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MIGRATION IN CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES IN THE CONTEXT OF EEU INTEGRATION AND NEW INTERNATIONAL REALITIES

Leila F. Delovarova

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

E-mail: delovarova@mail.ru

Nuriddin Sultanmuratov

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

E-mail: nuriddin.sultanmuratov@gmail.com

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Abstract. Integration processes in the Eurasian space are the result of the evolution and transformation of approaches to cooperation and rapprochement of the members of the association, including the convergence of the development of all “four freedoms” of the EEU (movement of goods, movement of services, movement of labor and movement of capital). The EEU is now the only effective economic integration association in Eurasia, and the migration component is one of the key aspects that influences the other three and increases the integration potential of Central Asian countries that are not members of the associations. This study is aimed at analyzing the integration potential of Central Asian countries through the prism of existing and possible migration effects. The study carried out an overview analysis of the potential of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the possibility of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan joining the EEU, with an emphasis on the potential and role of labor migration for these countries in the context of the EEU. The relevance of the study is due not only to the importance of economic integration processes in the Eurasian space through the prism of migration effects for Central Asia, but also in general in the context of gaining important experience, processes of unification and raising common standards throughout the Eurasian space, and in particular, in the migration field. The effects of labor migration within the EEU for Central Asia will not only be indicators of rapprochement and integration, but also the expansion of cooperation in general at the regional and interregional level. Such experience is also important for the EAEU, since it is important for the Union, along with expanding the list of economic partners, to develop new mechanisms for coordinating labor migration.

Keywords: EEU; migration in Central Asia; EEU migration potential; Greater Eurasian Partnership.

Introduction

Modern Eurasian integration is represented by a complex of economic and social processes, which are constantly developing and transforming against the background of certain political and cultural-humanitarian aspects of interaction between the involved countries and partner organizations.

The relevance of studying the processes of Eurasian integration is due to the increasing role of the Eurasian space in international relations both in the context of new geo-economic changes and in the context of the potential of the Eurasian Economic Union, which is one of the promising economic projects with great potential for further development and transformation. Migration processes within and along the EEU are the important aspect connected with the internal conditions and enlarging external cooperation. Sustainability of labor migration processes is a serious pattern not only for EEU members but also for

Central Asian countries (with the exception of Turkmenistan) which are fully involve into the migration system but not into the membership.

This study is based mainly on the EEU documents posted on the organization's legal portal¹ and analysis of key events in the post-pandemic period interpreted on the main website of the organization, the Eurasian Economic Commission², on the official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan³, on analytical reports [1; 2], as well as on expert opinions of Russian and Central Asian experts, which were accumulated in the process of personal meetings and through the study of secondary sources.

The main goal of the Union is to increase the competitiveness of the member countries through a set of measures aimed at streamlining trade between the main partners and stimulating their own production in the interests of the national economies of the EEU countries. It is also an effective platform for regulating the movement of labor resources in this area. At the same time, the processes of integration within the EEU are developing against the background of new geopolitical and geo-economic realities and complexities, determining which it is possible to identify some trends affecting the activities of the Union. In the external contour we see such trends as constant socio-political and economic turbulence along the perimeter of the Union and, practically, in all countries of the Union against the background of post-pandemic effects and the changed geopolitical situation in the Eurasian space; a new polarity in international relations and the impact of sanctions against the Russian Federation, which raises the question of new approaches of the EEU. Afghanistan remains a serious challenge both for the EEU and for the Central Asian countries (to a greater extent for Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). These are serious factors that hinder rapprochement, but also have potential for the development of integration.

In the internal contour it is necessary to emphasize the still existing economic barriers, the different structure of the economies of the participating countries; the still observed incomplete coordination of the involved national structures in the participating countries; the low level of people's trust and a certain pessimism about the feasibility and success in the countries of the Union at the expert level, despite the confident steps at the state and interstate level. One of the challenges of the Union is the need to adapt to the constantly changing realities and to use for the most part the strategy of so-called "quick response", which is not always to plan and model the situation.

Against the background of these trends, the strengthening of the internal potential is seen in the strengthening of the structure, regular interaction of all member countries of the Union, constant work, and improvement of mechanisms in the main areas of activity. This seems to be an important but complex task, which is being worked on continuously.

Assessing the state of Eurasian integration and the Union's activities in general, we can talk about the results in the context of deepening economic rapprochement and institutionalization, sustainability, and improvement of mechanisms. The process of institutionalization of the EEU has already been completed, the governing bodies of the Union have been formed and are working effectively. The work of the main bodies is synchronized with the public authorities of all member states of the organization. Decisions taken by the EEU bodies are clearly formulated and implemented in an organized manner.

¹ Legal Portal // Eurasian Economic Commission : [site]. URL: <https://docs.eaeunion.org/en-us> (accessed on 05.06.2023).

² Eurasian Economic Commission : [site]. URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/en/> (accessed on 05.06.2023).

³ Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan : [site]. URL: <https://www.akorda.kz/en> (accessed on 05.06.2023)

The assessment of integration potential is supposed to be done through the evaluation of the effectiveness of the “four freedoms” of the EEU: movement of goods, movement of services, movement of labor and movement of capital. It is also necessary to consider the current challenges and the expansion of the Union’s international activities.

Active capacity-building activities are under way for each of the “four freedoms”. These processes are constantly evaluated not only at the level of the Union structures involved, but also at the expert level. It is worth highlighting a whole range of activities to develop and promote the main areas of activity, noted by experts⁴ and confirmed by the legal framework⁵.

Customs control was abolished at the internal borders of the Union, the weighted average rate of the common customs tariff was significantly reduced, and a common system of measures to protect the internal market was developed and put into effect.

There is a unified system of technical regulation within the EEU, and since January 2017, a unified EEU customs code has been introduced.

At the end of 2018, the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (SEEC) adopted the Declaration on Further Development of Integration Processes within the EEU, the provisions of which expanded opportunities for cooperation in advanced areas of science and economy, including such areas as space, nuclear power, renewable energy, ecology, and medicine.

October 2019, the Concept of the Common Financial Market of the EEU was approved.

For each such significant activity there is a conceptual justification and a step-by-step development plan for the development of the common financial market⁶. Thus, it is possible to ascertain stable institutional processes in the internal contour of the Union, which are a solid basis not only for its sustainable development, but also for transformation.

The sanctions imposed on Russia are an urgent and serious challenge for the Union. On the one hand, sanctions are a serious challenge for all members of the Union, but on the other hand, they should be a catalyst for the development and implementation of a more pronounced common economic policy of the EEU. This should take place against the background of accelerated modernization and diversification of the economies of the Union’s countries, which will allow to achieve an effect both at the national and supranational levels.

Strengthening in the internal circuit is also seen in the search for new business opportunities in the changing global economy, assisting businesses in overcoming barriers related to disruptions in transportation and logistics chains and restrictions on financial settlements in international trade. It is necessary to continue working on the digitalization of all processes, as well as enhancing a positive image within the Union, especially among young people.

Capacity building against the backdrop of sanctions and rapidly changing geo-economic realities in the external environment is seen in the further expansion of the Union’s international activities. This is important not only for Russia, but also for other countries of the Union, including Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries that are potential participants or observers of the Union.

⁴ Карпович, О. ЕАЭС в новых условиях: риски и вызовы // Общественный совет при ФТС России : [сайт]. 06.09.2022. URL: <https://www.osfts.ru/publikacii/2022/2882-caes-v-novykh-usloviyakh-riski-i-vyzovy> (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

⁵ Legal Portal // Eurasian Economic Commission : [site]. URL: <https://docs.eaeunion.org/en-us> (accessed on 05.06.2023)

⁶ Свобода движения услуг и капитала // Евразийская экономическая комиссия : [сайт]. URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/upload/medialibrary/881/29.-Obschchiy-finansovyy-rynok.pdf> (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

This direction is relevant from 2019 precisely in the context of the development of multilateral and multidimensional economic cooperation. The EEU's international activities are carried out in accordance with Article 7 of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union of May 29, 2014⁷ and the Procedure for the implementation of international cooperation by the Eurasian Economic Union, approved by Decision of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council of December 23, 2014, No. 99. In accordance with paragraph 5 of the said Procedure, the Main Directions of the Eurasian Economic Union's international activities are formed.

As of 10 November 2022, the ECE has concluded 46 memorandums with international organizations, 27 memorandums with governments, ministries, and agencies of third countries, 14 memorandums with regional integration and interstate associations, 7 trade agreements with third countries⁸.

A serious step in this direction is the signing of Memoranda of Cooperation with UN structures, with the CIS, international and regional organizations CSTO, SCO, IOM, and others.

Prospects lie in the potential for expansion of trade and economic cooperation, which is ensured by increasing the range of partners under the preferential regime of economic cooperation. Moreover, new partnerships should be considered from the point of view of finding new logistics solutions.

Already in force Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation with the PRC, signed cooperation agreements with Serbia and Singapore and memoranda of cooperation with Indonesia, signed a declaration of partnership with the Pacific Alliance⁹.

It is also necessary to note the Interim Agreement leading to the formation of a free trade zone between the EEU and Iran, which entered into force in 2019, and on March 14, 2022, before the end of its term, a Protocol to the Interim Agreement was signed to extend its application for three years or until the entry into force of the free trade agreement¹⁰.

A new and serious stage in the consolidation of these results and in the development of international cooperation was the approval by the EEU of the main directions of foreign activity for 2023 on December 9 in Bishkek. The main priorities are stated strengthening of interaction with the CIS countries and other near abroad countries. The importance of developing a systemic dialogue with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union (EU), the BRICS countries and Mercosur in the context of the idea of the Greater Eurasian Partnership was also noted¹¹.

⁷ «Договор о Евразийском экономическом союзе» (Подписан в г. Астане 29.05.2014) (ред. от 24.03.2022) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 03.04.2023) // Консультант Плюс : [сайт]. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_163855/ (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

⁸ Main Directions of EAEU International Activities for 2023 approved // Eurasian Economic Commission : [site]. 09.12.2022. URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/en/news/utverzhdenny-osnovnye-napravleniya-mezhdunarodnoy-deyatelnosti-eaes-na-2023-god/> (accessed on 05.06.2023).

⁹ EAEU develops international cooperation: Free Trade Agreement with Singapore signed, Interim Agreement leading to the formation of a free trade area with Iran to come into force soon // Eurasian Economic Commission : [site]. 10.11.2019. URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/en/nae/news/Pages/01-10-2019-8.aspx> (accessed on 05.06.2023).

¹⁰ Islamic Republic of Iran // Eurasian Economic Commission : [site]. URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/en/commission/department/dotp/torgovye-soglasheniya/iran.php> (accessed on 05.06.2023).

¹¹ Main Directions of EAEU International Activities for 2023 approved // Eurasian Economic Commission : [site]. 09.12.2022. URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/en/news/utverzhdenny-osnovnye-napravleniya-mezhdunarodnoy-deyatelnosti-eaes-na-2023-god/> (accessed on 05.06.2023).

The chosen areas are aimed at promoting the realization of the export potential of the EEU countries, including by entering new markets and expanding the use of national currencies in mutual settlements.

States such as China, Vietnam, Serbia, Singapore, and Iran have been identified as major partner countries in accordance with concluded trade agreements. The activation of the Union's ties with Latin America, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa will strengthen the EAEU's status and increase the potential of the integration association.

The Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP) initiative was first proposed by President Putin in 2015 and was developed in the following years. Thus, in the Declaration on Further Development of Integration Processes within the EEU of December 6, 2018, the member states indicated their commitment to the idea of pairing integration processes in the Eurasian space within the BEP, and in the Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the Development of Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Cooperation Entering a New Era of June 5, 2019, the parties expressed their readiness for "parallel and coordinated" development of the BEP and China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative.

Even though there is still no unified vision of the GEP, on May 26, 2022, the Eurasian Economic Forum highlighted some parameters of the GEP. First, the formation of development institutions, including the Eurasian Export Center and the Eurasian Reinsurance Company, and a special role in promoting the project is assigned to the system of business dialogues of the EAEU Business Council, which could become an example for a potential platform for business cooperation in Greater Eurasia. Thirdly, the BEP geography includes the SCO, ASEAN, and BRICS countries.

This study takes as a basis the definition made by a group of researchers of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) in the report "EEU Development 2022+: Strategic Challenges and Time Requirements" [1]. According to this report, "The Greater Eurasian Partnership is a system of institutions and trade and economic agreements of varying degrees of depth between the EEU and external partners, as well as integration blocs, maximizing benefits for its participants from foreign economic activity. Trade and economic agreements include not only preferential and non-preferential trade agreements, but also investment agreements on the development and creation of infrastructure projects (international transport corridors), sectoral cooperation, formation of special economic zones". In our opinion, this definition reflects the full depth and scope of the GEP, considering that the goal of the partnership is to maximize the economic benefits of integration processes in Eurasia and increase the resilience of economies to external challenges and threats.

Integration potential of member states within the EEU framework

The integration potential of Kazakhstan, as one of the founders and active participants of the Union is seen in a rather multifaceted way, in particular, new challenges and prospects. At the same time, Kazakhstan's participation in the Union is constantly criticized both at the level of the expert community and at the level of public discussions of representatives of various spheres of activity of the domestic society, which is not without reason. Nevertheless, participation in the Union gives Kazakhstan a few opportunities for flexible response and balancing in new conditions, as well as for strengthening the integration potential in general and experience, which may be important in deepening economic cooperation in relation to the CA countries.

Moreover, the complexities associated with global and interregional crisis phenomena, including post-pandemic effects, increasing polarity in international relations, referring

the US-China line, the situation around Afghanistan and sanctions caused by Russia's conflict in Ukraine pose some challenges to Kazakhstan, including those of an economic and logistical nature.

Kazakhstan's potential in the EEU is seen in several aspects. One of these aspects is the possibility of relocation of large foreign companies to Kazakhstan. In July 2022, President Tokayev instructed to create conditions for the relocation to Kazakhstan of foreign companies that left Russia. Most of the company was forced to make decisions on the change of location. For 2023 in the republic is planned to open new branches of international companies, the number of such companies considered from 50 to 300. In general, the flow of foreign direct investment in Kazakhstan in 2022 increased by 28%¹². These figures have increased significantly, and Kazakhstan faces a serious challenge to improve its approaches with foreign partners, particularly from the EU and the US. This should also be seen as an increase in business opportunities in the country. It is also very important not to be affected by sanctions and to fulfill its obligations within the EEU.

The next aspect is the issue of increasing Kazakhstan's transit potential, as the country is the largest transit hub in Central Asia. There is a great potential here both for the EEU and for partner and third countries. Along with this, Kazakhstan faces the need to diversify transportation and logistics routes in new conditions and is actively working in this direction.

Kyrgyzstan had a certain way to join the EEU and faced a few difficulties. The process of accession of the Kyrgyz Republic directly to the EEU began in 2011 and was a logical continuation of Kyrgyzstan's participation since the 1990-s in integration projects in the CIS space, and as a member of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), Kyrgyzstan exercised its right to join the Eurasian integration project "by default". The negotiation process significantly intensified in 2014. Roadmaps for the Kyrgyz Republic's accession to the Eurasian integration project were agreed upon [3].

In a relatively short period of time, Kyrgyzstan managed to carry out a large-scale work on the creation of customs infrastructure, including equipping checkpoints, debugging information systems and other aspects. Following the completion of the necessary measures, the EEU members together with the Kyrgyz Republic on December 23, 2014, in Moscow signed the Treaty on Accession of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union and on May 8, 2015 two special protocols to the Treaty and separate international treaties included in the EEU law in connection with the accession of the Kyrgyz Republic. The Treaty and its protocols entered into force on August 12, 2015 [2].

For all complex issues, the Kyrgyz side was provided with comfortable transition periods and proposed solutions, and mechanisms for providing logistical and financial support were developed at the bilateral level to adapt the country's economy to the conditions of functioning in the EEU.

It should be mentioned that in 2014, an Agreement was signed between the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Government of the Russian Federation on the development of economic cooperation in the conditions of Eurasian economic integration, under which the Russian side undertook to provide Kyrgyzstan on a free-of-charge basis for the implementation of activities related to the equipping of border crossing points and laboratory facilities of the Kyrgyz Republic to meet the requirements, finan-

¹² «Непростые условия»: что ждет ЕАЭС в 2023 году? // Журнал Exclusive : [site]. 12.01.2023. URL: <https://exclusive.kz/neprostone-usloviya-chto-zhdet-caes-v-2023-godu/> (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

cial resources in the amount of up to 200 million USD [2]. In 2017, Kazakhstan allocated USD 100 million to assist Kyrgyzstan to integrate into the Eurasian Economic Union¹³. This assistance was provided in the form of training services and financial transfers for customs checkpoints, modernization of testing laboratories and training in technical regulation.

Since joining the Union, customs control on its border with Kazakhstan has been abolished. Kyrgyzstan started applying the EEU Commodity Nomenclature of Foreign Economic Activities and the Single Customs Tariff of the EEU. Since November 18, 2015, after the completion of modernization of the necessary infrastructure, sanitary and phytosanitary controls on the border of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan were removed by the Decision of the EEC Council of August 21, 2015 (Order No. 277 of the Ministry of Agriculture of the RK dated October 26, 2016) [2]. However, some controls, such as veterinary and sanitary controls at the border remain in place until an adequate level of food security between the countries is achieved.

Kyrgyzstan is the first country to undergo the process of joining the EEU and the first results of the country's participation in the EEU were ambiguous and even unprofitable. This was due to poor preparation in the collection of three types of taxes – value added tax (VAT), sales tax and excise tax. The results of the reduction of trade with third countries, especially with PRC, were tangible, exports of garments and other products from Kyrgyzstan decreased. Among the positive effects, the recovery of the sugar industry, the opening of production of construction materials, new production in the textile sector, in the knitwear industry, in the footwear industry¹⁴.

Experts cite several arguments about the incomplete realization of Kyrgyzstan's potential within the EEU, but there are also arguments in favor of expanding opportunities for Kyrgyzstan.

First, as noted above, is the increase in trade barriers with the rest of the world, including with three of the four neighboring states of the Kyrgyz Republic – the PRC, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. This is because the Kyrgyz Republic's trade barriers are lower than those of the Russian Federation, the dominant country in the EEU. With the introduction of higher trade barriers on PRC imports, the Dordoi market has lost its regional role and is increasingly becoming a market for Kyrgyz consumers [4]. Along with this, the improved road network connecting the PRC and the Kyrgyz Republic reduces trade costs, both through improved transportation and by attracting more traders to the market. This is important in a region where historically price differences have often been associated with high transportation and logistics costs and with overcoming formal trade barriers.

Even though the Kyrgyz Republic has close relations with the other four EEU member countries, but most of all with Russia and Kazakhstan, which account for about 45% of exports (excluding gold) and 40% of imports of the Kyrgyz Republic [4]. Thus, Kyrgyzstan's trade and total trade turnover after joining the EEU has not yet covered all countries.

Analyzing the results of Kyrgyzstan's participation in the EEU it is necessary to note the macroeconomic results, which are important for the integration potential of Central Asia. Kyrgyzstan has made significant progress in reforming the business environment. A whole

¹³ Сенат РК одобрил выделение Кыргызстану \$100 млн на интеграцию с ЕАЭС // Inbusiness.kz : [сайт]. 29.06.2017. URL: <https://inbusiness.kz/ru/last/senat-rk-odobril-vydelenie-kyrgyzstanu-100-mln-na-integrats> (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

¹⁴ Zh. Zhanaltay. Kyrgyzstan in Eurasian Economic Union: Benefits and Losses // Eurasian Research Institute : [site]. URL: <https://www.eurasian-research.org/publication/kyrgyzstan-in-eurasian-economic-union-benefits-and-losses/> (accessed on 05.06.2023).

layer of modern supranational legislation based on the best international practices has been introduced in the country in key areas of the economy, including those focused on export development, which has already had an impact on improving the investment climate and increasing the investment attractiveness of the country's economy both for investors from third countries and within the Union.

The most notable benefits Kyrgyzstan has received from the freedom of movement of labor, goods, and services, which has affected, in particular, the growth of remittances to Kyrgyzstan from migrant workers in the EEU.

As a full member of the Union, Kyrgyzstan offers initiatives and could implement its own, which affects the future of the organization and the development of the country, as well as is important for the development of cooperation with third countries, including within the region.

One of the important initiatives that was realized was the holding of the EEU Economic Forum¹⁵. This year the forum was held for the second time and has become a permanent platform for discussion.

This year, within the framework of the second Eurasian Economic Forum Kyrgyzstan proposed several initiatives to expand the integration potential of the EEU, including a proposal to create a supranational EEU development institute performing the functions of preparation, analytical support and financing of integration projects, as well as the creation of the EEU Institute of Business Ombudsman in order to minimize barriers in the internal market of the Union and to form a mechanism for pre-trial resolution of arising issues¹⁶. Kyrgyzstan's initiative within the Union, the experience gained and openness to cooperation allow us to conclude that the country's integration potential is sufficient, despite the remaining difficulties. Kyrgyzstan's integration experience is important in the context of further deepening of cooperation in Central Asia.

It seems important that in the EEU's external contour it is necessary to focus separately on cooperation with Central Asian countries strengthening cooperation with Uzbekistan, which has significant economic and demographic potential.

In September 2020, the Eurasian Economic Commission considered granting Uzbekistan observer status in the Eurasian Economic Union. The Eurasian Economic Commission considered granting Uzbekistan observer status in the Eurasian Economic Union¹⁷. Uzbekistan's partnerships with the economies of the EAEU member states are quite strong and have great potential for cooperation. Uzbekistan is becoming increasingly attractive in terms of attracting foreign investment and developing industrial facilities.

In April 2021, a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Eurasian Economic Commission and a plan of joint

¹⁵ По инициативе Кыргызстана пройдет Евразийский экономический форум // Sputnik Кыргызстан : [сайт]. 24.01.2022. URL: <https://ru.sputnik.kg/20220124/kyrgyzstan-eaes-forum-predlozhenie-1061477920.html> (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

¹⁶ КР предложила создать институт развития ЕАЭС – главное из речи Жапарова // Sputnik Кыргызстан : [сайт]. 24.05.2023. URL: <https://ru.sputnik.kg/20230524/sadyr-zhaporov-eaes-forum-vystuplenie-1075615933.html> (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

¹⁷ EEC Council considered granting Uzbekistan the Observer State status in EAEU // Eurasian Economic Commission : [site]. 09.04.2020. URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/en/nae/news/Pages/04-09-2020-4.aspx> (accessed on 05.06.2023).

activities for 2021–2023 were adopted¹⁸. The Memorandum identifies a wide range of areas of cooperation from regulation of goods and services markets to issues of digitalization and social agenda. The Memorandum provides for cooperation in the areas of trade policy, customs and technical regulation, consumer protection, protection of social and labor rights of workers, circulation of medicines and medical devices, financial markets, transport, energy, industry and agro-industrial complex, digital economy, and others. Cooperation will be carried out through the exchange of experience and information, consultations and meetings, joint preparation and organization of events, including with the participation of representatives of business communities. A joint working group on interaction between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the EEC was also established, the first meeting of which was held in October 2021, during which the main directions of interaction were discussed.

Among the advantages seen for Uzbekistan, one can particularly note the possibility of overcoming geographical isolation by increasing connectivity and connectivity and creating a common transport market for the Union. The country will have easier access to continental transportation hubs with access to the markets and sea routes of Russia, China, the Near and Middle East and the EU.

It should be noted that Uzbekistan has a stable system of industrial enterprises, the experience of which is important for the development of the EEU. The development of production and industry in general is now one of the priority tasks of the Union.

Assessing the prospects of Uzbekistan's accession to the EEU within the framework of expert discourse, it can be argued that in the short-term, and possibly in the medium term, the country does not consider this option of cooperation. In this context, Uzbekistan's role as an observer should be considered more. It seems important to strengthen this direction of the EEU and seriously consider President Tokayev's proposal to strengthen the institution of observer¹⁹.

It is possible to conclude a free trade agreement with Uzbekistan, which would meet the interests of both the Union and the country. In this regard, the signing of a preferential agreement with Uzbekistan appears to be a stage for closer cooperation with Eurasian structures with subsequent accession to the EEU. It is important to focus on the harmonization of national legislation in the field of consumer protection, intellectual property issues, regulation of companies' activities in accordance with the Union's norms, and investment interaction.

Thus, Uzbekistan is an important partner of the EEU in the CIS has large integration resources in all areas of interest to the organization.

The potential of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in terms of new logistics routes and integration potential of the CA region should be seriously considered.

Tajikistan has shown interest in Eurasian integration since 2014, but the benefits of joining the Union are still being studied in the country. The country needs to undertake a whole series of reforms and work on the convergence of standards and harmonization of

¹⁸ ЕЭК и Правительство Узбекистана подписали меморандум о взаимодействии // Евразийская экономическая комиссия : [сайт]. 30.04.2021. URL: <https://eec.eaeunion.org/news/eek-i-pravitelstvo-uzbekistana-podpisali-memorandum-o-vzaimodejstvii/> (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

¹⁹ Токаев по итогам ВЕЭС: Потенциал ЕАЭС важно системно реализовать во благо наших стран // Zakon.kz : [сайт]. 25.05.2023. URL: <https://www.zakon.kz/politika/6394783-tokaev-poitogam-vees-potentsial-caes-vazhno-sistemno-realizovat-vo-bлаго-nashikh-stran.html> (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

legislation. In connection with Tajikistan's potential EEU observer status, it seems necessary to strengthen expert support and conduct consultations and negotiations at the expert level on these issues. It should be noted that Tajikistan has a great potential for realization of water-energy diplomacy, as well as migration potential.

When expanding cooperation with Tajikistan, it makes sense to rely on the experience of the European Union on regulatory convergence with other countries without their accession to the association²⁰. Joining the EEU is important for the country in the context of free movement of labor and social preferences for migrant workers. Tajikistan also appears to be an important partner for the EAEU and the definition of the format of cooperation is necessary for effective interaction.

Cooperation with Turkmenistan is one of the declared areas of EEU partnership. The country has a reserved position in cooperation with organizations due to its neutral status. At the same time, Turkmenistan is interested in cooperation with the EEU. Turkmenistan has established a governmental commission to study the possibilities of the EEU. In the declaration on deepening the strategic partnership between Russia and Turkmenistan signed by the leaders of both countries in June 2022, the parties expressed their intention to intensify trade and economic cooperation using the potential of the Eurasian Economic Union [1].

Involvement of Turkmenistan will activate its energy and logistics potential within the EEU.

Migration potential and migration effects of the EEU for Central Asian countries

The integration potential of the countries of the CA region should also be considered from the point of view of the migration component.

Labor migration is under the jurisdiction of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) and all labor movement issues fall under the competence of the Department of Labor Migration and Social Protection of the EEC. The Department of Labor Migration and Social Protection consists of the Departments of Labor Resources, Migration and Social Protection²¹. The Department monitors and controls the implementation of the obligations of member states in the field of labor migration.

In general, the coordination of labor migration is determined by the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union. Section 26 of the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union "Labor Migration" defines the general principles of regulation of labor migration issues within the EAEU member states. The section consists of 3 articles – Articles 96, 97 and 98²². These articles of the Treaty determine the procedure and forms of cooperation between the member states in the field of labor migration, the procedure for the implementation of labor activities by employees of the EEU member state, as well as approve the principle of free access to the labor market. This Treaty provides guarantees for the stay of family members of labor migrants based on a labor contract, rights and obligations of labor migrants.

²⁰ А. Королев, Г. Калачигин. Новые контуры внешнеэкономической стратегии ЕАЭС // Российский совет по международным делам : [сайт]. 14.07.2020. URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/novye-kontury-vneshneekonomicheskoy-strategii-eaes/> (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

²¹ Labor Migration Department // Eurasian Economic Commission : [site]. URL: <https://eec.eaunion.org/en/commission/department/migration/> (accessed on 05.06.2023).

²² «Договор о Евразийском экономическом союзе» (Подписан в г. Астане 29.05.2014) (ред. от 24.03.2022) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 03.04.2023) // Консультант Плюс : [сайт]. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_163855/ (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

The union also has a Protocol on the provision of medical assistance to employees of member states and their family members (Annex No. 30 to the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union), an Agreement on Cooperation in Countering Illegal Labor Migration from Third Countries, and an Agreement on Pension Provision for Employees in Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union dated December 20, 2019.

The Eurasian Economic Union is so far the only platform that contains specific norms and rules for labor migrants for member countries and is a good model for managing labor migration.

The migration direction is constantly developing not only within the Union, but also along the external contour. To date, the EEU has formed an independent labor market and has already shown stability in the complex international realities.

Free movement of citizens within the EEU is developing dynamically and requires further improvement of response and coordination mechanisms. According to the EEU authorities, annual labor migration flows within the union have increased from 800,000 people in 2016 to 1 million 700,000 people in 2022²³, this information is also confirmed by official EEU resources. According to EEU statistics, 447,832 labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan and 54,581 from Kazakhstan stayed in the Russian Federation in 2022. In Kazakhstan in 2022 there were 63,345 from Russia and 8,812 from Kyrgyzstan²⁴. It seems that such statistics do not reflect the real situation due to the fact that not all migrants go through the necessary registration and contracting procedures. Thus, it seems that migration volumes are much larger, and this has a corresponding impact on migration effects.

Within the framework of the union, labor migration has become a mutually beneficial process contributing to socio-economic development with coordinated movement of labor force between member states. The developed migration management system is important not only for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as members of the union, but also for other Central Asian countries, as the countries are in the same migration sub-system but have different migration profiles.

The positioning of Kazakhstan as a country of primary, alternative, transit destination, as well as a country of origin of labor migrants is preserved, but also experiences some changes in the context of such phenomena as mobilization in Russia due to the conflict in Ukraine. This applies not only to re-locates from the Russian Federation, but also to other citizens of the Union, as well as labor migrants from Central Asia who have dual citizenship (their own and the Russian Federation) or plan to redirect to Kazakhstan. The EEU gives a few advantages to the member countries of the Union in the field of labor migration coordination. This is also important for Kazakhstan, which has a rather diversified migration profile.

For Kyrgyzstan, migration potential is of great importance since external labor migration is an integral part of the country's socio-economic sphere. The EAEU gives migrants many advantages for staying and carrying out activities in both Russia and Kazakhstan. At

²³ Рынок труда в ЕАЭС продемонстрировал устойчивость в непростых условиях, но требует внедрения новых современных технологий // Евразийский экономический форум : [сайт]. 24.05.2023. URL: [https://forum.eaeunion.org/news/rynok-truda-v-eaes-prodemonstriroval-ustoychivost-v-neprostykh-usloviyakh-no-trebuuet-vnedreniya-novy/](https://forum.eaeunion.org/news/rynok-truda-v-eaes-prodemonstriroval-ustoychivost-v-neprostykh-usloviyakh-no-trebuuet-vnedreniya-novykh-sovremennykh-tehnologiy/) (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

²⁴ Сведения о численности граждан государств-членов Евразийского экономического союза, въехавших в страну (Республика Армения, Республика Беларусь, Республика Казахстан, Кыргызская Республика, Российская Федерация) для осуществления трудовой деятельности за период с 2012 по 2015 годы // Евразийская экономическая комиссия : [сайт]. URL: https://eec.eaeunion.org/upload/medialibrary/d5b/Svedeniya-o-chislennosti-trudyashchikhsya-za-2012_-2022-gg..pdf (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

the same time, since 2022 Kyrgyzstan has been a popular country for re-locates from Russia and at the same time the transit potential of the country is increasing.

For Tajikistan, migration processes are also an integral part of the economy and social development. Unlike Kyrgyzstan, migrants from Tajikistan do not have the advantages of the EAEU migration regime. Since labor migration from Tajikistan is mainly directed to Russia, the relevant legislation is in force here. This also applies to Kazakhstan, and it should be noted that due to the imposition of sanctions and mobilization there is an active redirection of Tajik migrants from Russia to Kazakhstan. Joining the union would provide several advantages for labor migrants according to Articles 96-98 of the above mentioned EEU treaty.

Uzbekistan leads in terms of demographic potential, in particular, young able-bodied population. Labor migrants from Uzbekistan, whose remittances contribute significantly to the country's GDP, prefer first Russia and then Kazakhstan. Joining the EEU will make it possible to solve several problems related to the coordination of labor migration and ensuring the rights of labor migrants and their families.

An important aspect for labor-surplus countries of Central Asia, whose migration is directed to Russia and Kazakhstan, is remittances, in particular, for Kyrgyzstan – the Union country and Tajikistan – the partner country. According to the World Bank in 2022 remittances to these countries amounted to about 30% of GDP²⁵. According to the same source, Uzbekistan, an observer country of the Union, is also among the top recipients of remittances. Most remittances to the countries of the Central Asian region come from Russia. In the new realities there is a serious redirection of migrants from Central Asia to Kazakhstan, as well as for re-locants from Russia. In this regard, further development of migration processes and procedures in the EEU is important for all Central Asian countries.

Another aspect to be emphasized is the diversification of migration from the Eurasian space to other regions. This process has already started due to globalization and global interdependence in the first decade of the 21st century. Labor migrants from Central Asian countries are choosing new destinations and looking for new opportunities. In the new realities in which the Union is being transformed, this process will intensify. Expansion of cooperation, the treaty on Free Trade Zones with third countries and the implementation of the Greater Eurasian Partnership can give a new impetus to the development of more sustainable mechanisms for regulating labor migration processes.

Migration challenges in the EEU

Along with numerous advantages for labor migrants and economies in the EEU, there are a few unresolved issues. The main problems of labor migration in the EEU are related to the health of migrants and their financial literacy. The development of the labor market in the EEU requires the creation of new digital products and conditions for easier access of workers, including to social protection systems and medical care. Keeping track of migrants and obtaining quality statistics remains an unresolved issue.

Along with this, it should be noted the imbalance of supply and demand in the EEU labor market, significant differences between working conditions in the coun-

²⁵ Remittances Grow 5% in 2022, Despite Global Headwinds // The World Bank : [site]. 30.11.2022. URL: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/30/remittances-grow-5-percent-2022> (accessed on 05.06.2023).

tries of the Union²⁶. It is also noted that most migrants from the Central Asian region do not go through all the necessary procedures for introduction into the legal field to fully utilize the advantages that the EEU provides. Another challenge is the mismatch between the demand for specialists and the supply of these professional specialists. This leads to lower labor productivity and some economic effects are lost. Moreover, new forms of employment develop faster than the formation of relevant legislation.

Most of the labor force has low or medium qualifications, which affects both migrants themselves and the effects of labor migration. This applies to working conditions and issues of access to health and other social services.

To meet the challenges, it is necessary to develop a few solutions, which are already being discussed and sought by the relevant EEU bodies.

One of the important solutions for improving mechanisms for regulating labor migration and properly ensuring the rights of migrants is the wider use of digital tools, convenient and functional mobile applications for migrants, as well as the use of practices of forecasting the development of economic and financial processes. It is also important to improve notification and access to financial products to improve remittance and investment mechanisms.

Within the Union it is important to initiate certification and recognition centers for harmonization and introduction of common requirements in the EEU.

It is necessary to create easier access for workers and their families to social protection and health care in the state of employment. This is being worked on by the Eurasian Commission together with international partners and a project is being developed to raise awareness among workers about modern standards of health and safety²⁷.

It is also important to continue and improve preparation and adaptation activities in countries of departure through the development of national pre-departure training systems, as well as in host countries to create comfortable conditions for the stay and successful adaptation of workers and their families.

Thus, the migration effects of EEU activities are important not only for the countries of the Union, but also for the CA countries that are not part of the organization.

Conclusion

Thus, the EEU's activities in the new geopolitical and geo-economic realities appear to be quite multilevel, multifaceted, and ambiguous. Numerous economic and political challenges and security threats along the perimeter of Eurasia, including sanctions against Russia, imposed against the backdrop of the conflict with Ukraine, are, on the one hand, a serious obstacle to further development, on the other hand, give a new impetus to the development of the organization itself and its members and partners.

The integration potential of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the internal contour of the Union has different possibilities, and they should be aimed not only at the development of

²⁶ Рынок труда в ЕАЭС продемонстрировал устойчивость в непростых условиях, но требует внедрения новых современных технологий // Евразийский экономический форум : [сайт]. 24.05.2023. URL: [https://forum.eaeunion.org/news/rynok-truda-v-eaes-prodemonstriroval-ustoychivost-v-neprostykh-usloviyakh-no-trebuuet-vnedreniya-novy/](https://forum.eaeunion.org/news/rynok-truda-v-eaes-prodemonstriroval-ustoychivost-v-neprostykh-usloviyakh-no-trebuuet-vnedreniya-novykh-sovremennykh-tehnologiy/) (дата обращения: 05.06.2023).

²⁷ Там же.

the organization, but also at strengthening their own economies and their diversification. In this context, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan first need to use the potential of the organization to implement their primary economic and socio-economic needs and goals, including to enhance the positive effects of migration.

The opportunities for accession and cooperation in the EEU for Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are mixed and uneven, but important both for the sustainability of national economies to improve standards, economic security, logistical component, and migration cooperation.

Uzbekistan is seen as a priority in the context of expansion in the Central Asian vector due to its economic, resource and demographic potential. If the decision on accession is delayed by the government or it is difficult to overcome barriers, it is important to strengthen the institution of an observer in the EEU. As such, strengthening the integration potential will be important for both Uzbekistan and the EEU. The EEU is also interesting for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the context of free movement of labor force.

Migration effects in the EEU extend beyond the space of the organization - to the perimeter of Central Asian countries, they are important and interrelated for the transformation of the organization itself and the development of the region. The mechanisms that have already been developed in the EEU to coordinate migration processes are the only and so far, non-alternative platform in the entire Eurasian space. Despite a few challenges, including limited access to quality medical services, imperfect digital tools for migrants, imbalance in labor supply and demand and other aspects, the functionality and certain efficiency of existing mechanisms remain important. Importance of remittances and acquiring new skills for CA countries at the present stage.

In general, the Eurasian Economic Union has undergone a significant transformation in the new realities, strengthened institutionally and is in the process of searching for new approaches and solutions in economics, logistics and free movement. Modern global and regional challenges will force all members of the Union to seek new approaches, and this should be considered when assessing the performance of the organization and its partners.

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Bio notes:

Leila F. Delovarova, PhD in International Relations, Acting Associate Professor, Department of International Relations and World Economy, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Contact information: e-mail: delovarova@mail.ru; ORCID ID: [0000-0003-3163-5933](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3163-5933); Web of Science Researcher ID: [N-4809-2014](https://orcid.org/N-4809-2014); Scopus Author ID: [55858531800](https://orcid.org/55858531800).

Nuriddin Sultanmuratov, PhD in Regional Studies, Senior Lecturer, Department of International Relations and World Economy, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Contact information: e-mail: nuriddin.sultanmuratov@gmail.com; ORCID ID: [0000-0003-3711-4303](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3711-4303).

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МИГРАЦИЯ В СТРАНАХ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ В ЕАЭС И НОВЫХ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ РЕАЛИЙ

Деловарова Л. Ф.

*Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Алматы,
Казахстан*

E-mail: delovarova@mail.ru

Султанмуратов Н.

*Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Алматы,
Казахстан*

E-mail: nuriddin.sultanmuratov@gmail.com

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Аннотация. Интеграционные процессы на Евразийском пространстве являются результатом эволюции и трансформации подходов к кооперации и сближению участников объединения, включая проработку всех «четырёх свобод» ЕАЭС (движение товаров, движение услуг, движение рабочей силы и движение капитала). ЕАЭС сейчас является единственным действенным экономическим интеграционным объединением в Евразии, а миграционная составляющая – одним из ключевых аспектов, влияющих на три остальные и повышающих интеграционный потенциал стран Центральной Азии, не являющихся членами объединения. Данное исследование направлено на анализ интеграционного потенциала государств Центральной Азии через призму существующих и возможных миграционных эффектов. В исследовании проведен обзорный анализ потенциала Казахстана и Кыргызстана, возможности присоединения к ЕАЭС Таджикистана, Туркменистана и Узбекистана с акцентом на потенциал и роль трудовой миграции для этих стран в контексте ЕАЭС. Актуальность исследования обусловлена не только важностью экономических интеграционных процессов на Евразийском пространстве через призму миграционных эффектов для Центральной Азии, но и в контексте получения ценного опыта, процессов унификации и повышения общих стандартов на всем Евразийском пространстве, и в частности, в миграционной сфере. Эффекты трудовой миграции в рамках ЕАЭС для Центральной Азии будут не только индикаторами сближения и интеграции, но и расширения сотрудничества в целом на региональном и межрегиональном уровне. Такой опыт важен для ЕАЭС, так как Союзу наряду с расширением круга экономических партнеров важно развивать новые механизмы координации трудовой миграции.

Ключевые слова: ЕАЭС; миграция в Центральной Азии; миграционный потенциал ЕАЭС; Большое Евразийское партнерство.

Сведения об авторах:

Деловарова Лейла Федоровна, доктор PhD по специальности «Международные отношения», и. о. доцента, кафедры международных отношений и мировой экономики, Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан.

Контактная информация: e-mail: delovarova@mail.ru; ORCID ID: [0000-0003-3163-5933](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3163-5933); Web of Science Researcher ID: [N-4809-2014](https://orcid.org/N-4809-2014); Scopus Author ID: [55858531800](https://orcid.org/55858531800).

Нуриддин Султанмуратов, доктор PhD по специальности «Регионоведение», старший преподаватель, Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан.

Контактная информация: e-mail: nuriddin.sultanmuratov@gmail.com; ORCID ID: [0000-0003-3711-4303](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3711-4303).

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