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**DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN EMPLOYMENT OF MIGRANT  
WORKERS**

N. P. Neklyudova (a)\*, V.A. Antropov (b)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Science (Ural Branch), Moskovskaya, 29, Ekaterinburg, Russia,  
nnp81@mail.ru

(b) Institute of Economics, Russian Academy of Science (Ural Branch), Moskovskaya, 29, Ekaterinburg, Russia

***Abstract***

Digital economy literature has discussed how the adoption of the Government as a Platform (GaaP) can help public administration to produce more efficient public services. Since international migration is a sphere that needs a lot of transformation in its regulation more research is needed to analyse how the GaaP can help the government to deliver public services that fulfil expectations of migrant workers and employers that use foreign labour force. The article describes digital form of communication between migrant workers, employers and state agencies in the sphere of employment. The basic research methods were the analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the digital economy in the field of employment facilities, the analysis of domestic legal acts on migration management in the Russian Federation. The use of electronic employment records and electronic (digital) working contract for migrant workers as well as creation of unified system for working contract accounting are offered for discussion. Advantages of the technological tools for basic stakeholders are presented. While the extent to which migrant workers will be employed in the digital economy of Russia is unknown, it is recommended that government systems established for digital platforms should be sensitive to protection needs of all workers, and also recognize the specific protection needs of migrant workers.

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## 1. Introduction

Migrant workers constitute a sizeable share of the labour force in the key countries of destination. Russian Federation (RF) is an active participant in migration exchange and the largest center of immigration after United States, Germany and Saudi Arabia (World Migration Report, 2020). The main reason of foreign citizens' arrival on the territory of the Russian Federation is work. Russia has a visa-free entry regime with a number of CIS countries, which makes it attractive for migrant workers from these states. Features of modern demographic development (depopulation in Russia against the population growth in Central Asian countries), civil conflicts in neighboring countries and the globalization of the labour market also contribute to the fact that Russia is a center of attraction for labour force.

According to the World Bank (2020), remittances are making up 29 per cent of GDP in Kyrgyz Republic, 28 per cent in Tajikistan, 10 per cent in Ukraine, and 7 per cent in Uzbekistan. Thus, the future of work in Central Asian countries and states of Eurasian Economic Union cannot be discussed without taking into account the role, contribution, and protection needs of migrant workers.

At the same time, rapid technological changes transform the world of work and employment (Bounfour, 2016; Kapranova, 2018; Smithies, 2017). New advances in technology, including internet of things, robotics and digital platforms will influence employment in a variety of ways. The nature of employment – how people look for work, how they are interviewed for a job, and how they sign a working contract – is also actively being reshaped by new technologies and by the policies that shape their application.

## 2. Problem Statement

Analysis of a number of studies concerning migrant workers in Russia showed that their labour rights are systematically violated by both employers and migrants themselves (Human Rights Watch, 2009; Human Rights Watch, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2017). Unreported or illegal employment is the main reason of such violations.

According to some research papers (Bezborodova & Skrebtsova, 2011; Neklyudova & Ilinbaewa, 2017; Stepanov, 2016; Vasilyeva, 2017) the level of illegal migration in Russia can be estimated at 30-60%. One of the main reasons of illegal working migration is complicated procedure of employment. Firstly, there are some main categories of labour migrants:

- temporary migrants from countries that have visa regime of entry to Russia;
- temporarily migrants from countries that have visa-free regime of entry to Russia;
- citizens of Eurasian Economic Union countries;
- highly qualified specialists;
- foreign citizens with temporary residence permit;
- foreign citizens with permanent residence permit.

Each category has specific rules of employment different from other categories.

Secondly, Russian government developed a huge body of legislation and other legal acts regulating the sphere of external labour migration. There are more than 100 Federal laws and 50 presidential decrees; more than 50 resolutions and orders of the Government of the Russian Federation; more than 65 instructions and orders of relevant ministries and departments that contain explanations for employment of foreign citizens. There is no unified migration code that regulates the issues of labor migration. It is difficult for both employers and employees to slice and dice the peculiar features of employment.

The third reason for all these problems is the imperfect and uncompetitive state management system.

### **3. Research Questions**

To improve the efficiency of administrative procedures in the field of labour migration regulation, as well as to prevent violations of the migration legislation of the Russian Federation, the use of modern digital technologies and information technology tools is becoming increasingly important. Therefore, the study raised the following questions.

- How can digital technologies be used for regulation migrants' employment procedure?
- How these technologies can be applied?
- What are advantages and opportunities of new technological tools for migrant workers, Russian government and employers?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to present the scheme of electronic form of interaction between 1) foreign citizens engaged in labour market of the Russian Federation, 2) employers that use labour force and 3) state bodies regulating labour migration. Introduction of electronic working contracts for migrants and creation of the unified system for working contracts accounting are also proposed.

### **5. Research Methods**

In the context of increasing speed of technological and economic changes in the world, the Russian system of public administration is facing increasingly diverse and complex tasks, but it is not ready to solve them (Andreeva et al., 2018; Aptekman et al., 2017). In order to ensure Russia's long-term competitiveness, a new system of public administration must be created that will become the technological, normative and cultural basis for future development. The role of such a framework can be played by the "Government-as-a-Platform" (GaaP, Platform) – a qualitatively new system for organizing and performing the functions of public authorities of the Russian Federation, built on the basis of integrated and digitized processes and advanced technologies (Cordella & Paletti, 2019; Petrov et al., 2018). The State Migration Policy Concept of the Russian Federation for 2019–2025 (2018) also calls for the introduction of electronic forms of interaction and the expansion of the use of modern digital technologies in order to provide public services in the field of migration.

### **5.1. Electronic employment records for migrant workers**

Since January 1, 2020, Russian government introduced an electronic (digital) employment record (Federal Law 439-FZ). It is assumed that this technology will provide permanent and convenient access for employees to information about their professional experience, and employers will open up new opportunities for personnel accounting. Electronic employment records have the following advantages:

- convenient and quick access to information about person's employment record;
- minimization of erroneous, inaccurate and unreliable information about employment;
- possibility of remote employment;
- use of electronic work record data for obtaining public services;
- new opportunities for analytical processing of labour activity data for employers and government agencies;
- high level of data security and safety.

The listed advantages are relevant for both Russian and foreign employees. In this regard, it is proposed to extend this tool to foreign citizens without fail. There is no reason why this should not be done. On the contrary, this technology solves a lot of other problems (apart from labour ones) associated with the stay of foreign citizens in Russia.

### **5.2. Unified system for accounting of employment agreement between foreign citizens and employers**

Unified system for accounting of employment agreement between foreign citizens and employers Super services is complex public services grouped by typical life situations connected with work. Foreign citizens will be able to receive them automatically. This is a new format for providing services without paper documents and visits to government agencies.

The System must be integrated with the state government agencies of the Russian Federation that included into process of labour migration regulation. Here are some of them: Directorate for Migration Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, RA State Pension, Federal Tax Service, Federal Labor and Employment Service. The employment contracts themselves are proposed to be concluded in electronic form. This way is a kind of digital transformation of existing processes and management structures based on the possibilities of new technologies introduction.

The new system will gradually replaces the functions and services of existing systems. However, during the transition period the traditional and new systems can coexist in parallel.

### **5.3. Electronic employment contract**

The employment contracts are proposed to be made in electronic form. The scheme for interaction in the Unified system will look like this:

1) An employer registers the organization's digital profile in the Unified system and fills in all the necessary information that is traditionally specified in the employment contract (details, full name of the employer, etc.).

2) A migrant worker registers his personal digital profile in the Unified system indicating some basic information: name, VAT number, patent number, certificate of proficiency in Russian, knowledge of Russian history and fundamentals of RF legislation, etc. Since the system is integrated with the main government agencies, most of the data on foreign citizens had to be present in the e-government system.

3) The migrant worker comes to the employer and provides an identity document. The procedure can be realized in a distance way via Integrated System of Identification and Authentication.

4) The Employer requests information about the applicant (full name, passport data, Tax Identification Number, etc.) in the Unified System. If the applicant is found, a package of data about the employee (personal file) is formed by integration with the information systems of state bodies and sent to the employer. If some documents are missing in the System or there are documents that are overdue (for example, the person did not pass a medical examination for a long time or his/her certificate of proficiency in Russian expired), the potential employee is notified of this.

5) If a personal file is formed, a draft employment contract is automatically prepared. The electronic contract will contain all the data that is specified on paper: the details of the parties, working conditions, resting time rules, salary, rights and obligations of the employee and employer. The draft can be modified if necessary.

6) The Employee receives a notification about the draft of an employment contract in the personal account and, after checking the data, gives consent (clicks the confirm button).

7) The "Signed" employment contract is automatically entered into the Unified system for accounting of employment agreement, where it is assigned a number. The electronic work record of the migrant automatically appears in the employment record.

## **6. Findings**

The presented procedure has many advantages for all stakeholders.

### **6.1. Advantages for migrant workers:**

- Simplification of the employment process: there is no need to collect documents.
- Confirmation of foreign citizens' employment history. In future, if necessary, they will be able to confirm their work experience.
- Fixation of the obligations of the employer to the employee.
- Possibility to look for a job while staying in the country of origin.
- Protection the labour rights of foreign citizens in the Russian Federation.
- Training of foreign citizens' legal literacy.

### **6.2. Advantages for employers:**

- Optimization of HR management.
- The proposed tool allows employers to cancel the validity of such a document as notification of the conclusion and termination of an employment contract with a foreign citizen. The notification is a special document that an employer is currently required to fill in and send (along

with a copy of the employment contract) to the Directorate for Migration Affairs within three business days in case of concluding a employment contract when hiring a foreign citizen and in case of termination of the contract when dismissing a foreign citizen. If an employer ignores this obligation or makes mistakes in the text of the notification, he or she may receive a fine of up to 1 million rubles or other penalties, such as suspending the company's activities for up to 3 months. Since the Unified System will be integrated with the Directorate for Migration Affairs as well as with of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, notifications will be sent automatically. It seems that this measure will make life of employers much easier.

### **6.3. Advantages for employers:**

- As a result of the implementation of the System, the government will be able to monitor and control whether foreign citizens have labour relations with employers or work illegally.
- The conclusion of electronic labour contracts will enable the protection of migrants' labour rights and will protect migrant workers from social threats by monitoring incoming pension contributions, social contributions and transfers.
- If the project is successfully implemented, it can be extended to the employment of Russian citizens.
- Reduction of operations cost in the public administration system.
- Increasing of the speed of providing public services.
- Reduction of traditional "paper" services.
- Reduction of illegal labour migration.

## **7. Conclusion**

In the digital age, there is an increased reliance on the smart technologies as a means of dealing with employment in a more efficient manner. Governments have slowly started to move away from traditional methods of administration to digital based platforms. This allows for innovation and development in the sphere of human resources.

Due to rapid technological changes, employment contracts can now be concluded electronically. Although electronic employment contracts are just a small part of digital economy, they have a number of benefits and are becoming increasingly important. This tool is beneficial for all parties: an employee, an employer and the state. It is cost effective and time efficient.

Although there are no specific laws on electronic employment contracts nowadays, the promulgation of such digital tool can help to clarify the situation and will enable parties to enter into electronic employment contracts with more ease.

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