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### **“Is welfare fair?”**

*A comparative study of migrants' aspirations and welfare system support in Germany and Norway.*

Abstracts: Among the factors attracting the migrants to Europe in general and to Germany and Norway particularly is the well-developed welfare system of these countries. The Russian-speaking migrants are not the exclusion. They are searching for the feeling of security, of being protected and supported by the state which is not the case in most of the countries of former Soviet Union. The question is: how the welfare system influence on the process of adaptation and integration of migrants, what they were awaiting and what they are getting? How they are feeling by themselves about it? In our report it is discussed on the background of data obtained during the pilot research of the processes of adaptation of Russian speaking migrants conducted in 2008-2009 in Germany and Norway.

**Key words: Russian speaking migrants, Welfare System, Germany, Norway**

Europe is an attractive destination for different types of migration, and has already been so for several decades. One of the advantages migrants experience in this region are well developed welfare systems. This has become an essential pull-factor for the Russian-speaking migrants, especially after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In search of a “welcome in Europe” and a way to elevate one’s life quality, one of the largest migrant flows from the former Soviet Union was directed towards Germany and also Norway with their highly developed welfare where the migrants hope to receive sufficient support for their new life and fast integration into the host society.

This report is based on data obtained during the scientific project: “General and special features of the adaptation of Russian-speaking migrants: comparative analysis of the processes in Russia, Germany and Norway” (pilot research). During 2008 and 2009, we conducted a comparative study on the

Russian-speaking migrant communities using a task-oriented questionnaire, as well as in-depth interviews in three federal states of Germany: Bremen, Hessen and Nordrhein-Westfalen and the federal region of Oslo in Norway with 190 respondents in Germany and 62 respondents in Norway. One of the purposes of this research was to discover the existing relation between the integration policies as a part of the welfare systems of Germany and Norway, the migrant aspirations, as well as the migrants' success in reaching their goals.

Through the history of Eastern Europe, the different push- and pull-factors have impacted the direction of the flows of migrations. Internal migration dominated Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union until 1990. However, the dissolution of the Soviet Union followed by economic and political struggles resulted in a reduced standard of living. Thus, in the late 1980's and early 1990's the trend started changing, with an increased migration from Eastern Europe to Western countries.

We consider migration as crossing any territorial boundaries, internal or external, with the purpose of changing residence permanently or for an extended period of time. Migration often is influenced by different "push" or "pull" factors. In addition to previous waves of immigration to Germany, a large number of citizens from the former Soviet Union migrated to this country in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Consequently, there is a large Russian-speaking community in Germany, and Russian-speaking people are today the second largest foreign-language minority in the country. The total numbers of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Germany is currently more than 2.5 million, and are represented by two major groups of migrants.

The first group consists of "ethnic Germans" and their families. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Germany (Bundesministerium der Innern), more than two million people came to Germany, acquiring this status from 1950 to 2001.

"Jewish immigrants and their families" represent the second large group of immigrants who moved to Germany from 1991/92 to 2007. According to the German authorities responsible for integration of migrants, there are a total of 209.226 people within this group today (Bundesverwaltungsamt, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge). In addition to these large groups of Russian-speaking migrants, it is necessary to include the number of citizens from the former Soviet Union living in Germany as a result of joint marriages with the local population, or various kinds of employment or academic migration.

The increased interest in Norway started in the period of the economic reforms in 1992 with the opening of borders and the formation of the Barents region. The opening of borders and direct links with Norway provoked a wave of migration from Russia. However, restricted immigration policies pursued by the Norwegian authorities resulted in a limited number of Russian-speaking migrants. So according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway (Utenriksdepartementet), there were 14.873 immigrants from Russia and 2604 from Ukraine, as well as persons born in Norway to parents of immigrants by the year 2010. The vast majority of them moved to Norway in the period from 1995 to 2008.

Marriage with the local population as well as academic and labor migration is the main motive for migration from the former Soviet Union to this, another "western" country - Norway.

The perception of the country plays an important role for the individual prior to migrating.

Germany is often perceived as a country with quite well organized state and social system, whose effectiveness in working with migrants is well known. In addition to this, a strong Russian-speaking community consisting of a total of about three million people is able to support new settlers. These and other factors make Germany an attractive country for possible migrants from Russia.

On the other hand, little is known to Russians about Norway. Results of a nationwide survey of 1500 respondents devoted to clarify the "attitude of Russians to Norway", held by the Fund "Public opinion" in 2001, showed a low degree of

awareness of life in the country, but every tenth participant mentioned the developed economy of Norway, the stability and prosperity, noting high standard of living in Norway.

Relying on the traditional approach to migration by E. Lee<sup>1</sup>, the following factors can be considered “pull-” factors to Western European countries such as Germany and Norway: a high level of economic development, stable social and political environment, well-functioning social security system, affordable education and health, safety, and relatively low crime rate, and good ecological situation. These factors attract people of different regions of the former Soviet Union and now Russia to migrate to the West-European countries.

For instance, the “pull-”factors in Germany belonging to the welfare system include a comprehensive system of public, state-religious and non-governmental organizations helping migrants settling in a new place of residence, special integration programs for migrants, including Russians. In addition to this, the state pays the initial migrant language training courses, as well as health insurance, housing, and living expenses (food, clothing, etc.) until the migrant may find a job. Employment agencies are assisting migrants in finding a job.

Norway, as well as Germany, is a country which attracts migrants from different countries, including Russia. Norway is repeatedly recognized by the UN as the world's best country to live in. Local authorities are actively promoting the integration of immigrants into society, as well as preventing racism and discrimination. Since 2004, there are mandatory introduction programs for migrants. These programs contribute to obtaining a general knowledge of Norwegian society, the Norwegian language, and to prepare the migrants to work and live in the country.

Since 2005, courses in the Norwegian language (250 hours) and social studies (50 hours) are offered for all new immigrants. If necessary, new immigrants can receive up to an additional 2700 hours of free language training.

The problem of employing migrants is effectively solved through employment agencies and comprehensive system of free training courses. Social welfare services provide financial support to families experiencing difficulties, assisting with housing and medical care.

Thus, we can with some level of certainty state that Germany and Norway have well-organized and adequately funded systems for integrating migrants and assisting in adapting to their new society. These could therefore be considered to be strong “pull” factors.

Based on our research, the motives for migration from the former Soviet Union to Germany and Norway differ significantly. When considering immigration to Germany, the “push” factors played a significant role. This finding, in accordance with the hierarchy of human needs by Abraham Maslow, corresponds with the dissatisfaction with basic needs of the relevant physiological and existential levels primarily related to security due to a lack of confidence, and a need for freedom from fear and failure.

**Table 1: What were the reasons for your family to move to a new location?**

|   | Germany | Norway |
|---|---------|--------|
| 1. financial difficulties in the home country (in the territory of departure) | 8,9%    | 5,7%   |
| 2. insecurity related to the future, fear for children                        | 25,60%  | 9,20%  |
| 3. moved after the family and neighbors                                       | 7,9%    | 5,70%  |
| 4. it is a more peaceful life here  | 11,4%   | 13,80% |
| 5. there is a better social security system here                              | 19,9%   | 11,50% |
| 6. better career and earning opportunities here                               | 10,1%   | 20,70% |
| 7. moved to relatives   | 8,9%    | 8,00%  |
| 8. Marriage   | 1,6%    | 12,6%  |

<sup>1</sup> Everett S. Lee. A Theory of Migration, 1966

The results of both survey and in-depth interviews with experts, shows that the most significant reasons for leaving the home country to Germany were: “insecurity, fear for the children”, with 25,6% of the respondents, wish for a “greater social protection” - 19,9%, and “financial difficulties at home” being answered by 8.9%. Based on these results, it would seem that a majority of the migrants wish for a secure life in a country with a better welfare system than in, at least in the moment of migration, the turbulent countries of the former Soviet Union.

At the same time, many “ethnic Germans” considered moving to Germany not as a migration, but rather as a return to their historical home land. This could, therefore, be considered to be a “pull” factor for this group of migrants.

The motives for migration to Norway differ greatly; as the majority of the migrants stated that their main reason for moving to Norway was due to the country providing “the best prospects for career and employment”. This answer was reported by 20,7% of the respondents.

The difference in these findings between Germany and Norway suggests that migrants to Germany had a need for providing security at the time of moving, while migrants to Norway seemed at their time of migration to have moved further up the Maslow hierarchy in that their primary reason for migrating was the desire for self-realization. Thus, the survey identified a significant difference in motivation between the Russian migrant communities in Germany and Norway.

In general, the motivation for avoiding failure and a desire to liberate oneself from the problems of previous residence as well as the need for greater social protection was prevalent amongst the Russian migrants in Germany. This position may be associated with a passive attitude towards managing ones living conditions. At the same time, this attitude may often be followed by a lower desire for initiative and a high level of expectations from the surroundings

In Norway, the main motivations for the migrants were to succeed; the desire to improve the quality of life through career, a successful marriage and/or achieve a more peaceful life. It would seem that this position and attitude towards one’s own life and surroundings could, in general, be considered to be viewed as being more active.

It would seem reasonable to expect the motivation of migrants to be closely linked to the behavior strategies that they choose, in order to adapt to another country. The difference in the main motivation for migration shown by the Russian speaking migrants in Germany and Norway is reflected in the choice of their methods to adapt to a new place of residence. Through the survey, we found that a large part of the emigrants to Germany (33.0%), were planning to look around first, and then take some steps. Conversely, the majority of migrants in Norway were prepared to take active steps in order to improve life quality (35%), for example in the way of “finish the studies or retrain, and get a new job”

Furthermore, significant differences were discovered related to the expectations of migrants in Germany and Norway related to the provision of various kinds of aid and assistance from local authorities, services and institutions. While 63.4% of the migrant arriving in Germany relied on external assistance and help, only 31.5% relied solely on their strength. In Norway, only 35% counted on external assistance, and 47.4% did not expect help from anyone – planning by themselves to undertake effective steps for employment and finding a place in the Norwegian society, and to a much lesser extent relying on assistance from local institutions.

**Table 2: On whose assistance were you relying when settling in a new place?**

|  | Germany | Norway |
|--|---------|--------|
| 1. help from the relatives (friends) there | 31,0%   | 17,5%  |
| 2. help from governmental organizations    | 28,2%   | 17,5%  |
| 3. help from local migrant organizations   | 4,2%    | 0,0%   |
| 4. did not count on outside help           | 31,5%   | 47,4%  |
| 5. other                                   | 5,1%    | 17,6%  |

Based on our results, there is a significant difference between Russian migrants who moved to Germany in comparison with those who moved to Norway concerning the motivation for moving, as well as the level of personal proactivity and expectations. The fundamental difference between Russian-speaking migrants in Norway and Germany seems to be in the level of self-confidence while overcoming obstacles and achieving success in the new place of residence shown on one side, and on the other side relying on help from someone. Consequently, the two groups of migrants may be looked upon as examples of significantly different positions towards integration to the new society – active and passive.

The fact is that in both countries, the majority of respondents consider their migration a correct action, although the percentage of those who could not answer was sufficiently large. The question: “If you had to start all over again, would you have moved here again?” was positively answered by 54.9% of respondents in Germany and 64.5% in Norway; not answered - 39.0% in Germany and 27.4% in Norway, and “would have remained in the same place of residence” - 3.8% in Germany and 3.2% in Norway.

All together we can see the satisfaction of migrants with their new life in Germany and Norway, but our question is how it corresponds with the welfare systems in these countries, which were among the most pull factors of migration especially in case of Germany. Is welfare fare? Here for our opinion it is important to consider the influence of the welfare system on different strata of migrant community and especially of different generations. The deep interviews with experts allow us to define several dimensions of this problem for both countries.

1. The case when the welfare support was necessary in full amount; the migrants came because they needed it; it was sometimes almost the case of life for them.

*“It is good here for Jews, for old people who could not support themselves in Russia, Ukraine and CIS countries. And here they came, there they were not supported by their country, but here the government supports them financially for a normal level for living.” (Germany)*

2. The case when the welfare support in full amount leads to the situation of provoking of the passive role of migrants in society. The system of financial support, money for living, for housing, for medical insurance, for eat etc., etc., all these leads to the conclusion: if I do not work and have it all - why should I work?

*“Weaknesses ... well, the arriving refugees, of course, good financial support, it is a good thing. But on the other hand it causes some problems with them yet because they do not want to work then. Because getting a good benefit, no one wants to go with him and go to work, to do something. Actually, it generates a large number of dependents.” (Norway)*

*„...”Sozialhilfe”<sup>2</sup> This is of course strongly affecting the people, because everything depends heavily on the family. If a child, whether he 10 years old, 15 or 20 years can see that parents do not want nothing, mom goes somewhere to earn a little bit and that is all. That is strongly reflected in all the children, what goals they have and then there are things they want to achieve, whether they will achieve something someday.” (Germany)*

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<sup>2</sup> Sozialhilfe- system of state financial support in Germany for those, who never were working in Germany or are long time without job. In “Sozialhilfe” are included: money for living in general, for housing, medical/health insurance, etc.

*“at one point everything falls on you: apartment, living conditions, this and this and this, it seems that you are in some stage of life become some kind of a person secured, protected and people migrated here are satisfied and when comes a time that something must be done to change anything in life, I mean look for a job, learn a language, a person becomes, "Why? I have everything, "his life he lives, it seems for him that he has everything, he has the opportunity to go to Europe, even in these circumstances, we will speak frankly, and occurs a moment when a person begins to consider is it beneficial to him or not profitable at all to work. So here it is such a terrible situation” (Germany)*

3. The case when the standard full support from the state is not properly working not only because of the reasons mentioned above: “I’m getting enough for life why should I work?” but because this system was developed for the local population and is not taking into account the peculiarities of mentality of migrants.

*«German machine goes astray in such a case because it is, how to say, is formalized for the German unemployed, not for Russian, Turkish, it does not understand a bit of his mentality or his life, that is, on the one hand it will protect him, gave him a certain starter moment, but then all these courses, all quite formal shape. Psychology here is configured so that a person should reach himself. So people are living here - a man, he must get through by himself. If in the Group there are 5-6 Russian people, they begin to communicate in Russian, to discuss Russian problems they are moving away from the topics of these courses, that is, they are again in their emigrant...» (Germany)*

*„ Norway – is the socialist country that is why they believe there are principles of socialism that everyone should try on their capacity to invest in society but these opportunities for all in society are different. The week feels good and is maintained; the disabled, children with poor health, with difficulties in school, they get much more support. Social system is also assigned on immigrants. That he will have this support from the state. Well, it is transferred to the immigration policy - but it's a double edged sword because on one hand - this is certainly an advantage. Because people anywhere, in any place, no country in the world would not have received such support as they get in Norway, for them it is certainly an advantage. But for the country is not the strongest side because the result is, for example, misuse of Norwegian social system...“ (Norway)*

There are several correct answers on the question of our report „Is the welfare fair? “

1. Yes it is fair. It allows the old, sick, handicapped people, people who cannot! work to live normally. It is the greatest advantage of modern European society that people are feeling themselves secure and sure that in any case they will have enough money for food, sufficient medical care and place where to live. That the society will take care about them, not as it is in the case of modern situation in Russia and most of the other countries of former Soviet Union

2. No it is not fair. The support from the state provokes passive role of migrants, makes slower work integration, and leads to misuse of welfare system by migrants.

3. Yes it is fair. That is the people who are deciding how to behave themselves and how to accept the state support, they are choosing by themselves active or passive role in the process of adaptation and integration in the new society.

*„I think that all problems are sitting in the man himself in the head. What he wants the problem - such he creates for himself. Not a single day I did sit without a job. If I got up in the morning and said to myself, that I want to find a job, after*

*dinner I had a job. And job was of a different kind. I nursed the sick. I have a medical education, I have had 3-4 jobs in month, I had to help my daughter in the Ukraine, I could earn up to 900 euros per month, and I earned them...”(Germany)*