

Study of the migrant integration policy (MIPEX) in Russia

According to the United Nations (2019), Russian Federation was the second country in the world by number of migrants in 2015, and fourth - in 2017-2019. For a long time, the integration policy towards migrants was not considered as a fundamental element of the migration policy in Russia, as after the collapse of the USSR, most of the migrants shared the same cultural and historical background with nationals. Currently, the lack of a centralized and comprehensively developed migration policy has led to an increase in social tension, perceived threat, and negative attitudes towards migrants (Ivakhnyuk, 2009, 2016). Therefore, assessing the effectiveness of Russian state policy regarding the integration of migrants and determining the directions for its' development is **relevant and topical** issue for modern scientists and practitioners.

Difficulties in assessing the effectiveness of state policies for the integration of migrants are largely due to the lack of information needed for the development and implementation of program documents. In order to overcome the existing information vacuum, the international organization Migration Policy Group (MPG) created a special instrument (McGinnity et al, 2018) - the Migrant Integration Policy Index (**MIPEX**), which allows for cross-country comparisons, building country profiles by key indicators, and analyzing possible directions for the development of integration policy both as a whole and by its components (Huddleston et al., 2015).

This report addresses two waves of assessments (2014 and 2019) Russian integration policy using MIPEX methodology. In Russia the assessment was organized by team of scientists from the Center for Sociocultural Research, National Research University Higher School of Economics with collaboration with experts in migration field and MPG.

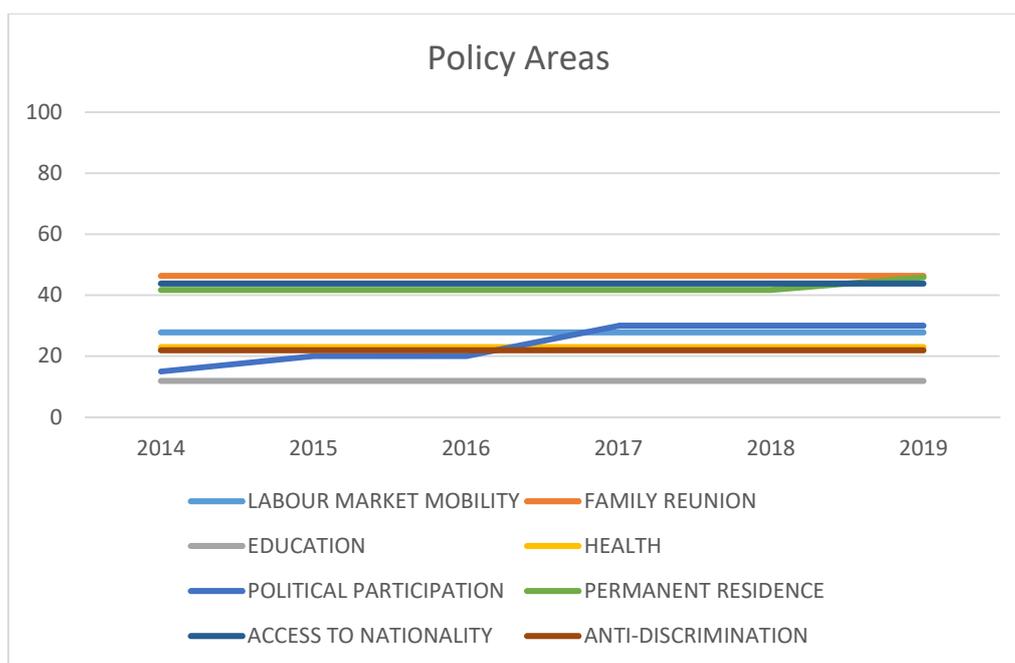
The study was carried out using the **method** of expert assessments. An updated (shorten) version of the MIPEX questionnaire was used in this study to assess the state and dynamics of the migration integration policy from 2014 to 2019. This version of the instrument was developed by MPG on the basis of a full version of the questionnaire, adapted in the Russian context during the 1st wave of assessment. The new version of the questionnaire included 58 questions covering eight areas: labour market mobility; family reunification; education; political participation; permanent residence; access to nationality; anti-discrimination; and health.

The assessment process was arranged in accordance with the established MIPEX **procedure**, and took place in two rounds. At first, specially selected experts provided answers to the questionnaire. They supplemented and substantiated their answer with comments reflecting the specific features of national legislation. This evaluation was followed by a round of anonymous peer reviews by another panel of experts and moderated anonymous discussions between experts and peer reviewers. The resulting scores, answers and comments were translated into English and sent to

MPG. Further, together with MPG, an additional check of the answers and comments was done, as well as their clarification, and the final country score (both in general and for all 8 areas) was calculated.

The **novelty** of the study lies in the fact that it was the first official study aimed to reveal the index of Russian integration policy towards migrants. Methodologically the study is significant due to translation and adaptation of the MIPeX instrument. All this made it possible not only to study the features of integration policy towards migrants in dynamics, but also to compare the results of Russia with other countries, to reveal Russia's position in the overall ranking of countries.

Results of the study show that migrants in Russia face many obstacles and slightly unfavourable prospects for their long-term integration, because Russia's integration policies are some of the weakest of all 52 MIPeX countries. Russia score in 2014 was 29 on the 100-point MIPeX scale, and Russia ranked 2nd from the bottom. Russia score in 2019 was 31 on the 100-point MIPeX scale (pic.1), while the average MIPeX country scores 50/100. Russia ranked 3rd from the bottom, similar to China and slightly more advanced than Indonesia and India.



Pic.1 MIPeX-Russia for 8 areas from 2014 to 2019

Russia's approach to integration is categorized by MIPeX as 'immigration without integration' as little is done in Russia for integration of migrants. Obstacles emerge for foreign citizens across many areas of life in Russia. Compared to the policies in most of the 52 MIPeX countries, foreign citizens in Russia are left more exposed to poorer labour market conditions and healthcare, are not protected against discrimination in all areas of life, and have significant difficulties in access to

education. Ad hoc opportunities and support for immigrant leaders are improving but still slightly unfavourable for full political participation in Russia. At the same time Russia has halfway favourable policies for family reunification, permanent residence and access to nationality.

To make a **conclusion**, it is necessary to mention that Russia's approach to integration matters because state policies can influence whether or not integration works as a two-way process and how well immigrants and the public interact and perceive each other. Such restrictive policy creates a 'vicious circle' of exclusion that reinforces fear and separation, contributes to an increase in xenophobia and islamophobia in a society. Further development of state policy on the integration of migrants should be focused on filling the gaps in Russian legislation and law enforcement practices in relation to discrimination, the rights and freedoms of migrants, and their access to social institutions.

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