area.



It is also worth noting here that the Republic of Belarus needs to develop a legal act establishing the conditions for the entry and temporary work of seconded workers since there are many pitfalls in this area raising questions both from Belarusian organizations that host foreign specialists and from foreign employers that send their employees on business trips to the Republic of Belarus. The authors of the research may recommend studying the Directive of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union 96/71/EC of 16.12.1996 concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services.²⁸

Seasonal workers are another category of immigrant workers for whom a separate regulatory legal act could be developed. For example, it is possible to provide them with multiple-entry special permits for several years with the right to work from 3 to 9 months or entitle them to a simplified procedure of obtaining a special permit for the duration of seasonal work.

²⁸ Official Journal of the European Communities [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31996L0071&from>.

Returning to the analysis of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On External Labour Migration", its Chapter 4 deals with the issues of the general procedure for attracting foreign labour force to the Republic of Belarus, defining the procedure for the employment of immigrant workers, possible restrictions on employment, the issuance and cancellation of work permits as well as the rights, obligations, and guarantees that immigrant workers have when engaging in labour activities.

Thus in accordance with the Law, foreigners can work in the Republic of Belarus subject to obtaining special permits for the right to work in the Republic of Belarus. A special permit is issued for one year and can also be extended once for one more year. Further, if a foreigner continues to work for the same employer, it is necessary to obtain a new special permit again. While the rule of priority of a national employee does not apply during the extension of the permit, when receiving a new one, it is necessary to provide information about the available vacancy to the labour, employment, and social protection authority. In this case, there is a possibility that the labour, employment, and social protection authorities may issue a negative opinion on the possibility of attracting a foreign specialist, referring to the availability of local personnel, even if the employer is quite satisfied with the foreigner and the foreigner himself wants to continue working for this employer. Moreover, in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons in the Republic of Belarus", a foreigner who has been forced out of work must leave the territory of Belarus within 15 days or find a new job within the same term. According to the authors of the study, this situation negatively affects the confidence of the private sector in public authorities, on the one hand, and does not inspire confidence in stable employment in Belarus among foreign specialists. In this regard, it is recommended to consider the possibility of cancelling the employer's obligation to obtain a new special permit for the same foreign specialist intending to continue working for the third and subsequent years. Instead, for example, it is advised to provide for the extension of the first issued special permit for the duration of the concluded employment contract instead of extending it on an annual basis (by analogy with foreign employees of HTP residents). Thus the procedure will become clear and at the same time, this will allow the MIA of Belarus to streamline the records of immigrant workers that arrived during the reporting period and all working foreigners at any time of the request. It is necessary to provide a number of conditions to exclude the abuse of such an opportunity, for example, to provide for the cancellation of a special permit in case of violations of the Labour Code related to payment of monthly salary or social contributions or violations of the Tax Code related to payment of taxes, and so on.

The above-mentioned obligation of a foreigner to leave the territory of the republic within 15 days in case of loss of the grounds for residence, i.e. loss of work, also runs counter to the goal of the policy of Belarus in the field of external labour migration to retain qualified foreign workers in the Belarusian labour market. The authors of the study propose to extend the period of stay of former foreign workers in Belarus in order for them to be able to find new jobs.

Articles 26-29 of Chapter 4 of the Law regulate the procedure for issuance of permits to employ foreign labour force in cases when more than 10 foreign workers are employed. According to the authors of the study, this type of document is groundless and causes unnecessary bureaucratic procedures.

Articles 33 and 35 of Chapter 4 of the Law are dedicated to the rights, duties, and guarantees provided to immigrant workers. They cover issues of equal remuneration with citizens of Belarus for work of equal value, payments provided for by the legislation of Belarus, affordable medical care, pension provision, and so on. Thus immigrant workers are entitled to a wide range of rights and guarantees when working in the territory of the Republic of Belarus. In addition to these rights and guarantees, the authors of the study consider it necessary to add the right to protection of labour and other similar rights on an equal basis with citizens and foreigners permanently residing in the Republic of Belarus, the right to conclude employment contracts with Belarusian employers outside the Republic of Belarus (by analogy with emigrant workers), as well as the right to family reunification, as well as to extend some of the migrants' rights to their family members.

Article 21 of the Law also stipulates that foreigners have the right to find employment in Belarus with the assistance of legal entities and individual entrepreneurs or foreign organizations providing recruitment services. The activities of such organizations are regulated by the above-mentioned Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 885 of 30.06.2011 "On Approval of the Procedure for the Provision of Services of Recruitment from among Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons Having no Permanent Residence Permit in the Republic of Belarus by Legal Entities and Individual Entrepreneurs". According to this resolution, in order to perform their activities, these organizations are required to conclude cooperation agreements with foreign recruitment agencies. To date, there is not a single such organizations in the Republic. Perhaps one of the reasons is the difficulty in finding foreign recruitment agencies, establishing contacts with them, and achieving the proper level of trust.

The second group of legal acts establishing the procedure for the employment of Belarusian citizens and foreigners permanently residing in Belarus abroad, consists of:

- the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Combating Human Trafficking" (which contains measures to prevent human trafficking and related crimes, including licensing of activities that may create conditions for human trafficking and (or) exploitation, requirements for modelling agencies, as well as legal entities providing educational services);
- Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 450 of 01.09.2010 "On Licensing of Certain Types of Activities" (which stipulates that activities related to employment outside the Republic of Belarus are subject to licensing, as well as establishes conditions and requirements for license applicants);
- Resolution of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus No. 388 of 30.11.2010 "On the Procedure for Assessment of the Compliance of the Capabilities of the Applicant for a Special Permit (License) (Licensee) with the Licensing Requirements and Conditions Established for the Activities Related to Employment Outside the Republic of Belarus, and Collection and Dissemination (Including in the Global Computer Network (the Internet)) of Information about Individuals for their Acquaintance";
- Resolution of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus No. 386 of 30.11.2010 "On the Establishment of Forms of Documents for Licensing of Activities related to Employment outside the Republic of Belarus, and Collection and Dissemination (Including in the Global Computer Network (the Internet)) of Information about Individuals for their Acquaintance".

The listed regulatory legal acts, as well as Chapter 3 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On External Labour Migration" clearly regulate the procedure for employment of citizens abroad by licensees. There is a comprehensive framework, which defines their duties, requirements for employment contracts and employment assistance contracts, as well as the conditions for employment under student programmes. Thus the activities of licensees are transparent, understandable and subject to control, which guarantees the protection of the rights of Belarusian citizens employed abroad with their assistance.

At the same time, according to licensees, many of the requirements applicable to their activities are burdensome and unnecessary, for example, the requirement to submit within 5 days after the return the information about those who returned after the termination of the employment agreement (contract) to the territorial departments for citizenship and migration. According to licensees, it is almost impossible to do this, since emigrant workers themselves often do not get in touch with licensees and refuse to report their movements. However, the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Belarus provides for the responsibility for failure to provide such information. In this regard, the authors of the study recommend abolishing this requirement.

At the same time, according to the authors of the study, some requirements on the contrary are lacking, especially those that are directly related to the safety and pre-departure training of migrant workers. For example, Article 16 obliges licensees to inform emigrant workers about the provisions of the legislation of the State of employment in the field of external labour migration, about the location and phone numbers of diplomatic institutions of the Republic of Belarus abroad, as well as about international organizations. However, it is not clear what information emigrant workers receive and in which form, as well as how much they are prepared for departure. The authors of the study consider it expedient to oblige licensees to prepare and issue the above and other necessary information to emigrant workers with a written acknowledgement of receipt. Thus, both sides will protect themselves: labour emigrants – from possible violations of their rights, and licensees – from possible claims from labour emigrants about the lack of information that should be provided before departure.

The issues of actual subsequent employment of Belarusian citizens in the territory of the country of destination remain not covered by the Law. According to the Law, employment contracts are to be concluded with Belarusian citizens before their departure, however, very often there are cases when upon arrival to a foreign employer they are offered to sign other/new contracts (often civil contracts). A foreign employer acts in accordance with the legislation of his state, but Belarusian citizens have doubts about the legality of such an offer. In these cases, the territorial divisions for citizenship and migration have questions for licensees, but there are no grounds to hold them accountable since they do not violate Belarusian legislation in this regard. The same applies to cases when licensees send labour emigrants to a foreign immediate employer, knowing in advance that the employer is not an immediate one, and Belarusian citizens will be redirected to third parties. According to the authors of the study, the part of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On External Labour

Migration" which is dedicated to labour emigration needs to be updated taking into account modern global processes and trends in labour migration.

International agreements concluded by the Republic of Belarus with other States on the employment of its citizens in the territories of the parties are also part of the legislation in the field of external labour migration. To date, there are 9 bilateral agreements (with the Russian Federation (1993), the Republic of Moldova (1994), Ukraine (1995), the Republic of Poland (1995), the Republic of Armenia (2000), the Republic of Azerbaijan (2007), the Republic of Serbia (2009), the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (2011) and the Republic of Tajikistan (2011), 3 multilateral treaties (the Agreement of the CIS Member States on Cooperation in the Field of Labour Migration and Social Protection of Migrant Workers (1994), the Convention of the CIS Member States on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (2008), and the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union (2014).

Bilateral agreements regulate the issues of remuneration of migrant workers, state insurance, taxation, medical care, as well as measures regulating the import and export of personal property, tools and equipment, money transfers, etc. However, they do not establish any provisions on these issues that differ from the effective legislation of the state of employment. That is, migrant workers of the contracting parties perform labour activities in the territories of these states in accordance with their legislation without receiving any preferences. In this regard, it is questionable whether it is expedient to implement such international treaties and conclude similar new ones.

The only exceptions are agreements with the Russian Federation, according to which the parties provide their citizens with equal rights to employment, remuneration, and other social and legal guarantees, recognition of documents issued in the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation for the exercise of labour rights and social and labour guarantees without the need to legalize those documents, mutual recognition of the period of service, and equal rights to social security, medical care, and access to the services of health-improving institutions in the territories of the contracting parties, as well as agreements with Ukraine and Azerbaijan.

According to the provisions of the agreement with Ukraine, the parties recognize (without legalization) diplomas, certificates of education, relevant documents on the granting of a title, academic degree, rank, qualification, and other documents necessary for the exercise of labour activity that are certified in the order established in the territory of the state of departure, as well as their translation into the official language of the state of employment or Russian. It is worth noting that this agreement also contains norms that worsen the situation of Ukrainian migrant workers in comparison with the national legislation of Belarus in the field of external labour migration (for example, the prohibition of employment by several employers). In this regard, the authors of the study recommend making appropriate changes to this international treaty.

The bilateral agreement with the Republic of Azerbaijan allows citizens of the contracting parties to work, including under civil contracts. However, this norm is not implemented in practice in the Republic of Belarus.

Among the multilateral treaties, the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union is of practical interest.

Thus, section XXVI "Labour Migration" of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) establishes all the necessary conditions for granting citizens of the member states the right to freely exercise labour activities throughout the territory of the EEU, which is one of the main principles of the EEU. Namely, citizens of the Union can work in the territory of the Union without the need to obtain work permits. The conditions under which migrant workers from one of the EEU Members States exercise labour activities in any state of the Union are equated to the conditions enjoyed by citizens of the latter State. As for the formation of a common labour market, the only exceptions are the restrictions provided for by the Treaty and national legislation in order to ensure national security. The free movement of labour force is also facilitated by the provisions of the Treaty providing for the recognition of state-issued documents on education without their legalization, and simplification of procedures related to the stay of citizens of one Member State of the Union in the territory of another member State.

On 1 January 2021, the Agreement on Pensions for Workers of the EEU Member States of 20 December 2019 entered into force. Its main goal is the development, preservation, and exercise of the pension rights of workers under the same conditions as the ones enjoyed by citizens of the State of employment. The Agreement defines the procedure and the mechanism for exporting pensions from one country of the Union to another and provides for the summation of the period of service in the EEU States to determine the right to a pension. In addition, the issue of medical examination of workers, including correspondence medical examination when awarding a disability pension, was settled, as well as transitional provisions were introduced to determine the

procedure for the awarding and payment of pensions for periods of work preceding and following the entry into force of the Agreement.²⁹

As part of the implementation of the provisions of the Agreement, the authorized bodies of the EEU member states are working on the pilot project "the Unified Search System "Work without Borders" (Eurasian Electronic Labour Exchange). The creation of a single integrated information and analytical system will increase the efficiency of the use of preferences in the field of labour migration provided for in the EEU Treaty and will benefit both sending and receiving States, as well as workers themselves and their family members, greatly facilitate the search for a suitable job and employment opportunities throughout the EEU, increase the level of awareness about real employment opportunities and working conditions in other Member States, and reduce the spontaneous movement of workers across the territory of the Union in search of new jobs.

Thus the analysis of the legal framework of the Republic of Belarus in the field of external labour migration shows that the effective legislation is complex, multilateral in terms of the scope of regulated matters pertaining to labour migration, and in some cases flexible in relation to certain categories of migrants. At the same time, the authors of the study have developed proposals and recommendations for further improvement of regulatory legal acts in this area, which can improve the conditions for attracting foreign workers to the national labour market and increase the level of protection of Belarusian citizens going abroad for work.

4.2 THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The ecosystem of labour migration includes interrelated interest groups: labour migrants, employers, trade unions, government agencies, migration networks, intermediary organizations, international and non-governmental organizations and public associations, etc.

In a broader sense, the ecosystem of labour migration also includes interactions with the diaspora and migration networks. Communities of compatriots abroad (diasporas) play an important role both in helping to find a job and in adapting to a new place of residence.

Migration networks are understood as connections established at a personal level between migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in countries of origin and countries of destination on the basis of kinship, acquaintance, and a common place of origin. Migration networks are also called the social capital of migrants, relying on which the latter find it easier to decide to migrate.³⁰

The purpose of the migration policy is to increase the efficiency of this ecosystem, as a result of which all participants will be fully satisfied with it. At the same time, the key system-forming factor is the maximization of profits by all participants in the short term, and, if possible, long-term sociodemographic effects.

The system of state regulation of external labour migration in the Republic of Belarus began to take shape in 1992 with the establishment of the State Migration Service, which until 2004 operated as a subsidiary body of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Currently, its functions are delegated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (the Department of Citizenship and Migration).

The national legislation clearly defines the powers of the President, the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, the Department of Citizenship and Migration and its territorial divisions with regard to the matters of external labour migration. The main activities of the internal affairs bodies in the development and implementation of the state labour migration policy are as follows:

- ensuring the priority right of citizens to occupy vacant jobs in the national labour market;
- supervision of the attraction and use of foreign labour force, as well as the employment of citizens abroad;
- prevention and suppression of illegal migration, illegal hiring of citizens for work abroad and foreign citizens and stateless persons for work in the State;
- ensuring legal and social protection of migrant workers;
- maintaining records of migrant workers entering and leaving the Republic of Belarus for work on the basis of signed employment contracts.

²⁹ The Agreement on Pensions for Workers of the EEU Member States entered into force [Electronic resource]: The Eurasian Economic Commission, 12.01.2021. – Mode of access: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/12-01-2021-01.aspx>.

³⁰ The Development of Migration Theory in the Context of Globalization //The Age of Globalization. Issue #1-2(17-18)/2016 . [Electronic resource]: Ivakhnyuk I.V. – Mode of access: <https://www.socionauki.ru/journal/articles/428978/#:~:text=Migration%20 networks%20 understand%20 as%20 established,1993%3A%20448%5D>.

In accordance with Chapter 2 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On External Labour Migration", state regulation and management of external labour migration is performed by the President of the Republic of Belarus, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus, internal affairs bodies of the Republic of Belarus and other state bodies of the Republic of Belarus within their competence.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Taxes and Duties, the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus, the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus, the National Academy of Sciences are among other structures dealing with the processes of external labour migration in Belarus. According to the authors of the study, the private sector should also be included in this list in the form of employers' unions in Belarus.

As for international organizations and public associations having headquarters or representative offices in the Republic of Belarus, the United Nations represented by the International Organization for Migration, and the public association "Business Women's Club" (which administers the hotline for safe departure, stay abroad and countering human trafficking) are currently working in the area of external labour migration.

Integration associations, such as the CIS and the EEU, also have bodies dealing with labour migration issues, namely, the Council of Heads of Migration Authorities of the CIS and the Department of Labour Migration and Social Protection of the Eurasian Economic Commission (Figure 16).

The powers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus in the field of external labour migration are mentioned above.

The second most important state body involved in the regulation of external labour migration in Belarus (namely, labour immigration) is the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus. This body issues conclusions on the (im)possibility of hiring a particular specialist for a specific position by a specific employer. This policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection allows to maintain the balance between the priority of employment of Belarusian citizens and the need to fill empty vacancies in the country's labour market. However, the existing system has some disadvantages. For instance, due to the fact that the main body regulating labour migration is the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection cannot fully solve the tasks related to effective use of foreign labour resources in the form of organized recruitment, for example, or exemption of certain categories of foreign employees from the requirement to obtain work permits. As a solution to this problem, during an expert interview with representatives of this department, the latter voiced the idea of delegating the powers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs related to the issuance of special permits for the right to work in the Republic of Belarus to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

Another area of responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus is the solution of pension issues for migrant workers.

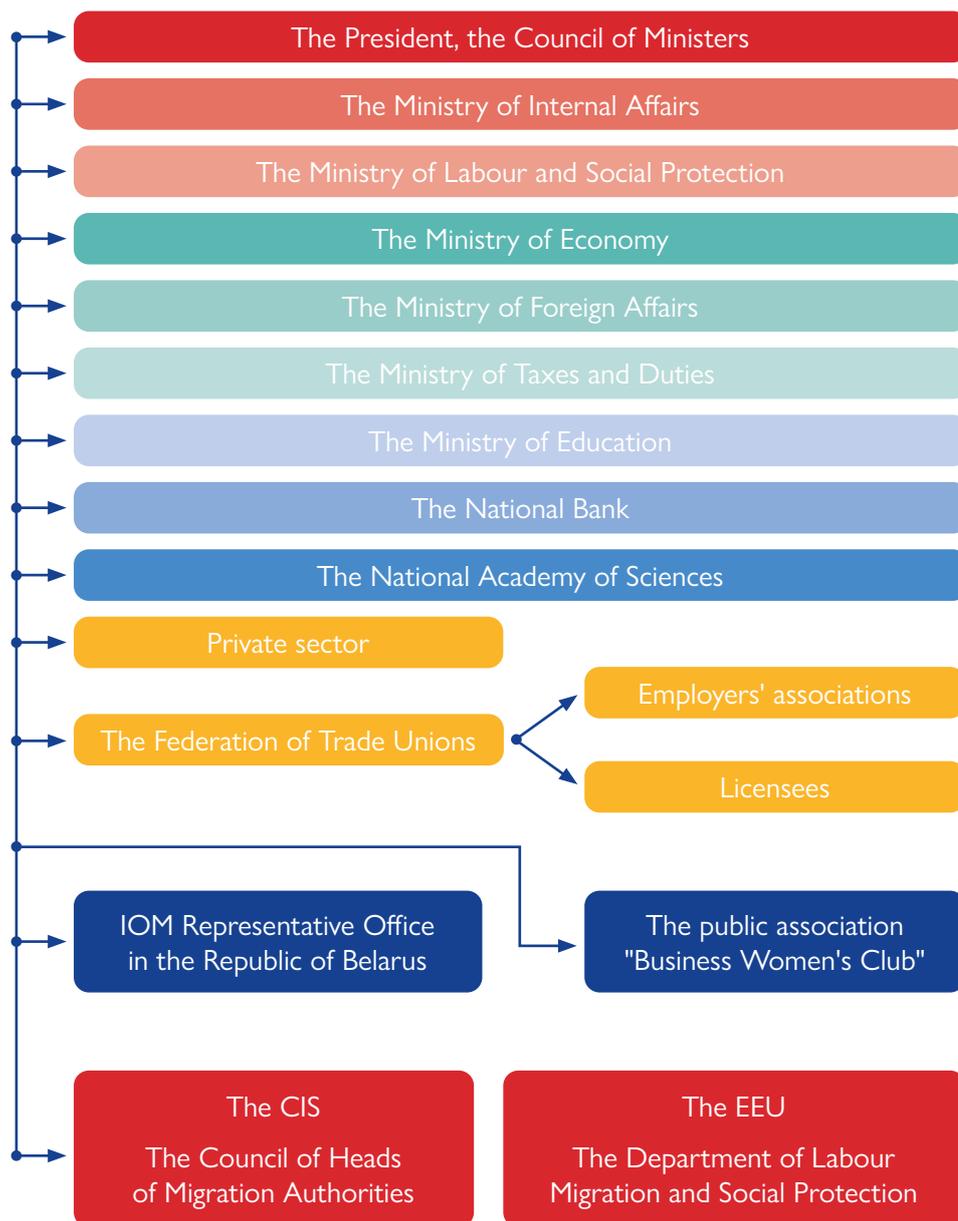
Citizens who have worked abroad are provided with pensions in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Pension Provision", taking into account the provisions of international treaties (agreements) in the field of social (pension) provision concluded by the Republic of Belarus with these states.

Citizens who have worked or performed other activities in the territories of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Turkmenistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan are provided with pensions according to the territorial principle, that is, pensions are awarded and paid to citizens in accordance with the legislation of the state in which they reside.

Recently, international treaties have provided for the so-called proportionality principle, according to which each State calculates and pays part of its pension or the full amount of the pension corresponding to the number of years of service (contribution). Pension is paid by the State in whose territory the citizen lives at the time of applying for it.

Such international agreements are concluded with the Russian Federation (entered into force on 29.03.2007), Latvia (entered into force on 28.09.2010), Estonia (entered into force on 01.03.2020), Azerbaijan (entered into force on 15.07.2014), Czechia (entered into force on 01.10.2019), and the Republic of Moldova (entered into force on 01.11.2020). A similar agreement has also been concluded with Poland, but the Polish side has not ratified it.

Figure 16. Mapping of subjects included in the labour migration ecosystem in Belarus



Source: the authors of this study E. Krupa, E.Maslenkova.

It is planned to conclude similar agreements with Bulgaria and Serbia.

Thus under the condition of legal employment of Belarusian citizens abroad, there are no problems with accrual and payment of pensions. At the same time, if a migrant worker works in a country with which Belarus has no agreement, the period of work in this country is not included in the total period of service. At the same time, a citizen of the Republic of Belarus has the right to voluntarily pay pension contributions for the period of employment abroad and may be subject to double taxation of pension contributions.

The Ministry of Taxes and Duties of the Republic of Belarus is also part of the ecosystem of external labour migration in the Republic of Belarus, which regulates the mechanism of paying taxes on income received while working abroad.

Income received from sources outside the Republic of Belarus is subject to income tax for individuals recognized as tax residents of the Republic of Belarus (subparagraph 1.1 of Article 196 of the Tax Code of the Republic of Belarus).

The object of income taxation is determined according to the tax status of the payer. Regardless of citizenship, individuals who actually stayed in the territory of the Republic of Belarus for more than 183 days during a calendar year are recognized as tax residents of the Republic of Belarus. An individual who is not

recognized as a tax resident of the Republic of Belarus will not be subject to income taxation when receiving income abroad or from abroad, regardless of the nature and the amount of the income received by him. In this case, the received income is taxed by the country which recognizes as its resident the individual who received the income abroad or from outside the Republic of Belarus.

Tax residents, when receiving taxable income from sources outside the Republic of Belarus in a calendar year, are required to file a personal income tax declaration for these incomes no later than 31 March. Income tax is calculated at the rate of 13 per cent.

If an individual recognized as a resident of the Republic of Belarus received income in a foreign state and in accordance with the legislation of this foreign state paid tax there, then the amount of the tax paid (in a foreign State) is subject to offset when paying income tax in the Republic of Belarus. Documents related to the income received and the payment of tax in a foreign State will be recognized as legitimate if they are confirmed by the tax or other competent authority of the foreign State in which the income was received and the tax was paid.

Thus the issues of taxation of personal income received from work abroad are clearly regulated. The available information is posted on the websites of district tax inspectorates and is provided by relevant specialists in the form of explanations and comments. Deductions from the income of short-term migrant workers staying in the territory of the Republic of Belarus for more than 183 days, as well as of long-term immigrant workers considered as tax residents of the Republic of Belarus generate tax revenues to the budget thus benefiting economic development.

According to modern approaches to international migration management, social dialogue is one of the important mechanisms for the development of balanced solutions taking into account the opinions and interests of various parties whose interests are affected by migration processes: government agencies, employers' associations, and trade unions. In this light, more and more attention is being paid to social dialogue as a tool for achieving social progress and finding optimal solutions in the field of labour market regulation. In this regard, the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus plays an important role among the state bodies and departments supervising these issues.

According to Article 2 of the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Trade Unions", foreign citizens and stateless persons can join trade unions established and operating in the territory of the Republic of Belarus, if this is provided for by their charters.

As noted by an expert from the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus, this norm does not fully comply with the Convention on Migrant Workers, according to which the right of migrant workers to membership in trade unions should not depend on the existence of this norm in the charter.

At the same time, membership or non-membership of citizens in trade unions does not entail any restrictions on their labour, socioeconomic, political, and personal rights and freedoms guaranteed by the legislation of the Republic of Belarus (Article 4).

Thus the rights of migrant workers are protected by the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus, however, if the employee is not a member of a sectoral trade union, the terms of the collective agreement do not apply to him.

A trade union member has the right to:

- receive free legal assistance and advice from trade union bodies on issues within the competence of the trade union;
- receive services of health-improving, cultural, and educational institutions, as well as sports facilities of the trade union on preferential terms;
- use the social assistance fund of the trade union, and if necessary, receive financial assistance from the funds of the trade union budget;
- enjoy the rights and benefits provided by sectoral and local agreements;
- apply to the elected bodies of the trade union for help, with questions, statements, and proposals, and demand an answer on the merits of the application in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Belarus.

At the same time, the expert found it difficult to estimate approximately the number of emigrant workers of the Republic of Belarus who are members of trade unions. No special statistical records are maintained, as, from the point of view of protection of the rights of trade union members, it does not matter to trade unions

whether their members are foreign citizens or not. At the same time, the expert noted that most often foreign workers join the trade union of health-care workers.

Republican public administration bodies that are not covered by the analysis but also mentioned in Figure 15 are also involved in regulating the processes of external labour migration within their competencies and powers.

As for the private sector, the authors of the study believe that it plays one of the main roles in the ecosystem of external labour migration, though it is not fully involved in cooperation with state institutions. Representatives of the private sector are the focus of a separate section below.

Summing up this section, it should be noted that a sufficiently developed ecosystem of external labour migration has been created and operates in the Republic of Belarus, however, the mechanism of interaction between the institutions regulating labour and migration in the Republic of Belarus needs streamlining.

Taking into account the need for measures to organize and manage the orderly employment of citizens of the Republic of Belarus abroad, it seems necessary to distribute respective functions among other ministries and departments and to ensure their effective interaction. Currently, the policy in the field of international labour migration seems to be misaligned with the policy in the field of economics, education, and effective functioning of the labour market.

4.3 THE NATIONAL POLICY ON LABOUR MIGRATION. THE PLACE OF LABOUR MIGRATION IN THE POLICY DOCUMENTS ON STATE DEVELOPMENT

Analysis of the strategic policy documents adopted and implemented in the country shows that until 2020, a significant part of the migration issues had been covered by the State Programme "People's Health and Demographic Security of the Republic of Belarus" for 2016–2020, which pursued the goal of stabilizing the population size and increasing life expectancy. The objectives outlined in the subprogramme "External Migration" were as follows:

- management of external migration, taking into account the demographic and socioeconomic development of the country's regions, as well as the return of compatriots;
- improving the system of detection, prevention, and suppression of illegal migration, as well as integration of foreigners;
- improving the procedure for attracting foreign specialists to the Republic of Belarus, as well as countering illegal integration.

Thus in this State Programme, the processes of external labour migration were considered only in the context of countering illegal migration.

Since 2021, the block of issues related to migration has been transferred to the State Programme "Law Enforcement" for 2021–2025, subprogramme 2 "Migration".

To achieve the set goals, the following objectives are envisaged:

- improving the efficiency of migration flows management, including in the field of external labour migration, by aligning their volumes, directions, and composition with the prospects of demographic and socioeconomic development of the Republic of Belarus;
- assistance to foreign citizens and stateless persons seeking protection in the Republic of Belarus;
- development of mechanisms and means of prevention, detection, and suppression of violations of migration legislation, as well as information resources (systems) in the field of citizenship and migration.

The Programme reflects the comparability of consolidated targets and targets of the State Programme with the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is indicated that the implementation of the Programme will ensure the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 10. "Reducing inequality within and between countries", target 10.7. Facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

In the next five years, further development of the system of social protection and employment promotion will be ensured within the framework of the State Programme "Labour Market and Employment Promotion"

for 2021–2025. The purpose of the State Programme is to ensure the implementation of the state policy in the field of employment promotion. To achieve this goal, this programme provides for the accomplishment of the following objectives: stimulating economic activity of the population through the implementation of active employment policy measures and the provision of social guarantees; involving the economically inactive population in labour activity; ensuring the balance of supply and demand in the labour market; improving labour conditions and safety.

In order to accomplish objective 3 – ensuring the balance of supply and demand in the labour market – the Programme envisions such measures as regulation of external labour migration processes with the aim of ensuring the necessary balance between the use of national labour resources and the attraction of foreign labour force by monitoring migration processes and issuing an opinion on the feasibility of attracting foreign labour force, taking into account the needs of the labour market. The responsible authorities are the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, regional executive committees, and Minsk City Executive Committee. The issues of external labour migration are indirectly linked and taken into account in a number of key country programmes such as the National Strategy for Sustainable Socioeconomic Development of the Republic of Belarus until 2030, the Programme of Socioeconomic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2021–2025, the National Action Plan for Gender Equality in the Republic of Belarus for 2021–2025. These programmes make some contribution to the consideration of vulnerability factors in migration management.

The Programme of Socioeconomic Development for 2021–2025 contains a reference only to migration to the permanent place of residence. "In order to stabilize the size of the population, it is necessary to develop a set of measures to reduce the emigration outflow, primarily of young people. Favourable conditions will be created to ensure the return of external migrants and stimulate the influx of highly qualified foreign specialists to the republic." It should be noted that the Programme emphasizes the importance of the contribution of highly qualified foreign specialists to socioeconomic development, but does not specify whether these specialists will be engaged on a permanent or temporary basis. Meanwhile, the content of the stimulating measures being developed will largely depend on this criterion.



Representatives of IOM and Ministry of Interior shake hands © IOM 2020.

At the same time, external labour migration can serve as an additional tool to achieve the objectives outlined in this programme, including the following:

- to ensure progressive GDP growth: at least by 1.2 times in real terms in 2025 compared to the level of 2020;
- to increase the real disposable incomes of the population by 1.2 times over the five years, including the growth rate of pensions above the inflation rate; to create conditions for long-term financing of the economy, to ensure the growth of investments in fixed assets by more than 1.2 times compared to the level of 2020;
- to increase the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector of the economy, ensure its financial stability and create new high-tech industries;
- to implement a regional policy aimed at creating a comfortable living environment and new jobs that guarantee decent pay for effective work.

In general, the analysis of the strategic state programmes on migration adopted and implemented in the country has shown that they lack the following:

- the rationale supporting the goals, objectives, and priorities in the development of external labour migration;
- correlation with national and regional priorities in the field of employment and the labour market;
- references to the Programme implementation monitoring system;
- numerical values of target indicators for the implementation of the policy in the field of external labour migration;
- integration of the interests of female migrant workers, which hampers effective protection of their safety and health.

The Concept of Migration Policy of the Republic of Belarus for 2021–2026 which is currently being developed includes strategic guidelines of the state on the implementation of migration policy and assessment of the migration situation in the country taking into account socioeconomic development. The document defines the priorities of cooperation and migration policy for the next five-year period with the approval of the corresponding action plan for its implementation in the future. The priority areas outlined in the Concept will be as follows:

1. Optimization of internal and external migration flows, ensuring a positive balance of external migration of the population, including improving the investment and tourist attractiveness of the Republic, facilitating migration in the field of education and supporting academic mobility, fulfilling international obligations to protect the rights of forced migrants, facilitating voluntary return to the Republic of Belarus for permanent residence of Belarusians living abroad, as well as other persons who are able to successfully reintegrate into the Belarusian society, creating conditions for the adaptation and integration of migrants, ensuring constructive interaction between migrants and the Belarusian society;
2. Improving the system regulating external labour migration;
3. Countering illegal migration and further development of mechanisms and means of prevention, detection, and suppression of violations of the legislation of the Republic of Belarus in the field of migration;
4. Improving the mechanisms for collecting statistical information.³¹

Thus the study has shown that at the moment the issues of external labour migration are misaligned with the problems of socioeconomic development of the Republic of Belarus. The long- and medium-term strategic policy documents recognize the need to regulate the processes of international migration, including the migration of qualified personnel in the interests of the socioeconomic development of the country, addressing issues of qualitative human development. At the same time, the resource of labour migration as one of the drivers of socioeconomic development remains unaccounted for, including in programmes developed and implemented at the regional level.

³¹ Voluntary review by the Republic of Belarus of the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.



5. CHALLENGES OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION: THE VIEWPOINT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

As part of the study, in order to identify gaps in the regulation of external labour migration processes and the policy implemented in this area from a practical point of view, a survey was conducted among representatives of the private sector, including organizations employing foreign labour force and sending abroad Belarusian citizens and foreigners permanently residing in Belarus.³² A meeting was also held with the Co-chairman of the Board, the Director of the Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers named after Professor M.S.Kunyavsky.

The questionnaire for employers was designed in such a way as to obtain basic information about the enterprise (the scope of activity, the total number of national and foreign employees, their gender, countries of citizenship), information about the impact of the pandemic on the staff capacity of the organizations, the reasons for hiring working immigrants, the advantages and disadvantages of this process, as well as the opinion about legislative measures taken in this area and suggestions for their improvement.

The general trend, which can be traced through the respondents' answers, is that the more foreigners work in an organizations, the greater the economic benefit from their involvement received by the enterprise. Thus business entities employing up to 50 foreigners do not feel any economic advantages, but on the contrary, incur some financial and time costs associated with obtaining permits. Organizations employing from 50 to 100 labour immigrants replied that they benefit economically from attracting foreign workers, including in the form of learning from foreign experience.

Moreover, when answering the question about where they were looking for foreign labour force, all organizations that took part in the survey chose the options "with the help of colleagues and acquaintances" and "through business partners", while such options as "through state or foreign employment services", "through private recruitment agencies", and "at labour exchanges" were not chosen. Accordingly, when asked whether they believe that there are problems with finding foreign labour in Belarus, they answered in the affirmative or found it difficult to answer. This situation indicates the existence of this problem in the country. According to the authors of the study, one of the solutions would be to allow recruitment agencies included in the register of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Belarus to provide foreigners with services of employment with Belarusian employers. To date, the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Employment of the Population of the Republic of Belarus" restricts the activities of these agencies to providing services to citizens of Belarus and foreigners permanently residing in Belarus. This answer to the question about a possible solution to the issue was chosen by the employer attracting the largest number of foreigners among all respondents. This employer

³² See the application forms in the Annex.

also chose other options such as "state employment services should deal with this issue," "it is necessary to sign international agreements on the organized recruitment of foreign labour force."

The main reason why respondents attract foreign specialists was not the lack of local personnel, but the lack of the necessary qualifications demonstrated by it. The same information was confirmed by a representative of the Research Institute of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, who stressed that there are unemployed Belarusian citizens in small settlements, but their level of qualification and (or) education does not allow them to be competitive in the labour market. Answering the question about the reasons for hiring foreign workers, respondents also noted higher wages required by local citizens.

The answers to the questions about work under the conditions of a global pandemic were also identical: none of the respondents had any problems with hiring foreign workers during or after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, except for the answers to the questions concerning the crossing of borders, and provision of the results of PCR tests or vaccination certificates.

Regarding the block of questions concerning gaps in legislation in the field of external labour migration, which create some difficulties in practice, respondents noted the following: (1) to extend a special permit for the right to engage in labour activity in the Republic of Belarus, it is necessary to introduce a vacancy in the staffing table, even though there is no vacancy as such, (2) short registration periods for temporary stay/residence of foreign citizens, (3) the long period from the date of submission of documents to the receipt of work permits, (4) a system of charges for obtaining permits for employment of foreign citizens.

When asked about their proposals on simplification of the procedures for the hiring of foreigners, respondents noted the need for electronic document management, in particular, online submission of documents.

The respondents positively assessed the openness of the state bodies involved in the procedures related to the registration of foreign specialists for their employment, noting that these bodies are open for interaction and provide all necessary information, including on their websites.

In addition to the survey of individual employers of foreign workers, as noted above, a meeting was held with the employers' union as an association representing the interests of many employers.

The Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers named after Professor M.S.Kunyavsky is an independent association of employers, whose main tasks, among others, are to help its members in the development of their business, normalization of social and labour relations, comprehensive protection of members and representation of their interests in the government, state bodies, public and other organizations, improvement of legislation in the field of economic (commercial) and labour law, participation in the development and implementation of a coordinated policy aimed at solving socioeconomic problems, including through consultations and cooperation with state authorities and trade unions, as well as with international organizations. The Union pursues a policy of social partnership and seeks to favourably represent business interests in the process of a trilateral dialogue with the government and trade unions. There is a Republican Club of Directors which operates under the umbrella of the Union and provides a direct line for communication with the government. Directors of enterprises of various forms of ownership participate in its work and are involved in joint discussions of draft regulatory legal acts of Belarus.

The Board of the Business Union includes the heads of CJSC "Akoterm", the Republican Timber Industry Association, LLC "Pixel Investments", CJSC "Molodechnomebel", JSC "the Institute of Minskgrazhdanproekt", JSC "Vesta", CJSC "Vilia", CJSC "Gomellift", JSC "Bank BelWEB", JSC "Priorbank", the Union of Entrepreneurs, enterprises specializing in outdoor advertising, CJSC "MAP ZAO", etc.

The Business Union has more than one hundred members from such sectors of the economy as medicine and health care, industry, goods and services, business services, constructions, automotive industry, logistics, etc³³.

The Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers cooperates in Belarus with the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Labour Organization (the Moscow Bureau), as well as with many republican government bodies. For example, members of the Board of the Business Union participate in the work of the Council for Improvement of the Legislation in the Social and Labour Field under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus.

During an interview with the Chairman of the Board, the Director of the Business Union noted that their association attaches great importance to labour immigration as an additional opportunity to solve the issues of labour force deficit experienced by the members. According to her, personnel issues, in principle, have recently

³³ BUSINESS UNION OF ENTREPRENEURS AND EMPLOYERS [Electronic resource] – Mode of access: <http://bspn.by/>.

come to the forefront of discussions among the members of the Business Union. During the peak of the pandemic, the situation further worsened. Builders and seamstresses are the most demanded specialists among the hiring members. These issues are solved only by the efforts of internal employees. For example, the Board cooperates with educational institutions of the Republic of Belarus to prepare their students for employment with the members of the Business Union, and work is also underway to improve the qualifications and ensure retraining of employees required by employers. However, very often this is not enough to fill vacancies at enterprises. The Director of the Board of the Business Union noted that there are currently no organizations in Belarus where employers could apply for help in the search for foreign specialists. It is also quite common for investors implementing various projects in Belarus to apply to the Business Union with requests for clarification of the legislation regarding the attraction of foreign specialists for installation of equipment and training personnel to operate new equipment.

Thus the Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers directly deals with labour migration, namely, attracting foreign labour force. In this regard, it seems appropriate to involve the unions of entrepreneurs and employers operating in Belarus both in the work to improve legislation and in the implementation of policies in the field of external labour migration. The Board of the Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers named after Professor M.S.Kunyavsky could be the voice of employers and make appropriate proposals that, in their opinion, would contribute to the more efficient practical implementation of legislation. For example, in response to the question "What would you propose to change in national legislation and effective procedures for attracting foreign workers", the Director of the Board proposed to issue special work permits to foreigners valid for more than one year or permits for one year that instead of one-time subsequent extension and would be extended the whole period of employment of the foreigner. Employers do not understand why they should undergo the same procedure every year if both sides of the employment relationship are satisfied with each other. It was also proposed to abolish the need to receive opinions on labour, employment, and social protection when attracting certain categories of highly qualified foreign specialists, since if an organization needs a specific foreign employee (with a specific foreign language, knowledge, experience, etc.) for a certain time, it is absolutely clear that either such specialists will not be registered at the employment centre, or the employer will not be interested in them, because he has already found the foreigner he needs. In practice, in this case, both the employer's representative and representatives of relevant government agencies have to spend their resources on issuing unnecessary documents.

Legal entities and individual entrepreneurs who have a license to carry out activities related to employment outside the Republic of Belarus were more willing to participate in this survey, using the opportunity to identify problematic issues that they face in carrying out their activities. Feedback was received from half of the licensees that submitted the questionnaires.

The questionnaire for licensees consisted of 26 questions grouped in the following blocks: information about the organization (location, to which countries it sends workers, in which fields are these workers employed, emigrants of what age leave more often and for what period), information about possible violations of the rights of Belarusians employed abroad, information about pre-departure training, information about the existing problems in work with foreign partners and labour emigrants, information concerning work under the conditions of the pandemic, as well as proposals on improvement of the legislation on the employment of citizens outside Belarus.

As in the situation with organizations employing foreigners, licensees answered some questions, if not identically, then in a similar way. Thus 70 per cent of licensees replied that they had not encountered any problems in sending Belarusian workers abroad for temporary employment. The remaining ones who answered in the affirmative referred to problems related to restrictions on exit from the Republic of Belarus.

When asked how often their clients believe that they were deceived or misinformed during the preparation of a work-related trip abroad, 80 per cent of respondents replied that this does not happen, 10 per cent noted isolated cases, and another 10 per cent found it difficult to answer.

The next question was about the information that is most-needed by potential labour emigrants from Belarus. The overwhelming majority of licensees chose the answers "taxation of income received from abroad in the Republic of Belarus" (23.3%), "possibilities of money transfers to the country of origin" (16.7%), "medical care in the country of employment" (13.3%) and "visa support" (13.3%). Respondents also reported the lack of information on taxation in the country of employment (10%), social protection in the country of employment (6.7%), the rules of stay, social protection and labour rights in the country of employment (6.7% each), the possibility of protecting one's rights in the country of employment (3.3%). In this regard, the authors of the study recommend requesting relevant information through foreign institutions of the Republic of Belarus and then providing it to licensees for more informative pre-departure training.

The following difficulties in work with labour emigrants were also noted:

- refusal to pay for services rendered;
- the use of the licensee to travel abroad without subsequent employment with a foreign partner;
- going to work under the influence of alcohol, absenteeism, and bad faith performance of work duties resulting in damage to the reputation of the licensee;
- a formal approach to signing documents (refusal to read or inattentive reading) which results in numerous misunderstandings and complaints from the three sides of the employment process.

To minimize the occurrence of such problems, respondents suggest allowing them to take an advance payment for the provision of services related to employment abroad, selectively choosing who to provide such services to, as well as creating a blacklist of unscrupulous citizens, including those registered in psycho-neurological and narcological dispensaries.

Absolutely all respondents faced the same problems related to work under the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic: the closure of borders preventing labour emigrants from freely leaving for work abroad, the difficulty of tracking the constantly changing rules for crossing borders and staying in countries of employment, delays in obtaining work permits, visas, difficulties in booking tickets independently despite the availability of the necessary certificates of vaccination or PCR test results, as well as reduction in the number of Belarusians who want to go abroad for work.

Belarusian citizens themselves face the following difficulties: restrictions on exit from the Republic of Belarus, the requirement to serve a quarantine in the country of employment, and constantly changing conditions of entry into the country of employment.

The responses to the last block of questions about the procedure for obtaining a license to carry out activities related to employment outside the Republic of Belarus, and interaction with government agencies showed that absolutely all respondents consider the procedure acceptable, the relevant information is available, government agencies responsible for issuing licenses are open to contact (90%), and only 10 per cent of licensees experienced difficulties when applying for a license. Interestingly, when asked about the online filing of documents, 80 per cent of respondents found it difficult to answer whether this would facilitate the process of obtaining a license.



Migrant signs a consent form to take part in the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme © IOM 2022.

The interviewed licensees also presented the following proposals for improvement of the legislation regulating the employment of citizens abroad as a follow-up to the practical implementation of the current Law of the Republic of Belarus "On External Labour Migration":

- to amend Article 19 of the Law, as it contains specific requirements for an employment contract between an emigrant worker and a foreign employer. At the same time, according to the second paragraph of Article 13 of the same Law, migrant workers perform labour activities in the state of employment in accordance with the legislation of the state of employment. In practice, it is very difficult or absolutely impossible to explain to foreign partners acting as employers why they should be guided by the provisions of the Belarusian legislation instead of their national legislation when registering employment relations with Belarusian citizens. Departments for citizenship and migration also do not register employment contracts provided by foreign partners.
- to introduce the term "a direct employer" into the Law, since the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus requires the conclusion of employment contracts with direct employers.
- to allow by law the use of outstaffing when organizing the employment of citizens abroad, as this model of employment is widely used all over the world. as an option, not to punish licensees for applying the principles of outstaffing, since it is not prohibited by legislative acts of the Republic of Belarus.
- to allow licensees to cooperate with foreign recruitment agencies.
- to allow emigrant workers to conclude civil law contracts with foreign employers.
- to allow to provide information about a foreign partner in the form of an extract from the register of legal entities sealed by a translation agency, since it is very difficult to explain to foreign partners why a paper document is needed when electronic registries are used in their countries.
- to cancel the apostille affixing on the statement of the Unified State Register of Legal Entities (KRS) when registering a package of documents.
- to make voluntary medical insurance against diseases and accidents for travel outside the Republic of Belarus mandatory for the duration of the shift.
- to abolish the licensee's obligation to report information about returned emigrant workers to departments for citizenship and migration.
- to allow submission of other reports to departments for citizenship and migration online.
- to ensure the possibility of registering employment contracts on the premises of the licensee by providing limited access to the relevant database of departments for citizenship and migration. Thus the temporary resources of both licensees' employees and the departments for citizenship and migration themselves will be preserved.
- to abolish the regulation according to which the state border of the Republic of Belarus can be crossed by migrant workers at checkpoints only once every three months.

The work done in cooperation with the private sector has shown that this category of stakeholders involved in external labour migration processes not only implements the state policy in this area but also can and should be considered as an equal partner of the relevant state bodies in the improvement of legislative and administrative measures. The private sector is the first to face the challenges of labour migration and the first to have to respond to them immediately. With proper organization of cooperation with both separate private businesses and their associations, the effectiveness of measures in the field of external labour migration will increase significantly.

6. ENTRY POINTS FOR EXPANDING THE USE OF THE POTENTIAL

OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY



6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE USE OF THE POTENTIAL OF MIGRANT WORKERS

Recommendation 1. To reduce the negative consequences of the outflow of the Belarusian labour force abroad and increase its positive impact on the development of the State.

The outflow of the Belarusian labour force, as well as its negative consequences, cannot be reduced by direct legislative and (or) administrative regulation. These issues can be resolved by gradually eliminating the economic, social and other factors affecting the public life that lead to the departure of the young working population.

At the same time, certain results can be achieved by accomplishing the following migration-related tasks: the development of opportunities for temporary legal employment abroad as an alternative to permanent emigration, raising public awareness of the possibilities of return migration, ensuring the protection of the rights of citizens of the Republic of Belarus working and living abroad.

Such measures provide for the support of migrants throughout the migration cycle (before departure, during their stay abroad and upon return).

Recommendation 2. To develop opportunities for temporary legal employment abroad.

The introduction of various targeted schemes for seasonal and temporary employment of Belarusian citizens abroad should be useful both for the Republic of Belarus and for the destination countries. Such migration processes should be based on the principles of law, and create a favourable environment for the return of citizens, as well as the opportunities for implementing the acquired knowledge.

In order to increase the possibilities of temporary legal employment abroad as an alternative to permanent emigration it is necessary to intensify the negotiation process on concluding social security agreements with states interested in the organized temporary migration of Belarusian specialists, including guarantees of protection of their rights and assistance from states of employment in the reintegration of returning Belarusians, and focus the activities of business entities providing mediation services in the employment of citizens of the Republic of Belarus abroad on the promotion of seasonal and circular migration. Raising public awareness of migration opportunities is an effective tool to promote legal migration. Citizens of the Republic of Belarus should be informed both about the existing opportunities for legal employment abroad, the specifics of the migration legislation of the destination States, and about the possible risks associated with an unregulated status. For this purpose, official websites of interested state authorities, ties with the Belarusian diaspora, and free social advertising on the Internet can be used.

Recommendation 3. To include the issues related to the development of external labour migration in the policy documents on the sustainable development of the Republic of Belarus.

In the long-term programme documents (the National Strategy for Sustainable Development), it is advised to note the need to ensure the migration attractiveness of the Republic of Belarus for both permanent migrants and temporary labour migrants contributing to sustainable socioeconomic development.

Recommendation 4. To increase the contribution of remittances to social stability and the growth of the welfare of citizens as the main goal of the socioeconomic development of the Republic of Belarus in the medium term.

Improving the financial literacy of migrant workers, facilitating their access to financial and banking services, and developing special banking products for migrant workers will expand the access of migrant workers to modern payment instruments and thereby ensure high competitiveness of the national payment market, favourable investment climate, greater control of the implementation of payments, optimization of costs, and maximum availability of payment services and payment instruments, as well as reduce the costs incurred by migrants in fulfilling their monetary obligations through reduction of tariffs for settlement and (or) cash services involving the use of innovative forms of money transfers.

In order to enhance the economic effects of labour migration, it is very important to make greater use of the investment potential of money earned abroad for development purposes. It would be expedient to develop a State programme to assist migrant workers and their families in the effective use of money transfers, which would provide an effective mechanism to stimulate investment by migrant workers in market segments aimed at the development and creation of new jobs. It is necessary to provide specific assistance to migrants' families in applying international experience and practices in investment and to create sufficient and accessible mechanisms for them in the regions that would allow them to use the potential of money transfers more fully and effectively. Support for investment activity of migrant workers, increasing their interest in converting remittances to deposits, development of a microcredit system, introduction of tax incentives for family businesses, promotion of entrepreneurship among women and youth, as well as other measures increasing the interest of the population in investment projects can contribute to the revitalization of the banking and financial system.

This means that effective management of labour migration processes can largely ensure closer cooperation between the state and business structures. The complexity of this important task lies in the fact that it requires not only the assistance of the state, namely of labour management bodies, but also the expansion of their interaction with local self-government bodies, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and international organizations.

It would be expedient to create a multi-faceted state system to assist migrant workers and their families in the effective use of remittances with a focus on the main areas of activity and cooperation aimed at ensuring more effective use of the potential of labour migration for development. It should encompass a set of measures, the main ones being as follows:

- improvement of the overall investment and savings climate in the country;
- making the necessary changes to customs legislation, supporting the import of new technologies, materials, and mechanisms that contribute to organization of production and creation of jobs;
- further development of the potential of the remittances market, integrating postal companies, credit unions and other financial organizations in it;
- assisting migrant families in mastering the practice of investing, creating sufficient and accessible mechanisms for them in the regions that would allow them to use the capital generated by remittances more fully and effectively;
- introduction of tax benefits aimed at the promotion of family businesses and entrepreneurship among women;
- revitalization of the banking and financial system to support investment activities of migrant workers and increase their interest in converting remittances to deposits;
- combining cash receipts of migrant workers with public sources or funds of structures dealing with development issues;

- introduction of mandatory packages of information and consulting services to be provided by international recruiting agencies of the country, including sensitization and promotion of entrepreneurship in the Republic of Belarus (information leaflets, flyers, etc.) before the departure of migrants for work abroad.

Recommendation 5. To increase the involvement of women in the processes of external labour migration.

Conduct full-fledged gender-oriented research and strengthen measures to collect, obtain and analyse data and ensure accountability in order to highlight the contribution of migrant women, as well as gender drivers of migration.

Recommendation 6. To create the necessary conditions for the return and reintegration of migrants into the Belarusian society.

In order to encourage the return of migrants from abroad, it is necessary to strengthen the ties with the Republic of Belarus so that migrants can participate in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of the state, as well as to inform migrants about the possibilities and conditions of return. Reintegration support should be primarily aimed at ensuring access of returning Belarusians to social services guaranteed to citizens of the Republic of Belarus by law. In the future, larger-scale national and regional programmes will be needed to encourage the return of migrants and their reintegration into Belarusian society.

Measures to encourage the return of migrants and their reintegration should provide for the following: a mechanism for providing information and advisory assistance to citizens of the Republic of Belarus returning to the country, as well as for establishing cooperation with public associations to provide legal and other assistance; channels for transmitting information to migrant workers from the Republic of Belarus, as well as foreign Belarusians, including regarding employment opportunities and social services available in the Republic of Belarus; improvement of financial literacy of citizens of the Republic of Belarus in the field of investment, creation and development of business; clear delineation of powers and coordination of actions of state institutions on reintegration issues; a system for collecting data on the needs of returnees in the field of social and economic reintegration; national and regional programmes to facilitate return with appropriate funding. In order to encourage the return of Belarusian migrants, it is necessary to consider creating a state system for extending loans to returnees who want to start their own businesses and introducing tax benefits for those who invest money earned abroad in their own businesses.

Recommendation 7. Update the requirements for licensees, taking into account the current problems.

As the practical implementation of the legislation on labour emigration shows, many requirements for licensees are burdensome and unnecessary. For example, the requirement to submit the information about those who returned after the termination of the employment contract to the territorial departments for citizenship and migration within 5 days upon the return, or the requirement to conclude employment contracts only of a certain form. Conversely, stricter requirements such as the requirement for licensees to provide the information necessary for departure with a written acknowledgement of receipt would contribute to the protection of the rights of labour emigrants.

It is also necessary to give the utmost priority to the resolution of problematic issues related to cases when migrant workers are not sent to a direct employer or forced to accept significant changes in working conditions.

Recommendation 8. To expand the possibilities of statistical accounting of citizens leaving for work abroad.

Availability of information about the age of departing citizens, their level of education, the sectors of the economy where they are going to work and other information would allow all interested agencies to understand better the nature of labour emigration and, accordingly, to develop a policy in this regard, taking into account the available data.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENSURING MORE EFFICIENT USE OF FOREIGN LABOUR FORCE

Recommendation 1. To improve the legislative approach to the regulation of labour immigration.

Today, the main legislative act (the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On External Labour Migration”) regulating all aspects of labour migration is a normative act applicable to all immigrant workers without exception. At the same time, to attract the categories of workers required by the national labour market (for example, highly qualified and qualified, seasonal, seconded, etc.) both in the short and long term, certain regulatory legal acts must establish other conditions for admission, employment and stay.

Recommendation 2. To strengthen institutional cooperation. The priority objectives related to the strengthening of the institutional capacities for both implementation of planned activities and addressing emerging needs in the field of labour immigration are to strengthen the interaction of public authorities (which implies a clearer definition of functions, responsibilities and opportunities), develop an effective, flexible and sustainable mechanism for interdepartmental cooperation, strengthen the coordinating role of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic Belarus, as well as involve of the private sector in this work.

Recommendation 3. To expand the opportunities for the use of foreign labour force with the aim of solving current and future issues related to employment and the labour market.

To stipulate the need to consider the following issues in medium term programmes of socioeconomic development:

- addressing the demand of the national economy for labour resources of certain professions and qualifications through the development of programmes to attract foreign workers;
- introduction of differentiated mechanisms to regulate temporary labour migration of different groups of migrants.

Recommendation 4. To study the problems in access of immigrant women to the health-care system of the Republic of Belarus.

To date, there are no studies that give an idea of the migration burden on the health-care system of Belarus. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure universal health coverage, it is necessary to promote migrant-oriented policies that cover migration-related vulnerabilities, non-communicable diseases, occupational and environmental health and access to health services taking into account the special needs of migrants, including those related to health, childhood and motherhood, as well as other gender-sensitive services.

Recommendation 5. To selectively improve the legislation in the field of labour immigration for the empowerment of immigrant workers.

To date, the regulatory legal framework of the Republic of Belarus in this area is more focused on the responsibilities of immigrant workers and their employers, and responsibility for non-compliance with the provisions of the legislation. At the same time, if the State seeks to attract and retain foreign workers, it is necessary to expand respectively the scope of the rights granted to them. For example, it is advisable to grant employers the right to conclude employment contracts with foreign employees for the same period as with citizens of Belarus (for example, for five years) and to issue special permits for the right to engage in labour activity in the Republic of Belarus for the same period. It is also expedient to grant the right to protection of labour and other similar rights on an equal basis with citizens and foreigners permanently residing in the Republic of Belarus, the right to conclude employment contracts with Belarusian employers outside the Republic of Belarus (by analogy with emigrant workers), as well as the right to family reunification, as well as to extend some of the migrants' rights to their family members. Extension of the period of stay in the territory of Belarus for foreigners who have lost their jobs (regardless of reasons) to facilitate the search for new jobs would significantly increase the chances of retaining foreign specialists in the labour market.

Recommendation 6. To develop and implement competitive programmes for attracting highly qualified specialists to the country, as well as workers with different levels of skills in professions that are in demand in the national labour market.

To develop programmes for the organized recruitment of foreign workers in the countries of origin, seasonal migration of workers, and holiday-period labour migration of foreign students; to develop infrastructure in the field of labour migration based on cooperation between state, private, and public organizations.

To identify priority countries for hiring labour force based on the geopolitical and economic priorities of the Republic of Belarus. These States, in addition to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Community, may

include Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Viet Nam, Türkiye and Serbia. It is possible to abolish the requirement for citizens of these countries to receive work permits in the Republic of Belarus.

To sign bilateral agreements on organized recruitment of migrant workers who will undergo preliminary training in migration centres outside the Republic of Belarus between the Republic of Belarus as a receiving or sending country (taking into account the interests and needs of the regions) with priority donor countries and countries receiving migrant workers.

Recommendation 7. To improve statistical support.

Effective statistical support for the analysis of migration trends and decision-making in the field of migration involves more efficient use of existing opportunities for collecting and analysing data on labour immigration, expanding the range of information sources through the use of state registers, including a unified information and analytical system for managing migration processes, the introduction of a scientific approach to analysis of statistical data in order to increase opportunities for practical use of its results in various spheres of public relations. It is proposed to eliminate some shortcomings in the records maintained by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus. For example, to expand the range of activities of immigrant workers, as well as to add spheres/branches of the economy where these labour immigrants are involved. A breakdown by age and level of education would also allow to see the quality of the foreign labour force received by Belarus and the national labour force sent abroad.

It is proposed to add information about the jobs in which citizens of the EEU member states are employed and their gender structure.

Special attention should be paid to the lack of information about the specific number of foreign citizens working in Belarus. This is due to the use of different approaches by territorial departments for citizenship and migration when entering the relevant information into the automated information system "Citizenship and Migration". There is a situation when departmental records of labour immigrants do not reflect the real numbers of foreigners actually working in the territory of the Republic of Belarus. This figure is either overstated due to repeated entry into the database of information about the same foreigner and entry of information about those who signed a contract but did not enter, or underestimated due to the failure to enter such data.

In this regard, it is recommended to develop a unified approach to the entry of data into the automated information system "Citizenship and Migration", for example:

- to separately count those who enter into labour relations with Belarusian employers for the first time (which will allow to know the number of persons who entered the country and the actual trends) and those who continue their work by extending a special permit and getting a new one (even if employed with new employers), which will allow to know the number of foreigners actually working at any time;
- to enter information about foreigners who concluded employment contracts in the territory of a foreign State into the automated information system "Citizenship and Migration";
- to consider cooperation with the Social Protection Fund to obtain data on foreign workers who actually started working.

Recommendation 8. To enhance the role of trade unions in regulating the processes of external labour migration.

Trade union associations and trade union organizations at all levels should:

- seek the participation of trade unions in the development of state migration policy and mechanisms for attracting migrant workers, taking into account the specifics of individual sectors of the economy, regions, and territories and ensuring maximum possible use of the national labour force;
- provide in the statutory documents of the relevant trade union bodies for the right of migrant workers to join a trade union of the receiving state; encourage membership of migrant workers in trade unions;
- prevent cases of discrimination and violations of the rights of migrant workers concerning labour conditions and wages, as well as identify the facts of hiring illegal migrants;
- organize training of trade union activists on labour migration and protection of the rights of labour migrants;
- establish the practice of mutual consultations of relevant trade union bodies on labour migration issues, exchange information on employment opportunities for migrants, and the situation with the protection of their rights.

CONCLUSION

Migration and mobility of the population are inextricably linked with socioeconomic development. Labour migration policy should cover a wide range of types of foreign workers with different levels of qualifications and with different periods of stay. The willingness of foreign citizens to come to the country and the interest in them on the part of the host state depend on the condition of the labour market. Given that the labour markets of individual states are increasingly integrated into a single market, different time and geographical frames must be taken into account in the process of management-related planning.

The use of external labour migration as a tool for sustainable socioeconomic development requires flexibility of policies and structures created to regulate the needs of the labour market. From a purely economic point of view, the movement of labour force should be considered only as one aspect of the global economy, which includes networks of national economies and interests requiring a management strategy that takes into account all these complex relationships. Moreover, migration is becoming increasingly diverse. As a result, when managing migration that may result in permanent residence, governments must take into account a much wider range of movements and motivations over different time periods than they did previously.

Regulation of recruitment and hiring in the labour markets in the Republic of Belarus is still largely in the hands of employers. In order to continue playing the leading role in migration management, the Belarusian government must work with a wide range of social partners, maintaining dialogue, sharing responsibilities and ensuring broad agreement on the necessary political initiatives and responses. This means expanding the management functions, which should allow the main stakeholders in the labour market processes (employers, trade unions, and some public associations) to establish cooperation with governments instead of creating the impression of conflict between them. This implies that governments and employers should come to a certain agreement based on the principle that the volume of foreign labour force should be the subject of a compromise between the government's obligation to limit inflows that may harm job opportunities for the local population and foreigners legally residing in the country, and on the other hand, the employers' interest in the use of foreign labour force in any quantities on terms that are favourable for all parties to the employment relationship.

Thus after proper consultations with social partners, the Government of the Republic of Belarus should establish acceptable conditions related to wages and working conditions, as well as an appropriate basis for ensuring maximum employment of the local population. These principles are then communicated to employers for practical implementation. In this case, control over labour migration is increasingly seen as a process of cooperation based on an agreement, which is discussed and agreed upon by all stakeholders in the labour migration ecosystem. This does not imply that the state should abandon its own responsibility, but rather implies the need to approve a more transparent decision-making process.

At the same time, to maximize the positive effect of remittances, government authorities should focus on sound macroeconomic management, institutional reforms, and economic development strategies that include the entire economy and can mobilize all resources for development.

The implementation of the proposed measures will help to develop a more effective ecosystem of labour migration, which accelerates socioeconomic development, contributes to meeting the needs of the economy in labour force, as well as complies with international standards and international commitments of the Republic of Belarus.

APPENDIX 1

The main questions asked in the process of expert interviews.

The Research Institute of Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus

- *In your opinion, does the export of labour force have a significant impact on the labour market of the Republic of Belarus? What is this impact manifested in?*
- *In your opinion, does the import of labour force have a significant impact on the labour market of the Republic of Belarus? What is this impact manifested in?*
- *What will ensure the continued attractiveness of the Republic of Belarus for immigrant workers in the short and medium term?*
- *Do you think that the issues of external labour migration are sufficiently integrated into the main strategic and programme documents on the socioeconomic development of the Republic of Belarus? How can the impact of external labour migration on the socioeconomic development of the Republic of Belarus be strengthened?*
- *In your opinion, is there a need to develop a gender-sensitive policy in the field of external labour migration?*

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus

- *Do employment assistance programmes implemented in the Republic of Belarus sufficiently take into account the issues of external labour migration?*
- *In your opinion, what should be done to ensure more efficient use of external labour migration as a tool for influencing the labour market of the Republic of Belarus?*
- *In your opinion, are there unresolved problems related to the provision of pensions to Belarusian citizens who engaged in temporary labour activities abroad?*
- *In your opinion, what should be done to increase the share of existing and emerging vacancies filled by foreign specialists?*
- *Do you consider organized recruitment of labour force an effective additional tool to ensure the balance of the national labour market? Why, in your opinion, is this tool practically not used in the Republic of Belarus?*

The Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus

- *From the point of view of your department, do Belarusian and foreign employees enjoy equal access to the protection of their labour rights?*
- *Please specify the number of foreign citizens (immigrant workers) that were members of trade unions in 2016–2020.*
- *What are the advantages of membership in a sectoral trade union organization for a foreign employee?*
- *What can be done to increase the coverage of immigrant workers with trade unions?*

The National Bank of the Republic of Belarus

- *Which countries are emigrant workers' remittances mainly received from? Which countries are emigrant workers' remittances sent to?*
- *How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the volume of emigrant workers' remittances?*
- *How do you assess the contribution of emigrant workers' remittances to the economic development of the Republic of Belarus?*
- *What do you think should be done to increase the volume of official emigrant workers' remittances?*
- *What do you think should be done to increase the economic effect of migrant workers' remittances?*
- *What opportunities are there to reduce the cost of migrant workers' remittances?*

The Ministry of Taxes and Duties of the Republic of Belarus

- *What are the main problems in the field of income taxation of emigrant workers in the Republic of Belarus?*
- *Does the problem of double taxation of the income of emigrant workers persist?*
- *Are Belarusian citizens sufficiently aware of the procedure for taxation of income from work abroad?*
- *What can be done to increase the collection of taxes on income from work abroad?*

The Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences

- *What is the gender structure of labour export and import flows?*
- *What is the reason for the low share of feminization of external labour migration in the Republic of Belarus?*
- *In your opinion, what are the key problems faced by migrant households headed by women in the Republic of Belarus?*
- *In your opinion, is there a need to develop a gender-sensitive policy in the field of external labour migration?*

The Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers named after Kunyavsky

- *Do you think that there is a need to attract foreign labour force to the labour market of the Republic of Belarus?*
- *Do you think that there is a problem with the selection and hiring of foreign specialists in the labour market of the Republic of Belarus?*
- *Was the Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers involved in the work to improve the legislation of the Republic of Belarus in the field of external labour migration? If so, what was the role of your organization in it?*
- *What would you propose to change in national legislation and current procedures for attracting foreign labour force?*

APPENDIX 2

A QUESTIONNAIRE

For heads of legal entities and individual entrepreneurs of the Republic of Belarus providing employment services for citizens outside the Republic of Belarus

Dear respondent!

This questionnaire was prepared within the framework of the international technical assistance project "Maximizing the Impact of Migration and Mobility on the Sustainable Development of Belarus" implemented by the Representative Office of the International Organization for Migration in the Republic of Belarus in coordination with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) of the Republic of Belarus. The purpose of the survey is to examine the current situation with labour migration flows and remittances to the regions of Belarus, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results of the survey will be used to develop recommendations for improving the country's labour and migration legislation, and primarily to create comfortable conditions for business development and jobs creation.

City/Settlement _____

In which countries do you send citizens for temporary employment? _____

In which sectors are workers sent by you abroad employed?

- industry services
 transport entertainment
 communications other _____
 agriculture

For what period do you mainly send Belarusian citizens abroad?

- for permanent employment (no time limit) for a period of less than three months
 for a year or more for one-time jobs
 from six months (inclusive) to a year other _____
 from three months (inclusive) to six months

What is the average age of citizens sent to work abroad by your organization?

- 18–22 22–30 30–40 40–50 Above 50

How often do you have cases when citizens did not return to Belarus after the end of the employment contract?

- Often Sometimes Seldom Never

Has your organization faced any problems due to sending Belarusian workers abroad for temporary employment?

- yes no I find it difficult to answer

If so, then these were:

- claims made by a sent worker against your organization
 problems between an employee and a foreign employer
 problems between the sent employee and the law enforcement agencies of the country of employment
 your version of an answer _____

Are you aware of cases when labour rights were violated during work abroad?

- yes no I find it difficult to answer

If so, how?

- The actual employer changed.
 Workers were forced to sign a new or additional agreement.
 Unpaid overtime work
 Incomplete payment for work performed

- Work with uncertain payment prospects (workers did not know whether they would be paid for the work or not, and how much they would be paid.)
- Workers were not paid at the end of the work.
- Long delays in payment of wages
- Workers were forced to work too hard.
- Workers were forced to work in inhumane conditions (cold, dirt, harmful conditions)
- The rights of employed workers were not violated in any way.
- Your own version of answer _____

In your opinion, are citizens sufficiently informed before their departure on how and where they can protect their rights in the country of employment? _____

How often do your clients believe that they were deceived or misinformed during the preparation for employment abroad?

- This does not happen
- There are isolated cases
- It occurs from time to time
- This is a common practice
- I find it difficult to answer

In your opinion, what information (advice) do potential labour migrants from Belarus need most of all?
(multiple answer options are allowed)

- rules of stay in the country of employment
- labour rights and obligations in the relevant position offered by a foreign employer
- taxation in the country of employment
- taxation of income received from abroad in the Republic of Belarus
- social protection in the country of employment
- medical care in the country of employment
- visa support
- opportunities for remittances to the homeland
- opportunities to protect one's rights in the country of employment
- other (please specify) _____

Has your organization experienced bad faith conduct of clients employed abroad?

- yes
- no
- I find it difficult to answer

If so, what exactly? _____

What do you think should be done to avoid/minimize such situations?

What difficulties did your organization face while working during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Please describe briefly _____

What difficulties did the citizens you sent to work abroad face because of COVID-19?

How do you feel about the established procedure for obtaining a license for activities related to employment outside the Republic of Belarus?

- The procedure is acceptable
- The procedure is too complicated
- The procedure is not needed at all
- other _____

If your organization has paid fines for violating the procedure of employment of Belarusian citizens outside the Republic of Belarus, what is the total amount of fines for the last year (in rubles)?

- up to 5 basic values
- from 5 to 10 basic values
- from 10 to 15 basic values
- from 15 to 20 basic values
- above 20 basic values

Are the state bodies responsible for issuing licenses for activities related to employment outside the Republic of Belarus sufficiently open?

- yes
- rather yes than no
- rather no than yes
- no
- I find it difficult to answer

Is it easy enough to receive information from the above-mentioned authorities about the procedure for issuing a license for activities related to employment outside the Republic of Belarus?

- yes
- no
- other _____

Have you encountered any difficulties when submitting a package of documents for obtaining a license for activities related to employment outside the Republic of Belarus?

- yes
- no

If you have, please specify what those difficulties were related to _____

Do you think that online submission of documents for obtaining a license will simplify this process?

- yes
- no
- I find it difficult to answer

What would you propose to change in the legislation on the departure of the Belarusian labour force abroad for temporary employment and in the current procedures?

THANKS A LOT FOR THE ANSWERS!

APPENDIX 3

A QUESTIONNAIRE

For the heads of enterprises and organizations of the Republic of Belarus employing foreign citizens

Dear employers!

This questionnaire was prepared within the framework of the international technical assistance project "Maximizing the Impact of Migration and Mobility on the Sustainable Development of Belarus" implemented by the Representative Office of the International Organization for Migration in the Republic of Belarus in coordination with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) of the Republic of Belarus. The purpose of the survey is to examine the current situation with labour migration flows and remittances to the regions of Belarus, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The results of the survey will be used to develop recommendations for improving the country's labour and migration legislation, and primarily to create comfortable conditions for business development and jobs creation.

City/Settlement _____

Number of employees of the organization

- up to 50 from 50 to 100 from 100 to 500 500 and more

The type of activity that the company/organization is engaged in

- construction industry
 trading agriculture
 services other _____

How many foreign citizens do you employ during the year?

- up to 5 up to 100
 up to 10 up to 500 and more
 up to 50

Workers of which gender do you attract more?

- Men Women Equally

Did the total number of employees change during the peak of the pandemic?

- yes no other _____

Why do you hire foreign workers?

- There is a lack of local workers with the necessary qualifications.
 There are local workers, but they do not work in this specialty.
 Local workers demand higher wages.
 Migrants can be hired for the period during which they are needed (in order to adjust the number of employees depending on the season, changes in market conditions, etc.).
 Foreign workers can work for a longer working day, overtime, etc.
 This way I spend less on social benefits.
 other _____

Migrants from which countries work at your enterprise? _____

How do you find foreign workers?

- through government agencies (employment services, etc.)
- through private employment agencies
- with the help of private intermediaries
- through business partners
- on labour exchanges
- with the help of other employees
- with the help of colleagues and acquaintances
- employees themselves apply for the vacancy posted by us
- other _____

Do you think there is a problem with finding foreign specialists in the labour market?

- yes
- no
- I find it difficult to answer

If you answered positively, what do you think is the solution?

- State employment services should deal with this issue.
- Private employment agencies that employ Belarusians in Belarusian organizations should be allowed to employ foreign citizens.
- It is necessary to sign international agreements on the organized recruitment of foreign labour force.
- other _____

Which of the following services does your organization provide to foreign workers?

Type of service	Services provided free of charge	Services provided for an additional fee	Services that are not provided
housing			
catering			
health-care services			
payment for professional courses			
on-the-job professional training			
other services (<i>please specify</i>)			

Has your organization faced any problems due to the employment of foreign workers?

- yes
- no
- I find it difficult to answer

If so, then these were:

- problems between a foreign employee and the administration of the enterprise
- problems between a foreign employee and other employees
- problems between a foreign employee and law enforcement bodies
- problems between a foreign employee and the local population
- your version of an answer _____

If your organization has paid fines for violating the procedure for the use of foreign labour force, what is the total amount of fines for the last year (in rubles)?

- up to 5 basic values
- from 5 to 10 basic values
- from 10 to 15 basic values
- from 15 to 20 basic values
- above 20 basic values

Do you consider the amounts of penalties provided for by the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Belarus to be high?

- yes
- no
- I find it difficult to answer

Do you think there are gaps/shortcomings in the Belarusian legislation regulating the processes of attracting and using foreign labour force that create favourable conditions for committing offences?

Response options	On the part of employers	On the part of migrants	On the part of intermediaries
Yes			
Rather yes than no			
Rather no than yes			
No			
I find it difficult to answer			

If you answered in the affirmative, please specify what are these gaps/shortcomings _____

In your opinion, does the use of migrant labour force bring economic benefits to your organization (enterprise)?

Response options	On the part of employers	On the part of migrants	On the part of intermediaries
Yes			
Rather yes than no			
Rather no than yes			
No			
I find it difficult to answer			

What are the main advantages and disadvantages of hiring foreign workers compared to the local population?

Advantages	Disadvantages

Have you encountered difficulties in finding and hiring employees due to reasons related to COVID-19?

- yes no

If you answered in the affirmative, what difficulties did you encounter? Please describe briefly.

Do you think there are uncertainties in the Belarusian legislation that can create obstacles to attracting foreign labour force?

- yes no I find it difficult to answer

If so, how?

Do you consider the system of obtaining permits for the employment of foreign citizens too complicated and burdensome?

- yes rather yes than no rather no than yes no I find it difficult to answer

Do you consider the system of obtaining permits for the employment of foreign citizens too costly?

- yes rather yes than no rather no than yes no I find it difficult to answer

Do you consider the package of permits for hiring foreign workers provided for by the Belarusian legislation to be excessive?

- yes no I find it difficult to answer

If you answered in the affirmative, then which documents, in your opinion, should be abolished?

Do you think that the state bodies responsible for the admission of foreign workers to the labour market and issuing permits for the employment of foreign citizens are open enough?

- yes rather yes than no rather no than yes no I find it difficult to answer

Do you consider the information on the procedure for attracting foreign citizens posted on the websites of the above-mentioned bodies exhaustive?

- yes no other _____

If not, what information is missing? _____

Have you encountered difficulties in obtaining permits?

yes no

If so, what are they related to? _____

Do you think that online submission of documents for obtaining a license will simplify this process?

yes no I find it difficult to answer

What would you propose to change in national legislation and effective procedures for attracting foreign labour force? _____

Thank you for participating in the survey!



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