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## **RECENT POST- SOVIET MIGRATION: EUROPE AND TOLERANCE** *(Based on surveys, expert interviews and focus groups in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland)*

### **Abstract:**

The current research focuses on the concept of tolerance level, both on the behalf of local residents of European countries accepting migrants, and migrants themselves towards local population. The surveys were conducted in focus groups in Belgium, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Poland, while the expert interviews were collected in Belgium, Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The surveys conducted by the IMAGRI in Europe in December 2021 – January 2022 and compelled to be continued in the form of expert interviews after February 24 2022, allow us to answer the question about the attitude of post-Soviet migrants to European values and prospects of Europe and Europeans in the light of "force majeure" migration, that is the avalanche-like resettlement of millions of Ukrainian residents to Europe. IMAGRI has been working in Brussels since 2009 studying migration from post-Soviet countries emerged on the territory of the collapsed USSR, in particular, the WMA category, or "advanced migration" previously concentrating on women, and in the latest research expanded to all educated migrants of both genders. Highly educated migrants, who are placed in the center of IMAGRI's attention, possess well-developed intercultural communication skills, but in about half of the cases it does not solve the problems of their self-actualization in career and society.

**Keywords:** social adaptation; Russian-speaking migrants; World-Migrants Advanced (WMA); cross-cultural communication; level of tolerance, attitude, hidden discrimination

## Introduction

The International Migration and Gender Research Institute (IMAGRI) has been studying migration issues for more than 10 years; the presented research was conducted in September 2021 – January 2022. A special questionnaire was developed jointly with Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor T. V. Kuprina and Candidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor E. B. Bedrina, the Department of International Economics and Management of the Ural Federal University named after the First President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin (UrFU).

The survey was completed in January 2022, and while analyzing its results, we were forced to take into account the Russian SMO in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, therefore, in August-September 2022, we additionally conducted a number of expert interviews in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland.

The research takes into account the results of a survey of 254 people living in Europe for more than 5-10 years; expert psychologists and volunteers working in various refugee assistance centers from Ukraine since the end of February this year, as well as other specialists. The current data correlate with the ones we received earlier (since 2009).

The article is devoted to the study of the issue of social tolerance to different views, mores, habits and integration of post-Soviet migration *advanced* in Europe at the present stage.

## Research results and their analysis

The object of the research is "advanced migrants" – WMA (World Migrants Advanced). The term was introduced by IMAGRI in 2009 and firstly denoted Women Migrants Advanced. But for the present research we widen this term up to World Migrants Advanced taking into account views and opinions of both genders.

At the meeting of the European Migration Forum on October 27-28, 2021, it was noted: about 8% of its current population (**about 34 million people**) were born outside the EU; 10% of young people (15-34 years old) born in the EU have at least one parent of foreign origin [Eurostat, 2019]. On average, 13% of key workers are immigrants; Luxembourg (53%), Cyprus (29%) and Ireland (26%) are the leaders in this indicator [Eurostat, 2020].

However, in recent months (since the end of February 2022) in Europe, there has been an understandable (and predictable) sharp increase in the number of migrants (including the WMA category) – in absolute numerical terms from Ukraine.

In our research, we analyzed more than 250 questionnaires of migrants of the WMA category from the former USSR countries in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany and the Netherlands. Interviews with experts and focus groups on migration were conducted in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland; the responses of the local population were also taken into account.

In the process of the research, we have empirically verified the thesis that low-skilled migration practically does not feel intolerant attitude towards themselves while looking for a job (adequate to education - unskilled), while highly educated migration faces a negative attitude in some cases. The latter assumption has been confirmed by our monitoring and research, round tables and debates within the framework of IMAGRI for 13 years.

The problem of tolerance is the cornerstone of integration: getting a job adequate to education and professional qualifications is essential for the further life success in a new country.

Since February 2022, by WMA (World Migrants Advanced) we mean any migrant who has come to European countries (as a part of the world) from the territory that was once part of the USSR; at least with 1-2 higher educations and with an active social position. WMA also have well-developed cross-cultural communication skills.

**The news of recent months there is practical disappearance of the term "Russian-speaking migration" from the professional usage of migration sociologists, which is explained**

by new geopolitical conditions. And in our opinion, it indicates a new emerging trend.

Previously, by Russian-speaking migration migrantologists understood all those who came to Europe from the post-Soviet space. However, now it seems to be correct to call **such migrants "post-Soviet migrants", although they still know Russian, and it continues to be the main language for a significant part of them.**

Almost all of our respondents (96%) fall under the concept of "a multicultural dialogue specialist" – it is confirmed by the current research, but only half of them were professionally realized in the new country.

We have again confidently confirmed the long-standing conclusion: **European ideas about the initially high possibilities of implementing WMA migrants in a new country do not correspond to reality.**

In today's geopolitical realities, priorities have changed for a significant part of the WMA group: creativity and the desire to be realized in a completely new field have come to the fore.

We offered respondents some judgments-questions (see Table. 1) with answer options.

**Table 1**

**Research questionnaire**

<b>№</b>	<b>Questionnaire (statements to agree or disagree with)</b>
1.	"In my opinion, it's normal to think that your people are better than everyone else"
2.	"In my opinion, it is difficult to treat some nations and peoples well"
3.	"A person of a different culture usually scares or alarms me"
4.	"I want people of different nationalities to be among my friends"
5.	«I am ready to be friends with a person of another race"
6.	"It is difficult for me to communicate with people of another faith"
7.	"It doesn't matter to me what nationality my boss is, as long as he/ she has a high qualification"
8.	"I am ready to see a migrant among my colleagues in the office (at work)"
9.	"I am ready to accept a person of any nationality as a member of my family"
10.	"I have a negative attitude to interethnic marriages, as they lead to the disappearance of the nation"
11.	"I think migrants are beneficial because they are very hardworking and diligent"
12.	"I think migrants should have the same access to urban infrastructure as citizens of the country"
13.	"I think that refugees and migrants should not be helped more than everyone else, since local problems are no less"
14.	"I think that a person's nationality affects his/her opportunities in my city"
15.	"I support the idea that the local population should have advantages in the labor market"
16.	"I believe that migrants and refugees complicate the situation in my city (town, village)"
17.	"I believe that migrants increase competition for jobs in my city (town, village)"
18.	"I believe that migrants should only do low-skilled work (cleaning streets, washing floors, dishes, etc.)"
19.	"Among my friends and relatives there are those who are willing to work in workplaces where migrants are currently working"
20.	"There are many people among my acquaintances who have a negative attitude towards migrants"
21.	"A person should be evaluated only by his/her moral and business qualities, and not by his/her nationality"

The answers to questions 1-7 (about friendship and acceptance of people of another culture) are predictable. A small part of migrants (about 9.6%) answered, "It's normal to think that your people are better than everyone else," but in the surveys of the "locals" we did not receive such answers. The result shows a high level of tolerance of the community: both locals and migrants.

In the answers to questions 7-8 (about bosses and colleagues in the office), we have stated complete tolerance on all sides.

On the topic of family values, local Europeans replied that they were ready to accept a person

of any nationality (question 9): so, the policy of European multiculturalism has worked. However, among migrants, approximately 9.7% turned out to be against a new family member of "any" nationality, and 42% felt that the ability to connect their lives with someone depends on the religion of the chosen one (question 10).

Half of the respondents (both local natives and those who have come to the country some time ago) believe that local Europeans have enough social problems, so they are primarily entitled to social assistance and access to infrastructure (questions 12-13).

To the question whether nationality affects the recruitment in one's city (question 14 – we asked about qualified job), more than 70% of all respondents answered positively: 92% of migrants and about 30% of locals.

A third of migrants with experience supported the idea that "the local population should have an advantage in the labor market" (question 15). The statement "migrants complicate the situation in the city" was confirmed by 34% of respondents (question 16). "Migrants increase competition for jobs" is considered by 34%, 40% disagree with it. 24% do not have their own opinion, as they have never encountered it (question 17).

In the judgments about whether an unskilled job is intended only for migrants (question 18), we see complete solidarity and tolerance: of course **not**.

More than 65% have acquaintances who have a negative attitude towards migrants, which confirmed that respondents are aware of the problem. We deliberately did not ask a direct question about one's own position (question 20).

At first glance, there is a clear discrepancy; the respondents themselves or their acquaintances, most likely, have a "negative" attitude towards "migrants in general" – in the general, faceless (or impersonal in consciousness) mass. However, in direct contacts, in everyday or professional communication with a specific person, in whom a migrant is unmistakably recognized, the attitude towards him/her is formed individually, and to a large extent as a result of the behavior of the migrants themselves.

### **Expert interviews on the research topic**

In the modern situation, the demand for the services of psychologists and psychotherapists has naturally increased. Among the new migrants there are certified specialists, highly qualified doctors, including those with academic degrees. Educated people usually appeal to such specialists. We received comments from experts from the field on condition of anonymity (for security reasons of interviewees; the researchers know the names; the qualifications of specialists have been confirmed; all of them emigrated to Belgium many years ago and have practice in the country).

***Question:** What are your professional impressions about the patients from among the Ukrainian refugees? What are their plans for the future?*

**The answer of a psychotherapist, migrant from Belarus, candidate of Medical Sciences, permanent expert of IMAGRI, specializing in working with post-Soviet migration:**

Yes, 90% of the patients who come to me are Ukrainians with higher education. It seems that at least 90% of these 90% want to settle here. There is a conclusion that these people have been thinking about moving for a long time. The general situation in Ukraine after 24 February has become an opportunity for them to move to Europe; as a rule, they are those who are used to working and earning.

### **The answer of a practicing migrant psychologist from Russia:**

Those who come to me for consultations have long dreamed of living, working, studying in another country. They have taken advantage of the situation. There is nothing to condemn them. There is a war there, no one is insured. And the right to save a life is equal for everybody. Their

thoughts are: to get a job, learn a language, go to university, find a job, take root. These people are also having a hard time, by the way. Because of the discrepancy they often try to justify their flight, even if no one asks them about it.

**Question:** *Do you have many patients who are dissatisfied with their situation now? Who got the right to work in Belgium, but really did not find a job?*

**The answer of a psychotherapist:**

I specifically observe four factors:

1. Fictional ideas about abroad that do not reflect reality.
2. Soviet habits, the belief that the government is obliged to give something.
3. Person psychologically lives in the Karpman's triangle, and there everything is rolled up: "Victim" - "Rescuer" - "Prosecutor".
4. Personal problems are often interpreted as intolerance, as personal inconsistency.

**In the Czech Republic and Poland,** our experts are volunteers who have been working in refugee assistance centers since 24 February, 2022. Their answers are summarized as follows. About migrants' plans for the future: almost 90% say they want to return to their homeland, while almost 90% of refugees try to get a job as soon as possible before returning.

**Belgium.** Educated migrants (who came involuntarily, but decided to stay in the country) are very likely to start looking for a job or try to create their own business. We observed a similar trend in previous years as well.

However, the poorly educated temporary migration does not seek employment; moreover, it in every possible way delays the moment of starting of labor activity.

For example, after 24 February, 2022, cleaning firms in Belgium were preparing for an influx of potential migrant applicants, but expectations were not met, and the explanation for it is very simple. At the time of writing the article, in Belgium refugees from Ukraine received a cash allowance of 1200 euros/person – 1500 (if there is a child) euros per month<sup>\*</sup>, plus free transportation and medical insurance and the opportunity to shop in a social store. And the salary of a cleaner (and other unskilled workers) is about 1000-1200 euros<sup>\*\*</sup>. Belgians do not really understand this arithmetic now: unemployed (for example, due to illness) locals receive from the government about 800-900 euros / month plus benefits.

In other Benelux countries, the situation is different: the benefit in the Netherlands is 60 euros per person per week; in Luxembourg it is about the same, 500 euros for two per month. Those who came to these countries would like to start working and return home as soon as possible.

The situation in the Czech Republic is similar to the Netherlands and Luxembourg: the benefit is 5,000 CZK (about 200 euros); Poland also pays similar amounts. The "non-monetary" support introduced in February, such as free transportation for all refugees, is being gradually canceled. Those who came from Ukraine in spring started looking for a job soon enough and found it relatively quickly.

The situation in Lithuania is remarkable. For a small country, objectively not the largest migration flow is huge, and it is difficult for the government to pay benefits. The government is trying to give priority in finding a job for migrants from Ukraine, but Lithuania has very high unemployment. Accordingly, it is difficult to talk about the tolerance of both the indigenous population and the "old" post-Soviet migration.

The described situations (in Belgium and other above-mentioned countries) are diametrically opposite. But who created them? The governments, of course. Naturally, respectable Europeans get annoyed – both with politicians, with migration as a phenomenon, and personally with migrants.

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<sup>\*</sup> From September 2022 for a family of 3 people – 1400 + 250 per child.

<sup>\*\*</sup> In Belgium, payments of 250 euros – for the children of employees, for the children of entrepreneurs – 85-95 euros / month.

### **Conclusion on the main part of the research**

#### **1. Tolerance to migration is always a problem – it looks absolutely different from different points of view.**

Recent migrants believe that they are not being hired because of hidden discrimination. Dutch respondents who live in Europe note that post-Soviet migration carries with it the "baggage of the Russian world", does not focus on European principles of interaction and relationships in labor groups. The office culture in Europe and countries of the former USSR is very different, and that is why migrants are often denied employment.

#### **2. The importance and timeliness of our research.**

By coincidence, we managed to record tolerance to post-Soviet migration and its own tolerance to the host society before new acute geopolitical processes and shifts, as well as the level of tolerance or latent intolerance to the host country.

**3. We have confirmed a relatively high level of tolerance among the population of a number of European countries;** we believe this conclusion can be extended to countries that are not covered by the research.

**4. A sharp increase in the number of migrants in the country, caused by tragic or force majeure circumstances, for some (or even quite a long time - at least several months) increases tolerance and empathy among the local population at first.** However, now, after more than six months, according to social networks and empirically, we note a slight decrease in it.

**5. The level of tolerance in the provision of social support to migrants and competition for jobs varies.** As the survey shows, the "general" tolerance towards migrants is higher than existing in the "professional" ("career") environment.

**6. In the absence of a well-thought-out and consistent governmental policy aimed at the integration, adaptation of temporarily or permanently arrived migrants, the level of tolerance of the local population for a relatively short time (some months) decreases.**

**7. Even having moved to the country as part of a "planned" ("calm", "prepared") migration and being legally assimilated (de facto and de jure - a resident of Europe with all the rights, obligations and a passport of a European country), a migrant from the post-Soviet space sometimes continues to feel like a stranger in a new country.**

As T. V. Kuprina & S. M. Minasyan note in their research, "socio-cultural relations are a complex multidimensional phenomenon. It is especially evident while interacting with representatives of another culture in the dichotomy of "ours" – "theirs". [Kuprina, Minasyan, 2022: 208]

**8. A significant part of European residents (and assimilated migrants who perceive as such) oppose preferences for migrants in social and adaptation issues, and 50% believe that the social rights of local residents and newcomers should be equal.**

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