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THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE BALTIC REGION

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Immanuel Kant
Baltic Federal
University

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Tatyana Kuznetsova
tikuznetsova@kantiana.ru

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Editorial

NEW ECONOMIC AND MIGRATORY TRENDS IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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The articles in this special issue explore different types of migration processes in the countries of the Eurasian region and the EU amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The spread of the coronavirus and the ensuing closure of borders have caused a dramatic transformation in regional migration and economy. Many migrants were stranded: they could neither leave the country of employment nor return home. Having lost their jobs and sources of income, they turned into a highly vulnerable group.

The countries the Baltic Sea region have a special place in Europe. With the exception of Russia, they are members of the EFTA and the EU — the alliances that benefit from a visa-free travel regime, unimpeded movement of people, a common labour market, and unrestricted labour mobility. The populations of the Baltics are different: 1.32 m people in Estonia, 1.9 m in Latvia, and 2.8 m in Lithuania (2019) with their geographical smallness (the area of each of the countries does not exceed that of any German or an average Russian region), limited labour markets, and few employment opportunities complicate the situation of migrants in these countries. Russia is the destination for a significant proportion of migrants, including those seeking employment. The state has a visa-free regime with the CIS and a common labour market with its fellow members of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Selected demographic and socio-economic indicators for the Baltic Sea states, 2018-2019

Country	GDP per capita, USD (2018)	Population, thousand people		Number of international migrants, thousand people as of mid-2019	Unemployment rate, % (2019)	All Migrants, % (2019)	Migrants from non-EU countries, % (2019)	Net migration, thousand people (2018)
		2018	2019					
Norway	81,549	5.324	5.357	75,294	3.854	16,1	4,5	140
Denmark	61,522	5.781	5.806	59,77	5.117	12,5	5,4	76
Sweden	54,295	10.230	10.328	51,404	6.325	20	5,8	200
Finland	50,074	5.513	5.518	48,809	7.425	6,9	2,9	70
Germany	47,832	82.906	83.093	46,472	3.417	15,7	7	2700
Estonia	23,181	1.322	1.325	23,757	5.371	14,7	13,5	19,6
Lithuania	19,089	2.802	2.783	19,482	6.146	4,2	1,4	– 163,9
Latvia	17,747	1.934	1.920	17,771	7.415	12,4	13,6	– 74,2
Poland	15,46	37.977	37.973	15,6	3.846	1,7	0,7	– 147
Russia	11,344	146.781	146.749	11,601	4.800	8*	—	912,3

Comment: *For Russia, the proportion of all migrants;

Prepared based on *Non-national* population by group of citizenship, 1 January 2019; *Eurostat*. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Non-national_population_by_group_of_citizenship,_1_January_2019.png (accessed 15.11.2020); *Migration Data Portal*, 2020. URL: https://migrationdataportal.org/search/countries?text=&theme=&tags=10052&category= (accessed 15.11.2020).

A common problem of the Baltic Sea region and Europe is the ageing of society and the excess of death rate over birth rate (depopulation). In 'old' Europe (the Nordic countries, Denmark, and Germany), the population is growing due to migration — the region's level of economic development is twice as high as that of post-socialist states (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, and Russia).

The number and structure of migrants differ from country to country. For example, in Russia, migrants account for 8% of the population. Post-Soviet countries have few migrants from the EU. Meanwhile, in the EU 27, 35m people (7.9%) of the 446.8 m total population have a migration background[1] (21.8 m people [4.9%] are migrants from third countries; 13.3 m [3%], from the EU-27).

The countries of 'old' Europe are typical host countries, while countries of transitional economies have more complicated migration patterns. On the one hand, the citizens of the latter emigrate to more economically developed countries; on the other hand, transitional economies welcome migrants from less economically successful neighbouring countries. In Russia, about 90% of migrants

[1] Population on 1 January by age group, sex and citizenship, 2020, Eurostat. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/6e121a48—729c-4dc9-a8bb-9cd4cf570279?lang=en (accessed 15.11.2020).

come from the CIS. In Poland, nationals of Ukraine and Belarus account for a similar percentage. Immigration exceeds emigration in Russia, and it is vice versa in Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. Estonia is a special case with its population involved in short-term circular migration to Finland.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced all countries of the Baltic region to impose travel restrictions. These measures varied between countries. Every state closed its borders, but travel control within countries was not the same, and some groups of migrants were allowed transboundary movement in each country. Sweden's restriction, one of the mildest in Europe and probably the world, has not dramatically influenced the lives of its citizens. In Russia, regions selected what measures to take based on the level of morbidity. Germany and other Baltic region states declared a curfew and tough lockdown restrictions. Finland suspended transboundary migration; Poland and Germany allowed cross-border travel after a one-month hiatus.

The sudden closure of borders in March 2020 to control the spread of COVID-19 tore apart the common European labour market and the existent system of migration ties and eventually paralysed many processes in the mutually complementing economies. In the EU, the lockdown stopped many industries that usually employ migrants. Among them were agriculture (11.9%), domestic services (10.3%), and municipal services (9.9%).[2] Migrant unemployment rose sharply, particularly so in Norway and Sweden,[3] since many migrants had either short-term employment contracts or none at all. Having lost their jobs during the pandemic, they could not count on redundancy pay that laid-off employees are entitled to in the EU countries. In Russia, compensations were paid at the discretion of the employer. At the same time, in all these countries foreign nationals were allowed to extend the duration of migration documents.

Studies carried out in the EU and Russia have demonstrated that migrants are more susceptible to disease amid the pandemic because of physically demanding jobs (in agriculture or construction), deplorable living conditions, and poverty (up to 30% of all migrants in the OECD and 17% in the EU live below the breadline). Migrants' lodgings are often overcrowded. This holds true for 8% of migrants in the OECD and 11% in the EU but for the third country nationals it reaches 20%.[4] In Russia, migrants live in congested places and run a substantial risk of contracting the virus.[5]

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[2] Immigrant Key Workers: Their Contribution to Europe's COVID-19 Response, 2020, *European Comission*, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/publication/immigrant-key-workers-their-contribution-europes-covid-19-response_en (accessed 15.11.2020).

[3] Managing international migration under COVID-19. Impact of COVID19 on migration policies: key findings, 2020, *OECD*, URL: http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/managing-international-migrationunder-covid-19—6e914d57/ (accessed 15.11.2020).

[4] Inform # 1 — EU and OECD member states responses to managing residence permits and migrant unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020, *European Commission*, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/oo_eu_inform1_residence_permits_and_unemployment_en_updated_final.pdf (accessed 15.11.2020).

[5] Ryazantsev, S.V. 2020, The Situation of Migrant Workers in Russia During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Results of a Sociological Study). In: *International Conference The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Migration Mobility*, Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences and MGIMO University, 27 April 2020, Moscow. URL: http://испи.рф/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-migration-mobility/ (accessed 15.11.2020).

Host countries struggled with both providing medical care to and regulating the legal status of migrants who could not return home, get a job, or earn money. According to the EU legislation, once unemployed, migrants have to leave the receiving country. As it was recommended by the European Commission, most EU member states extended the duration of migrants' residence and work permits.[6]

Although the problem of visa support and renewal of residence permits was approached differently by different countries, none reacted promptly, and the rules were relaxed in most cases only for the categories of migrants mentioned in the EU Directive.[7] For example, Estonia, Norway, and Finland accepted applications but did not issue permits.

To prevent documented migrants from becoming undocumented, the EU, Norway, and Russia renewed all migration documents and statuses of foreign nationals (residence permits, short-term and long-term visas). In some cases, EU states waived the requirement that migrants should leave the country after a certain period of stay. In fact, travel bans made complying with it impossible. In Germany, the authorities were granted the right to reduce the duration of resident permits of third-country nationals who had lost their jobs because of the pandemic. In Finland, the authorities were evaluating if the person applying for permit renewal had means of subsistence. If a new contract of employment was unlikely, the chances of residence permit renewal were also slim.[8]

Based on the procedures for renewing migrants' permits amid the pandemic, the Baltic region states can be divided into two categories:

— states that did not renew residence permits for third-country[9] nationals who had lost their jobs (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), but gave them a chance of obtaining a different residence permit should they find new employment (Latvia);

— states that renewed permits for migrants who had had means of subsistence during the period of the previous permit (Finland).

Russia took one of the most liberal decisions in the history of both national and European migration policy: the duration of all migrants' residence permits was extended to 15 June at first and then to 15 September and 15 December 2020. This way labour migrants had a chance to find a new job. Furthermore, tax deferral for migrants' patents was announced.

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[6] A policy framework for responding to the COVID-19 crisis, 2020, *ILO Policy Brief on COVID-19*, ILO, URL: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/impacts-andresponses/WCMS_739047/lang — en/index.htm (accessed 15.11.2020); Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis. Migration Research Series. 2020. № 60. URL: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mrs-60.pdf (accessed 15.11.2020).

[7] *Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council*, 2004, 29 April. URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32004L0038 (accessed 15.11.2020).

[8] A policy framework for responding to the COVID-19 crisis, 2020, *ILO Policy Brief on COVID-19*, ILO, URL: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/impacts-andresponses/WCMS_739047/lang — en/index.htm (accessed 15.11.2020); Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis. Migration Research Series. 2020. № 60. URL: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mrs-60.pdf (accessed 15.11.2020).

[9] For EU countries all non-member states are third countries.

Countries of the Baltic Sea region try to bring home their citizens and for-eign nationals via transit countries. To this end, chartered air transport connec-tions and transit land corridors were to be arranged. EU countries returned about 500,000 citizens to their home countries and Russia — about 100,000.[10]

Communication with their homeland and the authorities of the host/transit country was another urgent problem for migrants across the Baltic region. Obtaining clear and reliable information was often complicated by the impossibility of contacting consulates and embassies, the closure of borders by the native country, insufficient command of the language of the host/transit country, the unclear legal status, and the absence of Internet connection. All EU countries and Russia uploaded multi-language guidelines to the websites of ministries, government bodies, and migrant support centres. The message was spread to migrants via the media, information posters, volunteers and NGOs, texts, and hotlines.

The Lithuanian researcher *Ingrida Gečienė-Janulionė* points out that, experiencing the ageing of the population, brain drains, and labour emigration, the Baltics will definitely benefit from the return and reintegration of migrants. They are importing new ways of organising work, new knowledge and skills. All this will contribute to the economic development of the countries.

Joni Virkkunen from the University of Eastern Finland argues that the visa-free regime and transboundary cooperation have been put at risk both in the EU and in the post-Soviet states, most of which enjoy visa-free travel. The severance of historical labour and trade ties has imperiled some service and development industries. Short-term, seasonal, and rotational circular migration is turning into long-term because of the impossibility of commuting and the costliness of travel and the COVID-19 testing.

Internal migration in the Baltic Sea states has been affected by not only national travel restrictions but also the decline of most industries. Kaliningrad has switched to online services and embraced self-isolation; the employment structure has changed (*Lyalina & Emelyanova*). Similar processes disrupting the usual work-life balance have been observed in Latvia (*Krisjane et al*). They have impacted on both migrants and local residents.

Sergey Ryazantsev, Irina Molodikova, and Alexey Bragin from Moscow examine the timeline of border closures and restrictions imposed across the CIS. They stress positive discrimination in Russian migration policies towards people from historically and politically proximate CIS countries.

The identification of the COVID-19 threat in the Baltics and analysis of threat representation in the Baltic media is the focus of the contribution co-authored by *Vera Zabotkina, Olga Pavlenko, Elena Boyarskaya, and Ekaterina Moiseeva*. Their investigation of the information space shows that there are at least six major media strategies: counter-active, projective, conservative, mobilising, resilient, and reflective.

[10] Coronavirus: European Solidarity in action, 2020, *European Commission*. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/coronavirus-european-solidarity-action_en (accessed 15.11.2020).

These strategies are universal. Depending on what the goal is, they are used to communicate threats either individually or in combination. The scale of the threat and its consequences bring attention to awareness-raising and threat representation in the media.

The closure of borders and the lockdown have damaged the economies of all countries. The service industries that intensively employ migrants have borne the brunt. All this has brought to the fore global value chains, the prospects of the world economy, and the pandemic-induced closure of Chinese factories. *Yuri Simachev, Anna Fedyunina, and Yuliya Averyanova* believe that despite the tensions between the countries, the Baltics-Russian bilateral trade conducted within global value chains and operations of multinational companies is resistant to geopolitical and economic shocks, despite value chain transformations caused by the pandemic. The authors show that, over the medium term, regional cooperation is possible if sufficient attention is given to the operations of Russian and Baltic transnational companies.

The findings presented in this COVID-19-related special issue emphasise firstly: the need for coordinated international effort and the reduction of trans-boundary travel restrictions; secondly: setting up different border-crossing regimes for residents of different countries, depending level of morbidity; thirdly: information exchange between governments, consulates, and their citizens. The liberalisation of the migration law by host countries (the so-called 'corona-amnesty' of migrants) has proven effectiveness: this measure has made it possible not only to ensure that migrants retain their legal status and access to the labour market but also to curb illegal employment and migrant exploitation. The media, which increase awareness of migrants and local residents, have a paramount role in the pandemic. Finally, it has been demonstrated that regional initiatives supported by local and transnational cooperation may contribute to stronger cooperation and alleviate the consequences of the pandemic.

Guest editors

Prof. Sergey V. Ryazantsev, MGIMO University, Russia; Institute for Demographic Research Federal Centre for Theoretical and Applied Sociology Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia.

E-mail: riazan@mail.ru

Dr Irina N. Molodikova, Central European University, Hungary; Institute for Demographic Research Federal Centre for Theoretical and Applied Sociology Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia.

E-mail: molodikova@hotmail.com

THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON LABOUR MIGRATION IN THE CIS

S. V. Ryazantsev [1,3]
I. N. Molodikova [2,3]
A. D. Bragin [3]

[1] MGIMO University
76 Vernadskogo pr., Moscow, 119454, Russia

[2] Central European University
9, Nador, Budapest, 1053, Hungary

[3] Institute for Demographic Research Federal Centre
for Theoretical and Applied Sociology Russian Academy of Sciences,
6 Fotievoy St. Moscow, 119333, Russia

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This study responds to the need for measures to mitigate the effects of national actions to slow the spread of COVID-19. National responses are dynamic processes and thus an elusive, albeit important, object of study. The governments of most CIS countries acted promptly and decisively in countering the pandemic. The comprehensive measures have had a serious impact on citizens' mobility and employment situation. Among the affected are millions of migrants working in the CIS. This article offers a comparative analysis, followed by synthesis, of the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as seen through the prism of employment and the situation of migrant workers in the CIS. Another focus is the restriction and support measures and how they have affected migrants. A range of qualitative and quantitative data was collated on the situation of migrant workers during COVID-19 restriction in the Russian Federation and across the CIS. The findings suggest that the lack of international coordination in tackling COVID-19 has complicated the situation of migrant workers, who suffer from the closure of borders and the absence of adequate social support. The article explores problems faced by migrant workers in the current crisis and proposes measures to alleviate them.

Keywords:
COVID-19, pandemic, CIS, migration flows, migrant workers, migrant crisis, remittances.

Introduction

The beginning of 2020 witnessed an outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first months, the virus was confined to China, but later it spread to all continents, and the CIS countries were no exception.

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The tough restrictions aimed to control the spread of COVID-19 provoked a terrible crisis in the world economy, which had a profound effect on all aspects of everyday life, regardless of one's social standing and status. The main restrictions limited migration mobility since the state viewed minimising personal contacts as essential to control the spread of the virus. To the same end, borders were closed and all transport connections suspended [1]. These decisions have led to major changes in global migration processes since many states closed their borders without giving migrants and their own nationals a chance to leave the country or return home. The paralysis of many industries that traditionally employ migrants has resulted in mass layoffs. The workers have no money either to go home or to stay in the host country.

Approaches to managing migrant flows vary from state to state depending on how fast COVID-19 reached the country as well as on what contribution migration makes to the economy [1]. Since migrants have an important role in the economies of the source and host countries, both are responsible for managing migration flows. Migrants drive forward the economy of the host country, whereas the economy of the source country depends on migrant remittances to a considerable degree. When living conditions deteriorate, the health of citizens is threatened, and there is a pressing need for return migration, the country must provide them with such an opportunity.

This article analyses the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the situation of migrants in the CIS countries. It aims to identify negatives effects the restrictions have had on migrants, as well as to propose a way to handle the crisis, using existing support measures.

The CIS migration flows constitute two out of five major global migration corridors (Russia — Kazakhstan and Russia — Ukraine[1]) with a total migration turnover of 6m people.[2] The CIS pandemic-induced migration crisis is influencing both regional and global trends. It is affecting the world economy as well. The CIS may set a good example to third states faced with a COVID-19 migration crisis in solving the problems relating to migrant movements and status.

Since the pandemic is far from over, and the virus comes in waves, the restrictions are likely to be tightened and eased more than. This study offers guidelines for minimising the damage that the restrictions have caused to migrants. Such advice may be welcome in countries where migration has an important role in the economy, and any migration crisis has economic fallout [2].

[1] Before the Ukrainian crisis erupted.

[2] Annual Report 2016, 2016, *The World Bank*. URL: http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/596391540568499043/worldbankannualreport2016.pdf (accessed 11.07.2020).

Information sources and theoretical approaches to research

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global phenomenon posing new socio-economic and demographic challenges. Few theoretical and methodological works may aid in providing a rationale for the effects of the pandemic, particularly those on mobility and the situation of labour migrants. Nor there is a single methodology for collecting statistical data on migrants facing difficulties in host, transit, and source countries. In most cases, data from information agencies, the media, and official spokespersons are used.

The article draws on investigations conducted by researchers and experts from international organisations and the CIS research institutes and universities in 2020. The contribution is based on scientific reports, research working papers, 2020 special issues of academic journals, and international organisations' reviews of migrant and labour market situation in the COVID-19 pandemic. The international organisations that have looked into the impact of the pandemic on mobility and the situation of migrants in the CIS are the United National Development Programme, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM),[3] the International Centre for Migration Policy Development [3], the International Labour Organisation (ILO) [6],[4] the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) [7],[5] the World Bank [8],[6] the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights, the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), and the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB). Russian research institutes and universities have also conducted empirical studies of the situation of labour and education migrants in the CIS. Among these are the Institute for Demographic Research of the Federal Centre of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (FCTASRAS) [1; 4—8], the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration [9], the Gaidar Institute for Economic Policy [10—12], and the Higher School of Economics and the Institute of Sociology of

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[3] Combatting xenophobia is key to effective COVID-19 recovery. 2020, Press release, *IOM*, 22 May 2020. URL: www.iom.int/news/combatting-xenophobia-key-effective-covid-19-recovery (accessed 11.07.2020); COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot #40: Returning Migrants, 2020, IOM, 20 May 2020. URL: www.iom. int/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19_analytical_snapshot_40_-_returning_migrants.pdf (accessed 11.07.2020).

[4] Protecting migrant workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Recommendations for Policy-makers and Constituents, 2020, *ILO Policy Brief*, Geneva, April 2020. URL: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—-ed_protect/—-protrav/—-migrant/documents/publication/wcms_743268.pdf (accessed 13.07.2020).

[5] Supporting livelihoods during the COVID-19 crisis: Closing the gaps in safety nets, 2020, *OECD*, 20 May 2020. URL: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=132_132985-hrr3dbjimj&title=Supporting-livelihoods-during-the-COVID-19_crisis%20oe.cd/il/30z. (accessed 15.07.2020).

[6] Potential responses to the COVID-19 outbreak in support of migrant workers. Living Paper Version 9, 2020, *World Bank Group*, June 2020. URL: https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/ documents-reports/documentdetail/428451587390154689/potential-responses- to-the-covid-19-outbreak-in-support-of-migrant-workers-may-26—2020. (accessed 13.07.2020).

the FCTASRAS [12]. A series of random sample surveys of labour migrants was carried out in spring 2020. Respondents were recruited via social media (Facebook and Vkontakte) and migrant organisations [13].[7]

The theoretical aspect of the study. At the beginning of the 21st century, globalisation, development of online communications, and progress of transport networks links caused a sharp increase in the number of both international migrants [14; 15] and transboundary transit migration flows [16]. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, migration was responsible for the rapid movement of large numbers of people. A vivid illustration is the migrant crisis of 2015 when Europe accepted about 1.1 m asylum seekers and refugees. In the pre-pandemic period, the development of virtual communication networks and transport modernisation were making migration control by nation-states ever less effective [44]. Migration flows were increasingly perceived by national governments as threats to security [17; 18]; securitisation of migration was being replaced by a closed-door policy [19]. EU initiatives to regain control over undocumented transit migration flows created a rift between member states and highlighted their differences in the vision of a migration policy and migration control [20].

Western European researchers have concluded investigations on changes in visa regimes over the past 50 years, and come to the conclusion that restrictions are ineffective — they have side effects, such as migration taking illegal forms, changing routes, and delays but do not make people abandon their plans [21; 22]. As border control becomes more stringent, migrants start to look for new ways to reach their country of destination. Thus, the geography of migration flows is constantly changing [15; 23].

Traditionally considered in the context of globalisation and growing migration flows, migrations processes were viewed before the pandemic as a natural consequence of increasing mobility, technological innovation, and other related factors [24]. Although regional processes taking place within the global migration regime were believed to be multi-directional phenomena, they were seen as merely supporting the general trend [25]. Before the 2015 migrant crisis, migration-related health risks were a relatively marginal subject of research. These risks were associated with refugee camps and ecological conflicts and people escaping them [15]. These problems were localised to areas providing shelter for large numbers of displaced persons [26].

When analysing the impact of COVID-19 on migration mobility in the CIS, it is important to keep in mind the multiple factors and complexity of interconnections that have emerged since the borders of almost all states were closed and almost all kinds of passenger traffic were frozen across the globe.

A unique feature of the worldwide mobility crisis caused by the pandemic is that the threat to survival and the need for prompt decisions have brought na-

[7] Ryazantsev, S.V. 2020, The Situation of Migrant Workers in Russia During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Results of a Sociological Study), *International Conference The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Migration Mobility*, Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences and MGIMO University, 27 April 2020, Moscow. URL: http://испи.рф/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-migration-mobility/ (accessed 14.07.2020).

tion-states to the forefront of the fight, which consists partly of border closure and various forms of quarantine restrictions. At first, supranational associations, such as the EU, the UN, the OECD were not ready either to rise to the new challenges to personal and public security or to handle insecurity around economics, food, health, and the environment [27]. But, as the crisis progressed, these organisations started to work towards solidarity and international response to the pandemic [12].

Of course, economic crises affecting migration happened before COVID-19. The crisis of the early 1970s forced numerous migrants from Turkey and Southern Europe to settle in Western Europe. The financial crisis of 2008 was accompanied by mass return migration. In Russia and Ukraine, the refugee crisis of 2015 manifested itself differently than in the EU. Still, the problem of asylum-seekers was not a major focus of research in the CIS in the 2010s. Yet, in the west, asylum-seekers and the routs they use to reach the EU have long been the centre of scholarly attention [28; 29],[8] the more so when applications for protection are not considered any more due to the pandemic. Asylum-seekers keep arriving at the south of the EU; refugee quotas are causing growing tensions between the member states. The EU refugee discourse is an important part of western European literature [30], alongside that on undocumented migrants [28].

The political and academic discussion of possibilities to bring migrants back to their countries, which was sparked off by the refugee crisis, continue among the western scholars in the context of quarantine restrictions and the prevention of undocumented migration in different countries [31]. The state as an institute is the key player when it comes to the rule for entering and exiting the country or staying in it and the state in its legislation put criterions to decides who is an immigrant, who is a refugee, and who is an undocumented migrant [19]. Under lockdown, migrants can easily find themselves in an undocumented situation should entry and exit rules change and corresponding penalties be introduced.

A positive development is that large European host countries have chosen the way of so-called migration amnesty with different forms of liberalisation of residence permit. Kazakhstan and Russia have also liberalised migrant access to the labour market until the end of 2020. Remarkably, the idea of labour migrant amnesty has been entertained in Russia, which has a large undocumented migrant labour market, for quite some time. Nevertheless, a lack of trust in human rights bodies prevented it from ever becoming part of the migration policy. Only when the pandemic threatened national security, when desperate unemployed migrants, probably counted in millions, were to find themselves in a hopeless situation, the Russian government adopted unprecedented measures to liberalise the national migration law.

[8] COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot #40: Returning Migrants, 2020, *International Organization for Migration*, Geneva, 20 May. URL: www.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19_analytical_snapshot_40_-_returning_migrants.pdf (accessed 13.07.2020); Protecting migrant workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Recommendations for policymakers and constituents, 2020, *International Labour Organization*, Geneva, April. URL: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—-ed_protect/—-protrav/—-migrant/documents/publication/wcms_743268.pdf (accessed 13.07.2020).

Russian researchers have stressed that previous migration crises faced by their countryand the current one have entirely different causes. In 2008—2009 and 2015, the absolute number of labour migrants did not decline, but the ratio between those employed legally and illegally changed [32]. The reason for it was twofold: employees trying to economise by using undocumented labour [33] and the unsuccessful government policy on labour migration [11]. During previous crises, the governments of developed countries and Russia adopted discriminatory practices against migrants to protect the national labour market to the benefit of their citizens [34]. It has been stressed that the traditional populist line of conduct pursued by governments in crises — getting rid of migrants who do jobs that locals might want — is characteristic of both the west [35—37] and Russia [32]. The COVID-19 situation is different: the EU, Russia, and Kazakhstan are liberalising their migration policy [10—11]. Attempts to substitute Russians for migrant workers were not successful either in 2008—2010 or in 2014—2016, nor are they now.

Some researchers believe that the COVID-19 crisis has hit the non-manufacturing industries harder [38] than other sectors. Employment risks are maximal for the affected service industries: 10m people have lost their jobs [39]. Yet mobility restrictions have provoked a supply-side crisis in the labour market, whereas earlier crises led to a decline in demand for labour [39]. This crisis has brought about a serious labour shortage in the Russian labour market. The development of platform economies has dampened unemployment through the labour market covidisation [40; 41]. This also holds true for Russia. Migrants newly engaged in the sector are replacing pensioners and students, who have traditionally worked in the field [42].

The new situation necessitates a study of new aspects of migration. Special attention should be paid to how migrants are surviving the pandemic and how they re-integrate once having returned home. An important line of investigation is exploring approaches to cooperation between governments, NGOs, and affected migrants. Furthermore, there is a need to find ways to simplify both the stay in the host country and the return home. This article will analyse these issues as observed in the CIS.

Restrictions on mobility in the CIS

The post-Soviet region has enjoyed a visa-free regime for many years. Migrants move almost freely between the CIS countries, Ukraine, and Georgia (to some extent). Most labour migrants come to another CIS country to take advantage of simplified employment opportunities. The two leading host countries in the CIS are Russia and Kazakhstan. Beyond the region, most migrants seek employment in the EU [3]. Therefore, restrictions imposed by one country affect migration from or through other CIS countries.

Former Soviet republics trod on the path of restrictions as early as February 2020 (Georgia was the first). In late March, borders between all CIS countries, except for Belarus, were closed for both entry and exit. A state of emergency was declared in many of them (see Table 1).

Table 1

Open/closed borders of CIS countries in the COVID-19 pandemic (till 1st of October 2020)

Country	Date of border closure	Date of partial opening	Official situation as of the time of closure	Actual entry/exist situation as of 1 October 2020
Russia	18 March[9]	1 August[10]	The border was completely closed. Russian citizens stranded abroad could take government-chartered flights or return home on their own.	The border is partly closed. Leaving the country is possible via the Belarusian border if one has third-country citizenship or a residence permit. Foreign citizens and residence permit holders can leave the country by chartered flights.
Belarus	Never closed[11]	Never closed	The land air borders are open; citizens of Belarus and other states can enter and exit the country. Many use Belarus as a transit country when travelling between Russia and the west.	
Kazakhstan	16 March[12]	20 June[13]	The border was partly closed. All foreigners who had arrived in Kazakhstan earlier could leave the country as soon as flights were resumed.	Citizens of Kazakhstan and holders of residence permits can enter the country by government-chartered flights. Regular air connections are suspended.

[9] COVID-19. National and international travel, 2020*, The Government of the Russian Federation*. URL: http://government.ru/rugovclassifier/891/events/ (accessed 04.08.2020).

[10] Media announce date of Russian borders' opening, 2020, *Rosbalt*. URL: https://www.rosbalt.ru/russia/2020/08/01/1856622.html (accessed 04.08.2020).

[11] Lukashenko: Belarus not to close borders, 2020, *Izvestia newspaper*. URL: https://iz.ru/1003527/2020-04-23/lukashenko-zaiavil-ob-otsutstvii-planov-zakryvat-granitcy-belorussii (accessed 04.08.2020) (in Russ.).

[12] Kazakhstan to impose border crossing restrictions, 2020, *TASS*. URL: https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/7985473 (accessed 05.08.2020) (in Russ.).

[13] When the Russian-Kazakhstani border will be opened in 2020, 2020, *Turister*. URL: https://www.tourister.ru/world/asia/kazakhstan/publications/1202 (accessed 05.08.2020).

Table 1 continuation

Ukraine	27 March[14]	29 May[15]	The border was partly closed. Citizens of Ukraine stranded abroad had the right to come home.	It is possible to enter/leave the country over the land border. To cross the EU border one needs a Fit-to-Fly certificate and a purpose-of-entry document (travel is allowed for work purposes, taking care of elderly relatives, and medical procedures).
Moldova	17 March[16]	1 July[17]	The border was completely closed	Citizen of Romania can enter and leave the country over the land border.
Georgia	January 2020[18]	Until 10 May[20]	The authorities closed the border with China as early as February. From 21 March, all international flights, including those to Russia and the EU, were suspended. Stringent quarantine restrictions were introduced despite the small number of cases. The restrictions were partly eased on 10 May	

[14] Coronavirus: Ukraine to close its border on 27 March, 2020, *Deutsche Welle*. URL: https://www.dw.com/ru/%D1%83%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0—27-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%80%D1%8B%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%B5%D1%82-%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D1%83-%D0%B8%D0%B7-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D0%B0/a-52932797 (accessed 06.08.2020).

[15] What countries have opened their borders to Ukrainians, 2020, *Unian*. URL: https://www.unian.net/tourism/lifehacking/otkrytie-granic-v-mire-2020-kuda-mogut-poehat-ukraincy-spisok-stran-11029211.html (accessed 06.08.2020).

[16] Moldova to close border to stop coronavirus, 2020, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*. URL: https://rg.ru/2020/03/15/moldaviia-zakryvaet-granicu-iz-za-koronavirusa.html (accessed 07.08.2020) (in Russ.).

[17] Willing to go abroad? Moldova's Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs of international pandemic rules. 2020, *Bălți independent portal*. URL: https://esp.md/sobytiya/2020/06/28/hotite-vyehat-za-granicu-mid-moldovy-informiruet-kakie-pravila-ustanovili-raznye (accessed 05.08.2020).

[18] When will Georgia open its borders to tourists? Latest updates, 2020, *Turister*. URL: https://www.turister.ru/publications/1209 (accessed 06.08.2020).

[19] Ibid.

End of Table 1

Armenia	16 March[21]	1 August[22]	The border was partly closed. All Armenian citizens and members of their families holding a residence permit were allowed to enter the country.	Foreign nationals and holders of residence permits could leave Armenia without any difficulty.
Kyrgyzstan	17 March[23]	15 June[24]	The border was completely closed	The border was partly closed. Citizens of Russia and Kyrgyzstan could enter the country. Transit via Kazakhstan was allowed.
Azerbaijan	5 April[25]	1 August[26]	The border was completely closed	
Turkmenistan	20 March[27]	10 June[28]	The border was completely closed	
Uzbekistan	16 March[29]	15 June[30]	The border was completely closed	
Tajikistan	10 April[31]	1 July[32]	The border was completely closed	

[20] Coronavirus: Armenian authorities extend state of emergency for one month, 2020, *RBC*. URL: https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/5ee3411b9a79472c2a10090d (accessed 04.08.2020).

[21] When will countries open their borders: a simple chart, 2020, *Sputnik Armenia*. URL: https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/infographics/20200601/23237578/Kogda-strany-otkroyut-granitsy-naglyadnyy-grafik.html (accessed 07.08.2020).

[22] Kyrgiza closes its borders, 2020, *Lenta.ru*. URL: https://lenta.ru/news/2020/03/17/zakrylis/ (accessed 08.08.2020) (in Russ.).

[23] Kazakhstan opens checkpoints with Kyrgyzstan and China, 2020, *Zona*. URL: https://zonakz.net/2020/06/15/kazaxstan-otkryl-punkty-propuska-na-granicax-s-kyrgyzstanom-i-kitaem/ (accessed 07.08.2020).

[24] Azerbaijan’s borders stay open, 2020, *Sputnik Azerbaijan*. URL: https://az.sputniknews.ru/azerbaijan/20200529/424064097/Azerbaydzhan-ostavil-svoi-granitsy-zakrytymi.html (accessed 08.08.2020).

[25] Azerbaijan extends border closure, 2020, *Profi Travel*. URL: https://profi.travel/news/47019/details (accessed 08.08.2020).

[26] Coronavirus: Turkmenistan temporarily restricts borer crossing, 202, *RIA Novosti*. URL: https://ria.ru/20200320/1568920983.html (accessed 10.08.2020) (in Russ.).

[27] Opening of Turkmenian-Iranian border postponed from 1 to 10 June, 2002, *Regnum*. URL: https://regnum.ru/news/2968811.html (accessed 09.08.2020) (in Russ.).

[28] Uzbekistan closes its borders: the country goes into quarantine, 2020, *Sputnik Uzbekistan*. URL: https://uz.sputniknews.ru/society/20200315/13678328/Uzbekistan-zakryvaet-granitsy — strana-perekhodit-na-rezhim-karantina.html (accessed 08.08.2020).

[29] Uzbekistan’s borders partly open starting from today, 2020, *Revizor*. URL: https://www.rewizor.ru/special-projects/revizor-travel/novosti/s-segodnyashnego-dnya-granitsy-uzbekistana-chastichno-otkryty/ (accessed 10.08.2020).

[30] Temporary procedure for international cargo deliveries by road, 2020, *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan*. URL: https://mfa.tj/ru/main/view/5920/vremennyi-poryadok-regulirovaniya-mezhdunarodnykh-perevozok-gruzovym-avtomobilnym-transportom (accessed 10.08.2020)

[31] Tajikistan is opening its borders after the coronavirus: where to fly? 2020, *Sputnik Tajikistan*. URL: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/country/20200617/1031425974/tajikistan-vozobnovlyaet-aviasobshchenie-tri-gosudarstva.html (accessed 09.08.2020).

Kazakhstan declared a national state of emergency and imposed a curfew.[32] Ukraine[33] also declared a state of emergency, for one month at first and extended it later. Moldova imposed quarantine restrictions for 60 days.[34] Kyrgyzstan and Georgia declared a state of emergency in some regions and cities.[35] Armenia and Azerbaijan introduced special quarantine restrictions.[36] In Uzbekistan, quarantine restrictions varied in severity from region to region. In Russia, a hybrid regime was in effect, which would change its name over the two months. The first week of restrictions was called 'non-working week; the second period, 'self-isolation' and 'regional high alert state' (the decision to declare it was made by regional authorities); at the beginning of May, the name changed to 'restrictions regime'. Yet the measures taken in Moscow and St Petersburg, which seriously limited the basic freedoms of citizens (the stay home order, the national and international travel ban) were de facto a state of emergency. The government of Tajikistan closed the borders but denied that there were any coronavirus cases in the country; no measures were taken until 30 April.[37] Turkmenistan closed its border while denying the epidemic. The country was even going to hold a national football championship. The actual state of affairs in the country is unknown.[38] Belarus did not impose any restrictions, nor were there any entry/exit or international travel limitations. Passengers travelled in, through, and from the country in the pre-pandemic regime. Belarus became the main transit corridor to the EU for people from neighbouring CIS countries (Russia and Ukraine).[39]

Across the post-Soviet space, with the exception of Belarus, migration between (and sometimes within) countries was frozen. The government urged peo-

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[32] Quarantine in Kazakhstan to last until end of June, 2020, *Zakon.kz*. URL: https://www.zakon.kz/5021739-karantinnye-mery-v-kazahstane.html?utm_source=web& utm_medium=newsv1& utm_campaign=notification (accessed 18.07.2020).

[33] Coronavirus: Ukraine declared state of emergency for 30 day from 28 Match to 24 April, 2020, *DW*. URL: https://www.dw.com/ru/в-украине-из-за-коронавируса-введен-режим-чрезвычайного-положения/a-52914514 (accessed 19.07.2020); Ukraine closes its border to foreign visitors from 17 March, 2020, BBC. URL: https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-51876682 (accessed 19.07.2020).

[34] Coronavirus: Moldova closes its border, 2020, *Ukrainian national news*, 15 March 2020. URL: https://www.unn.com.ua/ru/news/1857908-moldova-zakrivaye-kordon-cherez- (accessed 20.07.2020).

[35] Quarantine rules in Georgia, 2020, *Kavkazsky uzel*, 25 May 2020. URL: https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/348370/ (accessed 21.07.2020).

[36] Quarantine rules in Armennia, 2020, *Kavkazsky uzel*, 15 May 2020. URL: https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/348360/ (accessed 21.07.2020); Coronavirus: Azerbaijan announces special quarantine, 2002, Izvestiya, 23.03.2020. URL: https://iz.ru/990476/2020—03—23/v-azerbaidzhane-obiavlen-spetcialnyi-karantin-iz-za-koronavirusa (accessed 23.07.2020).

[37] Tajikistan closes its border to foreign visitors due to coronavirus, 2020, *Lenta.ru*, 10.04.2020. URL: https://lenta.ru/news/2020/04/10/tadjikistan/ (accessed 25.07.2020).

[38] Ibid.

[39] Coronavirus cases in Belarus hit record high, 2020, *Lenta.ru*, 25.04.2020. URL: https://lenta.ru/news/2020/04/25/belovirus/ (accessed 25.07.2020).

ple to literally stay home and to observe social distancing. Society was plunged into isolation. Only after 11 May 2020, countries of the post-Soviet region started to ease domestic quarantine restrictions; border opening was discussed as well. On 16 March 2020, the European Commission also advised third-country nationals to refrain for 30 days from non-essential travel to the EU. Member states followed this recommendation.

Uncoordinated border closure and suspension of international passenger travel, especially that between the EU and countries that have a visa-free regime with the union (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) and between Russia, Kazakhstan, the countries of the Eurasian Union, and Central Asia, created a situation when hundreds of migrants heading home were stranded at airports and borders of host countries. Border checkpoints could not handle the large influx of people. Ukraine closed half checkpoints on its border with the EU. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan simply closed the borders. The governments of all the countries tried to charter flights but could not cope with the huge number of those willing to return home.

Still, the official declaration of border closures often had little to do with the actual situation at checkpoints. This led to unrest at the borders of some CIS states. Many citizens and migrants had no access to verified information on how to cross the border because, officially, it remained closed.

As reported by the Institute for Demographic Research of the FCTAS RAS, about 32% of migrant respondents tried to return home but could not [4]. Not everyone was able to cross the border by car, bus, or a chartered flight.

The dearth of reliable information fuelled rumours about government-chartered flights and trains and makeshift camps at borders. Most speculations concerned the situation at the border between Russia and Kazakhstan. For example, in Orenburg, 157 citizens of Kyrgyzstan spent three days at the border. On 30 March 2020, 300 citizens of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, who could not fly out from Novosibirsk started a hunger strike; they had poor access to food, sanitation facilities, and medical care.[40] In Dagestan, more than 700 Azerbaijanis were stranded at the closed border with Azerbaijan. This contributed a lot to the uneasy coronavirus situation in the republic.[41]

Almost three thousand citizens of Uzbekistan spent several weeks till the mid of September in a camp near Rostov-on-Don. In squalid conditions, unable to cook food, they were waiting for the train, which carried about 1,000 people only in September. The next trained was scheduled for the end of October.[42] At Ka-

[40] Citizens of Kyrgyzstan stranded at Novosibirsk airport due to coronavirus start hunger strike, 2020, *Meduza*. URL: https://meduza.io/news/2020/03/30/grazhdane-kirgizii-na-dve-nedeli-zastryavshie-v-aeroportu-novosibirska-iz-za-koronavirusa-ob-yavili-golodovku (accessed 25.07.2020).

[41] Putin intervenes over Azerbaijani stranded at border in Dagestan, 2020, *Kavkazski uzel*. URL: https://amp.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/349772/ (accessed 27.07.2020).

[42] Thousands of migrants waiting for train at makeshift camp near Rostov-on-Don, 2020, *BBC News*. URL: https://www.bbc.com/russian/topics/cxlx9qe9mn5t (accessed 29.07.2020).

zakhstan's border with the Samara and Orenburg regions, citizens of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were waiting for a chance to leave at two makeshift camps for a month. More than 600 Tajiks were stranded at the border between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan because of quarantine restrictions.[43] Finally, the IOM provided buses to bring them home.[44] Those who managed to return to Central Asia were placed in quarantine camp where they had to stay in deplorable conditions. In Uzbekistan, this provoked a riot at the O'rtasaroy 20,000-bed shipping container camp near Tashkent. The outrage was caused by the extension of quarantine from 14 to 30 days for some of its involuntary residents. People lived in fours in a room, and if one of them had the virus, longer quarantine duration applied to all the four.[45] The medical staff did not explain why isolation was organised that way.

Most Central Asian migrants stayed in host countries: 170,000 labour migrants remained in Kazakhstan. Only 73,000 migrants out of more than 1m working in Russia returned to Uzbekistan. Out of 600,000 Moldovan labour migrants in the EU and Russia, over 300,000 returned home.[46] Ukraine welcomed back 650,000 out of its 4—5m citizens working abroad.[47] Therefore, most migrants either could not return home or decided to wait out the pandemic in the host country.

Migration in the CIS is short-term by nature in most cases. Thus, travel restrictions were very traumatic for many migrants who left behind their families and households. The CIS migration follows a seasonal pattern: migrants have to obtain permits, which makes a longer stay in the host country impossible.

To investigate the situation of migrants in the CIS, the timeline of border closures and openings was studied for each country. Since the actual situation differed from official declarations, empirical materials were collected from the media; employees of the CIS countries' embassies and consulates in the Russian Federation were interviewed.

For half the states, the official data matched the actual state of affairs. Seven countries out of 12 placed a total ban on transboundary travel. Many migrants did not have an opportunity to either leave the host country or return home because air and railway connections had been suspended. The only country to leave its borders open was Belarus. Thus, migrants in CIS countries were faced with a

[43] Tajiki migrants stranded between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, 2020, *Sputnik Tajikistan*. URL: https://tj.sputniknews.ru/migration/20200316/1030885717/grajdane-tajikistan-zastryali-kazakhsta-uzbekistan.html (accessed 29.07.2020).

[44] Three thousand dollars for infected foreign nationals, bogus call-outs, and akims in quarantine: chronicles of Central Asian response to coronavirus, 2020, *Fergana news*. URL: https://fergana.site/articles/119393/ (accessed 29.07.2020).

[45] Uzbeks riot at quarantine camp, demand they be sent home, 2020, *Mediazona*. URL: https://mediazona.ca/news/2020/07/10/quarantine-riot (accessed 30.07.2020).

[46] Coronavirus delivers blow to Moldova's economy, 2020, *Deutsche Welle*. URL: https://www.dw.com/ru/коронавирус-нанес-мощный-удар-по-молдавской-экономике-23042020/av-53226376 (accessed 30.07.2020).

[47] Ukraine to close its border to foreign visitors from 17 March, 2020, *BBC*. URL: https://www.bbc.com/russian/news-51876682 (accessed 30.07.2020).

choice between staying in a foreign country and waiting for the restrictions to be lifted or trying to return home, often via third countries, without a chance of coming back until the pandemic is over.

The only available mode of international travel (if border crossing was allowed) was land transport. Citizens of some states were allowed to leave the country in case of emergency — to visit the funeral of a close relative or to receive urgent medical care abroad. In some cases to enter a western country, visitors in transit through Belarus had to have a Fit-to-Fly certificate.

Migration policies of the CIS countries in the COVID-19 pandemic

To major host countries, Russia and Kazakhstan (they account for 90% of the CIS labour migrants) had to respond to the involuntary violation of the law by migrants when they overstay or were not able to get licence to work. That was inevitable since all immigration authorities no longer worked with applicants, and borders had been closed [4]. Russia and Kazakhstan liberalised their migration laws as regards the stay in the country and access to the labour market of foreign citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kazakhstan took specific measures to ease the situation of migrants amid isolation and border closure. A distinct feature of Kazakhstan's labour market is that private farmers and small businesses in border areas employ domestic workers form Uzbekistan. The issue of legal stay of migrants was widely discussed in the country before the pandemic. Kazakhstan's domestic labour market is mostly undocumented; only 13% of the workers have written contracts of employment [4].

On 22 March 2020, the National State of Emergency Commission under the President of Kazakhstan decided to extend visas and working permits for foreign citizens to 20 April 2020 and to prolong the length of stay for those who had arrived in Kazakhstan under visa-free agreements, which the state had concluded with 57 countries. Administrative penalties for overstaying were cancelled.[48]

The *Russian Federation* also tried to minimise risks of illegality for migrants in the pandemic. Presidential decree No. 274 of 18 April 2020[49] automatically extended the duration oflabour licences, working permits, visas, residence permits, and registrations expiring from 15 March to 15 June 2020. During those months, migrants did not have to apply for the extension of any documents. The no-entry deportation and expulsion periods were suspended as well. Employers had the right to use migrant labour. An important novelty was the amendment to

[48] Kazakhstan to extend visa and working permits for foreign nationals to 20 April, 2020, *Forbes Kazakhstan*. URL: https://forbes.kz/news/2020/03/22/newsid_221696 (accessed 01.08.2020).

[49] On temporary measures to regulate the legal statues of foreign nationals and stateless persons in the Russian Federation amid the spread of the novel coronavirus infection (COVID-19): Presidential decree of 18.04.2020 No. 274 (revised on 23.09.2020), 2020. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_350638/ (accessed 17.09.2020).

law 135-FZ On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens, which lifted the restriction on extending labour licenseduration without exiting Russia.[50] Foreign nationals can extend their licenseswhile staying in Russia as long as they have to. The State Duma adopted amendments to federal law 109-FZ On Registration of Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons in the Russian Federation of 18 July 2006.[51] On 7 September 2020, migrant registration procedures were further liberalised until 15 December 2020.[52]

On 16 September 2020, the Prime Minister of Russia, Mikhail Mishustin, announced the forthcoming simplification of obtaining ordinary private visas, as well as long-stay visas for close relatives of Russian nationals having different citizenship. This group of foreign nationals will be able to obtain a long-stay Russian visa based on a simple written application from a Russian citizen, and they no longer will have to leave the country every three months.[53] Similarly to most EU member states, the two major host countries of the CIS, Russia and Kazakhstan, liberalised the stay in the country and access to their labour markets for most migrants residing in the two states, regardless of the previous (documented or undocumented) status of such person. In effects, this meant amnesty for undocumented migrants.

The lockdown: the transformation of the CIS economies and labour markets

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a dramatic transformation in the labour market of the CIS countries. All the states had to impose transport and travel restrictions. They also shut down businesses in catering, services, construction, and commerce, i. e. the industries that traditionally employ labour migrants. The restrictions had a severe effect on the financial situation of those numerous migrants who had worked unofficially and could not expect redundancy pay. Most migrants lost their jobs without notice; some of them were denied their due wages. Early in July 2020, the situation in CIS labour markets was grim.

[50] On amendments to article 133 of federal law On the Legal Status of Foreign Nationals in the Russian Federation: federal law of 24.04.2020 No. 135-FZ, 2020. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_351148/ (accessed 17.09.2020).

[51] On amendments to federal law On Registration of Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons in the Russian Federation — federal law of 08.06.2020 No. 182-FZ, 2020. URL: https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_354481/ (accessed 17.09.2020).

[52] Migrants can register online using the Russian government services portal; the complicated procedure of cancelling registration at one address to obtain registration at a different one was abrogated; according to the new law, all migrants can register themselves and other migrants to the address of the property they own.

[53] Mishustin announces visa regime simplification for relatives from abroad, 2020, *Novaya gazeta*, 16.09.2020, availablr at: https://novayagazeta.ru/news/2020/09/16/164306-mishustin-anonsiroval-uproschenie-vizovogo-rezhima-dlya-inostrannyh-rodstvennikov-rossiyan (accessed 17.09.2020).

In *Russia*, about 54% of working migrants have lost their jobs. Once made redundant, even those who had an official job can no longer pay for accommodation, extend their patents and other documents, or send remittances back home. Overall, 32% of migrant have lost their sources of income [4].

Migrants working officially are entitled to sick pays from their employers. The failure of an employer to do so and discharging an employee instead is a violation of the Labour Code — the laid-off person has the right to go to court.[54] Those working unofficially found themselves in a difficult situation. Not protected by the Labour Code, they have serious difficulty with defending their rights to sick or redundancy pays. This group of migrants has become one of the most vulnerable in the pandemic.[55] The number of undocumented migrants in Russia is estimated at 2.5—3.4m people, most of them working in Moscow and St Petersburg and their environs [4]. Thus, the number of unemployed migrants could reach 1m as the pandemic struck.

As President Vladimir Putin stressed in his address of 11 May 2020, the epidemic left 1.4m Russians jobless.[56] The press office of Russia's Ministry of Labour spoke of 2.8m unemployed as early as June 2020. A survey conducted by the Levada Centre[57] in April 2020 shows that almost a third of Russian citizens from families with at least one employee was affected by pay cuts (33%), a fourth encountered salary delays (25%), and a fifth, lay-offs (26%). According to the survey, as early as August 2019, 64% of respondents (all of them Russian citizens), agreed that 'my relatives and acquaintances are ready to take jobs that are now done by migrants'. Another 44% believed that 'most migrants live better and have more money than my family and I do'. A deteriorating financial situation and bleak employment prospects of the local population may cause the idea of employment competition from migrants to fuel anti-migrant sentiment and social tension.[58] A possible growth in unemployment in Russia will further exacerbate the situation of CIS migrants residing in the country. Many of them will have to return home if this becomes possible.

In *Kazakhstan*, after a state of emergency had been declared, about 2m people lost their jobs. Over 12,000 entrepreneurs applied for government support,

[54] 'Our savings will last a week: how migrants staying in Moscow are surviving self-isolation and quarantine, 2020, *Fergana*. URL: https://fergana.site/articles/116812/ (accessed 17.09.2020).

[55] Doctors ask for insurance and registration. Who will help migrants wick with coronavirus and their roommates? 2020, *Fergana*. URL: https://fergana.agency/articles/117247/?country=kz (accessed 15.09.2020).

[56] Putin addressing the nation, 2020, *Youtube*. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owpG4fneHDM (accessed 10.09.2020).

[57] The employment rate, 2020, *Levada Centre*. URL: https://www.levada.ru/2020/05/19/ZANYATOST-NASELENIYA/ (accessed 14.08.2020).

[58] Form isolation to migration, 2020, *Levada Centre*. URL: https://www.levada.ru/2020/06/04/OT-IZOLYATSII-K-MIGRATSII/ (accessed 19.07.2020).

80% of the representatives of small and medium businesses, services, and commerce. These two groups account for approximately half the country's working population.[59]

The government of *Tajikistan* closed the country's borders preventing hundreds of thousands of Tajik migrants from coming to Russia for seasonal work. The state was left without foreign currency since labour migration provides 80% of foreign currency inflow.[60]

In *Uzbekistan*, the spread of the COVID-19 virus has paralysed almost all industries of the economy. A survey conducted by the country's Central Bank says that 56% of respondents experienced a decline in household incomes, whereas 15% were left without any income whatsoever.[61]

Kyrgyzstan's economy fell sharply. The closure of the border stopped the flow of customers from Kazakhstan who account for a substantial proportion of sales in the country. Most of the country's population works for small and medium businesses. Kyrgyzstan had to appeal to international donors. The IMF has already pledged USD 120.9m to support the state.[62]

In *Ukraine*, the closure of borders has frozen traditional short-term circular migration to the EU and Russia. Ukrainians constitute a significant part of Poland's agricultural workforces (in 2018, 99% of all seasonal work permits were issued to Ukrainian nationals). About 12% of Ukrainian labour migrants whose permissions to take a job in Poland were expiring and who did not have a job at the time left the country before 1 April 2020 because of COVID-19 restrictions. Ukrainians residing in the Czech Republic and Italy, countries that do not share a common border with Ukraine, had serious difficulty in returning home. They had to cross several countries that had closed their border to foreign visitors. Ukrainian migrants are using transit corridors running through Belarus, Austria, Hungary, and Romania. Besides, they currently do not have a chance of coming back.

The lockdown created high shortage of agricultural workers in the western countries. The attempts of Germany, Austria, the UK, and Finland to bring in seasonal workers aboard chartered flights operated by a private Estonian airline succeeded only once. On 23 April 2020, the MAU airline made a flight carrying 200 Ukrainians to Finnish farms, although Finland was ready to welcome 14,000 Ukrainians for seasonal works. The government of Ukraine suspended

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[59] The coronacrisis in Central Asia: the economic consequences of the pandemic in Central Asia, 2020, *Central Asian Bureau for Analytical Reporting*. URL: https://cabar.asia/ru/koronakrizis-v-tsentralnoj-azii-ekonomicheskie-posledstviya-pandemii/ (accessed 28.08.2020).

[60] Ibid.

[61] Uzbek families buy less meet in the pandemic, 2020, *Sputnik Uzbekistan*. URL: https://uz.sputniknews.ru/society/20200820/14809956/Koronavirus-v-Uzbekistane-glavnoe-na-20-avgusta.html (accessed 05.09.2020).

[62] UNDP COVID-19 in the Kyrgyz Republic: Evaluating socioeconomic-effects, vulnerability, and policy responses, 2020, *United Nations in Kyrgyz Republic*, August 2020. URL: https://kyrgyzstan.un.org/sites/default/files/2020—08/UNDP-ADB%2520SEIA_11%2520August%25202020%2520Rus.pdf (accessed 05.10.2020).

those flights, as stated by the Estonian ambassador to Ukraine, Kaimo Kuuusk.[63] Labour migrants became a matter for negotiation between the Ukrainian and EU authorities. The Ukrainian Prime Minister, Denis Shmygal, informed the EU ambassador to Ukraine, Matti Maasikas, that the country's government was ready to negotiate with European state willing to offer Ukrainians official seasonal jobs.[64] Based on the crisis scenario of coronavirus spread, Ukraine's Cabinet predicted in June that fewer than 50% of migrants would return their jobs abroad, and the unemployment rate would go up.[65]

Migrants under lockdown: hardships of survival

In April 2020, the authors of this article worked on a random-sample survey carried out at the Institute for Demographic Research. Respondents were labour migrants of age 18 and over (717 people) recruited via social media (Facebook and VKontakte) and migrant organisations [13].[66] About 84% of respondents mentioned a loss or reduction in income; over half (65%) either lost their jobs (28%) or were furloughed (37%). Half the respondents (51%) were able to send remittances back home in April. The most serious problems encountered by migrants were the inability to pay for accommodation (64%), the lack of jobs (45%), not having enough money to buy food (43%), troubles with the police (20%), deplorable living conditions (11%), and not having enough money to pay for the patent (lisence) (2%). About 1% of respondents said that they had tested positive for the coronavirus, and 3%, that their relatives and/or friends were sick with the infection [4].

Moreover, 32% of labour migrants who had arrived in Russia failed to obtain necessary permits (as calculated by the To Be Precise [Esli Byt' Tochnym] project).[67] The Russian media discussed that, due to the pandemic, most labour migrants might switch to unofficial employment, and this would lead to wage dumping and increase xenophobia.

The number of calls to the hotline of the Tong Jahoni human rights organisation increased to 14,200 in March-April 2020, which is twice that in March-April

[63] Ukraine is Africa of many centuries ago, 2020, *News-Front INFO*. URL: https://news-front.info/2020/05/03/ukraina-cze-afrika-prichem-mnogovekovoj-davnosti/ (accessed 11.07.2020).

[64] EU countries welcome Ukrainians foe work: Cabinet creates workgroup, 2020, *Inforesist*. URL: https://inforesist.org/strany-es-massovo-priglashayut-ukrainczev-na-rabotu-v-kabmine-sozdali-rabochuyu-gruppu/ (accessed 13.09.2020).

[65] Cabinet to consider two post-pandemic scenarios for economy, 2020, *NV*. URL: https://nv.ua/biz/economics/koronavirus-v-ukraine-kakie-posledstviya-dlya-ekonomiki-novosti-ukrainy-50094584.html (accessed 07.09.2020).

[66] Ryazantsev, S. V. 2020, The Situation of Migrant Workers in Russia During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Results of a Sociological Study), *International Conference The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Migration Mobility*, Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences and MGIMO University, 27 April 2020, Moscow. URL: http://испи.рф/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-migration-mobility/ (accessed 14.07.2020).

[67] From isolation to migration, 2020, *Levada Centre*. URL: https://www.levada.ru/2020/06/04/OT-IZOLYATSII-K-MIGRATSII/ (accessed 10.08.2020).

2019 (5,500 calls). The key reasons why people contacted Tong Jahoni remained the same: arbitrary detention (up twofold, from 2.2 to 4.1 reported cases); seeking a legal consultation (up by 30%, from 2,100 to 2,700); solicitation of bribes by the police (up threefold, from 600 to 1,300); requests for humanitarian aid (nine in March-April 2019 and 1292 in the same months 2020; the fourth most popular reason).[68]

Trying to cut their expenses, most migrants are choosing the cheapest hostels that are not fit for isolation — each fourth migrant shares a room with four to eight other people (27%) [4]. Such living conditions make social distancing almost impossible and leave migrants exposed to the risk of infection.

The official policy on isolating infected migrants at hostels and the ban on going out even to buy groceries add to pandemic-induced problems. For instance, in a hostel in the village of Novosergievka in the Leningrad region, the police locked in 485 migrants, of which 123 were tested positive for COVID-19. As reported by Tong Jahoni NGO, over 30 migrant hostels in Moscow, each having hundreds of beds, have been quarantined. Human rights activists believe that the virus spreads not because of situation in hostels but because of the owners of the hostels and sometimes migrants themselves throwing the infected migrants out of hostels.[69]

The language barrier to communication with physicians is yet another problem. Doctors are helping migrants to recover from the coronavirus: they give away free medicine and admit migrants to the hospital when needed. Still, many migrants do not speak Russian well and cannot articulate clearlythe ambulance crew how they feel, and there are cases when migrants have been denied emergency help and hospitalisation.[70]

The restrictions imposed in Russia have created administrative some situations that turned many law-abiding migrants into undocumented:

1) Russian migration services work was suspended from the end of March; it became impossible to extend the duration of a labour licenses, a residence permit, or any other document necessary for a migrant to legally stayin the country;

2) many migrants were not paid for the work they had already performed; nor did they receive any furlough payment when put in quarantine, although President Vladimir Putin demanded to do that in his address to the business community;[71]

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[68] Chupik, V. 2020, The problems of migrants in Russia durung self-isolation, *International conference The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Migration Mobility*, Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences and MGIMO University, 27 April 2020, Moscow. URL: http://испи.рф/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-migration-mobility/ (accessed 10.08.2020).

[69] 'They threw me out when I got sick'. Hostels with COVID-19 cases are being closed, residents are left locked in, 2020, *Fergana*. URL: https://fergana.site/articles/117910/ (accessed 09.07.2020).

[70] Doctors ask for insurance and registration, 2020, *Fergana*. URL: https://fergana.ru/articles/117247/ (accessed 02.08.2020).

[71] 'I'd rather they pay wages than give me a bowl of soup'. How can large businesses and diaspora help stranded migrants? 2020, *Fergana*. URL: https://fergana.plus/articles/117911/ (accessed 28.08.2020).

3) amendments were made to the Code of Administrative Offences concerning violations of quarantine restrictions. This led to a growing number of detentions of migrants by the police both in the streets and at places of residence. More detentions meant mass arrests, deportations, and placing migrants awaiting expulsion in special detention centres.

A lawyer from the Civic Assistance Committee NGO, Anna Gorodetskaya, calls these amendments, alongside fines levied on violators, illicit measures taken by the Russian authorities: 'Such measures are possible only in a state of emergency, which has not been declared'. Another lawyer, Tong Jahoni's Valentina Chupik adds more detail: 'If a state of emergency had been declared in Russia, the state would pay for food, accommodation, and the time out of employment'.[72] In reality, migrants had to bear all the expenses themselves.

The economic fallout of the lockdown in the source countries: the declining number of remittances

The economic consequences of the pandemic cannot yet be fully evaluated. The restrictions imposed in Russia during the first wave of COVID19 caused the country's GDP to fall by 12%.[73] Ukraine's Cabinet expects investment and consumption to plummet, which will prevent the country from returning to pre-pandemic levels, whereas government deficit will continue to grow.[74] Data from the Statistical Committee of the CIS demonstrate that the economic performance of the second six months of 2020 was below that of the first six months of 2019 in constant prices: GDP decreased on average by 3—6%; investment, from 23% in Armenia to 2.7% in Belarus; retail, by 1.5—19%. In all CIS countries, consumer prices have risen.

The most substantial decline was that in passenger traffic, both internal and external. It dwindled by more than a third (to 64%). The passenger traffic figures and the number of passengers paint a vivid picture of how closed international borders and travel restrictions have affected migration flows. Table 2 shows quantitative data on the volume and dynamics of passenger traffic in the first half of 2020 compared to previous years. Investment is used as the primary indicator of national socio-economic development. A decrease in passenger traffic affects capital investment in the country and thus the economy as a whole.

[72] They threw me out when I got sick'. Hostels with COVID-19 cases are being closed, residents are left locked in, 2020, *Fergana*. URL: https://fergana.site/articles/117910/ (accessed 28.08.2020).

[73] Putin named growing unemployment the greatest global problem, 2020, *RIA*. URL: https://ria.ru/20200623/1573378512.html (accessed 09.09.2020).

[74] Cabinet to consider two post-pandemic scenarios for economy, 2020, *NV*. URL: https://nv.ua/biz/economics/koronavirus-v-ukraine-kakie-posledstviya-dlya-ekonomiki-novosti-ukrainy-50094584.html (accessed 07.09.2020).

Table 2

Passenger traffic and capital investment in the CIS

Country	Number of passengers carried			Passenger traffic			Capital investment (in constant prices)
	m people	First six months of 2020 to first six months of 2019, %	First six months of 2019 to first six months of 2018, %	bn passenger-kilometres	First six months of 2020 to first six months of 2019, %	First six months of 2019 to first six months of 2018, %	First six months of 2020 to first six months of 2019, %
Azerbaijan	602.0	73.7	101.9	9.5	70.4	99.0	97.3
Armenia	34.9	44.4	104.5	0.5	45.4	102.5	76.6
Belarus	541.6	85.3	99.97	7.5	70.0	106.1	98.6
Kazakhstan	4 737.7	54.5	101.3	54.4	52.7	98.7	97.1
Kyrgyzstan	156.3	50.2	101.1	2.6	50.2	99.9	85.2
Moldova	23.0	53.3	103.4	1.1	49.3	105.7	85.1
Russia	3 909.0	67.8	97.9	141.3	54.4	108.1	96.0
Tajikistan	290.2	90.8	111.8	3.5	79.8	101.9	95.4
Uzbekistan	1 348.2	103.2	102.2	30.8	100.6	103.7	87.2
Ukraine	547.9	55.2	94.9	18.6	41.9	105.7	65.1
CIS total	12 190.7	64.3	100.1	269.8	56.8	104.9	94.0

Source: Statistical Committee of the CIS. URL: http://www.cisstat.org.

Passenger traffic has substantially decreased since the outbreak of COVID-19, compared to previous years. Only Uzbekistan has improved its performance. On average the industry has fallen by 45—55% (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Ukraine), which is a critical level. As to capital investment, no CIS country has reached the 2019 figures. This means that the restrictions have taken their toll on almost all industries that are connected, directly or indirectly, to migrant labour.

The situation in the labour market was very difficult for migrants themselves. The survey showed that migrants employed in services and construction were deprived of both means of subsistence and the chance to find a new job amid COVID-19 restrictions. The number of remittances that migrants send back to families has decreased as a result.[75] During peak restrictions, the number of remittances from Russia declined by over 50%. Migrants themselves were badly in need of money and could not count on wages.[76] A downward income trend has emerged in both source and host countries.

[75] Migrants from Central Asia living below the breadline need help, 2020, *UN*. URL: https://news.un.org/ru/story/2020/05/1378202 (accessed 14.07.2020).

[76] COVID-19 pandemic: what will happen to migrants' incomes in Russia, 2020, *Sputnik Uzbekistan*. URL: https://uz.sputniknews.ru/infographics/20200413/13914566/Pandemiya-COVID-19-chto-budet-s-dokhodami-migrantov-v-Rossii.html (accessed 15.07.2020).

A sharp decrease in remittances pose an enormous challenge to source countries, such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, whose citizens are employed primarily in Russia and Kazakhstan [7]. The economies of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan will bear the brunt: since 2010, remittances have steadily been over 25% of the countries' GDP, constituting a substantial component of their economies.[77] The negative economic background may contribute to greater social tensions and political instability in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. They can also cause unrest among migrants residing abroad. In Kyrgyzstan, this process started after the parliamentary election. Protesters stormed the building of the parliament, mass rallies followed, and a curfew was imposed on 12 October 2020 because of the unstable situation, threats to the lives, health, and security of citizens, and the need to restore public order.[78] A similar picture of political instability is observed in Belarus where protests have continued since the August presidential election.[79] The economic crisis has contributed to the political crisis in Azerbaijan and Armenia where battles over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region resumed resulting in heavy casualties on both sides. If these conflicts continue, Russia may become the destination for a large number of refugees.

The World Bank expects remittances to post-Soviet republics to fall by 28% amid the pandemic due to the economic crisis and isolation. This will deprive many vulnerable households of financial support. In 2019, about 76% of migrants registered in Russia for the first time came from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine. The total amount of remittances sent from Russia to CIS countries reached USD 12.9bn.[80] Dependence on remittances is very heavy at a regional and local level. In the Kyrgyz city of Osh, over 30% of households live on remittances.[81] In February-April 2020, this proportion decreased by 20—30%.[82]

[77] World Development Indicators (WDI). Global Financial Development, 2020, *The World Bank*. URL: https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/remittance-inflows-gdp] (accessed 15.07.2020).

[78] Borisenko, L. 2020, Head of Kyrgyzstan reintroduces state of emergency in Bishkek, 2020, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 12.10.2020. URL: https://rg.ru/2020/10/12/glava-kirgizii-povtorno-vvel-rezhim-chrezvychajnogo-polozheniia-v-bishkeke.htmlм (accessed 14.10.2020).

[79] The first day of 'national strike' in Belarus, 2020, *RBC*. URL: https://www.rbc.ru/photoreport/26/10/2020/5f96ac279a79472f06268cd1 (accessed 30.10.2020).

[80] Form isolation to migration, 2020, *Levada Centre*. URL: https://www.levada.ru/2020/06/04/OT-IZOLYATSII-K-MIGRATSII/ (accessed 08.07.2020).

[81] Ergeshbaev, U. 2020, The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on labour migration and the socio-economic situation in Kyrgyzstan, *International conference The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Migration Mobility*, Institute of Socio-Political Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences and MGIMO University, 27 April 2020, Moscow. URL: http://испи.рф/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-migration-mobility/ (accessed 16.07.2020).

[82] Emerging Europe braces for sharp drop in remittances from foreign workers, 2020, *Emerging Europe*. URL: https://emerging-europe.com/news/emerging-europe-braces-for-sharp-drop-in-remittances-from-foreign-workers/] (accessed 20.08.2020).

Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, and Ukraine are also running the risk of losing the substantial source of income that remittances are (they account for over 10% of the GDPs of these states).[83] On top of that, residents of source countries are not welcome to returned compatriots-migrants — there are fears that they will carry disease and cause stiffer competition for jobs.

Conclusion

Since it is still unclear when the COVID-19 pandemic will end and the restrictions are likely to hold up, many seasonal migrants unable to return home will become long-term migrants.

The pandemic has affected the world economy and migration, and CIS countries are no exception. The lockdown policy caused many migrants to lose their jobs and stable incomes almost at once. What makes the situation even worse is that they cannot return home to wait out the hard times. The closure of borders limited the mobility of migrants who found themselves stranded in a foreign country. In a difficult situation, sometimes without means of subsistence, many of them were physically locked in at hostels because of the virus or its threat. All this influenced adversely both source and host countries. For the former, the pandemic-induced crisis means the loss of a stable inflow of remittances, which account for significant proportions of their GDPs, and the return of hundreds of thousands of unemployed and probably sick citizens. For the latter, the negative consequences include the loss of cheap labour that will be difficult to recoup. An important factor is travel to both source and host countries becoming more expensive since any route involves multiple modes of transport, travel opportunities are few, and it is necessary to be tested for COVID-19 in both states. Migrants' behaviour has to change — they are faced with the choice between long-term migration or giving up working abroad and looking for a new way to earn a living.

Russia and Kazakhstan have substantially liberalised their migration laws giving migrants residing on its territory a chance to maintain legal status and access the labour market. As the data above show, many CIS countries have not gone to great length to minimise the risks of the migration crisis. Having closed their borders, some states deprived own migrants of any chance of returning home. The actual state of affairs differed much from official declarations, and this further aggravated the situation for migrants. Home countries were doing nothing to bring back their citizens, and host countries were not aiding foreign nationals in returning home; people were doing this one their own, often choosing paths of doubtful legality.

[83] Emerging Europe braces for sharp drop in remittances from foreign workers, 2020, *Emerging Europe*. URL: https://emerging-europe.com/news/emerging-europe-braces-for-sharp-drop-in-remittances-from-foreign-workers/] (accessed 20.08.2020).

The lack of coordination between home and host countries resulted in that thousands of migrants found themselves in deplorable conditions at makeshift camps or airports. Russia and Kazakhstan as the main destination countries for the CIS labour migrants aided migrants in extending the duration of documents and suspended legal punishments for the overstay.

Although there are no industry-specific data, it is safe to assume that some industries are in a desperate state because of coronavirus restrictions, whereas others are in need of migrant labour. Governments must help workers from shutdown businesses find employment with active businesses. Laid-off migrants must be able to apply for a work permit and stay in the country for a month or longer depending on the situation. All this has already been done in Italy and V4 countries.

We believe that the CIS states have to develop a package of measures to support migrants since the COVID-19 crisis has severely affected this social group. These measures should be aimed to:

• *simplify the extension of documents and work permits*. The restrictions make the search for a new job a long and arduous task. Migrants must have the right to stay in the country legally while looking for a job, focusing on new employment rather than getting paperwork in order. Apps used during the lockdown to manage the status of migrants can relieve migration services of part of their work after the restrictions are lifted;

• *formulate clear criteria for people eligible to cross the border*. Today, potential seasonal workers are experiencing problems with visa-free entry (nor can they obtain visas because consulates are closed);

• *create multi-language portals to disseminate coordinated information on the situation in the CIS* to quash rumour and prevent panic, which leads to the emergence of makeshift camps, riots, and migrants congregating at places that are not fit for accommodating people;

• *introduce the system of online job applications*. The digitalisation of traditional procedures and formalities will help fulfil the stay-at-home and physical distancing requirements. It will make the procedures swifter and more efficient for seasonal and domestic migrant workers;

• *assist migrants in returning home*. Regular chartered flights must be arranged by consulates of CIS countries. Borders must always stay open for the country's nationals willing to come home as well as for foreign citizens trying to leave the country;

• *introduce social safety nets*. Employers should not dismiss migrants as long as the restrictions are in effect since it will be very difficult to find a new job; the absence of income will put migrants on the edge of survival;

• *provide medical care*. In the current situation, many migrants were locked in at large hostels. This was very unsafe since the accommodation is shared by both infected and healthy people. Migrants with suspected COVID-19 must have access to medical care and safe lodging where they can self-isolate.

In the constantly changing situation and amid restrictions, it is impossible to minimise effectively risks faced by migrants. Yet if no action is taken, the economy will suffer, the crime rate will rise, and social tension will pile up in both source and host countries. Popular discontent with the economic situation in CIS countries may spark off conflicts within and between countries. These conflicts may be provoked to divert attention from the economy. In this case, refugees will replace migrants, and the complicated situation in the region will be further aggravated.

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The authors

Prof. Sergey V. Ryazantsev, Head of the Department of Demographic and Migration Policy, MGIMO University, Russia; Director, Institute for Demographic Research Federal Centre for Theoretical and Applied Sociology Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia.

E-mail: riazan@mail.ru

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5306-8875

Dr Irina N. Molodikova, Leader of the Project, Central European University, Hungary; Leading Researcher, Institute for Demographic Research Federal Centre for Theoretical and Applied Sociology Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia.

E-mail: molodikova@hotmail.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8926-9679

Alexey D. Bragin, Junior Researcher, Institute for Demographic Research, Federal Centre for Theoretical and Applied Sociology Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia.

E-mail: alexbragin562@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4065-3546

WORK-LIFE BALANCE DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK: THE CASE OF LATVIA

Z. Krisjane
E. Apsite-Berina
M. Berzins
T. Skadins
Ģ. Burgmanis

The University of Latvia
19 Raiņa bulvāris, Riga, LV-1586, Latvia

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This paper aims to shed light on work-life balance in Latvia during the state of emergency. The COVID-19 outbreak has led many governments to introduce lockdowns. While the restrictions imposed may help to contain the spread of the virus, they may also result in substantial damage to the well-being of the population. The COVID-19 outbreak in Latvia demonstrates the extent and ways in which socio-demographics has determined different patterns of behaviour, attitudes, employment changes and harmonised work and life balance. The study describes the development of COVID-19 in the country chronologically. It shows labour migration to and from Latvia before the COVID-19 outbreak, and then discusses geographical features of the distribution of confirmed COVID-19 cases. The extent of the COVID-19 threat is assessed focusing on the global, national, regional and intra-family levels. Finally, types of employment and work-life balance are analysed according to the geography and age groups.

Keywords:
COVID-19 outbreak, work-life balance, Latvia, type of employment, perception of threats.

Introduction

The turbulent times of the COVID-19 outbreak have changed society and conventional approaches to everyday life around the globe. Many governments have implemented lockdown measures, and while the restrictions imposed may help contain the spread of the virus, they may also result in substantial damage to population well-being at various geographical scales. These set the need to assess the

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extent and ways in which socio-demographics have determined different spatial patterns of behaviour, and attitudes and shifts in employment patterns. Moreover, COVID-19 displays geographic inequalities among the age groups of the population in Latvia: the outbreak is causing severe health, social and economic challenges, many of them being directly related to demographic factors.

Given that older people tend to have a weaker immune system and are more likely to suffer from chronic illness, they are particularly vulnerable to viruses like SARS-CoV-2 [1]. Thus, the severity of COVID-19 does not depend only on a country's health system and policy measures in imposing restrictions, but also on the age structure, regional distribution and social behaviour of its population [2]. Demographers have provided evidence showing that urban areas where people have stronger social ties appear to have a higher number of COVID-19 cases [3]. Early evidence shows that population gender-age structure and socio-economic status may explain the remarkable variation in mortality and the vulnerability to the COVID-19 outbreak [2, 4]. Furthermore, spatial disparities are also important when it comes to analysing the extent and ways in which demographic factors have determined different patterns of behaviour and socio-economic consequences caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. Besides, demographic factors are key to considering how various age groups interact in societies and thus to understanding the spread of the virus. Because of the travel restrictions and the closing of borders, population migration was largely affected. By considering the population age structure, particularly its vulnerable groups, it is possible to predict the consequences of the epidemic curve, the burden of acute diseases and expected needs for health care and different assistance measures [5]. Co-residence patterns and the age structure of the households are also of principal significance [6]. The COVID-19 crisis has exposed the impact of social and economic inequalities on the distribution of resilience to the large-scale health crises among various groups. Research from the UK shows that the crisis has adversely affected the increase of relational and situational poverty and further aggravated disparities based on social class, gender, race, and ability [7—8]. Several recently published studies elucidate the most important challenges and immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and the quality of life of individuals and families all over the world [9—14]. These latest investigations offer original methodology as well as empirical data on the topic researched. However, their results are incomplete, sometimes even controversial and in some way may have a strong cultural impact.

Several publications are related to the broader context of well-being in families [15]. For instance, there is a study on the impact of COVID-19 on separated families [16], on the increase of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic and the reduction of support measures [17] during this period. There is also a publication reporting a change in the sexual behaviour of young people during the COVID-19 outbreak [18]. Nevertheless, another study reveals that during the COVID-19 pandemic couples are more willing to become parents [19].

The outbreak of COVID-19 has not only affected the mental state and social relations among individuals but also transformed educational systems and patterns of employment all over the world. The issue of new forms of employment, including the ICT-based ones [20], has been under discussion in Europe and Latvia for several years now. Recent studies demonstrate that, due to the COVID-19 crisis, 37% of Europeans have started to work from home. While COVID-19 has unleashed the enormous unexploited potential for flexible working schedules, research has shown that, when working from home, employees may suffer from sleeping disorders, ergonomic injuries, as well as have to work longer hours to accomplish their duties, often because their children also spend their time at home [21]. At the same time, the presence of school-age children in the household had little effect on the need to work from home during the crisis. Amongst those working from home there was a somewhat higher share of those who did not have school-age children. This confirmed that the primary determinant of working from home was the nature of one's work and the extent to which remote work was feasible rather than the individuaor family circumstances of employees[1].

The pandemic-induced crisis is having an impact on many of the pre-existing inequalities along age, gender, socio-economic and geographic dimensions in Latvia [22—23]. Moreover, several recent studies have pointed out the importance of employees' work-life balance, on the one hand, and the mismatch between remote work setting expectations and reality, on the other[2] [24—25].

This paper aims to shed light on work-life balance in Latvia during the state of COVID-19 emergency.

The following research questions are to be answered in order to shed light on whether the outbreak of COVID-19 has affected the work-life balance of the population in Latvia:

1. What has been the chronological development of the COVID-19 outbreak in Latvia?

2. How does the individual perception of the threats differ?

3. To what extent were the work-life balance and type of employment influenced by the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020?

This paper is divided into five parts. The first part describes state of the art in the field under investigation and the methodological approach of the authors. Further, the results section covers the chronological development of the COVID-19 situation the country, describes patterns of labour migration to and from Latvia and maps the geographical features of the distribution of confirmed COVID-19 cases. Then, the level of COVID-19 threat is assessed focusing on the global, national, regional and intra-family levels. Finally, the type of employment (remote or non-remote) is analysed according to the geography and age groups.

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[1] Living, working and COVID-19, 2020. In: *Eurofound, Telework and ICT-based mobile work: Flexible working in the digital age*, New forms of employment series, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg Union. URL: https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef19032en.pdf (accessed 16.10.2020).

[2] Ibid.

Data and Methods

The study adopts a mixed-method approach. Firstly, the study carries out an analysis of the officially available statistical data on confirmed COVID-19 cases and their geographical distribution. Secondly, it exploits the data from a survey carried out in mid-2020.

Two officially available data sources used in this study are the national Government decisions related to COVID-19 provided by the Cabinet of Ministers[3] and the data from the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control of Latvia (*Slimību profilakses un kontroles centrs* or SPKC), which are used to describe the dynamics of confirmed cases. These datasets were available from the Latvian Open data portal[4].

This study is also based on a unique dataset obtained from a survey of 1473 respondents. The survey was organised in two phases. The first group of 459 respondents was surveyed from May 29 to June 30, 2020 directly by the Faculty of Geography and Earth Science, the University of Latvia. The second group of 1014 respondents was surveyed by the Market and Social Research Agency, *Latvijas fakti*, from July 3 to July 13, 2020. The two groups of participants were surveyed using the same questionnaire and comparable survey methodology (computer-assisted web interviews). The survey includes answers from respondents throughout Latvia.

The survey data was stratified by gender and age of the population, by regions, as well as by urban and rural areas. When analysing computer-as-sisted web interviews, the fact that not all respondents have access to the Internet was taken into account.

An essential part of the questionnaire consisted of questions related to behaviour and attitudes, as well as to changes in employment characteristics. The answers allowed researchers to analyse the impact of the crisis on mobility and remote employment options. Detailed information on the respondents' place of residence was obtained. Therefore, the survey data were closely related to the research topic and provided novel information for the analysis. The survey also included questions on the perceptions of threat, actions concerning quarantine and pandemics, the impact of quarantine on income, daily and social contacts, the challenges faced by the population. This allowed the researchers to include critical aspects of the analysis.

The survey results were mainly analysed using with the use of descriptive statistics methods. *Chi-square tests* and non-parametric *Kruskal Wallis test* were used to evaluate differences between various groups.

Descriptive statistics of the survey sample are shown in Table 1. Respondents are divided into groups based on their geographic location, as well as on their socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

[3] COVID-19. Valdības aktualitātes saistībā ar COVID-19, 2020, *Cabinet of Ministers*. URL: https://mk.gov.lv/lv/content/COVID-19 (accessed 16.10.2020).

[4] COVID-19 apstiprināto gadījumu skaits un 14 dienu kumulatīvā saslimstība pa administratīvajām teritorijām, 2020, *Data.gov.lv*. URL: https://data.gov.lv/dati/lv/dataset/COVID-19-pa-adm-terit (accessed 16.10.2020).

Table 1

Characteristics of the survey sample.

Descriptive statistics

Variable	Urban areas, %	Rural areas, %	Riga, %	Outside of Riga, %	Total, %
Gender					
Men	51.4	42.3	53.5	46.7	48.9
Women	48.6	57.7	46.5	53.5	51.1
Age group					
18—34 years old	35.1	24.5	41.6	27.6	32.2
35—54 years old	41.9	51.1	38.1	47.5	44.4
55—64 years old	23.0	24.4	20.3	24.9	23.4
Educational level					
Primary education or less	1.1	3.5	0.6	2.3	1.8
Secondary education	11.7	11.0	9.8	12.3	11.5
Post-secondary non-tertiary education	14.9	14.9	11.9	16.4	14.9
Tertiary education	72.3	70.6	77.7	68.9	71.8
Occupational status					
Employed	78.7	77.0	81.3	76.8	78.3
Unemployed	6.5	5.6	6.4	6.1	6.2
Retired	3.8	6.7	3.1	5.3	4.6
Unemployed student, pupil	3.1	1.3	1.8	3.0	2.6
Other	6.5	8.6	6.8	7.3	7.1
Did not want to answer	1.4	0.8	0.6	1.5	1.2
Changes in income level during the COVID-19 outbreak					
Sharp decrease	8.9	9.4	10.5	8.3	9.0
Moderate decrease	21.0	18.8	19.7	20.8	20.4
No change	62.5	62.1	63.5	61.7	62.4
Moderate increase	5.7	7.4	4.9	6.7	6.1
Sharp increase	1.2	1.3	1.0	1.4	1.2
Did not want to answer	0.7	1.0	0.4	1.0	0.8
Household type					
Single households	19.1	12.9	18.9	16.8	17.4
Larger households	80.9	87.1	81.1	83.2	82.6

Source: Authors' survey "Behavioural patterns and attitudes towards the COVID-19 outbreak in Latvia", 2020, N=1473.

Most of the respondents of the survey were women: they made up the majority of respondents outside Riga and in other areas. The “35—54 years old” age group was the largest in all parts of the country, except Riga, where the youngest age group made up a slightly larger part of the respondents. The situation with other groups was more ubiquitous. The vast majority of respondents in all areas were university graduates, most of which were employed. As for changes in income level, the answers were less homogenous. Whilst in most cases, no change had occurred; approxi-mately a fifth of the respondents experienced a moderate decrease in their income level.

Finally, but importantly, most of the respondents lived in larger (non-single) households, which was especially common for rural areas. The geographical aspect was vital when analysing the responses. Assessments from respondents living in Riga and the respondents living outside of the capital were compared. Age composition of the residents was crucial, too, so the responses of different age groups were also compared.

The spread of COVID-19 in Latvia: a chronological approach

To limit the spread of COVID-19, Latvia declared the state of emergency on March 12, 20205. Initially, it was set to last until April 7. Along with this decla-ration, numerous decisions were made regarding various aspects of the pandemic. For example, face-to-face (contact) education had to cease at all educational institutions, and teaching resumed online. Social distancing measures were also im-plemented: no more than two persons were allowed to gather in public indoor or outdoor spaces, separated by no fewer than 2 meters. Some excep-tions were, for instance, people living in the same household and their children (minors), as well as persons performing work or service duties. On March 12, it was announced that, as of March 17, an additional safety measure, a travel ban was imposed on all passengers travelling internationally through air-ports, seaports, by buses and or rail.

Numerous decisions were made on March 25. On weekends and public holidays, only selected stores (e. g., grocery stores, pharmacies, construction materials) were allowed to remain open in all shopping centres. Operation of sports clubs and additional education clubs was put on hold. In several medical institutions, physicians were no longer able to provide health care services. Government approved the criteria for receiving downtime compensations and tax holidays on March 26. Downtime benefit was to be paid to those employees who had to suspend work due to the spread of COVID-19.

Starting March 29, for the remainder of the emergency period, all private events, except outdoor funeral services (with epidemiological safety rules in place), were prohibited. Cultural, entertainment, outdoor sports and other recreational facilities were only allowed to work from 8 am to 10 pm.

On April 7, a decision was made to extend the emergency period until May 15. It was also decided that all citizens of the European Union and persons permanently residing in the member states, would be allowed to cross the territory of Latvia at specific land border crossing points to return to their country of residence.

As of May 12, organisation of public events, including cultural events both indoors and outdoors, was allowed. The maximum number of participants was set at 25 people, the duration of indoor events — at no longer than 3 hours.

From June 1, some restrictions concerning educational, athletic and cultural activities were lifted. State examinations and entrance examinations at the level of primary education, secondary education and higher education, as well as educational processes for all types of education, were allowed to take place on-site. Professional athletes were allowed to practice without keeping the 2-meter distance.

The COVID-19 emergency ended in Latvia on June 9. The 2-meter distance could now be disregarded for sports events, as well as dancing and acting classes. The total number of visitors at indoor cultural events was not to exceed 100 people, and 300 people in case of outdoor events.

From July 11, certain restrictions aimed at containing the spread of COVID-19 were reinstated. In public catering places, the maximum number of persons (not members of one household) at one table was set at 4 for indoors and 8 for outdoor seating areas.

Beginning July 17, both foreign tourists and Latvian citizens returning home were obligated to fill out the immigrant questionnaire upon their arrival. This measure was implemented to keep track of all travellers from abroad.

Up to 1,000 people were allowed to gather indoors from August 17, while the maximum number of people for outdoor gatherings was set at 3,000.

According to the State Revenue Service (Valsts ieņēmumu dienests or VID), during the period of lockdown caused by COVID-19 from March 12 to June 30 2020, a total of 133,462 downtime compensations in the total amount of 53.6 million euros were paid, and 55,179 individuals, including 2,388 self-employed persons, received these compensations at least once[5].

20% of compensation recipients reported to have been employed in wholesale and retail or in automotive and motorcycle repair industries; 13.9% in the hospitality industry; 9.5% in manufacturing, and another 9.5% provided professional, scientific and technical services. An average downtime payment recipient would be a salesperson or an employee of catering or hospitality industries.

When the state of emergency ended, the proportion of remote workers decreased. In June 2020, 15.5%, or 117,100 employees aged 15—74 worked remotely, which was 2.7 percentage points (18,800 people) fewer than in May; of these remote employees, 70% were women and 30% — men. In June, approximately one fifth (20.9%) of employees had the opportunity to work remotely[6].

[5] Dīkstāves pabalstu periodā teju 55 tūkstošiem cilvēku VID izmaksājis dīkstāves pabalstus vairāk nekā 53 miljonu eiro apmērā, 2020, *VID*. URL: https://www.vid.gov.lv/lv/dikstaves-pabalstu-perioda-teju-55-tukstosiem-cilveku-vid-izmaksajis-dikstaves-pabalstus-vairak-0 (accessed 16.10.2020).

[6] Attālināti nodarbināto darbinieku skaits, 2020, *CSB*. URL: https://www.csb.gov.lv/lv/statistika/COVID19/attalinati-nodarbinato-darbinieku-skaits (accessed 16.10.2020)

Table 2

Timeline of main events during the COVID-19 outbreak

Date	Event / decision
12.03.2020	A state of emergency is declared
17.03.2020	International passenger traffic through airports, ports, buses and rail is suspended
25.03.2020	Government of Latvia expands precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19
26.03.2020	Government approves the criteria for receiving lockdown compensations and tax holidays
29.03.2020	Stricter rules of social distancing are introduced to curb the spread of the virus
02.04.2020	The government expands the range of beneficiaries for lockdown compensations and tax holidays
07.04.2020	State of emergency is extended until May 12
23.04.2020	The minimum downtime allowance is set at 180 euros
30.04.2020	Due to the state of emergency, the usual procedure for students to take final exams in schools is changed
06.05.2020	On May 15 the internal borders of the Baltic States are set to open for free movement of people
07.05.2020	From May 12, the government enables the organisation of small cultural events and, following the requirements of the Sanitary Protocol, the operation of affiliated cultural institutions
14.05.2020	Beginning May 15, international passenger transportation between the Baltic States is allowed
21.05.2020	Starting June 1, some educational, cultural and athletic activities and events are allowed to take place on-site
09.06.2020	The COVID-19 emergency comes to an end in Latvia; many restrictions remain in place
10.07.2020	From July 11, certain restrictions are renewed
16.07.2020	Registration is introduced for incoming foreign travellers

Source: authors' compilation based on the Cabinet of Ministers data

Latvia recorded the first case of COVID-19 on March 2[7]. After that, the number of cases began to increase until reaching a (then) peak of 48 new cases on April 1. After that, and until the end of the emergency period, the pace was much less intense, with new cases not exceeding 27 new cases per day, so the situation remained relatively stable. On May 5, June 1, there were no new cases. The number of confirmed new cases is shown in Figure 1[8].

[7] Latvijā apstiprināts pirmais koronavīrusa «COVID-19» gadījums, 2020, *LSM.lv*. URL: https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/latvija-apstiprinats-pirmais-koronavirusa-COVID-19-gadijums.a349768/ (accessed 16.10.2020).

[8] Ibid.

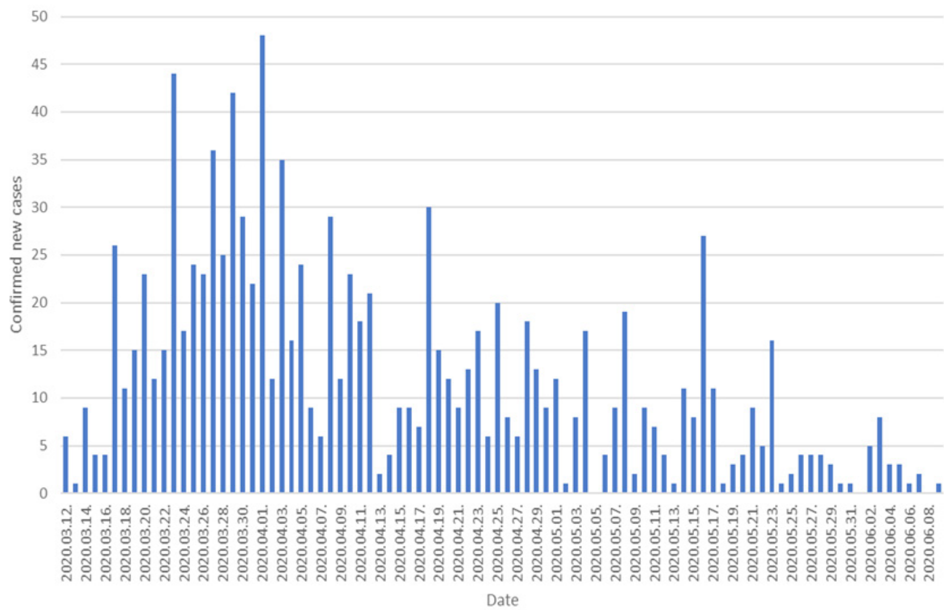

Figure 1. Number of confirmed new cases during the state of emergency

Source: authors' calculations, based on SPKC data.

International Labour Migration Flows to and from Latvia

The overall trend shows that the share of immigrants to Latvia is increasing, but the percentage of emigrants is slowly decreasing. The main destination countries for Latvian migrants are the United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Norway and the Netherlands. One previous study on labour migration geography shows that there are core-periphery differences in terms of labour market choices within and outside Latvia[9], particularly evident in the case of young internal migrants [22].

Around 46% of all immigrants to Latvia are the so called return migrants — citizens and non-citizens of Latvia. According to the national statistics of Latvia, in the early 2020 total population of Latvia was 1 million 908 thousand people with 10.4% non-Latvian citizens. The main group with non- citizens' status is Russian-speaking population with special passports, who permanently reside in the country [26]. In recent years, return migration has been steadily increasing, with migrants favouring the return to the capital — Riga, as well as other largest cities and surrounding municipalities[10]. Thus, the changes in the behaviour of labour force in Riga and its neighbouring region, as well as work-life balance there, are more topical, since internal migration is an essential phenomenon of the labour market in Latvia.

[9] Population migration databases, 2020, *CSB*. URL: http://data1.csb.gov.lv/pxweb/en/iedz/iedz__migr/?tablelist=true (accessed 16.10.2020).

[10] Ibid.

Moreover, strengthening the initiatives related to the support of return migrants was also a part of the public discourse and a priority at the national and regional policy-making level during the global COVID-19 pandemic-induced crisis[11]. After the first COVID-19 outbreak and suspension of international passenger transportation on March 17, numerous repatriation options were introduced. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, around 5,000 persons returned to Latvia with the repatriation flights with compulsory 10 days quarantine afterwards[12]. These were those Latvians who happened to be abroad at the time for travel or work arrangements and some return migrants. Global pandemic made those who previously considered a return viewing Latvia as a calmer, less affected place compared to other densely populated areas.

Of all immigrants, around 54% were labour migrants and international students. Due to the changes in the immigration legislation in 2019, there was an increase in the employability of third-country nationals having a long-term visa. The total number of legally employed international workforce increased from around 2,500 persons a year in 2012 to 15,363 persons a year in 2019. This highlighted the issue of labour shortage and the attractiveness of Latvia as a destination among labour migrants from Ukraine, Belorussia, Russia, Uzbekistan and India. According to the latest report on migration and asylum in Latvia, the number of third-country nationals working in Latvia based on visa and temporary residence permits increased by 63% by in 2019. The majority of those were employed in the following industries: 1) road transport and pipeline transport; 2) civil construction; 3) computer programming and consulting and 4) special construction works. Apart from that, there is also an increasing demand for cooks, builders and truck drivers [27]. Since the introduction of state of emergency and the lockdown, when international passenger transportation was not operating, national railway company of Latvia "Latvijas Dzelzcels", among others, organised repatriation train trips: Kyiv — Riga — Kyiv with around 500 labour migrants returning home[13].

Geography of COVID-19 in Latvia

March 22 is the first date for which the number of cases with a breakdown for the municipality level is available[14]. It should be noted that, if the number of con-

[11] COVID-19 pandēmijas laikā arvien vairāk cilvēku vēlas atgriezties uz dzīvi Latvijā, 2020, *NRA*. URL: https://nra.lv/latvija/328632-COVID-19-pandemijas-laika-arvien-vairak-cilveku-velas-atgriezties-uz-dzivi-latvija.htm (accessed 6.10.2020).

[12] Information for travellers to Latvia on the provisions for preventing the spread of COVID-19, 2020, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia*. URL: https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/consular-information/news/66019-emergency-situation-in-latvia-to-restrict-the-spread-of-COVID-19 (accessed 16.10.2020).

[13] "Latvijas dzelzceļa" un Ukrainas dzelzceļa repatriācijas reisu izmantojuši vairāk nekā pustūkstotis iedzīvotāju, 2020, *Ministry of Transport*. URL: https://www.sam.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/latvijas-dzelzcela-un-ukrainas-dzelzcela-repatriacijas-reisu-izmantojusi-vairak-neka-pustukstotis-iedzivotaju (accessed 16.10.2020).

[14] Aktualitātes par COVID-19, 2020, *SPKC*. URL: https://www.spkc.gov.lv/lv/aktualitates-par-COVID-19 (accessed 16.10.2020).

firmed cases per municipality was five or fewer, then the actual number was not included in the statistics, but instead was listed as "1—5." Still, the total number of cases (for the country) was 139. At that point, 28 municipalities (out of 119) had at least one confirmed case. The COVID-19 incidence in Riga was significantly higher than elsewhere, as evidenced by the fact in 26 municipalities, the number of cases was 1 to 5 (Figure 2).

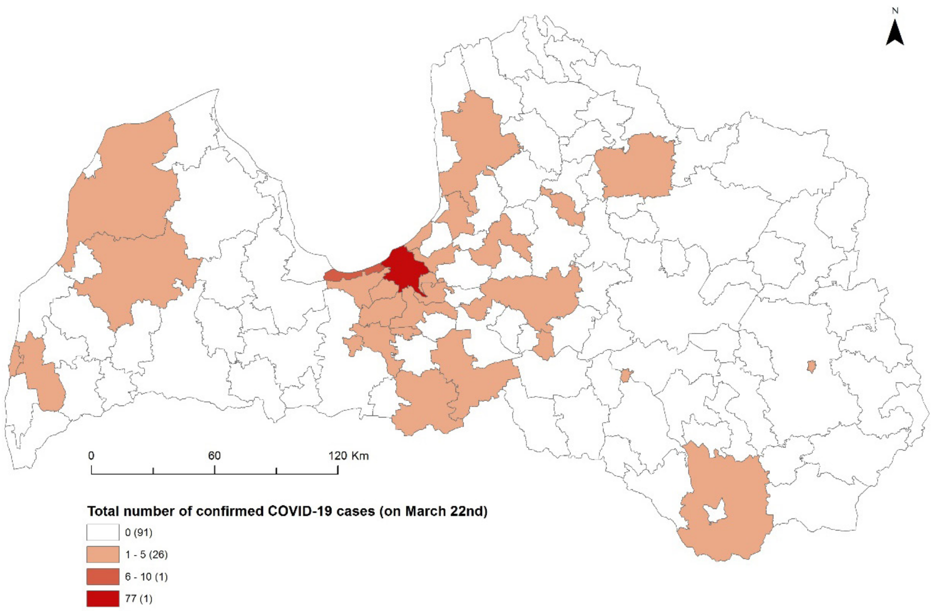

Figure 2. The geography of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Latvia on March 22, 2020

Source: authors' calculations, based on SPKC data[15].

By April 7, when the decision was made to extend the state of emergency until May 15, the number of municipalities with at least one confirmed case had grown to 55. Riga still had the largest number of cases, up to 295. Overall, municipalities in central Latvia, along with some cities, saw an increase in the number of cases. A total number of cases had risen to 577.

On May 7, when the government announced the lifting of restrictions as of May 12, 72 municipalities had at least one confirmed case. The number of confirmed cases in Riga had surpassed the 500 mark. The higher number of cases was still prevalent for central Latvia and some cities there. However, the number of cases had increased for individual municipalities in the northern part of the country, too (Figure 3). A total number of confirmed cases had reached 909.

[15] COVID-19 apstiprināto gadījumu skaits un 14 dienu kumulatīvā saslimstība pa administratīvajām teritorijām, 2020, *The Latvian Open data portal*. URL: https://data.gov.lv/dati/lv/dataset/covid-19-pa-adm-terit (accessed 16.10.2020).

On June 9, when the COVID-19 emergency in Latvia ended, nearly 70% (79) of municipalities had at least one confirmed case. Once again, Riga had notably more cases than any other municipality. Nevertheless, the growth rate was much lower compared to the previous dates. While the number of confirmed cases once again tended to grow in central areas of Latvia, several more municipalities further away had also experienced an increase in the number of cases. The total number of confirmed cases was now 1089.

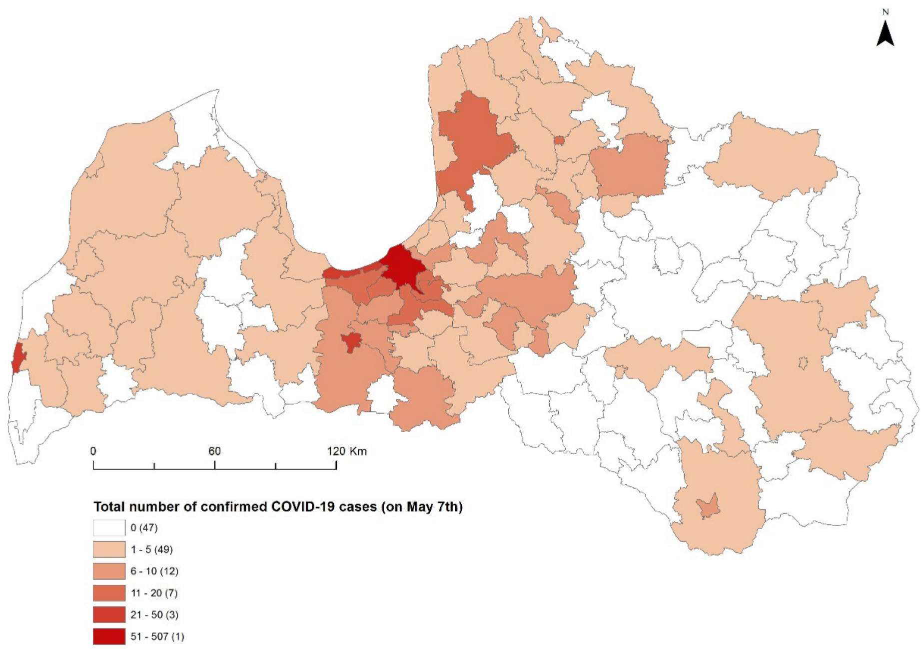

Figure 3. The geography of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Latvia on May 7

Source: authors' calculations, based on SPKC data[16].

Perception of the COVID-19 threats

When respondents assessed the threat at different levels, they mostly indicated that the highest threat was at a global scale, a lower threat rating at the national level followed this assessment. Significant differences were noted in the answers of respondents from Riga, who indicated that the threat level of COVID-19 in Riga was higher than in other parts of Latvia. On the other hand, those living outside Riga suggested that the threat in their municipality of residence was lower. The threat to families and the respondents themselves were perceived lower outside Riga than in the capital.

[16] COVID-19 apstiprināto gadījumu skaits un 14 dienu kumulatīvā saslimstība pa administratīvajām teritorijām, 2020, *The Latvian Open data portal*. URL: https://data.gov.lv/dati/lv/dataset/covid-19-pa-adm-terit (accessed 16.10.2020).

Table 3

Perception of COVID-19 related threats
(1, low level of threat, to 4, very high level of threat)

Place of residence	Index	In the World	In Latvia	In the Municipality	Family	Myself
Riga	Mean	2.99	1.94	2.02	1.6	1.59
	N	467	482	471	476	473
	Std. Deviation	0.873	0.783	0.807	0.735	0.763
Outside Riga	Mean	2.9	1.99	1.61	1.5	1.54
	N	939	956	938	954	951
	Std. Deviation	0.837	0.772	0.707	0.689	0.735
Total	Mean	2.93	1.97	1.75	1.54	1.56
	N	1406	1438	1409	1430	1425
	Std. Deviation	0.85	0.776	0.766	0.706	0.745
	Kruskal Wallis Test	5.728*	2.010	100.122**	9.812**	3.621

Note: Statistically significant at ** $p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.

Source: Authors' survey "Behavioural patterns and attitudes towards the COVID-19 pandemic in Latvia", 2020, N=1473.

Comparing the impact of COVID-19 on different areas of life, it was noted that the daily lives of respondents were most affected by changes in employment. There were not only significant differences between those living in Riga and outside Riga, but also differences between age groups. Respondents in the age group 18—34 and 35—54 were affected more significantly than respondents of the 55—64 age group. There were no significant differences in the assessments of values and attitudes towards life between different groups. Respondents living in Riga indicated that the pandemic had affected the work-life balance, and these assessments differed significantly from those of the people living in other parts of Latvia. There were also significant differences between age groups, especially between younger (18—34) and older (55—64) respondents.

Table 4

The effects of COVID-19 on various aspects of respondents' lives (1, low effect — 4, very high effect)

The effects of COVID-19	Index	Place of residence			Age groups			
		Riga	Out-side of Riga	Kruskal Wallis Test	18—34	35—54	55—64	Kruskal Wallis Test
COVID-19 effects on work-life balance	Mean	2.66	2.53	6.983*	2.65	2.62	2.38	14.093**
	N	471	953		455	639	330	
	Std. D	0.999	0.995		1.027	0.984	0.963	
COVID-19 effects on values and attitudes towards life	Mean	2.44	2.46	0.000	2.45	2.46	2.46	0.794
	N	474	956		456	637	337	
	Std. D	0.938	0.940		0.957	0.935	0.924	
COVID-19 effects on work form	Mean	2.79	2.64	5.724*	2.78	2.78	2.40	27.329**
	N	476	949		458	636	332	
	Std. D	1.072	1.120		1.102	1.078	1.120	

Note: Statistically significant at ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Source: Survey "Behavioural patterns and attitudes towards the COVID-19 pandemic in Latvia", 2020, N=1473.

During the state of emergency, 55.5% of the respondents living in Riga worked remotely, while outside the capital, 41.4% of the respondents did so. There were also significant differences among age groups, with respondents of the 35—54 age group being more likely to work remotely, while respondents in the 54 to 64 were much less affected by remote work.

During the lockdown, 12.2% of all respondents had experienced a temporary shutdown of their workplace. This was slightly more notable among younger respondents (13.9%) and those living outside Riga (12.4%). For the younger respondents, the reasons for this situation were probably the same as in the case of work form preferences. That those living outside Riga reported, a somewhat higher share of shutdowns could have been caused by changes in everyday commuting activities to Riga and good internet access.

Table 5

Temporary shutdown of workplace by place of residence and age group

State	Place of residence		Age groups		
	Riga	Outside Riga	18—34	35—54	55—64
Closed temporarily	58	122	66	78	36
	11.9%	12.4%	13.9%	11.9%	10.5%
Not closed	430	863	409	576	308
	88.1%	87.6%	86.1%	88.1%	89.5%

Source: Authors survey "Behavioural patterns and attitudes towards the COVID-19 pandemic in Latvia", 2020, N=1473.

Challenges for the work-life balance

According to the results of the Labour Force Survey of the Central Statistical Bureau[17], in April 2020, slightly more than a fifth (22%) of employees aged 15—74 worked remotely. Due to the state of emergency, the number of remote workers increased eight times, to 148,400. Previously only 19,000 employees had worked remotely. Women were more likely to work remotely than men (difference of 27 percentage points: 63.5% and 36.5%, respectively). The highest share of remote workers (24.3%) in the total number of employees in April 2020 was observed in the 25—34 age group, but the lowest (16.7%) in the 55—64 age group. The result could be related to computer literacy to some extent, but it could also be explained by the overall age segmentation of the occupations. In numerous occupations, such as shop assistants, builders, hairdressers and many other professions, remote work was not an option. It was observed that state institutions, for example, Riga City Council, Ministry of Finance as well as large private companies, like, Latvian Mobile Telephone encouraged employees to work remotely. However, medium and small companies were neglecting to remote work possibilities, which seemingly was related to the lack of trust.

According to the survey results, the most significant changes during the COVID-19 pandemic were related to the balance between work and personal life. There was a strong sense of loneliness observed for those respondents who live alone in households, as well as non-employed retirees and students. Those respondents who have chronic illnesses and older respondents faced such health-related issues as sleep-disturbances and anxiety. This can be explained by the fact that the elderly and persons with pre-existing conditions could be included in

[17] In April 2020, 22% of employees in Latvia worked remotely, 2020, *CSB*. URL: https://www.csb.gov.lv/en/statistics/statistics-by-theme/social-conditions/unemployment/search-in-theme/2854-april-2020—22-employees-latvia (accessed 16.10.2020).

the risk group. Moreover, in most cases, the emergency adversely affected populations' well-being. It affected behaviour and communication with other people within family and society. Social distancing and hygiene requirements also contributed to the change. Parents with preschool or school-age children experienced a dramatic change in their daily routines since apart from their own employment-related commitments, they now had to make sure that requirements for distance learning were fulfilled. Often, numerous internet-connected devices had to be used simultaneously within a household. For some families, this caused an additional challenge to provide the required technical support. Moreover, younger children had to be continuously assisted during their learning process.

Respondents generally indicated full-time remote work as the most appropriate form of work in the COVID-19 pandemic situation, while the respondents in Riga chose full-time work as a priority more often (31.8%). Concerning the age groups, there were significant differences between respondents ages, with 18—34 (35.5%) preferring full-time teleworking, and the two older groups choosing full-time on-site work (23.5%).

Table 6

Respondent preferable work form characteristics during COVID-19 first phase, March to June 2020

Work form	Age groups						Place of residence			
	18—34		35—54		55—64		Riga		Outside Riga	
	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Full-time work at a workplace	2	27.1	2	24.5	1	23.5	2	25.5	2	25.0
Part-time work at a workplace	3	8.0	3	11.9	5	9.6	4	9.0	3	10.6
Full-time remote work	1	35.5	1	27.1	2	20.6	1	31.8	1	26.6
Part-time remote work	4	7.6	5	8.7	4	9.9	3	9.9	5	8.0
Contract-based work	5	5.9	4	10.9	3	12.2	5	8.0	4	10.4

Source: Authors' survey "Behavioural patterns and attitudes towards the COVID-19 pandemic in Latvia", 2020, N=1473.

Respondents indicated that full-time remote work was the preferable work form during the state of emergency (Table 6). This was the case for all groups, except for respondents aged 55—64. For them, the preferable work form would be full-time work at their workplace, accounting for 23.5%. This group had more limited digital abilities or were employed in jobs that required working at the workplace, which could have caused such disparity. Among those groups for whom full-time remote work was widespread, the youngest age group and residents of Riga had the highest shares. These respondents having jobs which enabled them to work remotely could explain the former. The latter was most likely caused by the fact that the number of COVID-19 cases in Riga was much higher than in the regions, which facilitated stricter measures for many workplaces.

Discussion and concluding remarks

The paper aims to provide insights into the aspects affecting the balance of work and everyday activities during the COVID-19 outbreak in one country. Based on the official confirmed COVID-19 cases, national regulations on the state of emergency and individual-level survey data, this study presented the case study of Latvia during the first phase of the pandemic in early 2020.

The results suggest that national regulations in the first part of 2020 were efficient. Latvia, among other European countries, was presented as a success story with its first phase response[18]. Another COVID-19 related study on the efficiency of medical assistance during the pandemic suggests that among other countries of Northern Europe, Latvia shows the lowest death rate [28].

In 2020, as in previous years, net migration in Latvia was still negative[19], and thus studies on the outgoing migration have been more prevalent in the country [29—31]. In the case of Latvia, internal work and study commuters largely contribute to the labour market geographic composition [32]. However, there is also a recent study on the local and foreign workforce, their well-being and social protec-tion [33], which states that most of the state-supported social benefits and ser-vices are granted to the permanent residents, while persons without any social insurance residing in Latvia and having temporary residence documents receive insufficient social protection compared to other groups.

Geographically, COVID-19 cases were more common in the capital, Riga, with other large towns and rural areas having a low number of confirmed cases. This is somewhat similar to other countries, for instance, Poland or Italy, where the regions were affected with the varied distribution of cases, and urbanised locations were those that suffered most [34—35].

[18] First phase of COVID-19 response successful in Latvia, 2020, *LSM.lv*. URL: https://eng.lsm.lv/article/politics/politics/karins-first-phase-of-COVID-19-response-successful-in-latvia.a363059/ (accessed 16.10.2020).

[19] Population migration databases, 2020, *CSB*. URL: http://data1.csb.gov.lv/pxweb/en/iedz/iedz__migr/?tablelist=true (accessed 16.10.2020).

The results of this study have shown several interesting phenomena concerning public attitudes toward the COVID-19 outbreak. Perceptions are crucial to understanding the links between macro-level conditions and micro-level behavioural or attitudinal responses [36—37]. While on an individual level, people tend to estimate their level of concern as moderate, when it comes to their families, the level of anxiety is higher [38]. The results also suggest the geographic divide: a pandemic is more threatening globally, however, within Latvia threats are perceived as higher in the capital than at the regional or local level, which can be explained by the population density. Presumably low level of threat or optimism bias [39] remains only until a person is a confirmed coronavirus positive as individuals can assume that others are more predefined to any negative events [40], including the COVID-19 virus. Moreover, in other studies on the topic it was found that fear is one of the central emotions during pandemics [39].

Apart from individual struggles to maintain one's work-life balance, there were also intra-family and distant learning challenges in Latvia. This may have contributed to the increased parental burnout [41] and family violence [17].

According to the results of this study, full-time remote work was the preferable employment form during the state of emergency in Latvia. In Riga, it accounted for about 32%, was mostly exploited by the younger age group and related to the employers' response and specifics of the sector of the economy. This, again was intertwined with the family status and the need to care for children. The issue of new forms of employment, including the ICT-based forms of employment [20], has been discussed in Europe and Latvia for several years. In Latvia, remote work and self-employment have been defined as the new forms of employment in the field of labour protection. Recent studies show that due to the COVID-19 crisis, 37% of Europeans have started working from home. A study in Lithuania showed that around 40% of the working population started working from home, and linked job satisfaction from a distance working to socio-demographic characteristics [25]. While COVID-19 has unleashed the vast unexploited potential for flexible forms of employment, research has shown that employees face sleeping disorders and ergonomic injuries when working from home, as well as the need to work longer hours to accomplish their duties, often because their children also spend their time at home [21].

Finally, according to the results of our study, the balance between work and private life proves to be the most challenging to achieve, and there remain several groups of individuals such as parents, people living alone and seniors who are more predisposed to the risks described above.

Acknowledgements

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The authors

Prof. Zaiga Krisjane, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Latvia, Latvia.

E-mail: zaiga.krissjane@lu.lv

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3422-1958

Dr Elina Apsite Berina, Senior Researcher, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Latvia, Latvia.

E-mail: elina.apsite-berina@lu.lv

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5537-5879

Dr Maris Berzins, Associate Professor, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Latvia, Latvia.

E-mail: maris.berzins@lu.lv

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5773-3307

Toms Skadins, Research Assistant, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Latvia, Latvia.

E-mail: toms.skadins@lu.lv

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6837-4426

Dr Girts Burgmanis, Researcher, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Latvia, Latvia.

E-mail: girts.burgmanis@lu.lv

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5903-2283

THE LABOUR MARKET OF RUSSIA'S KALININGRAD EXCLAVE AMID COVID-19

L. L. Yemelyanova
A. V. Lyalina

Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University
14 A. Nevskogo St., Kaliningrad, 236016, Russia

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The COVID-19 pandemic, which has swept across the globe, is a serious challenge to the Russian labour market. This article examines the consequences of COVID-19 for Russia's Kaliningrad exclave and how its territorially isolated and lockdown-affected small labour market responds to drastic changes in employment, income, and consumption. Another question is how the immigrant-rich labour market will rebalance the supply-demand equation. Official statistics from the regional government and its subordinate bodies show that the Kaliningrad regional labour market has been severely battered by shutdown measures. This particularly applies to organisations operating in the most sensitive industries: manufacturing, hospitality, tourism, estate, transport, and warehousing. The unemployment has gone up, reaching a level above the national average; the number of vacancies is dwindling. Keeping the proportion of out-of-the-region workforce at the usual level may aggravate the situation. Although effective, the measures taken by the regional authorities seem insufficient for an isolated regional labour market.

Keywords:
great lockdown, COVID-19, pandemic, migration, labour market, unemployment, migrant workers, Kaliningrad region, Russia.

Introduction

In the *Great Lockdown*[1] survey, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) gives several definitions of the global crisis brought about by the spread of COVID-19. The fund's experts stress that it is unlike any other crisis. They highlight uncertainty about its duration and intensity as well as the difficulty of producing recommendations on encouraging economic activity and describing the role of

[1] *World Economic Outlook: The great lockdown,* 2020, Washington: International Monetary Fund, 158 p.

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economic policy under current circumstances. The experts believe that the crisis has to be dealt with in two phases — a phase of containment and stabilisation and that of recovery. The IMF expects a partial recovery in 2021, although the level of GDP will remain below the pre-virus trend.[2]

The current economic downturn, albeit different from previous ones, is another episode in the series of 21st-century crises, which have deeply transformed labour markets across the world and often increased their flexibility. In its turn, a flexible labour market adapts more easily to economic changes, including a growing unemployment rate. It has been demonstrated [1; 2] that the crisis has a diverse effect on the labour market, depending on such characteristics as sex, age, education, citizenship, and the type of employment contract. As it has been shown through the cases of Italy [3] and other OECD countries [4; 5], a highly flexible labour market means a risk of unemployment for young people and less qualified workers — people in the most precarious position as employees. Other ways for the market to adapt to shocks, without causing mass unemployment, are lay-offs and salary delays and non-payments [6; 7]. It has been argued that these consequences contribute to greater social stratification and inequality [8].

Pent-up mobility has sparked off a labour supply crisis, whereas earlier shocks led to a sharp decrease in demand for labour [9]. Lockdowns imposed around the globe have given a boost to the platform economy and short-term contracts, which have become a refuge for foreign low-skilled workers [10; 11]. Moreover, lockdowns are accompanied by the severance of international economic ties rendered impossible by the closure of borders. This blights the prospects of globalisation and opens the path for the return of nation states [12]. In the labour market, the supply shock has expedited the digitalisation of work processes, turned physical migration into virtual, and given advantage to the economies and countries excelling at information and communications technologies[3] [10; 13; 14]. The COVID-19 crisis has affected non-manufacturing industries the most, whereas other crises dealt the biggest blow to production [15].

Experts say that the Russian labour market has escaped an explosive rise in unemployment [16—18]. According to the sixth edition of ILO Monitor, this scenario is very much in line with global trends.[4] The economists from the HSE University Vladimir Gimpelson and Rostislav Kapelyushnikov study a series of surveys looking into the effect that COVID-19 has had on the Russian labour market (the surveys were conducted in May-June 2020). They conclude that the situation was the grimmest in April and May; in June, it started to improve. Gimpelson and

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[2] *World Economic Outlook: The great lockdown,* 2020, Washington: International Monetary Fund, 158 p.

[3] Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. A practical guide, 2020, Geneva: ILO, 47 p.. URL: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—-ed_protect/—-protrav/—-travail/documents/publication/wcms_751232.pdf (accessed 13.10.2020).

[4] ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work, 2020, Sixth edition, Updated estimates and analysis. URL: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—-dgreports/—-dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_755910.pdf (accessed 22.09.2020).

Kapelyushinkiov stress that salaries in Russian regions are traditionally a product of the high institutional flexibility of salary setting as well as of administrative and financial barriers to prompt dismissal of employees. Small and micro-enterprises have wider opportunities to discharge workers. Thus, growing unemployment levels are more characteristic of regions where small and micro-businesses account for a significant share of the economy than of those dominated by large companies. The survey shows that the most sensitive industries are industrial production, construction, transport, commerce, and services. Studies analysing official statistics demonstrate the same[5] [15].

The most resistant to the restrictions were the ICT industry, the public sector, and finance, which have successfully switched to remote working. The changes in the labour market have gone almost unnoticed to agriculture, public and municipal administration, the police, and large organisations.

According to the official Rosstat data, the Russian labour market reacted to the economic changes with a slight decrease in the employment rate from 59.1% in March to 58.3% in August 2020 as the unemployment rate went up from 4.7% to 6.4% and GDP plummeted by 8% at the peak of COVID-19 restriction in April–May 2020. Positive trends emerged later, including an increase in employment.[6]

The closure of borders between the Russian Federation and other countries as well as the suspension of international travel have dramatically affected the rate and structure of migrant labour supply. Earlier studies show that international labour migration often becomes a tool of 'flexicurity' policy [19]. At the same time, migrants run a greater risk than locals of being laid off, transferred to a part-time job, or left without wages. Surveys of migrant workers carried out in Russia in April–May 2020 show that from 20% to 65% of the respondents lost their jobs. The biggest drop in employment (40%) took place in the Moscow agglomeration where tough restrictions were imposed earlier than in other regions [20; 21]. Border regions are concerned with unemployed migrants stranded at the border and being unable to go home [20].

Experts have stressed that migrant workers all over the world were 'taken hostage' by this situation: most of them have lost their income and cannot return home, whereas seasonal workers cannot reach their destinations [22]. In Russia, the former constitute the most sensitive group, which struggles with two major problems — the absence of income and the expiration of permits. Human rights activists and diasporas voiced their concerns about the situation, and necessary measures were taken.[7]

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[5] *The economic and social consequences of the coronavirus in Russia and the world: an analytical newsletter of the HSE University*, 2020, no. 10. URL: https://www.hse.ru/mirror/pubs/share/381715657.pdf (accessed 22.09.2020) (in Russ.).

[6] Gloomy prediction not confirmed, 2020, *Ogonyok*, no. 33, p. 14 (in Russ.).

[7] *On temporary measures for regulating the legal standing of foreign nationals and stateless persons in the Russian Federation to counter the spread of the novel coronavirus infection COVID-19*, 2020, decree of the president of the Russian Federation of April 18, 2020, No. 274, accessed via the Consultant Plus computer-assisted legal research system (in Russ.).

Although agriculture, which relies on seasonal workers, has suffered the most from the lack of access to the migrant workforce, construction and the utility sectors (Russians rarely seek employment in these fields) have been affected as well.[8] The demand for migrant workers has decreased in the service sector (hair salons, cleaning, transport, domestic work, etc.) and hospitality [23]. Some countries (Russian is not one of them), where industries depend crucially on imported labour, have taken measures to support migrant employment [24]. Singapore has waived foreign worker levy; South Korea has extended support measures for small and medium businesses, including tax reliefs, to migrants with work permits. Relief and stimulus measures have been taken in countries where the demand for migrants has considerably increased amid the crisis. This is the case for employees in agriculture, healthcare, and IT in Germany, Italy, the UK, and some other states[9] [25].

Interregional labour migration is expected to increase when the peak of the pandemic has passed. In Russia, this especially applies to that from remote areas to large economic centres [26].

This article analyses the consequences of the pandemic for the Kaliningrad labour market, in view of the changes in migrant worker recruitment. The first part of the study dwells on the key measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 as well as the support initiatives, especially those that have had the strongest effect on the labour market and migration. These measures and initiatives are divided into consecutive phases. The second part examines major changes in the labour market in the first six months of 2020 and from January to August 2020. Finally, the third part investigates transformations in the rate and structure of internal and international permanent migration and changes in the recruitment of migrant workers in the Kaliningrad region in the first six months of 2020. Finally, conclusions are drawn about the efficiency of steps taken to support the regional labour market and migration; recommendations on how to improve these measures are made.

Conditions and restrictions that have affected the labour market and workforce migration in the Kaliningrad region

The restrictions imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Russia and the socio-economic support measures are easily divided into consecutive phases. *Phase one*, January–March 2020, sought to limit interactions at the outer fringe of the country. To this end, the Russian-Chinese border was closed on 30 January; international visitors arriving in Russia were denied entry from March 18.

[8] Russia: is the falling number of migrant workers hurting the economy? 2020, *InoSMI.RU*. URL: https://inosmi.ru/economic/20200720/247779693.html (accessed 21.09.2020) (in Russ.).

[9] *International Migration Outlook 2020*, 2020, OECD Publishing, 369 p. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1787/ec98f531-en.

The exclave of Kaliningrad has close cooperation with its neighbours, where first COVID-19 cases were registered earlier than in Russia. The territory was one of the first in the country to be faced with restrictive measures. As early as March 16, the region found itself in transport isolation when Poland and Lithuania closed their borders to foreign nationals.

In *phase two* (April–May), the strictest restrictions were gradually imposed. They were accompanied by support for affected industries and the population. On 27 March, international flights were suspended. From 20 April, anyone arriving from abroad had to self-isolate. From 15 March to 15 September, the expiration of migrants' documents (patents, work permits, migrant recruitment permits, temporary and permanent residence permits) was suspended. Migrants were allowed to prolong patents without leaving Russia. A temporary ban was placed on decisions to restrict the rights of migrants and repatriates to stay in Russia.

One of the toughest restrictions was a non-working period from March 30 to May 11. To keep the economy afloat, federal support measures for strategic organisations were taken. A list of major industries and large organisations that had been most severely affected by the pandemic was compiled. These measures included federal cost-recovery subsidies, tax reliefs, loan guarantees, and subsidies for small and medium businesses and community-focused NGOs (there are 237 of the latter registered in the Kaliningrad region). According to the Government of the Kaliningrad region, as of 1 July 2020,[10] 91 community-focused NGOs received subsidies totalling 36m roubles.

From 14 April, local small and medium businesses were receiving region-al subsidies of 15,000—100,000 roubles, depending on the organisational type and the number of employees. Kaliningrad residents could get a financial aid of 50,000 roubles to start a business. Subsidises were granted to businesses and individual entrepreneurs with up to 15 employees. Moscow prepared financial measures to support affected organisations: 5—30m rouble loans for manufacturing companies, loan repayment holidays for individual enterprises and small and medium businesses, interest-free loans to pay salaries, tax exemption for some tax-payer categories, and soft loans with an 8.5% interest rate. In the Kaliningrad region, the latter initiative required engaging the funds of the Centre for Business Support at 0.1% for a period from three to six month. From 1 April, the regional local tax deadline was extended for businesses that had to shut down.

The federal relief measures for small and medium businesses, concerning public, municipal, and commercial leases were followed by a regional initiative shifting the first-quarter non-property tax deadline (land lease), as well as the deadline for taxes due from 1 March to 31 May, to 10 October. Form 14 April, scheduled state inspections were cancelled, and a six-month moratorium (6 April-6 October) was put on lender-initiated bankruptcy cases.

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[10] The register of community-focused NGOs, 2020, *Official website of the Government of the Kaliningrad region*. URL: https://nko39.ru/razdel_nko/reestr.php (accessed 21.10.2020) (in Russ.).

Phase-two social measures supported various categories of citizens. On 15 April, the federal government introduced additional payments for medical staff and social workers. From April to July families with children received additional payments as well. The unemployed were drawing an increased benefit from 12 April to 1 September. On 10 April, the regional authorities announced a lump sum unemployment benefit of 10,000 roubles. People over 65 who neither switched to remote working nor took a leave of absence were eligible to claim incapacity benefit. Loan repayment holidays for private persons were introduced, and a 6.5% mortgage programme was announced for 16 April–1 November.

Phase three, which began in June 2020, saw the lifting of many restrictions and the prolongation of support initiatives. On 1 June, the state border was opened, and international flights to selected countries resumed. But, on 15 June, 14-day self-isolation became obligatory for foreign nationals arriving in Russia for work. As to the economy, restrictions on regional and businesses services were lifted on 7 June. Self-isolation was cancelled for people coming from other Russian regions on 22 June; 1 July saw the resumption of interregional railway services. Restriction removal continued until 1 October. As of the time of writing, the deteriorating situation imposed new restrictions on cafes, restaurants, and indoor playgrounds. The third-phase support measures included additional payments to unemployed parents in June–September and a 15% (instead of 20%) downpayment within the 6.5% subsidised mortgage programme. Economic tools embraced subsidies for measures against COVID-19 taken by small and medium businesses and community-focused NGOs as well as 2% loans for such NGOs and other organisations from June to 1 November 2020.

Changes in migration regulation were as follows. On 25 June, skilled international talent was allowed one-time entry to Russia[11]; the expiration of work permits, migrant recruitment permits, and patents was resumed on 16 June.

The timeline of responses can be easily tracked based on labour market performance indicator. The extension of unemployment benefits in April 2020 led to a rise in the official unemployment rate.[12] At the same time, to qualify for a 2% loan, a business must have kept all its employees during the pandemic. This qualification helped contain the growth of the unemployment rate. Most support measures were aimed at small and medium organisations that were affected the most by the national COVID-19 response. Surveys show, however, that only one-third of economic entities have applied for support. This can be explained by inaccuracies in the law and the uncertain post-pandemic future of the businesses themselves.[13]

[11] Regulation of June 25 No 1671-r. Accessed via the Consultant Plus computer-assisted legal research system.

[12] Gloomy predictions not confirmed: super-unemployment called off, 2020, *Ogonyok*, no, 33, p. 14 (in Russ.).

[13] Experts from Plekhanov Russian Economic University on the economic impact of the coronavirus, 2020, *Plekhanov Russian Economic University*. URL: https://www.rea.ru/ru/koronavirus/Pages/koronavirus-experti.aspx (accessed 25.09.2020) (in Russ.).

Changes in the labour market

Russia's Kaliningrad exclave has been much more affected by the federal and regional COVID-19 response than any other national territory. The region has found itself in a far less secure position. There are several reasons for it. The regional economy relies upon imports and transit of goods and raw materials. Supply and demand imbalances in global markets and closed borders have struck the import-dependent sectors of the regional economy.

The Kaliningrad regional labour market has several distinctive features, which came to the fore as the crisis arose. The first one is its small size. The population of the region was 1012.5 thousand people as of 1 January 2020, the workforce size stood at 535,800, and the number of employed persons at 512,000 people according to 2019 data. The proportion of people employed by or owning small businesses is very high in the region. In 2018, one-fifth of regional workforces, 101,400 people, ran businesses without incorporation as a company. The region's developed service sector accounts for two-thirds of the employed. In the 2000s, manufacturing was rapidly developing — specifically food production, the automotive industry, and shipbuilding. They employ 27,000 people (6% of the working population and 39% of those engaged in manufacturing). As consumption dwindles, borders remain closed, the global situation deteriorates, and internal demand declines, the region's leading industry, automotive, is suffering more than other manufacturing sectors. This circumstance has a detrimental effect on the region's socio-economic performance. Regional statistics show that the production of motor vehicles and full and semi-trailers in January-August 2020 was at 64% of the level of the same period of 2019.[14] Natalya Zubarevich and Sergey Safronov cogently note that regions specialising in car manufacturing, as well as imports and exports, are among the most affected by the measures to contain the pandemic [9].

There are few large companies in the region for targeted training of specialists. This causes imbalances in labour supply and demand. Positions requiring a higher education constitute a sizable proportion in the structure of employment. A sample workforce survey shows that, in the final quarter of 2019, there were 30,700 managers and 135,900 highly skilled specialists among the 518,000 people employed in the region. This means that at least 32.1% of the employed must have a higher education. Since annual employee turnover due to various reasons is estimated at 3%, 5,000 new specialists with a university degree are needed each year. In 2019, only 3,700 students graduated with a bachelor's, specialist or master's degrees from regional universities. Some of the bachelors were admitted to master's programmes. There are projections from other regions that the demand for labour, including people with a university degree, will soon decrease. Thus,

[14] The socio-economic situation of the Kaliningrad region in January-August 2020: a current affairs report, 2020, *The Kaliningrad regional branch of the Federal Service for State Statistics*, Kaliningrad (in Russ.).

the needs of the Kaliningrad economy can be met only by workforce redistribution from other regions. An acute problem is the lack of health professionals of all categories, particularly specialty doctors. The latter are not trained in the region. Medical students have had to join emergency ambulance crews in the fight against the pandemic.[15] There is also a dearth of educators in Kaliningrad. As stated by the regional Ministry for Social Policy, in March 2020, unfilled vacancies for teachers of various disciplines numbered 243. The problems of remote education and the high proportion of people of older ages among teachers resulted in the resignation of over 300 educators at the beginning of academic year 20/21. This was reported by the Minister of Education of the Kaliningrad region Svetlana Truseneva.[16]

The territorial isolation of Kaliningrad from mainland Russia and the restrictions aimed to contain the virus were the decisive factors influencing the regional labour market amid the spread of COVID-19. The Kaliningrad labour market was forced into complete isolation, which caused it to slump much worse than those of other Russian regions. Closed borders, as well as the interregional redistribution of discharged workforces rendered impossible, have left participants in the labour market with very options and possibilities to regulate labour relations. Thus, the labour market of the Kaliningrad region has suffered the most serious damage compared to the other regions of Northwestern Russia (Fig. 1). In the first six months of 2020, the demand for labour as reported by employers was 62% below that in the same period the previous years. This decrease was the most dramatic in Russia's Northwest. The region saw a 5.8-fold increase in the number of unemployed registered with employment services and a 9.4-fold growth in the number of unemployed registered with employment services per 100 reported vacancies to reach one of the highest levels in the Northwest.

Analysis of current labour market data for January–August 2020 reveals a steady trend towards an increase in the number of unemployed registered with unemployment services, especially in the summer months. An 8.6-fold increase in the number of unemployed occurred over the same period. The number of vacancies reported by employees fell by one-third, whereas the number of unemployed per vacancy rose 10.3-fold from March to August (Table 1).

[15] 'Thank you, guys, we're going home': Health Minister discloses why 350 Kaliningrad doctors have refused to work with the coronavirus, 2020, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 4 May, 2020. URL: https://www.kaliningrad.kp.ru/daily/27123/4211005/ (accessed 25.09.2020) (in Russ.).

[16] Over 300 teachers quit before new academic year, 2020, *Klops.ru*, August 25, 2020. URL: https://klops.ru/news/2020—08—25/219133-v-kaliningradskoy-oblasti-nakanune-novogo-uchebnogo-goda-uvolilis-svyshe-300-pedagogov (accessed 19.09.2020) (in Russ.).

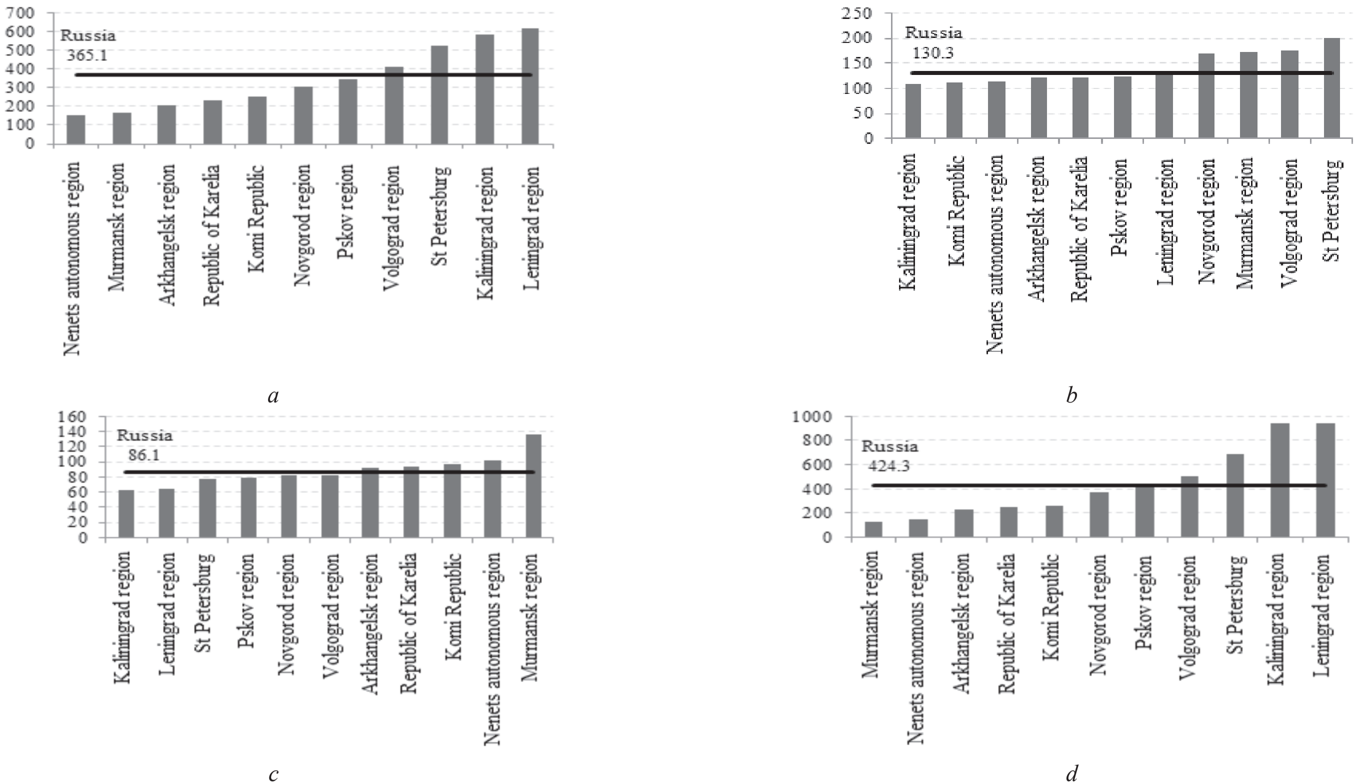

Fig. 1. Labour market indicators in Russia's northwestern regions in January–June 2020, % of the same-period 2019 levels:
a the number of unemployed registered with employment services as of June 2020; *b* the number of unemployed aged 15 and over; *c* number of vacancies reported by employees to unemployment services; *c* the number of unemployed registered with employment services per 100 reported vacancies

Source: prepared by the authors based on Rosstat data

Table 1

Indicators of the Kaliningrad labour market in March-August 2019 and 2020, people

Month	Number of unemployed		Number of unemployed registered with employment services		Reported vacancies		Unemployed people per vacancy	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
March	5200	4937	4558	4222	15590	17800	0.3	0.3
April	5119	16248	4612	13441	16136	17072	0.3	1.0
May	4991	23522	4435	20839	17563	13235	0.3	1.8
June	4985	29132	4417	27095	17151	10639	0.3	2.7
July	5017	34983	4351	32714	17526	10999	0.3	3.2
August	4948	38866	4323	36343	17665	12701	0.3	3.1
August to March, increase/decrease (times)	1.0	7.9	0.9	8.6	1.1	0.7	1.0	10.3

Source: prepared by the authors based on Kaliningradstat data.

The first significant increase in the number of applications to the regional unemployment services happened in mid-April. The situation was under control at the time: the number of vacancies was three times that of applications. It took a turn to the worse in late April and particularly in May. At the end of May, the number of unemployed exceeded that of vacancies by 5,000. The most affected industries were commerce, real estate services, transport and warehousing, hospitality, construction, and tourism. When the lockdown was imposed, there was a continuing demand for labour in manufacturing and healthcare. In the summer months, the number of unemployed was rapidly growing as the demand for labour declined. According to employment services, the more than tenfold rise in the number of unemployed compared to March 2020 was partly accounted for by people who had been jobless for more than a year and those who were looking for work for the first time. It is reasonable to suppose that the economic restrictions have cast light on off-the-books employment, specifically that in services. The first to be affected, off-the-books workers had to start looking for jobs. The registered unemployment rate was at 3.5% at the end of May, which is 4.4 times that of the same month the previous year. At the end of August 2020, the registered unemployment rate reached 6.8% of regional workforces. Under lockdown, the labour market of Kaliningrad performed very differently from that of an average Russian region. This is very much in line with expert forecasts.[17] The situation did not improve in the summer month, nor did a rapid recovery from the crisis occur. For the population, the most painful consequences were the fall in manufacturing (by 88.6% in January — August 2020 compared to the same period of 2019) and the consumer price growth. Current statistics suggest that, in August 2020, food prices were 4% above those at the beginning of the year (in 2019, the price increased by 0.1%) over the same period. In January — August 2020, the prices of non-food items rose by 3.1%, compared to 1.6% in 2019. Although statistics on employee turnover[18] do not demonstrate an overall reduction in employment in July 2020 on the same period of 2019 (100.6%), some industries suffered a precipitous decline. Among them are real estate services (88.6%), manufacturing (94.6%), services (95.8%), hospitality (95.8%), and commerce (99.2%). As stated by Kaliningradstat, the number of employees grew in administration and related services (119.6%), IT and communications (106.2%), and mining (106.1%).

The regional labour market reacted to the downturn in the economy and the pandemic-related restriction as early as the second quarter of 2020: the number of people dismissed from companies and organisations (small businesses were not considered) exceeded that of new hires by 3,600 people.

Figure 2 shows the balance between recruited and leaving employees as a percentage of the average number of employees in the second quarter of 2020 in Russia and the Kaliningrad region. The list of industries that accounted for most layoffs is very similar to that across Russia. Some regional industries, however, had dismissal rates well above the national average. These are real estate services, education, manufacturing, and transport and warehousing. The proportion of discharges was the highest in real estate services, which had a large number of surplus employees. Lockdown spurred redundancy in the industry.

[17] Gloomy predictions not confirmed: super-unemployment called off, 2020, *Ogonyok*, no. 33, p. 14 (in Russ.).

[18] I.e. the number of replacements in organisations; regular employees, part-time employees, and independent contractors are taken into account.

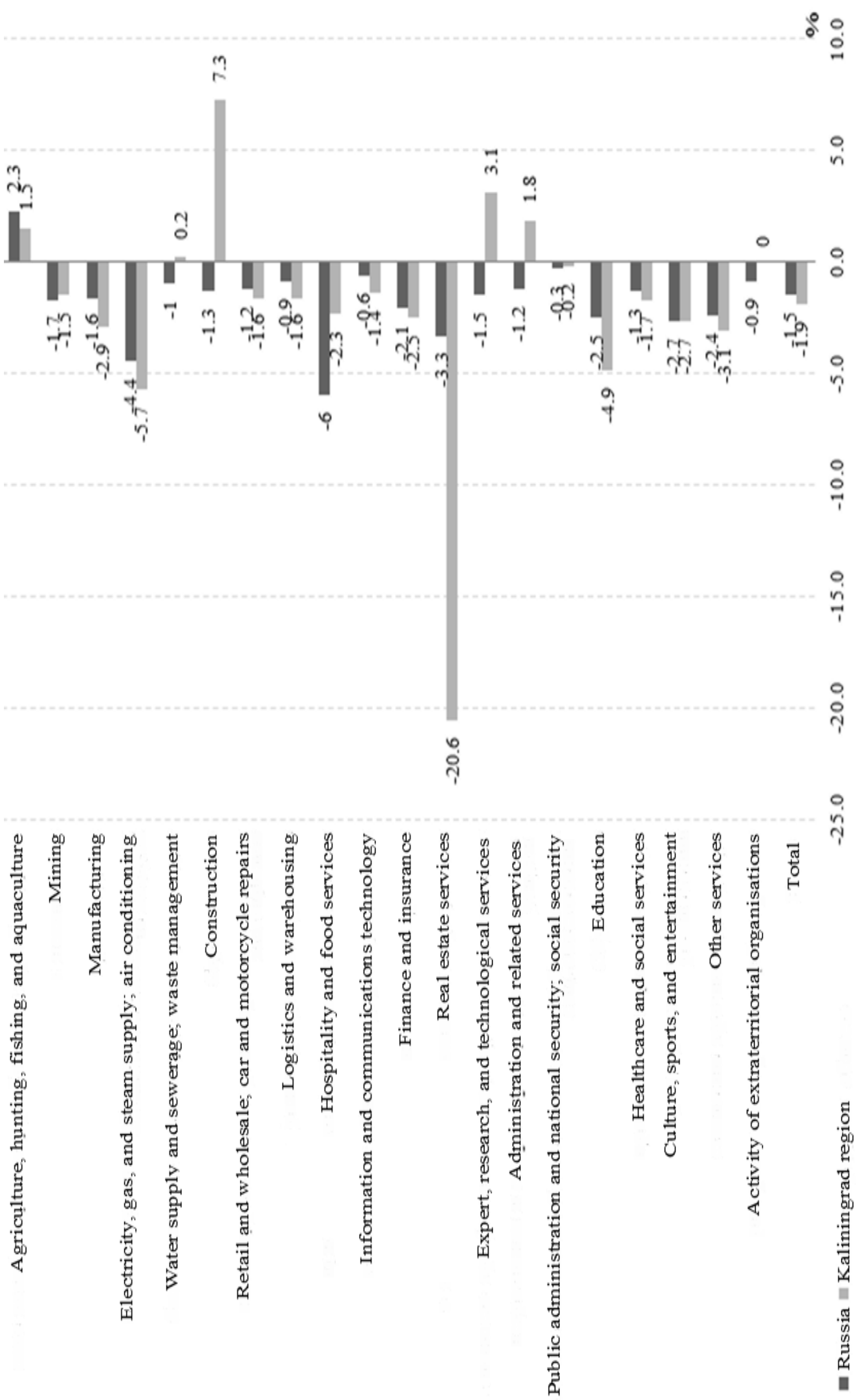

Fig. 2. Balance between recruited and leaving employees of organisations (small businesses are not included), % of the average number of employees in the second quarter of 2020 in Russia and the Kaliningrad region

The lack of teachers and healthcare professionals became even more acute during the crisis. The rate of discharges was above the average across the country in commerce, electricity, gas, and steam supply, air conditioning, IT and communications, finance and insurance, and some other service industries. Workforces, however, redistributed among industries. The employee growth rate went up in construction, agriculture, forestry, fishing, aquaculture, administration, and expert, research and technological services.

The measures to prevent mass dismissals and keep salaries in check were not very effective. This is confirmed by the analysis carried out by the Centre for Labour Market Research at the HSE University in June 2020. The findings suggest that, as the lockdown was imposed, almost 10% of Russians who had been employed before the quarantine lost their jobs.[19]

Labour migration

The *permanent international migration rate* was declining from February 2020 compared to the same period of 2019 (Table 2). A reduction was observed in exchange with Uzbekistan, India, and Poland: a shift from positive net migration to negative took place. As to other countries that traditionally contribute to the migration increase in the region — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Belarus, the positive net migration rate dropped by 45—75%.

On the contrary, the *interregional migration* rate increased by 17% in the first seven months of 2020 on the same period the previous year. This was a result of a reduction in the number of internal emigrants by 12% because of lockdown, while the number of immigrants remained almost unchanged. This is indicative of the recent trend towards growing migration exchange with mainland Russia. A positive, albeit not decisive, role in this trend is played by 'Increasing the mobility of labour resources' — the subprogram of the Kaliningrad region state program 'Social support for the population of the Kaliningrad region' (resolution of the Government of the Kaliningrad region of 18 November 2018 No. 848). The initiative provides reimbursement of moving-related expenses and housing subsidies. It is aimed to attract to the region specialists in IT and communications, engineering, pharmaceutical and medical manufacturing, shipbuilding, car manufacturing, ra-

[19] *Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. A practical guide*, 2020, Geneva, ILO. 47 p.. URL: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—-ed_protect/—-protrav/—-travail/documents/publication/wcms_751232.pdf (accessed 13.10.2020).

Table 2

Current data on immigrants, emigrants, and net migration in the Kaliningrad region in January–June 2020

Direction of migration	Immigrants, people		Emigrants, people		Net migration, people		Replacement migration, %*		Net migration, 2020, % of 2019						
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020							
	January—July	January—July	January—July	January—July	January—July	January—July	January—July	January—July	January	January—February	January—March	January—April	January—May	January—July	January—July
Intraregional	12149	10084	12149	10084	0	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Interregional	10132	10043	6230	5494	3902	4549	225.7	248.6	189.2	154.8	154.2	122.1	108.1	124.2	116.6
International	6757	4933	2979	3701	3778	1232	218.5	67.3	111.6	83.4	54.9	31.1	27.3	28.2	32.6

Comment: *a ratio of net migration to natural decline (absolute values), %.

Source: calculated based on Rosstat and Kaliningradstat data.

dio-electronics, agriculture, and expert, research and technological services. In 2020—2021, six regional employers are participating in the programme to recruit 150 employees over two years.

In 2020, the structure of migration increase is very likely to change. Interregional migration will have a paramount role in offsetting the population decline. This type of migration accounted for half of the migration increase in January-June 2019 and 79% in 2020.

Although the age structure of immigrants is mostly advantageous to the Kaliningrad region, the stabilisation of the working-age population in 2011—2019 is still not observed [22]. Travel restrictions imposed as part of the COVID-19 response will most probably result in a drastic reduction in workforces and an even more acute labour shortage. During the pandemic, this process was aggravated by a decrease in intraregional migration (between municipalities) by 17% in January–July 2020 on the same period of 2019. The most considerable reduction occurred when the severest restrictions were in effect — in April (20%) and May (23%).

Negative changes in *temporary labour migration* also took place in the second quarter of 2020. In January-March 2020, there was no substantial drop in the number of temporary workers. On the contrary, it increased both in the Kaliningrad region (136%) and nationwide (121%). Yet in April-June 2020, this figure went down. This is explained by the fact that most migrant workers in the region originate from countries that have a visa-free arrangement with Russia. The travel restrictions were extended to these states only in the second half of March. The Kaliningrad region saw a less substantial reduction than most Russian regions did: the region's figures were comparable to those of 2018, being at 70% of April-June 2019 (Fig. 3).

Currently, there are about 13,000 migrant workers in the region. Nine out of ten migrant workers in the Kaliningrad region come from Uzbekistan. Others are citizens of Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Moldova. Most temporary migrants have primary or secondary vocational education and do manual labour. Demand for these workforces is explained by both the lack of skilled workers among the local population (corresponding training programmes were axed in the 1990s) and the reluctance of local specialists to accept the available offers (usually with low wages) [27].

Because the number of Kaliningrad residents leaving the region in search of employment decreased in the first six months of 2020 compared to 2019, net temporary labour migration rate remained positive, at 1,000 people. Kaliningradstat data show that, in 2019, 10,900 people left the region for other countries, pursuing work. Most of them are specialists in marine fishing

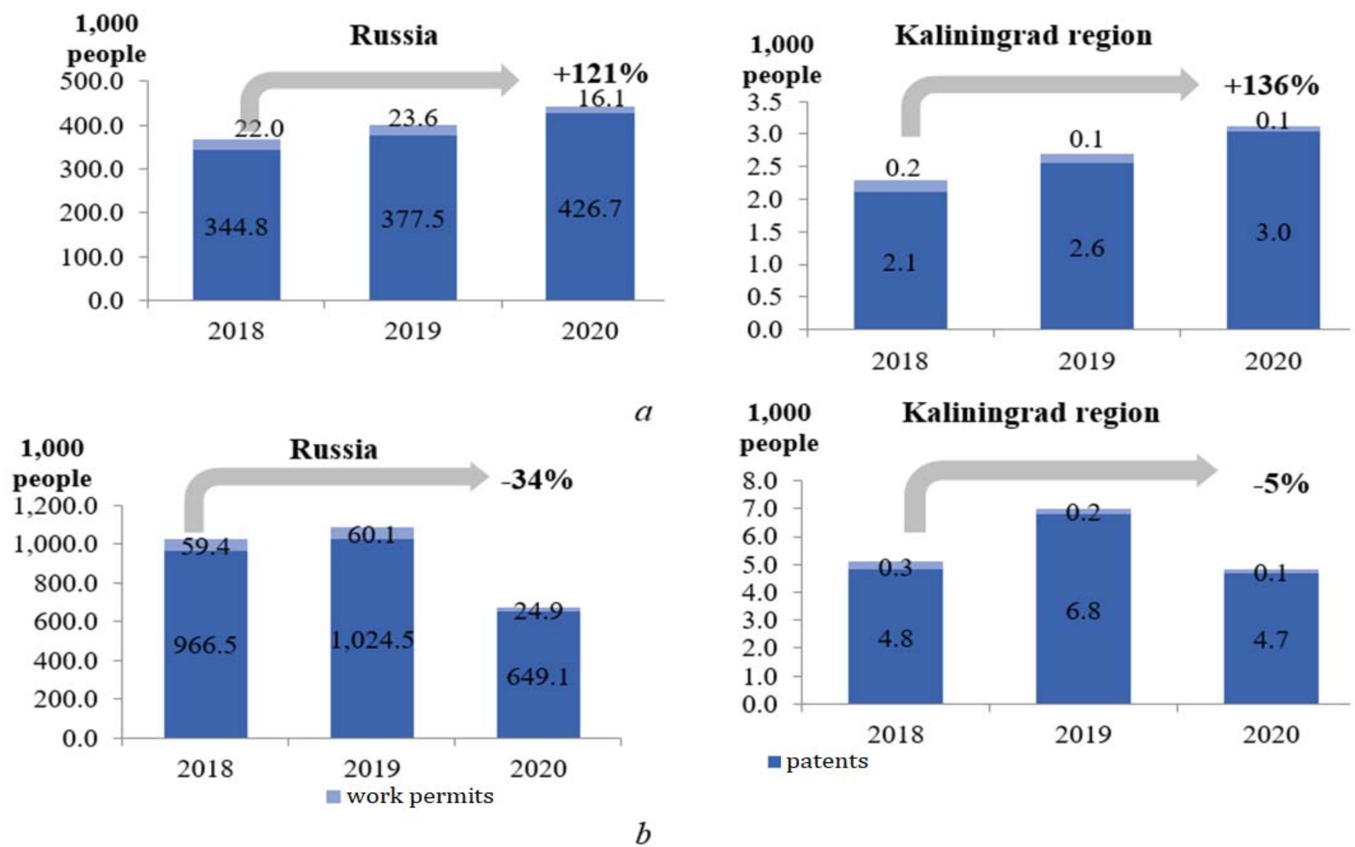

Fig. 3. Current data on the number of migrant workers in the Kaliningrad region and Russia in the first six months of 2018-2020:
a — January–March, b — January–June

Source: prepared by the authors based on Rosstat data.

and seafaring, and the region has low demand for such specialists in current conditions [27]. The lack of recent data precludes an evaluation of the dynamics of labour migration from other Russian regions. According to the latest information from Kaliningradstat, Russian temporary labour migrants are replacing international migrants in the same positions. This was a goal of regional policy.[20]

Travel restrictions have a devastating effect on ties between the exclave region and its neighbouring countries. These connections have federal significance — the Kaliningrad region accounts for 19% of gross permanent migration between Russia and Lithuania and 13% of that between Russian and Poland (although their volume is not high) [28]. Temporary cross-border migration flows are explained in most cases by economic, cultural, and recreational reasons. Data on the crossings of the Russian-Polish state border show that, in the first quarter of 2020, they decreased by 14% on the same period of 2019. Over the first six months, the decline was as sharp as 60%.[21]

Conclusions and recommendations

The federal support measures for major organisations, the population, and vital social spheres, primarily healthcare, have been mostly successful in Russia. The reduction in employment has slowed down, mass lay-offs have been prevented, and the most vulnerable groups have received aid. The above analysis demonstrated that the lockdown crisis had affected some Russian regions more than others. The Kaliningrad region found itself in a disadvantaged position because of its exclave economic and geographical situation and the local peculiarities of labour supply and demand. This study showed that the measures taken by the regional authorities simultaneously with the federal response had been prompt and efficient at first. Still, they were insufficient to compensate for the isolation of the regional labour market from the national one.

[20] On the Social Support for the Population national programme for the Kaliningrad region, 2020, *resolution of the Government of the Kaliningrad region* of 18 November 2013 No. 848, accessed via the Consultant Plus computer-assisted legal research system (in Russ.).

[21] Statystyki Straz Graniczna, 2020, *Komenda Glowna Strazt Granicznej*. URL: https://www.strazgraniczna.pl/pl/granica/statystyki-sg/2206, Statystyki-SG.html (accessed 27.08.2020).

In the Kaliningrad region, the crisis arose later and has been more prolonged than on average across the country. Among the specific regional features are growing structural unemployment, falling household incomes, and rampant inflation. The region's high proportion of small and medium businesses has become the undoing of the local labour market. The effectiveness of measures to support small and medium businesses has been low. This points to a rudimentary knowledge of how these organisations respond to crises, poorly thought-out solutions, and insufficient awareness of support measures among businesses.

The 'self-isolated' small labour market of the Kaliningrad region has few opportunities for the redistribution of workforces among industries. A reduction in employment has affected not only commerce and services but also manufacturing. The study confirmed earlier findings that the regional employment structure, which is susceptible to crises, requires economic restructuring, particularly a decrease in the proportion of the population employed in services, especially commerce. Another solution is the creation of jobs in new manufacturing areas, at high value-added companies, and in innovative and community-focused service industries. It is important to use financial and economic mechanisms to regulate the labour market, for instance, by stimulating investment in the regional economy from large and medium businesses as well as by replacing migrant workers with new technology. All this will diversify the regional economy and make it more complex.

Among the consequences of the 'covidisation' of the regional labour market are the resignations of teachers and healthcare professionals — professionals that have long been in demand in Kaliningrad. This makes it necessary to revisit the range of educational programmes available in the region. The ongoing digitalisation of the labour market necessitates the development of digital skills.

The growing role of interregional migration in offsetting natural decline and a reduction in local workforce call for the expansion and better funding of programmes aimed at recruiting specialists from across Russia to fill permanent positions in the region. As the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Russia Anton Kotyakov has emphasised, there is also a need for raising interregional awareness of new vacancies.[22] It seems that relocation will benefit the regional labour market much more than temporary labour

[22] Kotyakov: the unemployed should be offered jobs in other regions, 2020, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 31 August, 2020. URL: https://rg.ru/2020/08/31/kotiakov-bezrabotnym-nado-predlagat-takzhe-vakansii-v-drugih-regionah.html (accessed 19.09.2020) (in Russ.).

migration since the region's net temporary labour migration rate is still negative. Moreover, tools for temporary recruiting discharged employees from other Russian regions may prove ineffective in the exclave of Kaliningrad because of the enormous expenses incurred when travelling across the borders. These tools are likely to increase the number of emigrants looking for temporary jobs elsewhere in Russia.

The key to solving this problem are best practices of employment stimulation and labour migration management in foreign countries. For example, when facing a shortage of nurses and caretakers, the region is recommended to relax applicable administrative regulations and even temporarily freeze the patent systems.

The crisis-induced spread of digital and platform employment, which is accompanied by virtual high-skilled migration, demands a legal framework based on comprehensive studies and international best practices.

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The authors

Dr Larisa L. Yemelyanova, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, Russia.
E-mail: larissaemel@yandex.ru
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6242-7825

Dr Anna V. Lyalina, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, Russia.
E-mail: anuta-mazova@mail.ru
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8479-413X

DISEASE CONTROL AND BORDER LOCKDOWN AT THE EU'S INTERNAL BORDERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE CASE OF FINLAND

J. Virkkunen

University of Eastern Finland
2 Yliopistokatu St., Joensuu, FI-80101, Finland

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The article discusses the lockdown of the EU's internal borders during the COVID-19 pandemic in Finland. Special attention is paid to bordering as a means for disease control and the governments' aim to "protect the population and secure functions of society" during the pandemic. Not only did the government restrict flights and 'non-essential' travel from non-Schengen countries such as Russia, China and Thailand but, with some exceptions, it also restricted everyday cross-border encounters and commuting between Finland and its Schengen neighbours of Sweden, Norway and Estonia. The restrictions hampered tourism and migrant-dependent industries; they also complicated the lives of migrants' families. While lockdown of the Estonian and Russian border does not cause any debates in Finnish society, the closure of the Finnish-Swedish border area that had been completely open since the 1950s led to a debate on citizens' constitutional rights and civil disobedience in the form of semi-legal border crossings.

Keywords:
bordering, COVID-19, pandemic, EU's internal borders, Estonia, Finland, Sweden.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the geopolitical map of the world in a matter of months. Travel restrictions have become a global phenomenon and countries around the world have closed their borders for foreign citizens, ordered flight and rail operators to discontinue their operations and put travellers entering the state into quarantine. Quarantine and health control measures are nothing new in the management of communicable diseases but in the context of the globalised world with open borders, extremely high social, economic and political interdependence, the new practices of bordering shook our perception of the state and global integration and, in particular, transformed our everyday habits of domestic

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and cross-border travel. Viewed as one of the most critical parts of disease control and national security during the pandemic they have been also criticised for limiting our engagement and ability to perform in the globalised world.

The article discusses the lockdown of the EU's internal borders during the COVID-19 pandemic in Finland when the Finnish government not only restricted flights and 'non-essential' travel from non-Schengen countries such as Russia, China and Thailand but, with some exceptions, also limited everyday cross-border encounters and commuting between Finland and its Schengen neighbours of Sweden, Norway and Estonia. The article aims to explore the pandemic-bordering nexus and some of the social and economic impacts that bordering creates at the integrated internal border areas of the European Union. The paper focuses on Finland's borders to Sweden and Estonia representing two unlike border areas with different histories and levels of cross-border integration. Due to cooperation between five Nordic countries, the border to Sweden had been basically non-existent since the 1950s. The introduction of the pandemic lockdown led to the demands to observe citizens' constitutional rights for free movement and to actions of civil disobedience in the form of semi-legal border crossings. As many Estonian families and businesses rely on tourism and work across the border in Finland, the country's decision to restrict border traffic had severe impacts on Estonia's economy and families of Estonian commuting migrants.

The geopolitics of infectious disease control is not a new phenomenon. The topics of public and world health, as well as the spatial management of microbes and viruses, have been central in the political, legal and commercial history of nationalism, colonialism and internationalism. In her analysis of the history of disease control, Bashford [1] describes how infections disease control takes place not only within the jurisdiction of sovereign states but also in formal and informal intervention beyond states. She connects the rise of global public health and disease regulation to the context of the colonisation and de-colonisation on one hand, and to the evolving 'national' and 'international' spheres on the other hand. For colonial powers 'international health', i. e. colonial and tropical medicine there in the colonies, was a question of national defence. The geopolitics of disease prevention was, Bashford argues [1, p. 6], closely linked nationalism and the policing of sovereign territory. With the increase in travel, harbours and land borders became places of inspection where incoming goods, vessels and animals, as well as peoples' documents, identities and bodies, were examined. In fact, health documents and health checks including screening immigrants' bodies for any signs of disease appeared before the current-day ID system, a passport or visa, and made borders necessary points of travel.

Communicable diseases and disease control are studied primarily within the disciplines of medicine and public health, but they are also important topics of history, public management, sociology, social policy and others. Health geography[1] that is closely related to medical geography and the geography of health care, by definition, engages itself with geography and human health, while the topics such as mobility, border control, and isolation remain on the margins [2, P. 316]. In the relatively small fields of political geography and geopolitics, which this article contributes to, a nexus between disease, space and power is often scrutinized through globalisation and the workings of global political economy. They are also concerned with the possible impacts of disease on state sovereignty and with health as a contributor to or a destructive force of geopolitical stability. Thus, health issues became topics in critical analysis in environmental security and the new security agenda in the 1990s. [4, P. 38].

Globalisation, the rapidly increased international movements of people and goods and the recognition of the global character of communicable diseases transformed the colonial and the international health into global 'post-Westphalian' governance. A whole range of non-state actors and global health initiatives such as public-private partnerships, foundations, international organisations, G8, and civil society groups became central in setting the global health agenda, mobilising resources and providing services. [5, p. 3; 6; 7, P. 240, P. 256; 8, p. 161—164]. At the same time, borders became constitutive components of the new security discourse, technologies of governance and points of public health policy protecting domestic populations from outside threats [6; 8; 9; 4]. The conception of public health policy is still grounded in geopolitical ideas and national interests. Even though one nation's health security depends on that of all the others, national (or sectional) interests still prevail in public health [10]. In the European Union, the joint public health policy and infectious disease control became conceptualised through 'health security' and the generic notion of 'serious cross-border threats to health' [11, p. 347, 361—363]. Bengtsson and Rhinard [11, p. 363] conclude that joint EU-level coordination and support to the resilience in member states give an additional value to the states' 'generic' health risk management. They suggest that the fact that 'serious cross-border health threats' are increasingly considered as elements of societal security and subjects of crisis management reveals and consolidates a qualitative change in the vocabulary and priorities of health security at EU level. More attention is paid to European level threats to health and to threats crossing borders than to the plain prevalence of an infectious disease in individual member states.

In contemporary societies, the practices of border screening for disease prevention and management relate to acute outbursts of diseases caused by rapidly dispersing microorganisms such as bacteria and viruses or by chronic infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. In the context of new 're-emerging

[1] According to Elliot [3], health geography "is the study of the distribution, diffusion, determinants, and delivery associated with health and health systems in human populations". It also examines health and health systems with spatial lenses that open different perspectives to the study from the local (e. g., neighbourhood) to the global.

diseases and economic globalisation', way before the appearance of the pandemic, Bashford [1, p. 10—13] notices the change from 'international' health to 'global' health. The threats of bioterrorism, avian flu, SARS, and other microbial diseases are global in nature and, thus, impact the rich 'first world' societies as well. In the context of the internet, information and communications technologies, global social networks, transnationality and intensive cross-border mobility of people as well as financial capitalism are 'placeless' and, thus, undermine the foundations of national sovereignty and capacities of the state. However, the management of the global coronavirus pandemics in 2003 (SARS) and 2020 (COVID-19) clearly illustrates the dominance of nation states in disease control. Thus, global and European governance seem extremely weak.

In today's context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Radil, Pinos and Ptak [12] write about state bordering and illustrate the sudden reintroduction of border enforcement as the states' most salient political strategies to contain the virus and, thus, to manage the crisis. This reflects a rapid revival of nation states and territorial borders manifested in the expansion and the reintroduction of border management, including checkpoints and security forces limiting the international, and in some cases domestic, movement of people. The new practices of bordering materialise themselves in extremely severe travel and mobility restrictions. They serve as the primary instruments of control, health risk containment and national security and, thus, securitize not only everyday mobility and public spaces such as shops and public transport but also seriously restrict travel and transnational practices. Paasi [13] reminds that even though many states introduce borders as the primary solution for 'the problem', interruption of global networks or value chains is seldom the best solution. As an optimist, he also proposes another option: the pandemic can stimulate cross-border and future-looking cooperation in forecasting and preparing for future pandemics and drug development.

Borders of Finland during pandemic

On March 11th 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. A few days later, on March 16th, the plenary session of the Government of Finland announced a three-month state of emergency first time during peace. The Emergency Powers Act and the Communicable Diseases Act allowed the authorities to issue and implement a whole range of regulations limiting people's basic rights set in the constitution. To 'prevent a serious danger to life and health', the Government regulated visits to housing services for and free movement of the elderly and other at-risk groups, access to public establishments such as schools, universities and cultural venues such as libraries, mobile libraries, hobby and leisure centres, museums, and sports facilities. Private and third-sector actors and religious communities were encouraged to do the same.

> According to section 9 of the Constitution of Finland, Finnish citizens must not be prevented from entering Finland, and everyone has the right to leave Finland. However, limitations on the right to leave the country may be provided by law if they are necessary for the purpose of safeguarding legal proceedings or for the enforcement of penalties or for the fulfilment of the duty of national defence[2].

This quotation from the Finnish Border Guard instructions for passengers (2020a) points to several key principles and practices of bordering that the Emergency Powers Act introduced during 2020 pandemic, its ability to restrict people's constitutional right for free movement within Finland and across borders. Based on the Government order, the Border Guard Act, and the EU's Schengen Borders Code, on March 19th 2020, the government introduced new entry requirements and border traffic restrictions. The passenger traffic was restricted at the 'eastern' border and at the 'internal' borders of Finland[3]. The government recommended the shipping companies operating from Sweden, Estonia and Germany to discontinue ticket sales for passenger traffic until mid-May, with the exception of cargo traffic and the return of Finnish citizens and persons residing in Finland. Finnish citizens and residents were advised to return to Finland immediately and not to travel 'abroad'. 'Essential travels' for work and to access 'necessary services' were permitted across the northern and western borders. People returning to Finland from abroad by land, sea and air were advised to remain in conditions equivalent to quarantine for 14 days.

Finland shares its borders with four states: Estonia, Sweden, Norway and the Russian Federation. As the Finnish history and the changes in the region's geopolitical settings well indicate, relations to each of the bordering states, as well as different segments of the border, are different. The term 'internal' refers to Finland's Schengen borders to Sweden, Norway and Estonia, with traditions of free movement of people, while the 'eastern' and 'external' refer to the well-guarded border to Russia where also a valid passport and, usually, a visa is needed. The 'essential travel' and 'necessary services' refer to some of the exemptions in bordering under the Emergency Powers Act. These politically complex exceptions, and their implementation by the Finnish Border Guard, enabled some passenger traffic across Finland's borders. However, the vague definition of 'essential' and the understanding of constitutional rights lead to a discussion of de facto legality of the government's border policy on the one hand and to civil disobedience and semi-legal border crossings on the other hand. The impact and experiences of the situation clearly depended on the context.

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[2] The instructions of the Finnish Border Guard to passengers regarding entry to Finland, 2020, *Finnish Border Guard*. URL: https://www.raja.fi/current_issues/guidelines_for_border_traffic (accessed 8 December 2020).

[3] Finnish border traffic to be restricted as of 19 March 2020, 2020, *Finnish Border Guard*. URL: https://www.raja.fi/current_issues/facts/news_from_the_border_guard/1/0/finnish_border_traffic_to_be_restricted_as_of_19_march_2020_79144 (accessed 8 December 2020); Traveller, Return to Finland, 2020, *Ministry for Foreign Affairs*. URL: https://um.fi/ajankohtaista/-/asset_publisher/gc654PySnjTX/content/ulkoministeri-c3-b6-c3-a4l-c3-a4-matkusta-ulkomaille- (accessed 8 December 2020) (in Finnish).

Table 1

COVID-19 cases, COVID-19 related deaths and the number of new cases per 100,000 for the last 14 days of the month in Finland, Sweden and Estonia in 2020* (ECDC 2020)

Month	Cases			Deaths			New cases / 100.000, avg.		
	Finland	Sweden	Estonia	Finland	Sweden	Estonia	Finland	Sweden	Estonia
January	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	3	11	1	0	0	0	0,01	0,01	0,005
March	1315	4360	716	13	289	3	6,3	10,15	14,45
April	4908	20968	1667	206	2803	50	28,76	63,83	40,48
May	6828	38390	1866	316	4593	63	19,64	77,63	8,38
June	7211	67060	1988	328	5482	0	4,94	118,49	5,74
July	7425	76681	2052	329	5760	0	1,75	67,33	1,64
August	8079	84234	2374	335	5839	64	4,49	34,42	8,45
September	9894	93160	3316	343	5895	0	11,38	33,52	26,03
October**	11051	96685	3716	346	5904	67	31,91	61,41	51,48

* Cumulative, at the end of the month. ** Average The situation on 8 October.

Sources: ECDC 2020, Daily update of new reported cases of COVID-19 by country worldwide, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. URL: https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/download-todays-data-geographic-distribution-covid-19-cases-worldwide (accessed 8 December 2020).

The dynamics of COVID-19 cases and deaths in Finland, Sweden and Estonia were different (see table 1). With its more liberal policy, the overall number of cases, COVID-19 related deaths and the number of new cases per 100,000 in Sweden were clearly higher than those in the other two countries. This difference in the epidemiological situation had a direct impact on the way Finnish and Estonian policymakers, as well as health border authorities, viewed the free movement with Sweden, it was perceived as a risk. While Estonia created the 'Baltic bubble' allowing free movement between it, Latvia and Lithuania, Finland tightened the 'non-essential' mobility with all its neighbours in the North (Sweden, Norway), in the South (Estonia) and in the East (Russia).

Finland's 'eastern' border to Russia is an external border of the European Union and, thus, follows the joint Schengen regulations for border control. It also complies with the EU-level guidelines, best practices and recommendations for border guards as well as with the joint standards of information exchange. When the border traffic restrictions entered into force on March 19th, the passenger traffic was severely restricted and, apart from cargo, only some dual citizens, students coming to Finland and family members of Finnish citizens were able to cross the border. Consequently, the number of daily border crossings in Southeast Finland Border Guard District dropped from about 8,000—15,000 passengers to

1,000—1,500 with about 80% of them being professional freight drivers [14]. The new regulations allowed goods to move across borders but prohibited passenger travel such as tourism, they banned Russian cottage owners from visiting their properties in Finland and Finnish borderlanders from visiting Russia for 'cheap' gasoline. Cross-border cooperation projects transferred to online platforms but empty shops, malls and outlet villages had a serious impact on economic development in areas such as South-East Finland that relied heavily on cross-border business and tourism.

Unlike the 'eastern' border to Russia, Finland's western and northern borders to Sweden and Norway have been open for local border traffic for a long time. No passports have been required from the citizens of the five Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland) since the 1950s. Since Finland's entered the Schengen area in 2001, the border can be crossed anywhere [15] and the borders neither to Sweden nor Norway had any significance. Therefore, the government's March 19th decision to restore border checks[4] and to ban all movement other than cargo traffic and 'essential' travel-to-work commuting was controversial. Due to the high number of COVID-19 cases in Sweden, it was both welcomed and confusing. In the areas with hundreds of years' joint history, shared business and social infrastructure, e. g. in the joint city centre of Haparanda-Tornio twin city, the restrictions created some distress and 'semi-legal' traffic across the border to/from Sweden. In the South, the maritime border to Estonia had lost its significance upon Estonia's joining the EU in 2004 and entering the Schengen territory in 2007.

Like the land border to Sweden, the border at the Gulf of Finland developed into an area with the strong and active cross-border agglomeration of business, tourism and labour. During the pandemic, Finland's border control transformed both the travels and encounters between the two countries and the lives of Estonian immigrants in Finland.

In the following part, I will discuss the above territorial lockdown during COVID-19 pandemic in Finland. Special attention will be paid to the governments' aim to "*protect the population and secure functions of society*" by restricting migration and mobility at Finland's internal borders to Sweden and Estonia. The paper is based on academic and media reports, seminar discussions and in-

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[4] According to the Schengen Border Code (Temporary Reintroduction of Border Control, Migration and Home Affairs, 2020, *European Commission*. URL: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control_en (accessed 8 December 2020)), member states can reintroduce border checks at internal borders temporarily in the event that is a serious threat to public policy or internal security. The control must remain an exception, must respect the principle of proportionality and be limited in time. Previous time any control took place at Finland's border to Sweden was during the 2015—2016 'migration crisis' when the Finnish Border Guard in cooperation with the Swedish Police exercised 'intensified immigration control' ('tehostettu ulkomaalaisvalvonta' in Finnish). (see e. g. [17;18]). Formally, that was not border control but, rather, surveillance of foreign citizens including identity checks both in areas close to the border and Finland as a whole.

formation received from publications (news, statistics, etc.) of and meetings with the Finnish Border Guard. These will be analysed by using qualitative content analysis approach.

Medical personnel, snus and civil disobedience at the Swedish border

The history of the Finnish-Swedish border goes back to the Treaty of Fredrikshamn in 1809 when Sweden ceded Finland over to the Russian Empire. The border is the Sea of Åland and the Gulf of Bothnia in the South and the rivers Tornionjoki and Muonionjoki in the North. As members of the Nordic cooperation both Finland and Sweden have been committed to free movement of passengers and labour since the 1950s. The passport control was abolished already in 1952. In the 1960s and 1970s, the free movement culminated to mass migration to the rapidly developing industrial cities of Sweden. According to Korkisaari [16] up to 545,000 Finnish citizens moved to Sweden and about 295,000 moved back to Finland during 1945—2000. That was about 70% of all Finnish emigrants during the period and, including descendants, an increase of about half a million inhabitants in Sweden. These, combined with the traditionally intensive cross-border encounters in Torne River Valley, once a single cultural entity without border, and the Schengen cooperation in 2001 created a joint space for cultural heritage and intensive social, economic and political encounters.

Within the above context of cross-border integration, the government's decision to restrict border traffic at the Finland-Sweden border on March 19th was exceptional. The border was open only at Karesuvanto, Kolari, Muonio, Pello, Tornio and Ylitornio border-crossing points for goods and return traffic as well as for 'essential' commuting and other traffic. Crossing the border elsewhere was not permitted. Everyone, including Nordic citizens, was also obligated to carry a passport or an official ID. In practice, the new restrictions paralyzed many of the daily activities in the area where people used to work, visit friends or family members, go for shopping, movies or undertake other leisure activities and, importantly, do business across the border on a daily basis. The countries' different epidemiological development and approaches to virus control set the basis both for the state and civic discourses of the COVID-19 and cooperation.

According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control[5], the first cases in Sweden occurred in late February. Their number increased to 20,000 cases at the end of April and 93,000 at the end of September. With the first cases registered in Finland about a week later, their number in Finland rose to 5,000 at

[5] Daily update of new reported cases of COVID-19 by country worldwide, 2020, *European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control*. URL: https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/download-todays-data-geographic-distribution-covid-19-cases-worldwide (accessed 8 December 2020).

the end of April and to 9,900 at the end of September. Similarly to the number of new reported COVID-19 cases, the number of COVID-19 related deaths in Sweden (5,895 on September 31st) was about ten times higher than in Finland (343 on September 31st). The numbers reflecting the different medical approach to the pandemic — Sweden's being more liberal– as well as the fear for Finland's medical capacity set the basis for Finland's approach to and the discourses on the Swedish border during the pandemic. As the Minister of the Interior Maria Ohisalo stated at the government's COVID-19 briefing: "*The intensive care capacity of the North is rather small, and we cannot risk that. So now during the next weeks we need to limit even commuter traffic*[6]."

Following the countries' commitment for free movement, the border between Finland and Sweden opened on September 19th, six months after the unprecedented introduction of border control. Thus, the reasoning behind and the social, economic and political consequences of virus control in the two countries rise a number of interesting questions regarding the politics of bordering. First, the new border regulations restricted 'non-essential' crossings to/from Sweden. The ferry connection between Helsinki and Stockholm halted but, as its part of Finland's critical infrastructure, the connection between Turku and Stockholm continued its operations for cargo and returning passengers but not for cruises and other personal traffic. In the North where the border area makes a joint travel-to-work area, the narrow interpretation of the 'non-essential' travel, as well as the restrictions' impact on daily commuting, caused some concern. However, the Deputy Commander of the Lapland Border Guard District Janne Kurvinen explained the necessity of the restrictions during the pandemic:

> The border checks have been reintroduced for a reason. They have been introduced not to annoy but to protect people. Many things at the border areas are different, at least momentarily, when regular business across the border has been restricted. You cannot go across the border for regular shopping, banking or second home visits if it is not essential for the lives of people [19].

The final decision on the 'essential' character of a border crossing was made by the Border Guard checking the purpose of travel. Commander Kurvinen's above statement clearly demonstrates that the Border Guards in charge occasionally disagree with the citizens' conception of trips' essentiality, and this may lead to further clarification or, even, to a fine. As the epidemiological situation in Sweden was considerably worse than in Finland, the new restrictions and the efforts of the Border Guard to limit the spread of the virus were strongly supported both in the region and in the country in general. The recommendation for self-quar-

[6] Hallitus aloittaa pikaisesti valmistelut pohjois- ja länsirajaliikenteen tiukentamiseksi — Joudumme jopa työmatkaliikennettä rajoittamaan, sisäministeri sanoo, 2020, I. URL: https://yle.fi/uutiset/3—11283443 (accessed 8 December 2020) (in Finnish).

antine remained valid until the reopening of the border on September 19th, six months after the introduction of the control. After a week, on September 24th, the government reintroduced the border control due to the rapidly deteriorating epidemiological situation in Sweden, this time with an exemption for the residents of 'border communities'[7]. The acknowledgement of special needs among the communities at the border was a great success for the Lapland Chamber of Commerce that, among others, demanded a regionally sensitive approach to health policy that previously ignored all regional specificities and differences[8].

The second fascinating aspect of disease control relates to the above-mentioned constitutional rights of the Finnish citizens to exit and enter the territory of Finland at any times. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemics in March, the government sent a clear message to its citizens: "The borders are closed, this is not the time to travel for summer cottages, only 'essential' trips abroad are allowed, and both the Police and the Border Guard guarantee that the law is being complied". However, in early May, a couple of months after the new measures were implemented, local media along with people who used to cross the Swedish border on daily basis suddenly realised that the ban was not legal and it violated citizens' constitutional rights to exit and enter Finland. Having consulted lawyers, they concluded that the Border Guard had exceeded its authority by restricting the cross-border traffic with Sweden. As restrictions to the border traffic were not used for medical reasons only, and people attempting to cross the border were requested information and certificates of the 'essentiality' of their travel, the measures were assessed as disproportional and, even, as an excess of power by the Border Guard [20]. Interestingly, the Border Guard recognizes the questionable character of the restrictions but justifies the actions by their 'essentiality' for safeguarding citizens' fundamental rights to life and health protection. In its public response to the critique and complaints submitted to the Chancellor of Justice and the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Finnish Border Guard clarifies:

> The decision to restore the internal border control has not violated the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of movement, according to which a Finnish citizen must never be prevented from entering the country. Moreover, everyone has the right to leave the country unless this right is legally restricted. Consequently, the decisions taken by the Government regarding travel restriction are partly of a recommendatory

[7] To ease the situation in the North, the government introduced a border community regime with no requirements for quarantine. At the Swedish border, the regime applies to the municipalities of Haparanda, Övertorneå, Pajala and Kiruna in Sweden, and Tornio, Ylitornio, Pello, Kolari, Muonio and Enontekiö in Finland. At the Norwegian border, the regime applies to the municipalities of Storfjord, Kåfjord, Nordreisa, Kautokeino, Kaarasjok, Tana, Nesseby, and Sør-Varanger in Norway, and Enontekiö, Inari, and Utsjoki in Finland.

[8] Lapland Chamber of Commerce 2020, 2020, *Border Crossing Statement of Lapland Chamber of Commerce*. URL: https://www.lapland.chamber.fi/lapin-kauppakamarin-rajanylityskannanotto-23—9/ (accessed 8 December 2020) (in Finnish).

nature and their purpose was to slow down the spread of the pandemic. In these respects, the border officers have with instructions and advice supported the realization of the Government's goals[9].

The Border Guard's decision to restrict border crossings was a good example of two significantly important constitutional rights competing, to an extent, during the state of emergency: Right to life and health vs. the right to freedom of movement. The Border Guard is and represents itself as a body implementing the government's decisions. At the Swedish land border, the opening, however, led to an immediate increase in the number of border crossings particularly at Ylitornio and Haparanda-Tornio twin city[10]. Besides travel-to-work commuting and other daily affairs, many of the newspapers drew attention to snus[11] issue and civic disobedience at the border. The below example of snus shopping in Sweden reveals how some people, despite strong recommendations not to travel, took the initiative to cross the border as personal reserves of snus were getting low and its price on the Finnish black market was increasing. A man from Kemi, about 30km from the border, told about his trips across the border. Having become aware of his constitutional right to visit Sweden through the grapevine, despite border checks and quarantine, he decided to go for shopping.

> I have done it, the thing that you should not do. So, you must accept the two-week quarantine but the following week I did it again. I am a bit of a rebel… Sometimes the inspectors grumble what my personal motives are [to cross the border], I tell them that I do not have to tell them [21].

Majority of border crossings in the territory of Lapland Border Guard District was still travel-to-work and other 'essential' border crossings such as family visits[12]. As a concession, the Minister of the Interior Ms Maria Ohisalo recognized Finnish citizens' constitutional rights to travel abroad and supported the new governmental decision to award 'border communities' of Finland, Sweden and Nor-

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[9] The Basics of the Border Guard in Internal Border Control, 2020, *Finnish Border Guard*. URL: https://www.raja.fi/ajankohtaista/tietoa/tiedotteet/1/0/rajavartiolaitoksen_toimin nan_perusteista_sisarajavalvonnassa_79675 (accessed 8 December 2020) (in Finnish).

[10] Haparanda-Tornio twin city is an urban agglomeration of about 32,000 inhabitants that consists of the city of Hapranda in Sweden and the city of Tornio in Finland. According to Mainio (2020), 13.5 million crossed the border at Tornio in 2019. In Haparanda and the surrounding Swedish side of the valley, most of the medical doctors and care personnel, teachers, elderly care workers etc. are Finnish. The cities have over 40 cooperation agreements, including a joint school, travel centre, water treatment and heating plants, provincial museum and, of course, Ikea.

[11] Snus is moist smokeless tobacco that originates in Sweden. It is commonly used also in Finland, but it cannot be purchased in any EU country except for Sweden.

[12] Liikenne kasvaa Lapin sisärajoilla — Ylitornio ja Kilpisjärvi ovat vilkkaimmat Lapin rajavartioston valvomat rajanylityspaikat länsi- ja pohjoisrajoilla, 2020, *RAYA 100*. URL: https://www.raja.fi/lr/tiedotteet/1/0/liikenne_kasvaa_lapin_sisarajoilla_-_ylitornio_ja_kilpisjarvi_ovat_vilkkaimmat_lapin_rajavartioston_valvomat_rajanylityspaikat_lansi-_ja_pohjoisrajoilla_79783 (accessed 8 December 2020).

way a special status[13]. The new arrangement that came into effect on September 29th allowed the residents of border municipalities to cross the border even if the border crossings were otherwise restricted due to worsening epidemiological situation in Sweden. Thus, Ohisalo did appeal to Finns' morale and responsibility to refrain from any travels across [21]:

> Finnish citizens are always allowed to exit the country and come back. I appeal to the morale of Finnish citizens and to the fact that Border Guards work risking their health. Nurses, medical doctors fighting this disease risk their health every day.

Tourism and the family decisions at the Estonian border

The second case study of this paper, Finland's border to Estonia during COVID-19 pandemic, is very different from the one with Sweden. The cultural relations and mobility between Finland and Estonia have changed since the mid-19th century [24]. The foundation for relations and cross-border encounters was laid by cultural enthusiasts in the late 19th century Russian Empire and early 20th century independent Estonia. Yet, much of the contemporary relations encounters between the two countries developed during and, particularly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Opening of the regular boat connection in 1965 between Helsinki and Soviet Tallinn, unfolded new possibilities for travel. While Estonians were able to get acquainted with Finland through the Finnish TV and radio, only a few Estonians could travel to Finland due to tight exit regulations of the Soviet state. The number of Finnish tourists in Estonia, however, grew. The border opening upon the restoration of Estonia's independence in 1991, as well as Estonia's accession to the EU in 2004 and its joining Schengen Area in December 2007, transformed the cross-border travel and migration across the Gulf of Finland. As components of Finnish critical infrastructure, a basic ferry connection between the two countries continued during the pandemic, although only for cargo. The restrictions hit first and foremost tourism, Estonian migrant workers in Finland and their families in Estonia.

The area that is playfully also referred to as Talsinki or Hellinn[14], has during the years become a transnational space where the movement of people, goods and services is constant and an everyday practice both among Finns and for Es-

[13] The instructions of the Finnish Border Guard to passengers regarding entry to Finland, 2020, *RAYA 100*. URL: https://www.raja.fi/current_issues/guidelines_for_border_traffic (accessed 8 December 2020).

[14] The notion of Talsinki or Hellinn comes from an idea of a twin city consisting of Finland's capital Helsinki and Estonia's capital Tallinn. It is closely related to cities' strategic cooperation and an idea of twin city with concrete development goals through mobility of people and goods, services for non-residents, competitiveness and marketing of the region and well-being of the Baltic Sea. The notion has been extended to concrete projects aiming to develop cooperation and infrastructure (e. g. tunnel) of the region.

tonians. According to the Bank of Estonia[15], over 6.1 million non-resident trips were made to Estonia in 2019, out of which one third, about two million, was made by Finns. It is estimated that tourism and its EUR 2 billion receipts made up about 8% of Estonia's GDP in 2018[16], thus, the share of Finnish tourists is central for the country's economy. During the pandemic, the total number of overnights in Estonia decreased by 45% from about 4.9 million in 2019 (January-August) to 2.67 million in 2020. Estonians' domestic travel during the summer holidays compensated some of the 62 per cent decrease in foreign tourists. During the first eight months of 2020, Finnish tourists made about 21% of all overnights in Estonia (34% in Tallinn), including overnights by domestic tourists, but Finnish citizens accounted for the largest share (41%) of foreigners' overnights in the country[17].

The number of Finnish tourists started to decrease in mid-March and early April (see table 2), in the aftermath of the 'travel ban recommendation' and the restricted sales of tickets for passenger traffic issued by the Finnish government. Upon some improvement of the epidemiological situation in Estonia, Tallinn and Pärnu remained the most popular destinations among Finns. For many of them, Estonia is familiar, easy-access and safe and, therefore, it can serve as a substitute for the 'usual' summer vacation destinations of Greece and Spain during the pandemic.

Table 2

Overnights by Finns in Estonia, January-August 2020

Month	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
Estonia, total	71 950	101 165	30 978	262	1 873	37 248	156 166	78 126
Tallinn	51 456	74 609	20 652	125	1 407	22 243	89 958	46 442
Pärnu	11 908	15 724	6 363	37	147	8 848	38 822	16 476
Tartu	2 696	3 018	956	63	148	1 640	8 103	3 888
Other	5 890	7 814	3 007	37	171	4 517	19 283	11 320

Sources: Turismi arengu ülevaated, 2020, Puhka Eestis. URL: https://www.puhkaeestis.ee/et/uuringud-ja-ulevaated/turismi-arengu-ulevaated (accessed 8 December 2020).

Alho and Kumer-Haukanõmm [25, p. 17] portray the extent and the reciprocal character of mobility and migration between Finland and Estonia. According to them, these "*challenge the classification of identity binarily and roughly*

[15] Inbound travel, 2020, *Eesti Pank* 2020. URL: https://statistika.eestipank.ee/#/en/p/1410/r/2831/2620 (accessed 8 December 2020).

[16] Tourism Trends and Policies, 2020, OECD. doi: https://doi.org/10.1787/6b47b985-en.

[17] Turismi arengu ülevaated, 2020, *Puhka Eestis*. URL: https://www.puhkaeestis.ee/et/uuringud-ja-ulevaated/turismi-arengu-ulevaated (accessed 8 December 2020).

as 'Finnish' or 'Estonian' and give new meanings to the concepts of 'home', 'foreign', 'presence' and 'absence'". Besides tourism, long-term migration and transnational life have become a fact of life in the region. The number of Estonian immigrants in Finland has increased from 710 in 1990 to about 29,000 in 2010 and, notably, to about 51,000 in 2019[18]. Actually, Alho and Kumer-Haukanõmm [25, p. 18] argue that 'Estonians' is a heterogeneous group that consists not only of Estonians but also of Ingrian Finns and Russian speakers of several nationalities. Besides tourists and labour migrants, there are also students and entrepreneurs as well as spouses, children and retired individuals many of whom have immigrated along with the family. As many of the Estonians do not register their stay in Finland but commute between their 'home' in Estonia and Finland, the figures can be much higher. Between 1992 and 2019, over 8,500 Estonians have also received Finnish citizenship[19].

In 2011, up to 80—90% of the Estonians in Finland were men. Many of them travelled between home and work (in Finland) weekly, monthly, or slightly less often. The distance between the capitals of Finland and Estonia is only 80 kilometres and the inexpensive ferry connection across the Gulf of Finland takes only two hours. Employment in Finland where salaries are considerably higher than in Estonia gives commuters a sense of financial security and general well-being. Strong family and friendships relations in Estonia mean that most of the migrants have no desire to change their country of residence. [26, p. 141; 27, p. 158, 164—166]. That transnational life of commuting migrants materialises itself in constant travel, distance relationship and experience of being separated from one's wife and children. These often result in the feeling of loneliness, alienation between the father and his children, parallel relationships, or divorce. Yet, frequent communication combined with the economic security, well-valued quality time with the family during days off, including domestic and international travel, and better prospects of being able to support children's education may have a positive impact on the relationship [27; 28]. Even though children may get material benefits from family members' work abroad, they may have difficulties comprehending the 'necessity' of the situation [29, p. 94].

In this context, an article on Estonian construction workers being 'corona prisoners' in Finland [30] clearly illustrates the trouble that the sudden restrictions of border traffic created for Estonian labour migrants and their families. As Estonians' commuting across the Gulf of Finland was usually not considered as 'essential', the government's decision to terminate ticket sales for passenger traffic put Estonian migrants' lives on hold. They had to choose between going 'home' to Estonia or continuing earning in Finland, without knowing if they would be

[18] Immigrants and integration, 2020, *Statistics Finland Web databases*, available at http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/Maahanmuuttajat_ja_kotoutuminen/ (accessed 8 December 2020).

[19] Ibid.

able to go home before the end of the pandemic. In the article published in early-May [Ibid.], an Estonian construction worker voices his perspective that, I argue, represents a broader sentiment among commuting Estonians in Finland.

> I have not seen my family since then… Of course, I miss my close ones. Here, no one has been at home. Men walk around with depressed faces. But we have no choice since if you go to Estonia, you cannot come back. Everyone stays here, scared to lose the job!

The man had briefly visited Estonia for his son's birthday one and a half months before writing that, shortly, as the borders to Finland would be closed and travel-to-work commuting was not possible. Living apart from families, often in collective flats with several other male migrants, was challenging. While some decided to return home and find alternative employment in Estonia, others decided to stay in Finland due to Finland's more regulated and secure labour market. In Mõttus-Lepik's report [30], two men tell about the use of new telecommunication technologies for migrants' practices of home making in a transnational or translocal contexts. That is an important tool not only for Estonian migrants in Finland but for migrants around the world (see e. g. [27; 31]).

> I talk to them every evening through a video call. It is a kind of adventure, isn't it? They wait for me, and I wait for them. I am here for my family's sake to earn some money.
>
> Every morning, lunchtime and evening we communicate through video call but the absence of the physical contact is immense… And it has not been so easy for my wife either in Spain [where she stays] where the restrictions were particularly harsh. She could go out of the flat only to take out the trash and to go to a store.

Overall, these relate to the notion of transnational relationships and care among migrant families that suddenly revolutionised after the government decided to restrict mobility between the two countries. Working with Bryceson's and Vuorela's [32] and Pöllänen's [33] conceptions, Siim [26, p. 142] explains how transnational families have specific — often conscious — ways of expressing love, affection and care when everyday presence and family routines are absent. In the above example, video calls are significant daily practices that reduce emotional stress among migrants. However, both the physical longing and the worry about family members 'at home' remain. While some of the migrants had no other options but to 'wait and hope' for the changes in border traffic regulations in Finland, others left Finland for good or tried to find 'alternative' ways to cross the border back and forth. A migrant in Mõttus-Lepik's [30] report explains:

> You get a commercial vehicle and drive. As freight traffic is allowed, with a small van you will get across [the border]. If you tell them that you are bringing goods and you are a transport worker, the Finnish customs will let you through smoothly… In

theory, you could even visit your family in Estonia this way, but people have not done that yet. Now we just wait and hope that the Finnish government will ease the border restrictions on Sunday.

Since it was an important issue for Estonian labour and Finnish companies alike, and the idea was strongly promoted by the Estonian government, the commuting migrants were exempted from the 14-day quarantine when the Finnish government on September 12th tightened its travel restrictions with Estonia. While the Finnish government introduced the concept of 'border communities' at the Swedish border, Estonian travel-to-work migrants also got a special status for border crossings.

Conclusion

The history of borders as the primary solution for disease control is not a new phenomenon. In the context of the globalised economy, transnational networks and lives, as well as global value chains, states' decision to restrict travel and transnational practices is not, necessarily, the best solution. Being central components of nation states and popular in nationalist and populist discourses while, at the same time, functioning as instruments of control and health risk containment, borders and cross-border mobility are clearly securitized during the pandemic. Allowing cargo and 'essential' travel at the 'internal' borders, the Finnish government acknowledged the importance of well-functioning border-crossings for Finland's economy, performance and security. As the recent special arrangements of 'border communities' and commuting clearly indicate, the government, after all, responded to the critique and diplomatic pressure for alleviating social costs of its bordering.

The Finnish government protects its population and secures functions of society during the pandemic by restricting mobility and migration from its neighbouring states and beyond. The 'external' border of Finland to Russia was closed and effected particularly cross-border shopping and local economies in border communities. The 'internal' borders to Sweden and Estonia, that this paper concentrates on, represent two different historical, social and economic bordering contexts within the European Union. In the North, the cultures and the practices of border-crossing have been developing for centuries. Up to ten times higher infection rates in Sweden 'forced' Finland to restrict border traffic for over half a year and separated an integrated border area where people used to cross the border daily for work, leisure, shopping and family affairs. A special 'border community' concept and free cross-border movement for locals were introduced only in autumn 2020 when the government reinstated border control due to the deteriorating epidemiological situation in Sweden. In the South, the encounters across the Gulf of Finland between Finland and Estonia became extremely intensive only during the last decades. Besides interrupting the exceptionally lively tourism exchange, the new lockdown disrupted personal encounters and networks among commuters, migrant families and others. It also hampered the transnational family making and the development of personal networks, as well as caused severe economic losses for businesses and regions alike. Besides preventing the spread of the virus during the pandemic, the lockdown shook the areas that had been economically and socially integrating for years.

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed our understanding of globalising and Europeanising world. The illusion of a global world and borderless Europe has turned into a hey-day of nation states where international cooperation is scarce and different types of bordering practices are more rigorous than ever. Besides states' territorial borders, the practices of bordering have extended to public spaces and spaces outside border areas. In a way, bodies — particularly foreign bodies aiming to cross the border — have become spaces of suspicion and sites of bordering. In the context of very strong political pressure and methodological nationalism, the new practices often remain unnoticed. We can, thus, ask: Do bordering and restrictions to migration and mobility provide a solution to the 'problem'? And at what cost do they come for citizens, local communities and businesses?

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The author

Dr Joni Virkkunen, Research Manager, Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland, Finland.

E-mail: joni.virkkunen@uef.fi

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8845-1396

IMPACT OF REMIGRATION ON THE WORK SPHERE UNDER COVID-19: THE CASE OF LITHUANIA

I. Geciene-Janulione

Institute of Social Innovations
15 Sauletekio St., Vilnius, 10224, Lithuania
Vilnius University
3 Universiteto St., Vilnius, 01513, Lithuania

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Remigration is the return of a country's citizens from emigration. Remigrants carry with them ideas, knowledge, values, and skills. Although the work sphere is where these social remittances can be used most efficiently, the social remittance literature pays very little attention to employee experience. The primary aim of this article is to explore the types of social remittances, the ways they are transmitted, and how they are used in the work sphere. Employment has been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as many workplaces are closing amid quarantine restrictions and social distancing requirements. Another aim of this contribution is to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the transfer of social remittances to the work sphere. The article presents findings from 15 interviews with highly qualified remigrants and five interviews with their Lithuanian co-workers. The interviews were conducted in May–July 2020 within the project 'Social remittances of (re) migrants for society welfare growth: challenges and experiences in a comparative perspective', financed by the Research Council of Lithuania.

Keywords:
remigration, work sphere, COVID-19, social remittances.

Introduction

The regaining of independence in 1991 lifted the Iron Curtain of the Soviet regime, and Lithuanians started moving freely across the world. Yet after a short period of euphoria over potential family reunions and the freedom of choice of domicile, the economy of Lithuania went into a downward spin caused by the collapse of industry and market liberalisation. Economic hardship forced part of the Lithuanian population into economic migration. Over the past 30 years, Lithuania's emigration rate has been among the highest in the European Union;

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almost one-fifth of the population has left the country[1] (Migration in numbers, 2020). This has led to a decrease in the number of young, employable people as well as to workforce shortages. The current halt in emigration and the return of emigrants is viewed as a way to solve these problems.

Remigration is the return of citizens from immigration; remigrants carry ideas, knowledge, values, and skills with them. Social remittances have lately been a primary focus for many researchers. It is expected that 'by returning to their home country, circular migrants bring new skills and ideas, which encourage innovation and progress' [1, p. 3]. Still, as emphasised by Haynes and Galasińska [2], the social remittance literature has so far paid very little attention to employee experience. Most of the studies investigate what social skills emigrants acquire when working in the host country [2—4] rather than how social remittances are transmitted by returnees and what impact they have on workplaces in their country of origin. The primary aim of this article is to explore the types of social remittances, the ways they are transmitted and how they are used in the work sphere.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious effect on the work sphere as many workplaces are closing because of quarantine restrictions and social distancing requirements. Besides, travel restrictions have impacted on migration trends. Thus, the other aim of this article is to look into how COVID-19 has affected the migration situation and the transfer of social remittance to the work sphere in Lithuania.

This article presents findings from interviews (15) with highly qualified (re) migrants and five with their colleagues working permanently in Lithuania. The interviews were conducted in May–July 2020 within the project 'Social remittances of (re) migrants for society welfare growth: challenges and experiences in a comparative perspective', which was financed by the Research Council of Lithuania. This article defines 'returned migrants' as individuals who lived outside Lithuania for 12 months after 1990 but were residing permanently in the country as at the time of the study.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this article is an array of research assumptions about social remittances and employee experience. The term 'social remittances' was first introduced by Peggy Levitt to refer to 'norms, practices, identities and social capital' and emphasise the importance of social and cultural non-direct impact on the transformation of home countries [5, p. 927]. Migrants may bring home democratic — cultural and associational — practices, information, and know-how, as well as knowledge of how the system works in other countries

[1] Migration trends, 2020, *Migration in numbers*. URL: https://123.emn.lt/en/ (accessed 14.09.2020).

[6, p. 10]. The mobilisation of migrants' expertise and skills may contribute to the development of their countries much more than any financial remittances or investment [7, p. 73; 8; 9]. The circulation channels for social remittances have been identified in the literature. These are migrants' journeys or return to their countries of origin, migrants' social networks [10], and the media [2; 11].

Social remittances can have a major impact on the country of origin. Migrants are potential transmitters of research and innovation, responsible for technological transfer and skills improvement [12, p. 20]. The cultural capital that migrants have acquired in host countries benefits the countries of origin, which imbibe civil consciousness and experience [13, p. 77]. An important corollary is 'the subtle and dynamic effects of migration's "social remittances" on reshaping political understandings, expectations, and norms' [14, p. 19]. Social remittances can also change organisational routines in the home country, for example, by inculcating an attitude of accountability and transparency [6, p. 10—11].

The last decade has seen publications about social capital transferred by Central and East European migrants into their countries of origin [3; 4; 15—23], the influence of social capital on social change in the countries of origin [24; 25], and obstacles to the receipt of social remittances [26—29].

Work is one of the three main spheres where social remittances can be used, alongside family life and politics [30]. Nevertheless, 'very little attention is paid to the workplace in the social remittance literature' [2, p. 2]. Most studies examine what knowledge and social skills emigrants acquire through working in another country [2—4]. Potential social remittances are norms, values, ideas, practices, behaviours, knowledge, social skills, work culture, know-how, strategies, identities, social capital, etc. Grabowska defines workplace social skills as 'cognitive skills, self-management and discipline, contacts with others and work organisation skills' [4, p. 88]. Some skills are specific to returned migrants: they can ' (1) interact and interrelate cross-culturally; (2) deal with emotional work; and (3) take the initiative and act independently' [3, p. 6]. All this necessitates a study of how 'return [ed] migrants reflect and use their migratory experiences and possibly acquired work-related social skills after their return' [3, p. 5].

The factors in the transmission of workplace social remittances are timing, patterns of interaction in the workplace, and the receipt of social remittances. Timing is the key factor: the longer migrants are immersed in the working routines of a host country, the more their attitudes change and the more they become accustomed to 'the rules of the game' [2, p. 3]. Timing is also important for primary socialisation — if it occurs outside the country of origin, returned migrants 'will have more difficulty adjusting and/or giving back' [31, p. 503]. Moreover, 'sometimes there is a time lag due to a lack of opportunity to deploy their skills [obtained abroad] and competences upon return', for example, this applies to the command of languages spoken in a host country [3, p. 14].

The second factor is the pattern of interactions in the workplace. Grabowska investigates the 'patterns of interaction with the host society', particularly the learning patterns in the host-society workplace, since 'migrants differ in their attitude and approach to learning and the ways they communicate with the host and origin workplaces and employment-related situations' [3, p. 4]. It is also of interest to examine personal capabilities and different patterns of transmission of social remittances in workplaces in the countries of origin. For example, Karolak writes that the actualisation of social remittances in the workplace depends 'on the coping strategies adopted by returnees', stressing that 're-emigration, activism, adaptation and/or entrepreneurship were the returnees' main strategies in this respect' [19, p. 35].

The third factor is the patterns of receipt of social remittances in the workplace in the country of origin; workplaces may differ significantly in this respect. The main obstacles for remittance receipt are low incomes and the country of origin's work culture, which deals 'less with formal rules than with wider workplace culture and human relationships'. The latter include greater pressure, a stronger hierarchy, the lack of 'softer skills' (teamwork skills, negotiation, compromise), the lack of rules such as the 'work-life balance', attitudes to customers, etc. [2; 19]. Another obstacle is society's rather unfavourable attitude towards returned migrants and their migration experience: 'regardless of how much human capital returned migrants bring from abroad, the successful integration of returnees is unlikely if their migration experience is not considered as an asset by the home country's labour market' [1, p. 12].

Data

This article utilises statistical migration data and semi-structured in-depth interviews with returned migrants and their co-workers. The statistical migration used is open data from the Lithuanian Department of Statistics and other sources. These figures paint a clear picture of the migration situation in Lithuania and aid in assessing the impact of COVID-19 on Lithuanian migration.

Qualitative data were collected from 15 interviews with returned migrants and five with their colleagues working permanently in Lithuania. The interviews were conducted in May–September 2020 via Skype or a different messenger application in compliance with COVID-19 rules. They were carried out in the interviewee's language of choice — Lithuanian or English — and were recorded with the informed consent of the participants. The names of the respondents, places, companies, etc. have been anonymised. The interview data are used below to explore different types of social remittances, the way they are transmitted, and their receipt in the work sphere.

Returned interviewees were reached by using a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling to draw a reasonably heterogeneous sample. There were two main selection criteria — residing abroad for at least 12 months and a university degree. The first criterion applies because respondents needed to have spent sufficient time in the host country to acquire new knowledge and social skills, adapt, and gain cultural experience. The second criterion is based on theoretical assumptions and earlier findings showing that highly qualified migrants could offer the most to their country of origin [9; 12; 32—35].

Besides these two criteria, returned migrants were selected using the maximum variation sampling principle to ensure differences in gender, age, profession, and the time of emigration and return. The sample was balanced in terms of gender (8 females, 7 males), age (6 in their late 20s and 30s, 9 in their 40s; the sample did not include any older respondents as, statistically speaking, Lithuanian migrants are very young), and profession, which ranged from researchers, IT specialists, finance and e-commerce experts, engineers, business managers, librarians, and educators to culture workers. Some of them left Lithuania in 1993-1997, and some in 2012. The majority spent about 8—10 years abroad. Some returned to Lithuania as early as in 2006, and some came back only in 2018. All respondents had work experience abroad and spent sufficient time back in Lithuania to integrate into the local work sphere. Nevertheless, not everyone re-entered employment immediately upon returning to Lithuania because some did not find suitable work or simply wanted to take a break.

The interviews were designed to investigate qualitative biographical data from respondents, who were asked to share their migration stories: why they decided to emigrate, what their experience of study and work (if applicable) abroad was, and how they have lived since returning to Lithuania. Although the questionnaire had large blocks on family, workplace, and participation in public activities, this article will focus on the work sphere. The interviews sought to identify types of social remittances, the ways they are transmitted, the factors determining the success of social remittance receipt, and the impact of these remittances on the lives of the local population, localities, the country, and society. Respondents also answered questions about the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on their family and work situation.

The interviews with returned migrants' co-workers used the 'matched interviews' approach as it is employed in Ahmadov and Sasse's study [36] (they applied it when interviewing respondents' family members and friends). According to Ahmadov and Sasse, this technique 'goes one step beyond the self-reported attitudes and behavior in stand-alone biographical narrative interviews and allows us to add a comparative dimension by comparing the migrants' narratives with those of a family member or friend in the country of origin' [36, p. 11] Furthermore, 'this matching helps to validate what the migrants themselves report, but it also points to changes in their attitudes or behavior which they might not recognize in themselves' [Ibid.].

We surveyed workplace colleagues because they could provide valuable insight into types of social remittances and their receipt at a workplace. Returnees were asked to nominate a suitable candidate. Overall, we carried out five interviews with co-workers. Recruiting workmates for matched interviews was rather problematic. Since returnees were looking for people they could trust to express the same views, bias could have crept in the results of data analysis. The questionnaire for work colleagues mirrored that for returned migrants. Data from these interviews are used in this article to explain attitudes towards returned migrants at their workplace, to describe social remittances they were transmitting, and to evaluate the impact of these remittances.

The Lithuanian migration situation and its causes: 1990—2020

Official data show that, since 1990, the Lithuanian population has diminished through emigration by 699,000 people, which is about a fifth of the country's residents.[2] This figure may actually be higher because not all migrants report their departure. For example, in a 2019 study of migrants, 13% of respondents stated that they had not made their departure official.[3] The number of emigrants has varied quite significantly over the years (Fig. 1).

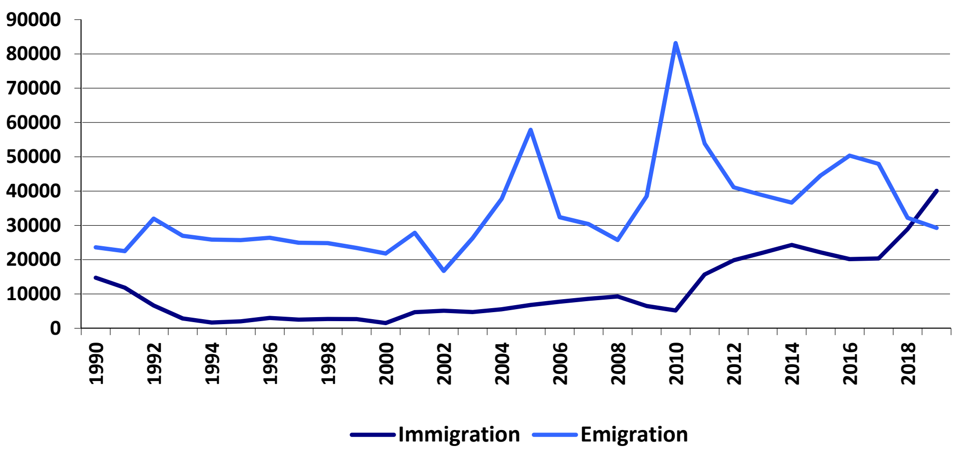

Fig. 1. Migration and immigration flows, 1990—2019

Source: Statistics Lithuania[4].

[2] Migration trends, 2020, *Migration in numbers*. URL: https://123.emn.lt/en/ (accessed 14.09.2020).

[3] Užsienio lietuvių apklausa apie jų būklę ir poreikius, 2019. URL: https://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/ULA%202019%20URM%20TINKLALAPIUI.pdf. (accessed 23.09.2020).

[4] Lithuanian official statistics Portal, 2020. URL: https://osp.stat.gov.lt/EN/ (accessed 01.09.2020).

Figure 1 shows two emigration peaks: the first occurred after Lithuania's accession to the European Union in 2004 and the second — after the 2008 global financial crisis. The 2010 peak was partially due to changes in the public healthcare scheme, requiring all permanent Lithuanian residents to pay monthly premiums. Emigrants who had reported their departure, including those who emigrated before 2010, were relieved of this obligation. Therefore, 'as paying health insurance premiums became mandatory, reported emigration spiked in spring 2010, giving an idea of the unreported emigration numbers of previous years' [37].

Most Lithuanian emigrants are young people: in 2019, more than 72.7% of emigrants were aged between 15 and 44, while this age group makes up about 36% of the entire Lithuanian population.[5] The three decades of emigration of young, employable people have given rise to many demographic, social, and eco-nomic issues: birth rates are falling, and there is a critical shortage of specialists in certain fields and overall workforce deficit. Moreover, 'a shrinking population of working people must support a growing number of the unemployed' and pensioners [ibid.].

Lithuania's migrants mostly choose the UK, Germany, Norway, and Ireland as their countries of destination.[6] The UK, however, is becoming less popular: in 2017, it was the destination of 47% of Lithuanian emigrants; in 2018, of 38%; and in 2019, of 35% (ibid.). This is mostly related to the political factor Brexit, which has added to uncertainty and created further obstacles for immigrants in the country. There is also considerable emigration to Ukraine and Belarus, mostly accounted for by citizens of these two countries who have come to Lithuania for temporary work.

Dissatisfaction in the work sphere remains one of the main reasons for emigration from Lithuania. A 2018 study of migrants revealed three most common reasons for emigration: expectations of a higher income (56% of all respondents); the desire to test oneself (20.7%); leaving behind Lithuanian authorities of all levels (dissatisfaction with the government, poor relationships with employers and the state, a low income) (20.3%).[7] Another study of emigrants, conducted in 2019, showed that main reasons to be disappointed with employment in Lithuania were low salaries (23.7%); limited career opportunities (12.9%); a lack of jobs (5.9%)[8]. A comparison of migrants' work conditions in Lithuania

[5] Migration trends, 2020, *Migration in numbers*. URL: https://123.emn.lt/en/ (accessed 14.09.2020).

[6] Migration trends, 2020, *Migration in numbers*. URL: https://123.emn.lt/en/ (accessed 14.09.2020).

[7] Tyrimas atskleidė, dėl ko emigruoja lietuviai: per maži atlyginimai — tik viena iš priežasčių, 2018, *DELFI.lt*, 8.10.2018. URL: https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/tyrimas-atskleide-del-ko-emigruoja-lietuviai-per-mazi-atlyginimai-tik-viena-is-priezasciu.d?id=79259323 (accessed 22.09.2020).

[8] *Užsienio lietuvių apklausa apie jų būklę ir poreikius,* 2019. URL: https://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/ULA%202019%20URM%20TINKLALAPIUI.pdf (accessed 23.09.2020).

and in emigration gives a gloomy view of Lithuania's work sphere: 89.3% of respondents said that employees were respected abroad, and barely 36%, that they were in Lithuania; 69.3% rated the level of stress at their workplace in emigration as acceptable, compared to just 25.5% who said the same about stress levels at home; 74.8% and just 19.1% spoke of good career opportunities abroad and in Lithuania; 80.6% and 38% respectively, that their merits were appreciated.[9] In the light of the above, Lithuania can hardly expect a steady stream of returnees.

Since 1990, immigration to Lithuania has been markedly lower than emigration (Fig. 1). Until 2017, most immigrants were Lithuanians who had left the country earlier, e. g., in 2011, 89.3% of immigrants were Lithuanian citizens; in 2016, 70.6%.[10] No reliable sources indicate how many of the returned citizens stayed in Lithuania and how many emigrated again. Sometimes people leave Lithuania and return several times, creating circular migration. Since 2017, immigration of non-Lithuanian citizens to the country has been increasing. In 2017 non-Lithuanians comprised 50.1% of all immigrants (of these, 3.4% were EU citizens; 46.7%, non-EU citizens). The number of non-Lithuanian immigrants increased 1.8-fold, compared to 2016. The proportion of immigrants in 2019 was similar: non-Lithuanian citizens accounted for 49.06% (of these, 2.2% were EU citizens, 46.9%, non-EU citizens). In 2019, the majority of non-Lithuanian immigrants were Ukrainians (45.1%) and Belarusians (32.5%). Most of them are economic migrants seeking to join Lithuania's workforce.

In 2020, the immigration situation changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to data from the Lithuanian Department of Statistics, since March, the pandemic has brought home almost 14,000 Lithuanians. At the same time last year, returned Lithuanians numbered 11,000. In March-August 2020, 8,597 Lithuanian citizens left the country; in the same months of 2019, this figure was 12,251. These data suggest that 'the pandemic has brought Lithuanians home, and kept those at home from leaving' [38].

The Lithuanian economist Žygimantas Mauricas says that this situation could as well be due to other factors such as 1) recent years' economic improvement in Lithuania; rapid growth in incomes and a reduction in tax liabilities; as compared to other European countries, the economic difference has significantly diminished; 2) Lithuania has not felt the effects of the COVID-19 crisis as strongly as many other countries in Western Europe, to which Lithuanians often emigrate,

[9] Tyrimas atskleidė, dėl ko emigruoja lietuviai: per maži atlyginimai — tik viena iš priežasčių, 2018, *DELFI.lt*, 8.10.2018. URL: https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/tyrimas-atskleide-del-ko-emigruoja-lietuviai-per-mazi-atlyginimai-tik-viena-is-priezasciu.d?id=79259323 (accessed 26.10.2020).

[10] Migration trends, 2020, *Migration in numbers*. URL: https://123.emn.lt/en/ (accessed 14.09.2020).

thus the stimulus to emigrate has become less powerful; people are afraid of going to other countries as they do not know whether travel restrictions will be reintroduced or whether they will find a job; 3) the third reason is Brexit, as the hard variant is becoming more and more likely [38].

The study of society's attitudes towards Lithuanians returning from emigrations shows that although the majority thought well of returnees, 20% of respondents were more sceptical about them (14% had a 'negative attitude' towards remigrants, and 6%, 'very negative').[11] Compared to the results of a similar survey conducted over a decade ago, in 2008, the number of people with a negative attitude towards Lithuanians returning from migration has risen considerably: then, only 3% of the population viewed returning émigré Lithuanians negatively (ibid.). This increase in unfavourable attitudes may have been due to articles in the press linking a sudden increase in crime with Lithuanians who have come home because of the pandemic.

There are no guarantees that, when the COVID-19 pandemic is over, emigration will not surge once again. In a representative survey of Lithuanian citizens carried out in July 2020, 62% said that they would not be considering emigration once the quarantine restrictions had been lifted; 16% said they were preparing to emigrate: of these, 3% had already made plans, while 13% were entertaining the idea but did not have concrete plans; 22% of respondents said that they were not planning to emigrate at present, but they would think about it should the opportunity arise.[12] Thus, one might expect another rise in migration once the travel restrictions are relaxed.

Returned migrants' social remittances in the work sphere

There is hope that returned migrants will integrate into the work sphere in their home country. The employment strategies of our respondents varied considerably: some had found work in Lithuania before returning and felt more secure; others did not seek employment for some time (a year or two) for various reasons — some wanted to take a break, others had returned to study (e. g., doctoral studies); some worked on personal projects (e. g. finishing a book) or had health concerns; some were raising young children, etc. Those who were searching for work found employment quite quickly since their competencies are in great demand in the country (e. g., a German-founded company urgently needed an engineer with a good command of German). Still, some respondents

[11] Grįžtamoji migracija auga — bet ar visi grįžtantieji laukiami? 2020, *IOM International Organization for Migration*, 19.08.2020. URL: http://www.iom.lt/lt/naujienos/364 (accessed 28.10.2020).

[12] Visuomenės požiūrio į migracijos procesus COVID-19 kontekste kaitos tyrimas, 2020, *IOM International Organization for Migration*, July 2020. URL: http://bit.do/renkuosilietuvatyrimas202007 (accessed 26.10.2020).

could not find a job that matched their competences or their income expectations. For example, one respondent who had spent a long time abroad working as a manager in finance did not want to work in an executive position in Lithuania because of her kids and, at the same time, considered salaries of non-management employees too low:

> Yes, I was looking [for work], I spoke to people and looked around. […] I wouldn't really want to be a director. A management position is a huge responsibility. If you're doing something, do it well. If I'm doing my best, I can't have a flexible schedule. When I can't say at work 'Sorry, but I need to pick up my kids from school and make dinner'. […] I don't want to abandon my kids or family. It there is something in between, they tell me '1,000 euros and you're hired', but I don't want 1,000 euros.
>
> *(F, late 40s, Latvia, Switzerland, Sweden, Poland, 11 years)*

Lower salaries were frequently mentioned by respondents as a shortcoming of Lithuania's labour market. Yet some respondents calculated that even with a lower income they would afford a better quality of life once they came home. Others decided to take steps to increase their income in Lithuania. For example, one respondent applied for six research positions, and all six employers were ready to hire; another found employment in a different field but with a company offering a higher salary; a third started their own business; a fourth began a career as a real estate agent.

When talking about their competences, skills, and attitudes brought from abroad, respondents highlighted their foreign language skills, which, as we see from the matched interviews, are sought-after and habitually used in their current workplaces:

> Also, if we continue talking about her competences, her excellent knowledge of English is very useful, as she's the person who always translates the texts that need to be translated, or goes over them whenever you ask her.
>
> *(F, late 20s, matched interview)*

Both respondents and their colleagues said that the former had some difficulty with the Lithuanian language. Although causing inconveniences, this circumstance was not considered a major drawback:

> Because I used to speak English all the time, my Lithuanian was so bad when I came back that if I had to write emails in Lithuanian, it took me forever. […] And still, even with my manager, when we are chatting on Slack, every other word that I use is English.
>
> *(F, late 20s, US and UK, 8 years).*

> She inserts English words both with the accent and without, but its all very organic. In certain situations, it seems easier for her to say things in English than in Lithuanian, even though her Lithuanian is excellent.
>
> *(F, late 20s, matched interview)*

Another important competency of returned migrants is the professional skills and experience they bring with them, which aid in performing professional and non-work-related tasks:

> I brought a lot of knowledge about selling real estate because over there I had to go to a lot of seminars, I had to read a lot, and I had a lot of experience.
>
> *(Aras, M, early 40s, US-Estonia, 17 years)*

> [I don't work in the field I was trained in], but at the same time, I am using all the knowledge I used for architecture and business.
>
> *(F, UK, mid-30s, 7 years)*

Another strongly accentuated aspect was the importance of returned migrants' social capital for their current workplaces. Migrants' connections with people in a host country were particularly important when working in Lithuania:

> Another thing that took off was my various contacts with foreign curators and art and culture organisations. It was based on these that we [...] [created] a platform for selling art with which we participated in the Collect Art Fair. This project happened purely through my contacts.
>
> *(F, early 30s, UK, 13 years)*

> We worked with the diaspora media, which was quite good; she was able to find contacts, which is something we benefit from to this day. She knows who's who over there, who is part of the American Lithuanian community if you need a contact. She's like a bridge because you don't need to search blindly, she can tell you straight-off — 'yes, I know someone, I can get you their contact details'.
>
> *(F, late 20s, matched interview)*

The language skills and professional knowledge, experience and social contacts of returned migrants are very welcome in Lithuanian workplaces as the matched interviews with the co-workers of our respondents reveal. Meanwhile, some respondents stated that it was essential to find a job abroad that would give them important competences:

> When you're in emigration, it's very important what you end up doing there. [...] If you're going away to work, then at least find a job where your knowledge will grow. It's a different situation if you return from emigration having worked hard in construction or something like that, compared to having worked in some kind of a normal job from where you return with a different skill set. That second group, which comes back with the good "baggage", these people are in high demand in Lithuania. Just about anyone will hire them. Their work culture and emotional intellect are totally different. As is their experience. Bring in this kind of people. They're needed all over Lithuania.
>
> *(M, early 40s, US-Estonia, 17 years)*

All respondents stated that, aside from the above competencies, they brought back something extra — the so-called 'soft skills'. These are a different type of work ethic (punctuality, organisation, responsibility, a results-orientated approach), a culture of communication (politeness, positivity, warmer relations with co-workers, respect for employees, a shorter social distance), liberal values and a Western mindset (e. g., greater sensitivity regarding nationality, race, LGBT rights).

Some workplaces were ready to embrace these soft skills. This is particularly true of private companies, institutions or large businesses rather than smaller, more aggressive or innovative businesses, or cultural initiatives:

> The culture sector is not commonly known for organisation, planning, clear argumentation, preparation ahead of processes, or keeping to deadlines. These things mean a lot in developing a company or participating in international projects. [...] [She] enhanced our team in terms of the culture of communication as well, in communicating via email.
>
> *(F, late 50s, matched interview)*

> On his very first day, he said: 'None of this *jūs* [the formal second-person pronoun in Lithuanian], it's *tu* [the general second-person singular pronoun], we're going to be working together here, we're a team'. It's like there's no need for that distance. That's what really came across, that shortening of the distance [...] I could really feel a kind of humanity and understanding coming from him, compared to other managers if I was sick or my child was sick, that would be the most important and critical thing.
>
> *(F, early 30s, matched interview)*

These workplaces are more open to experiments and new ideas, which give employees more freedom to show initiative; they are eager to try new work methods and not afraid of tackling tasks where they might not have a lot of experience:

> My boyfriend is in IT, and I think what he is experiencing, and maybe I am to some extent as well, is a little bit more freedom almost to do whatever you want to. [...] I think if you come back from abroad and you have seen how things are done abroad, and you want to implement those ideas, people [in Lithuania] would be more open to that. [...] I feel like in Lithuania there is always an idea that it's a small sandbox, it's a small place where we can experiment and do things, and then sell the real thing abroad.
>
> *(F, late 20s, US and UK, 8 years)*

Returned migrants who work in these kinds of workplaces established by Lithuanians or foreign nationals rarely complain about work culture or having their ideas ignored:

> Overall, my relationships in my current workplace are great, both with my colleagues and with my managers, they are respectful, they consider my ideas, so, perhaps even more attentively than in the US. [...] They give me tonnes of responsibility and they are absolutely open.
>
> *(F, late 20s, US and UK, 8 years abroad)*

At the same time, returned migrants working for state-owned enterprises or institutions emphasise stagnancy, overpowering bureaucracy, and strong hierarchy:

> [In my workplace] there is a strictly hierarchical system. There are 500 employees, and even now, any document that you need to be signed, you can't just send by email, like anywhere else, you have to physically go downstairs, knock on someone's door and ask them to sign it. The bureaucracy is so enormous, yet I understand it's a government agency and it certainly doesn't depend on me as to when those aspects will change.
>
> *(F, mid- 40s, US, 14 years)*

At government agencies and organisations, returned migrants are faced not only with bureaucracy and hierarchy but also a different work culture. For example, one of the respondents who had worked in the United States for both federal and private companies said that there were certain similarities between Lithuanian and US federal employees, yet some differences put Lithuania in a bad light:

> In America, federal employees, like I said, they don't rush, they fiddle around having found some kind of problem, they come up with some kind of answer, but slowly. […] But they understand that they need to reach a result, they need to do something, their work needs to be productive. The fact that they do this slowly, not very effectively, well, that's the same here in Lithuania and in America. In Lithuania, federal [government] employees don't feel like they need to come up with a result. […] They think that they have it good as it is, someone paid them, someone gave them an award, a wage supplement, yet they don't feel they need to pay that back somehow through work.
>
> *(M, late 40s, US, 10 years)*

> As to differences in work culture, respondents often said that it was very difficult to pass on their experience or implement new ideas because their initiatives were often rejected. As one of the respondents stated, 'they drag you down, "it'll never work, what a stupid idea". They come up with 100 reasons for not doing something, rather than simply encourage someone, you really miss that".
>
> *(F, early 40s, Switzerland, Monaco, Spain, 11 years)*

The same was noticed by co-workers:

> It's like going against an avalanche or a tsunami. It's like you're the one, lonely drop in the sea, and you often have to face 'oh you're an American, that's their culture, we don't do things like that here, it's different here', but then, after a number of years, one drop after another, if you're in a collective and they see you as an example, and take notice of it, then that's effective, this comes with time. Only, you'll never be a prophet in your own backyard.
>
> *(M, early 40s, US-Estonia, 17 years)*

He tries to adapt some kind of a model from America; they used to do that, but we do things like this, so, we do it this way, and he's so fired-up, but our lot are so soberly Lithuanian, and that enthusiasm of his is put out, like it or not. […] Because people don't accept it, or just say 'oh, that's so American, it'll never work here'.

(F, early 30s, matched interview)

Some respondents stressed that, in their work experience, they had encountered directors who were more inclined to take recommendations or new ideas into account, whereas co-workers had difficulty accepting those:

A lot of things were accepted, but many more were rejected. From the management side, a lot was accepted, but among the co-workers, the majority [of ideas] met with a rejection reaction. […] People can obviously see that I'm successful at work, I do well with my projects and articles, and my studies, but somehow in Lithuania my co-workers, they feel that this only drives them further into a corner and they're only more inclined to take on that categorical position where 'oh, he's an American, let him do things as he likes, but we'll stick to what we've always done'.

(M, late 40s, US, 10 years)

This phenomenon seen in respondents' comments echoes the results of Nevinskaitė's research, where she explains that the readiness of management to involve returned migrants does not necessarily mean that lower-level staff are just as inclined to adopt the migrants' experiences: their 'dominant attitudes and work culture may be opposed to the new influences introduced by the diaspora, or may simply not be capable of exploiting its potential effectively' [28, P. 148].

This kind of opposition from co-workers often discourages returned migrants: they are critical of their workplaces, mentioning inert attitudes and a lack of competency and acceptable work culture. What they find even more disillusioning is that they could work even better, but no one seems to need or want it:

Compared to abroad, the work culture in Lithuania is utter pain, for example, how can anyone not answer an enquiry for 10 days, or an email. Or, 'why should we change if it's good as it is'. […] I've reached some clarity as to how I could make sense of what's wrong with this country — indifference and incompetency, which is really obvious. […] The saddest thing is that you can do much more, but no one really needs it. […] You might want to do more, do better, for everyone else to do better, the company in general would do better — but no, it's not necessary. With time you forget, you even regress.

(F, early 40s, Switzerland, Monaco, Spain, 11 years)

Despite all these obstacles, returned migrants try to implement new ideas and succeed in doing so. Several ideas that had been put into practice were mentioned: company staff training, new science projects, new approaches to customer relationships, a new product development process, the introduction of superannuation payments, new ways of organising work in a laboratory, new methods for working with students, joint projects between scientific institutions and businesses, new inclusive cultural education programmes, etc.

What is the impact of these innovations? The results of the survey suggest that some co-workers have realised that imported examples are workable, and some innovations have been successfully adopted by their organisations:

> I used to organise weekly work meetings to talk about the progress of a project, or about the so-called budgetary topics. At first, everyone was very surprised, but later on, this thing started to be accepted, in several groups they've started holding weekly meetings to talk about what's going on, what's happening.
>
> *(M, late 40s, US, 10 years)*

> When we had just hired her to work with exhibition contracts, she was responsible for educational activities, and one of the tasks was to involve at-risk groups. With her participation at the biennale, these themes took off.
>
> *(F, late 50s, matched interview)*

> That one method that he had obviously experienced and used in America, and then shared with us here, that really caught on.
>
> *(F, early 30s, matched interview)*

When looking into the advantages and disadvantages of social remittances in the work sphere, respondents highlighted the importance of being encouraged to transmit their knowledge, skill, and work culture. They also emphasised that, instead of giving up, one had to look for another workplace where novelties would be welcome:

> From the experience of my friends I saw that people come with lots of experience and they are rejected, they start to think that they're not needed, but […] this does not mean that they're not valuable, it just means that they're like the swan among the ducklings. That swan just needs to find its own swans. Or start something on their own. Then they'll feel how valuable they truly are.
>
> *(M, early 40s, US-Estonia, 17 years)*

Returned migrants' co-workers also stated that the ideas, knowledge and skills, as well as the work culture of returned migrants, help change how work is organised in Lithuanian workplaces. Social remittances affect both work culture and society as a whole:

> The more people return with zero tolerance for various authoritarian or disrespectful forms [of behaviour] in the workplace, the sooner our society will get better. […] The more people who have worked or studied in another country return to Lithuania, the more chances there are for us, as a society, to grow out of our aggression, the bullying culture, intolerance, and similar things.
>
> *(F, late 50s, matched interview)*

The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on remigrants' workplaces

Respondents found it difficult to evaluate how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected migration or to say whether more Lithuanian citizens had returned to Lithuania, as the interviews were conducted at the peak of the first wave of the pandemic. They nonetheless tended to attribute the increase in return migration to another macro-level factor — Brexit. In their opinion, the laws concerning migration, employment, international students, etc. just started to change in 2020. The only link they saw between growing immigration and the pandemic was the loss of employment by Lithuanian nationals working abroad:

> I would probably relate this [returning migrants] more to Brexit than the COVID-19 pandemic. Unless these are people who have lost their jobs. Perhaps they have been fired from factories, they can no longer earn a living, they are not completely settled down — perhaps one of the reasons lies here.
>
> *(F, mid-30s, UK, 3 years, matched interview)*

The idea that low-skilled workers are bearing the brunt of the pandemic is well in line with the insights of Gary Rynhart, a senior official at the International Labour Organization (ILO). He believes that such migrants suffer the most in the pandemic because of the situation in 'the sectors they work in' and 'the poor conditions in which many lower-skilled migrants live and work'. Running a greater risk of losing their jobs and contracting the virus, 'many workers are returning to their countries of origin'.[13]

Other studies also demonstrate that the effects of the COVID-19 crisis vary across different economic sectors and different types of workers. In the spring of 2020, analysts from Scorify investigated the impact of the pandemic on different industries. They concluded that 'the most affected sectors in Lithuania are culture and arts, healthcare and social services. The impact on retail, services, and wholesale will be from moderate to great'.[14] Another international study, conducted in March and April 2020 on the initiative of Paylab.com, revealed that Lithuanian employees had been exposed to the repercussions of quarantine restrictions in varying degree. 'A majority of respondents (24%) were working from home in 2020; for 11%, nothing changed that year, 9% were not able to work during the lockdown; 8% lost their jobs; the salaries and bonuses of 8% were reduced; others took a childcare or annual leave; some were working part-time

[13] Uncertain future for migrant workers, in a post-pandemic world, 2020, *UN News*, 19.09.2020. URL: https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1072562 (accessed 27.10.2020).

[14] Išanalizavo, kaip koronavirusas paveikė Lietuvos verslus: išskirti ekonomikos sektoriai nugalėtojai ir pralaimėtojai, 2020, *DELFI.lt,* 24.05.2020. URL: https://www.delfi.lt/verslas/verslas/isanalizavo-kaip-koronavirusas-paveike-lietuvos-verslus-isskirti-ekonomikos-sektoriai-nugaletojai-ir-pralaimetojai.d?id=84340395 (accessed 27.10.2020).

instead of full-time; some took an unpaid leave'.[15] Qualified workers across all surveyed countries were more likely to work from home than low-skilled ones. Service-sector employees were affected the most — about 10% lost their jobs due to the pandemic [ibid.].

Our respondents shared their experience of COVID-19 consequences. Interviews with returned migrants confirmed that many of them had been affected by travel restrictions in spring 2020. The spouses of some respondents who still worked abroad at the time were unable to leave Lithuania; others could not go on business trips:

> Right before the borders were closed [my husband] did not fly out, and now the borders are closed, he cannot go back. Of course, we're not too sad about that, but he would like to go back, to put his [work] affairs into order.
>
> *(F, UK, mid-30s, 7 years)*

> Of course, with that pandemic going on I'm not travelling anywhere anymore, but before, every one or two months, there'd be some kind of work trip abroad.
>
> *(F, early 30s, UK, 13 years)*

The travel ban interrupted work and forced people to alter their plans. One of the respondents said that she had had to cancel the visit of a project curator from abroad, and this had stalled the project since it was impossible to get first-hand knowledge in Lithuania. Another respondent had to change her plans for going to the US to teach at a university and had to revert to online remote teaching.

In certain fields, the amount of work has significantly reduced, or work has become impossible altogether due to quarantine restrictions. For example, event management has come to a standstill because, as one of the respondents stated, 'a lot of events were cancelled, a few are still on towards the end of summer, so we're hoping the virus won't interfere there anymore' (M, mid-30s, UK, 7 years). Unfortunately, the number of interviews was insufficient to find more examples of the negative impact of COVID-19 on workplaces across different sectors.

Some respondents said that little had changed in their field, except for remote working. Respondents saw both advantages and disadvantages in shifting to homeworking. They appreciated the opportunity to be able to concentrate better and work more productively at home rather than at a noisy office where they were constantly interrupted by colleagues:

> Basically, nothing has really changed at work for me. I would even say productivity has increased because I can concentrate better on my tasks, there's no one around, no colleagues coming over, no one saying let's have a coffee. So the work is being

[15] Darbas koronaviruso pasaulyje, 2020, *Paylab.com (in Lithuania — Manoalga.lt),* 20.05.2020. URL: https://www.manoalga.lt/analyses/darbas-koronaviruso-pasaulyje/50616 (accessed 28.10.2020).

> done quicker perhaps, but generally nothing has really changed, I do my work on the computer, there aren't any meetings, or if there are then everything happens on Skype. Nevertheless, my communication is mainly with Germans, who work in Germany, via Skype. So in terms of work, nothing has really changed.
>
> *(M, mid-30s, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, 7 years)*

This respondent's insight resonates with the findings of a different study, which shows that professionals who need to perform complex tasks not requiring intensive communication with their colleagues are more in favour of and are more productive when working from home [39]. This applies exclusively to childless respondents whose work is computer-based or can be easily computerised, e. g. work in education or project management. As schools were closed in the lockdown, families of preschoolers and primary-school pupils were experiencing many difficulties with working from home and looking after young children simultaneously, as well as with having to help children with remote lessons. Besides, there is evidence that productivity falls when working from home under COVID-19 conditions [40].

Another negative aspect of working from home is the intense feeling of isolation from family, friends, and colleagues:

> I really miss those people, you miss a live meeting and not just with your family, but with colleagues as well, with friends. I've never experienced anything like this in my life. So now I understand just what that means, how important it is, that live communication because you do truly miss it a lot.
>
> *(M, mid-30s, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, 7 years).*

The literature describes this alarming aspect of remote working while focusing on anxiety, loneliness [40; 41], and the loss of social connections at work.[16] Of course, psychological distress over the pandemic adds to these grievances and leads to 'increased personal financial pressure, social isolation, fear of infection, or the threat of job loss' [41].

Moreover, in some fields, working from home means working more slowly, which is explained by poor work culture:

> When the quarantine regime was introduced, a recommendation came through that we had to work from home. [...] All six [of my staff] stayed to work from home and all six of them thought that this was some kind of holiday. [...] So what, we're still being paid [they thought], this is like a holiday. The kids need to be helped with online distance learning, you need to go to the shop to look for some kind of masks, and what, we're still expected to work [?!].
>
> *(M, late 40s, US, 10 years)*

[16] Impact of COVID-19 on working lives, 2020, *CIPD*, 3.09.2020. URL: https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/work/trends/goodwork/covid-impact (accessed 27.10.2020).

Some respondents said that, as quarantine restrictions had been imposed, their workloads had increased, which was related both to a rise in e-commerce turnover and the need to rethink work strategies and the ways projects were run, etc.:

> I had just been hired to open an online store, so everything was happening on the internet anyway, phone-calls with those people who could help us [do] those things, you know, all sorts of colleagues, so it really didn't feel like you couldn't do something because of the quarantine, just that there was a lot of work and you had to do everything as quickly as possible so that we could offer clients the chance to buy online.
>
> *(F, UK, mid 30s, 7 years)*

> All of us in our organisation work remotely. The work has certainly not stopped, it has even increased, because all of our projects are based on mobility and travel, so a lot of things had to be reconsidered.
>
> *(F, early 30s, UK, 13 years)*

In a study conducted in May and June 2020, the UK CIPD draws similar conclusions about workloads increasing in the pandemic: 'key workers are more likely to have too much work through the COVID-19 pandemic'.[17] Our survey of remigrants showed that a higher workload was associated not only with key workers in certain workplaces but also with certain workplaces in particular sectors, for example, e-commerce or IT. These industries belong in the list of 'essential' or 'life-sustaining' COVID-19 front-line sectors, which includes healthcare, social care, food sales, courier services, and alike.

Thus, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine restrictions has varied across different economic sectors and in different workplaces. Those who have lost their jobs or shifted to part-time work are experiencing appreciable financial losses, whereas those who have kept their jobs and social guarantees are doing as well as before. As one of the respondents said: 'I am still working, and because my husband is working in England, the social guarantees are even better there, a wage is still being paid, so we have not felt cut short somehow, we've been very lucky in this crisis. So far, at least' (F, UK, the mid-30s, 7 years). Highly qualified returned migrants are experiencing the COVID-19 crisis just as other highly qualified workers in Lithuania do. Still, self-confidence acquired in emigration and years spent outside the comfort zone work to their advantage in the pandemic.

Conclusions

Since the regaining of independence in 1990, Lithuania has experienced intense emigration. Although remigration has been insignificant since then, the years 2019—2020 witnessed a dramatic increase in immigration, accounted

[17] Impact of COVID-19 on working lives, 2020, *CIPD*, 3.09.2020. URL: https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/work/trends/goodwork/covid-impact (accessed 27.10.2020).

for by both foreign nationals and Lithuanian citizens. This change in migration flows is due to three macro-factors: the improving economic situation in Lithuania, Brexit (the UK is the most popular European destination for Lithuanian migrants), and the COVID-19 pandemic. Compared to other countries, Lithuania has performed well in the pandemic in both medical and economic terms; among other things, this is encouraging Lithuanians to remigrate.

Nevertheless, there is no guarantee that once COVID-19 is over, emigration from Lithuania will not surge again. The culture of migration has been developing over three decades. A large part of the population is still considering leaving the country. Limited employment opportunities amid the pandemic make Lithuanians revisit the idea of emigration. Another reason why returned Lithuanians might emigrate again is the poor receipt of remigrants and their social remittances. Push factors include society's negative attitude towards returned migrants amid the pandemic and the opposition to the innovations brought by remigrants.

Returned Lithuanian citizens have varied employment experiences. Some easily adapt their competencies and transmit social remittances (knowledge, skills, work ethic, and culture), whereas the ideas and practices introduced by others encounter stiff resistance. The main factors are related to three aspects: (1) the type of knowledge, skills, and experience acquired abroad (highly qualified specialist are appreciated much more than low-skilled workers); (2) how much the returned migrant wants to transmit, and how actively they do this; and (3) how prepared the workplace is to use social remittances.

The above research showed that the greatest remittance-related problem in Lithuania was the unwillingness of state-owned enterprises and institutions to embrace novelties. The interviews revealed that while the management valued, more or less, the competences of returned migrants and their work culture and welcomed the recommendations and innovations they proposed, co-workers were rather sceptical about innovations. Despite the opposition, respondents have managed to introduce some innovations: company staff training, new science projects, new approaches to customer relationships, new product development processes, new ways of organising work in a laboratory, new methods for working with students or autistic children, joint projects between scientific institutions and businesses, new inclusive cultural education programmes, etc.

Remigrants' potential for innovation must be reinforced by governmental and municipal measures helping recruit highly qualified returned migrants into the public sector. The more returnees hold decision-making positions, the sooner the public sector will become more effective. Half of the Lithuanians approve of measures to encourage the return of migrants and believe that Lithuania should seek the return of 'Lithuanian citizens who are highly qualified or who have created successful businesses, whose knowledge and connections can contribute to the progress of the country'.[18]

[18] Grįžtamoji migracija auga — bet ar visi grįžtantieji laukiami? 2020, *IOM International Organization for Migration*, 19.08.2020. URL: http://www.iom.lt/lt/naujienos/364 (accessed 26.10.2020).

The return migrants who took part in our study faced the same pandemic-related problems in their workplaces as other highly qualified Lithuanian workers did. Those who could continue their work from home maintained their income levels. Respondents spoke of both positive and negative aspects of homeworking. For some, it was easier to concentrate at home and they were able to boost their productivity. Others struggled to get their work done because they had preschool or school-age children at home all the time. The experience of isolation from other family members, friends, and colleagues was difficult for many.

The impact of COVID-19 on the work sphere depends on the field of work, the nature of work, family situation, work ethic, and work culture.

Even in the pandemic, highly qualified respondents, who had every opportunity to work from home, enjoyed a better situation than low-skilled workers. In this way 'remote work worsens inequality by mostly helping high-income earners' [42]. Less likely to work remotely, low-skilled workers run a greater risk of contracting the virus or losing their jobs. Moreover, the pandemic has forced society to embrace technology, automation, and artificial intelligence in almost all sectors, particularly those that traditionally employ low-skilled migrants.[19] In the long run, the pandemic may result in reduced demand for low-qualification workplaces that are usually filled by migrants. The pandemic has made remote working, education, and professional development more widespread. This new circumstance may also slow down the economic emigration of highly qualified workers by making it possible to choose domicile irrespective of the workplace location.

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The author

Ingrida Gečienė-Janulionė, Director, Institute of Social Innovations, Lithuania; Researcher, Vilnius University, Lithuania.

E-mail: gecieneingrida@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7174-7959

TRANSFORMATION OF GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS IN RUSSIA AND THE BALTICS AMID COVID-19: PROSPECTS FOR REGIONALIZATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ECONOMIC POLICY

Y. V. Simachev [1]
A. A. Fedyunina [1]
Y. V. Averyanova [2]

[1] Higher School of Economics National Research University
11 Pokrovsky boulevard, Moscow, 101000, Russia

[2] Higher School of Economics National Research University in St Petersburg
3 Kantemirovskaya St, St Petersburg, 194100, Russia

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Although Russia and the Baltics have historically been economic partners, the economic relations between them are tense today. Nearly stagnating bilateral trade contributes little to the development of either side. The Baltics-Russian bilateral trade conducted within global value chains (GVCs) and operations of multinational companies is much more resistant to geopolitical and economic shocks than traditional international trade. For instance, the accession of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to the EU and NATO in 2004 and the introduction of reciprocal EU-Russia sanctions in 2014 did not curb GVC activities between Russia and the Baltics. The article discusses factors in the transformation of the Baltics-Russian GVCs amid COVID-19. The research aims to prove regionalisation to be a viable prospect for the transformation of global value chains in Russia and the Baltics. In the medium term, regionalisation is possible as (1) part of global trends towards GVC transformation in the industries in which Russia and the Baltics traditionally specialise; (2) a response to the long-term structural challenges faced by Russia and the Baltics in creating a new generation of internationally competitive firms; (3) a result of companies tackling the effects of the pandemic against the background of historically stable relationships; (4) a product of strong social contacts and soft power. GVC regionalisation will be driven by individual companies, regional (local) governments, and Russian-Baltic cross-border cooperation initiatives. Finally, repercussions for Russian and Baltic politics are discussed alongside GVC regionalisation benefits for all the parties involved.

Keywords:
global value chains, Baltic states, Russia, COVID-19 pandemic.

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Introduction

Global value chains (GVCs) have been at the centre of the discussion of the global economy since the early days of the COVID-19 crisis [1]. The suspension of production in China as part of anti-epidemic measures compromised the supply stability for European and American companies, the problem is known as "contamination through the supply chain" [1]. At the same time, discussions on the transformation of global chains and the consequences for global production had been on the agenda long before the pandemic began[1] [2; 3]. The shocks associated with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have thus become a catalyst for the transformation of GVCs.

Although earlier literature has noted that exposure to external shocks is characteristic of small countries with a high intensity of participation in foreign trade[2], later studies have indicated that vulnerability to external shocks is characteristic of all the countries intensively involved in GVCs, regardless of their size [4]. Thus, both the Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, with their small open economies whose catching-up development was largely associated with the transformation of their positioning in global production networks [5, p. 32—33; 6, p. 23—24; 7, p. 26—31], and Russia with its large, resource-based economy and persisting problems of the transformation period and the export portfolio that is limited in terms of high value-added manufacturing goods [8, p. 10—12] could be attributed to such countries. Despite the differences in the size of the economies, their resource endowments, and structural features, common challenges remain for the Baltic states and Russia in the context of integration into global production: a small share of firms operating in foreign markets, a low share of technology leaders, low productivity, and the need to reposition themselves in global chains. The close foreign economic relations between the Baltic states and Russia have been inherited since the times of the Soviet Union, however, over the past three decades, the political relations of the countries have experienced difficult times, while foreign economic cooperation has not contributed to solving the common challenges of transformation and repositioning in global production networks.

The article aims to discuss the prospects for the transformation of GVCs in Russia and the Baltic states and to identify the factors contributing to such transformation at the present stage by considering the accumulating challenges,

[1] International Production Beyond the Pandemic, 2020, *UNCTAD World Investment Report 2020*. URL: https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/wir2020_en.pdf (accessed 05.08.2020).

[2] *Small States: Meeting Challenges in the Global Economy*, Report of the Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020, World Bank Joint Task Force on Small States. URL: http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/cpadocs/meetingchallengeinglobaleconomyl.pdf (accessed 05.08.2020).

the catalyst of which was the COVID-19 pandemic[3]. The paper shows why the regionalization of GVCs as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic can be considered a "window of opportunity" for transforming economic cooperation between Russia and the Baltic states and discuss the implications for Russian economic policy aimed at supporting the regionalization of chains and expanding cooperation with the Baltics.

The peculiarities of the GVCs in Russia and the Baltics are assessed by using modern methods of analysis typical of research in the field of international and regional economics, including statistical analysis of data from the *EORA-GVC Database, TiVA OEC*D, and *AMNE OECD*, which make it possible to identify the structural features of value chains of Russia and the Baltic states, as well as the specifics of the activities of Russian and Baltic multinational companies in host economies.

Features of global value chains in Russia and the Baltic states

The Baltic states are actively involved in GVCs and have vertically and geographically fragmented production mainly focused on their neighbouring markets [5, p. 27—28; 9, p. 5—9; 10, p. 9—10]. Despite the continuing lag in the level of development of some countries within the Baltic region, it should be noted that the way Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia integrate into GVCs generally corresponds to that of their neighbouring countries: Germany, Sweden, Finland, and Poland (Fig. 1). The assumption is based on a similar level of backward linkages[4], the dependence of export-oriented industries on imported components and semi-finished products (on average for the Baltic region[5] — 25.3%, for the Baltic states — 27.0%), as well as on the similar level of forward linkages[6] using export value added in the production of third countries: Baltic region countries — 19.6%, and Baltic states — 17.5%.

[3] By regionalization of value chains in this article, the authors understand the geographic reorientation of value chains from global markets to macroregional markets, including the replacement of global suppliers and buyers with counterparties from the domestic macroregion, the search for networks of suppliers and networks of buyers in the markets of neighboring countries.

[4] Backward linkages — foreign value added embodied in a country's gross exports, % of a country's gross exports.

[5] In this research the Baltic region countries are understood as Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden.

[6] Forward linkages — domestic value added embodied in foreign exports,% of the country's gross exports.

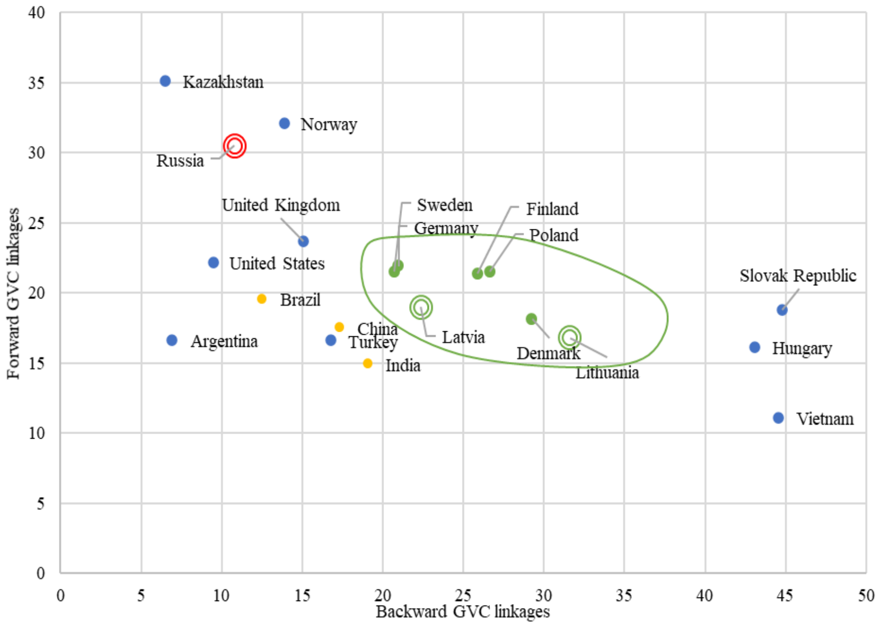

Fig. 1. Positioning of Russia and the Baltic states in GVCs, 2015

Note: Data for the last available year was used.

Source: Authors' calculations, data from TiVA OECD.

Russia, by contrast, is somewhat aloof (on the "periphery") in its participation in GVCs [8, p. 7—8]: it differs from the Baltic region countries, on the one hand, by too-short backward linkages (10.8% against 25.3%), and on the other hand, by too-long forward linkages (30.5% against 19.6%).

Over the past decades, economic cooperation between Russia and the Baltic states has passed through several stages largely determined by tense political relations which to a significant extent shaped the current nature of the interaction. The Baltics were actively integrated into the economic space of the USSR before leaving the Soviet Union in 1990 [11, p. 88—89; 12, p. 10—11]. The period from the 1990s to the mid-2000s was characterized by the shift of the Baltics' economic focus from Russia to Western Europe. This was primarily associated with the formation of new foreign trade partnerships, the search for new markets (in the early stages), and later, the preparatory stage for the accession of the Baltic states to the European Union (EU) in 2004. Thus, while in 1991, over 45% of the total imports of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were of Russian origin [13, p. 38], at the beginning of the 2000s, the share of Russian origin products in imports was 11% in Latvia, 14% in Estonia, 27.4% in Lithuania. At the same time, studies have shown a slow reorientation of mutual foreign trade of the former Soviet territories and the preservation of the linkages formed in the Soviet era. The explanations for this phenomenon are, for example, the inertia in infrastructure development (including roads and railways, telecommunications networks, logistics operators, and the business community) to access other markets, lower competitiveness of these economies compared to that of the Nordic countries and Germany, and the presence of historically formed inter-firm ties [14, p. 88—89; 15, p. 9—10; 16, p. 37—38]. The high importance of "colonial linkages" as a factor in international trade is confirmed by studies of the countries of the former Soviet Union, as well as of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, British Malaya, and Czechoslovakia [15; 17, p. 92—93].

The slow pace of the reorientation of foreign trade of the Baltic states to the markets of the EU countries can also be explained by the high significance of the historically established ties for the EU countries. Thus, the founding members of the EU were primarily focused on the creation of an integrated internal market and supported the development of trade relations among themselves rather than with the countries that joined the EU later [18, p. 1339—1349].

Before 2004, many observers noted that the accession of the Baltic states to the EU and NATO would help restructure historically tense relations with Russia. However, Europeanization did not contribute to a positive scenario [19, p. 1]. Since 2004, the policy of the Baltic states in relations with Russia has been determined primarily by the common foreign economic policy of the EU countries, as well as by the policy of cross-border cooperation [13, p. 37; 12, p. ten]. For the Baltic states, although the accession to the EU established *de jure* grounds for expanding international trade with Russia, *de facto*, there have been no changes. After the onset of the global financial and economic crisis, the 2004—2008 period of some expansion of mutual trade between the Baltic states and Russia gave way to a period of cooling of bilateral relations.

The 2014 Ukrainian crisis resulted in the imposition of mutual economic sanctions between Russia and the Baltic states and determined a further cooling of foreign economic relations. The fact that the Baltics have been the main supporters of sanctions against Russia led to a significant reduction in the volume of mutual trade between the countries compared to that with other EU countries [20, p. 1504—1505].

Changes in the general framework for relations between the Baltic states and Russia and the associated effects of "trade diversion" [12, p. ten; 13, p. 36—37] in the reorientation of foreign trade to the EU countries were weakly connected with cooperative relationships within GVCs. The volumes of value added imported by the Baltic states from Russia for subsequent export had been gradually growing from 2000 to 2019 increasing by 10.4 times by the end of the period against the background of the recession resulting from the global financial and economic crisis of 2008—2009 and the introduction of the mutual sanctions. This more than tenfold growth was ensured, primarily, by the increase in imports of energy resources (by 18.5 times) for export-oriented industries of the Baltic states, as well as products of the agro-industries (by 9.9 times) and chemical and steel industries (by 8.9 and 8.5 times, respectively; Fig. 2).

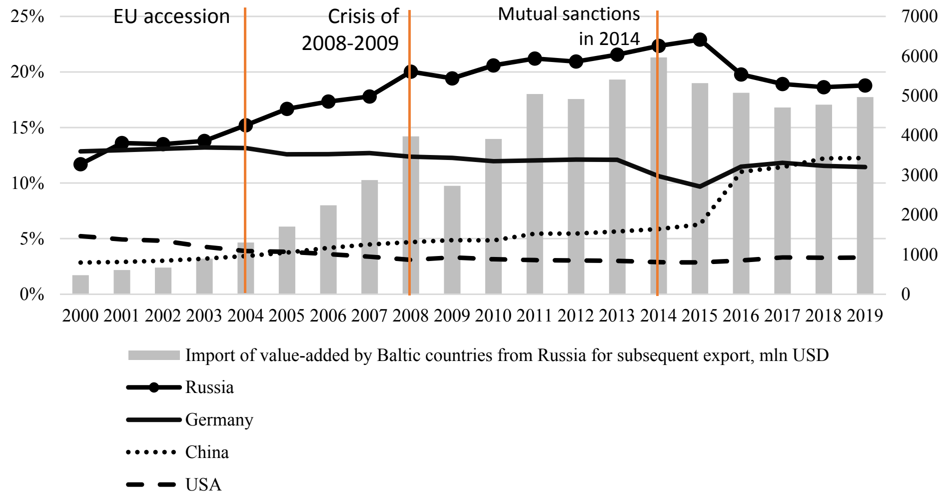

Fig. 2. Participation of the Baltic states in the backward GVC linkages: the *left axis* — the share of value added from Russia, the USA, Germany and China in the imports of the Baltic states for subsequent exports, 2000—2019; *right axis* — value added from Russia in imports of the Baltic states for subsequent export, mln USD

Note: Data for the three global GVC hubs (China, Germany and the United States) are given for comparison.

Source: authors' calculations, data from *EORA-GVC Database, World Bank*.

Russia also increased the volume of value added imported from the Baltic states within the GVC, which in absolute value increased by 7.4 times in 2000—2019. However, this effect was associated with a general increase in imported value added and in relative terms did not lead to an increase in Russia's importance as the Baltic states' partner in the backward GVC (Fig. 3).

It should be noted that the introduction of mutual sanctions in 2014 had a moderate impact on trade volumes. The fact that there was no sharp decline should be attributed to the permission to continue foreign trade in products subject to sanctions, the contracts on which were concluded before the period of their introduction [21, p. 13].

In addition, against the general background, Russia's imports from countries that did not impose sanctions also decreased. This was a consequence of the depreciation of the ruble and, accordingly, of the increase in the cost of imports, which is consistent with the research results [22, p. 307]. The lack of pronounced reorientation from countries that have imposed sanctions on other countries may also be the evidence that in reality (at least in 2015—2019) there was no substitution of trade channels. Although there is some evidence of a shift in supply channels (e. g., the re-export of goods from Belarus that were subject to the Russian trade embargo, such as fruit and shrimp [23, p. 6—8]), this does not change the general conclusion that Russian exports have decreased in all directions [21, p. 13].

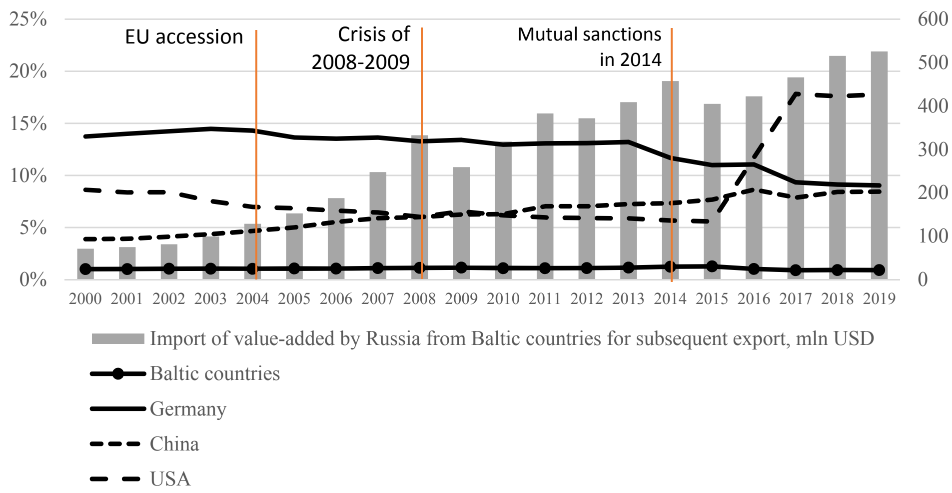

Fig. 3. Russia's participation in the backward GVC links: the left axis is the share of value added from the Baltic states, the USA, Germany and China in Russia's imports for subsequent exports, 2000—2019,%; right axis — value added from the Baltic states in Russia's import for subsequent export, mln USD

Note: Data for the three global GVC hubs — China, Germany and the United States — are given for comparison.

Source: authors' calculations, data from *EORA-GVC Database, World Bank.*

Thus, the results obtained generally indicate the stability of bilateral cooperative economic relations to geopolitical shocks and a significantly greater (compared with traditional international trade) resistance to economic shocks.

This sustainability is due to two factors: sectoral and organizational (with the participation of multinational companies [MNCs]) the peculiarities of GVCs.

With the view of the significant cross-country differences in resource endowments and sectoral structure of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, economic cooperation between Russia and the Baltic states within the GVC has developed basing on bilateral economic interests in sectors with comparative advantage. As a result, the sectoral structure of trade between Russia and the Baltic states within GVCs differs significantly from the commodity structure of the traditional non-chain merchandise trade largely based on the legacy of Soviet economic links. In Russian merchandise imports from the Baltic states, products of electrical and power engineering and equipment prevail (approximately 40%), and in the imports to the Baltic states from Russia, oil and oil products (approximately 65%) prevail. The sectoral structure of trade between Russia and the Baltic states within the GVC is distinguished by a significantly higher level of diversification, it also reflects the sericitization of the manufacturing sector in the GVC (participation of services in production and foreign trade in goods) [24, p. 2—3]. In the imports to the Baltic states from Russia within chains, oil and oil products continue to account for a significant share (47%), but another 27% is accounted for by trade in services, including wholesale trade and transportation services (23.2% in total), as well as business services requiring a high level of human capital[7] (3.8%). In Russia's imports from the Baltic states within the chains, the share of services is even higher (40.4%), it includes trade and transport services (23.9%), as well as services requiring highly skilled labour (8.4%; Fig. 4). The high contribution of the service sector to the exports of the Baltic states reflects, on the whole, a higher orientation of these countries toward trade in services [25, p. 293—294].

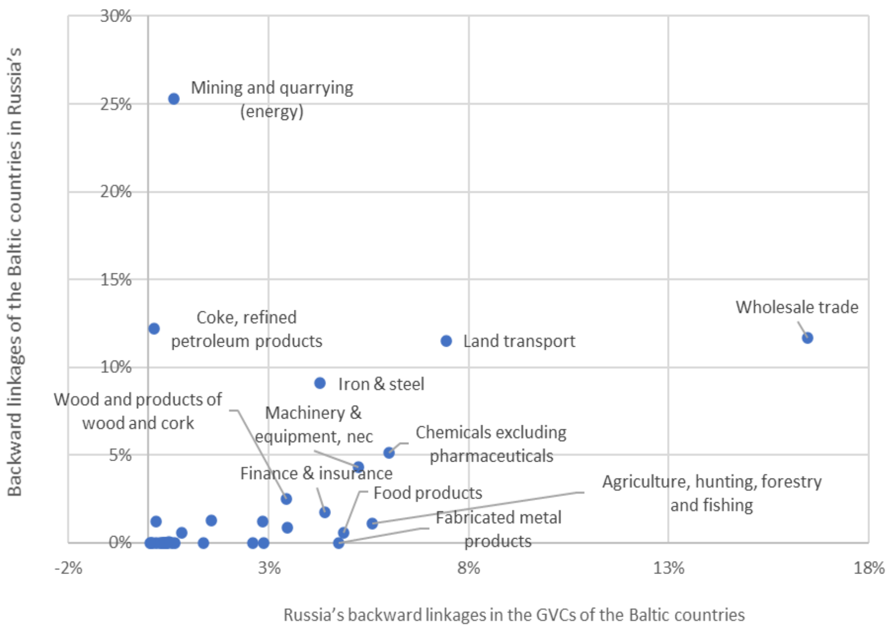

Fig. 4. Trade in value added in GVCs between Russia and the Baltic states by selected commodity groups, 2015,%

Note: Backward linkages of the Baltic states in Russia's GVCs — value added of the industry created in Russia and used in the exports of the Baltic states,% of gross value-added imports from Russia for use in the exports of the Baltic states; Russia's backward linkages in the GVCs of the Baltic states — value added of the industry created in the Baltic states and used in Russian exports,% of gross value added imports from the Baltic states for use in Russian exports.

Source: Authors' calculations, data from *TiVA OECD*.

In 2000—2017, the services not related to industrial production increased in terms of added value in the global chains of Russia. This is the evidence of the expanding cooperation between the parties in the non-production sector, as well as the indirect evidence of the growing role of "soft power" in economic cooperation. Thus, in 2000—2017, the value added from the Baltic states in the Russian education increased by 14.4 times; in the sphere of health and social services, by 11.7 times; and in the sphere of real estate services, by 9.2 times.

[7] Including research and development, ICT services, finance and insurance services.

Imports of added value from Russia to the Baltic states increased 22.4 times in education, and 14.2 times in real estate services. High growth rates in mutual value-added trade in the sector of services show that the formation of industrial ties between the countries is largely due to the bi-directional movement of the population between Russia and the Baltic states, as well as the presence of national diasporas.

The high level of 'servitization' of trade within the GVCs of Russia and the Baltic states determines the significantly lower volatility of value-added trade from geopolitical and economic shocks and at the same time is a growth point for the transformation of chains in the region and the increase in the share of value added.

GVCs are often organized by the activities of multinational companies[8]. MNCs are involved in international production through horizontal (within one industry) and vertical (in related industries) investment projects. They also develop interaction with independent companies abroad through other types of industrial cooperation (i. e. contract manufacturing, franchising, licensing). Thus, the boundaries of multinational companies and GVCs largely intersect but do not coincide [26, p. 54—55].

Our estimates show that the extent of the presence of Russian multinational companies in the markets of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, as well as that of Baltic MNCs in the Russian market, has changed somewhat over the past two decades. The introduction of mutual sanctions in 2014 did not significantly affect the change in the market positions of MNCs on both sides (Fig. 5). Thus, in 2005—2016, the average share of Russian MNCs in the Estonian market was 1.6%; in the Lithuanian market — 7.3%; and in Latvia — 4.9%. The share of Baltic MNCs in the gross output in Russia was 0.6%. Structural changes in the composition of MNCs of host economies observed in 2005—2016 resulted from the use of comparative advantages by companies in the markets of partner countries. Among the MNCs of the Baltic states, the structure of the output of MNCs of Estonia in Russia has significantly diversified: enterprises in the food industry, production of building materials, paper and paper products, and furniture have appeared, while the contribution of MNCs in the transportation and storage services industry has decreased. Russian MNCs have diversified their representation in Latvia including projects in the fields of hotels, financial and insurance activities, and telecommunications technologies.

[8] Multinational enterprises in the global economy. Heavily debated but hardly measured, 2018, *OECD*. URL: http://www.oecd.org/industry/ind/MNEs-in-the-global-economy-policy-note.pdf (accessed 05.08.2020).

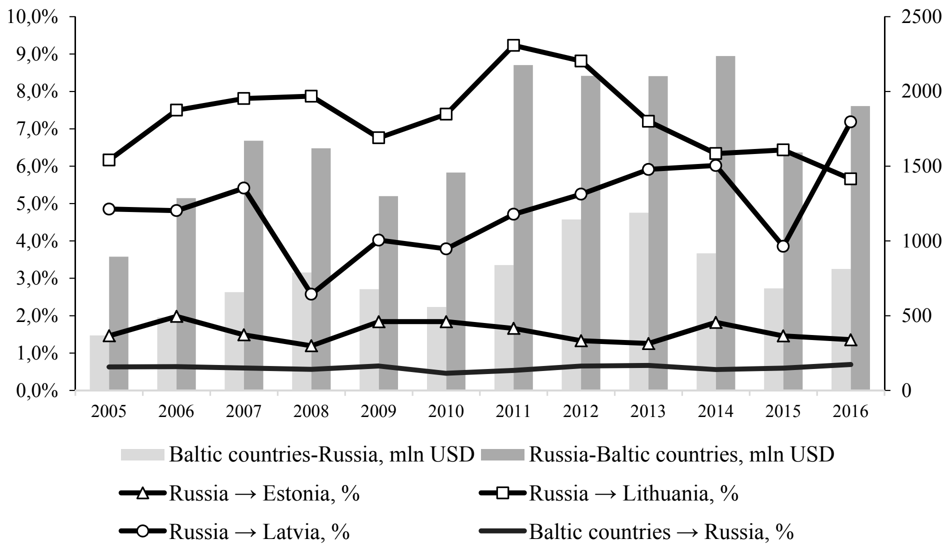

Fig. 5. Contribution of MNCs to the gross output, Russia — Baltic states, 2005—2016, %

Note: The analysis period is limited by the availability of data in *AMNE OECD* database.

Source: authors' calculations, data from *AMNE OECD* database.

Based on the estimates obtained, we conclude that the activities of MNCs are more resilient to geopolitical and economic shocks than foreign trade is. At the same time, the absence of any pronounced trends in their activities in the markets of the Baltic states and Russia should be attributed to that fact that the actions of MNCs were initially determined by their investment strategies in the absence of pronounced support of the host economies, and, in a later period, by contrast, by the growth of protectionist measures and tension in foreign economic cooperation. This finding generally corresponds to other conclusions on the relationship between the Baltic states and Russia (e. g., [27, p. 1277—1278]) stating that investment flows between them are synchronized with the economic cycles of the partner countries, therefore, the changes in international trade are translated into the results of investment flows only through the prism of investment cycles.

Prospects for the transformation of global value chains in Russia and the Baltic states

By the beginning of 2020, the economic relations between the Baltic states and Russia were characterized by the continuing regime of mutual sanctions as a result of the Ukrainian conflict. Although the warming of relations between

Russia and the EU has rarely been an issue for discussion in the academic literature and on the foreign policy agenda, experts have noted that manufacturers in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are extremely cautious about the prospects of expanding foreign economic contacts with Russia and thus primarily rely on other foreign markets [12, p. 10—11; 28; 29]. Among the most promising prospects for the country's enterprises Russian literature names those in the markets of the Eurasian Economic Union countries, East and Southeast Asia, and Africa. This may indirectly indicate the lack of visible prospects for expanding cooperation with Western markets [30, p. 46].

The economic crisis caused by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic could be a shock that changes the mood of both parties and contributes to the transformation of GVCs in Russia and the Baltic states.

A possible long-term effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is the changes in the level of uncertainty perceived by companies and the public. To reduce risks within the chains, coordination between their individual links will be strengthened. Thus, one of the expected GVC transformations is the regionalization of value chains1 [3]. This can be the result of both the withdrawal of MNCs from global chains and building their own chains at the regional level, and the transfer of existing capacities to an MNS's home region. At the same time, new multinational corporations may emerge that, due to their scale, will be more prepared for the risks and shocks in global production. An increase in the perceived level of risks for the population can determine the growth of interest in neighbouring territories (interestingly, this is already being observed) and the desire to operate and receive services in the nearest territories.

We highlight several reasons why the regionalization of GVCs as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic can transform the foreign economic cooperation between Russia and the Baltic states.

1. The analysis demonstrates that the value chains between Russia and the Baltic states are predominantly organized in industries with intensive use of local raw materials (agro-industries, steel and chemical industries). International experience shows that such chains, as a rule, are organized according to a regional rather than a global principle1. Hence, the most realistic scenario for their transformation is an increase in regionalization. Their growth points are increasing market segmentation.

2. Prospects for the growth of regional value chains in Russia and the Baltic states are also found in industries generally characterized by a global organization. These are primarily the power and electrical engineering and equipment manufacturing industries. A mutually beneficial strategy could be to increase the added value in production through industrial cooperation, pulling the elements of global chains to the Baltic region.

3. Despite the relative success of repositioning the Baltic states in the GVC [5, p. 32—33; 9, p. 5—9; 10, p. 9—10] and the absence of positive changes for Russia [8, p. 6—8; 26, p. 73—74], these countries are characterized by generally similar problems of participation in chains, for example, a significant gap between the technological level of the main layer of companies and that of leading companies, a low share of firms operating in foreign markets, and serious challenges to increasing labour productivity. The increased risks of working in distant markets may force firms in Russia and the Baltic states to reconsider their geographic priorities.

4. Regionalization of the value chains of Russia and the Baltic states can occur under the influence of business initiatives without critical shifts in foreign economic relations. This follows from the experience of chain development in the countries in the previous two decades. In addition, any shifts in interregional cooperation between Russia and the Baltic states are possible only with a significant lag, while business decisions can be made much faster.

5. The steady growth of mutual trade in services between Russia and the Baltic states demonstrates the continued interest of their population in neighbouring territories, which is explained by the attractiveness and demand for services in the border areas, including in the fields of culture, education, tourism, and real estate, not only by national diasporas but also by titular ethnic groups of respective territories. The growing global uncertainty and the maintaining attractiveness of services in the border areas can strengthen the countries' interest in cooperation in the service sector.

While at the national level the discussion of expanding foreign economic cooperation between Russia and the Baltic states can be restrained by the complexity of interstate political and economic relations, the available data and discussion in the expert and academic literature make it possible to determine the high potential for the development of cross-border cooperation between the two territories.

Although in 2012—2019 no increase was observed in the importance of the Baltic states as a market for Russian exports in general, it was seen in certain border areas, in particular, St. Petersburg, Leningrad, and Kaliningrad regions. Notably, after the introduction of mutual sanctions as a result of the Ukrainian conflict in 2014, the share of the Baltic states in the exports of these regions increased: for the Leningrad region, from 2.9% to 10.0%, and for the Kaliningrad region, from 3.5% to 6.0% (Fig. 6).

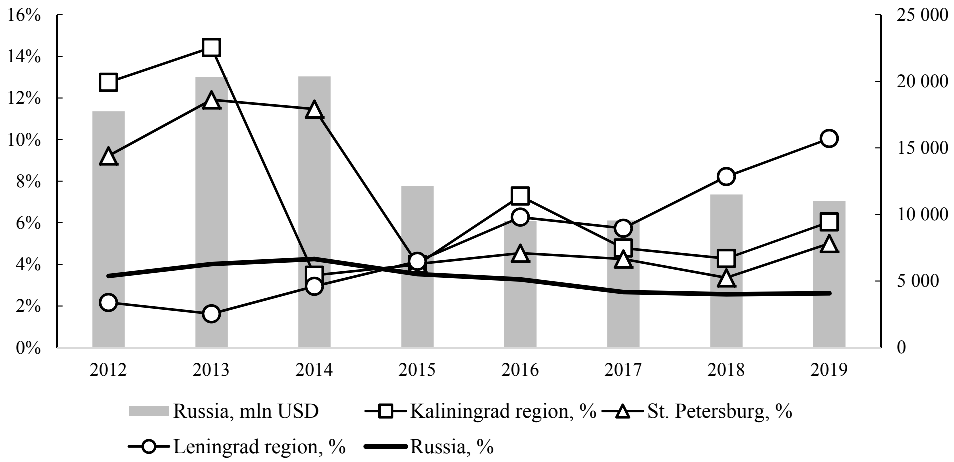

Fig. 6. The share of the Baltics in gross exports of Russia and chosen regions: left axis — % of gross exports; right axis — USD million, 2012—2019

Source: authors' calculations, data from the Federal Customs Service of the Russian Federation.

The high importance of the regional level of interaction in the Baltic Sea region is determined, in particular, by a special type of a territorial community that formed as a result of the end of the Cold War— a transboundary macro-region, the emergence of which shows that regional cooperation is reaching a new level [31, p. 129]. Consequently, many cross-border projects start on the basis of interaction between regional and local authorities [32, p. 349—350]. It is important to say that the priority projects were formed based on more than the principles of exchange and were formed not only in the field of economics but also in the scientific and technological sphere [11, p. 88—89; 32, p. 352]. This is especially significant in the context of discussing the prospects for expanding regional value chains of Russia and the Baltic states because industrial cooperation in such chains to increase the contribution of added value includes not only agreements on industrial cooperation and subcontracting but also cooperation schemes in research and development activities in the early stages of chains.

The expansion of economic cooperation between Russia and the Baltic states in the new conditions will be largely supported by a further qualitative increase in non-industrial formats of cooperation. In the context of tense relations between Russia and the Baltic states, political confrontation, often demonstrative, depletes the possibilities of official diplomacy [33, p. 113—114]. Hence, the use of «soft power» can become an effective tool for the development of relations, including such formats as humanitarian funds and cooperation in the fields of science, education, culture, health care, and environment protection [32, p. 354; 33, p. 113—114, 34, p. 110;]. In our opinion, the «soft power» potential has been underexploited. At the level of individual organizations, only a few institutions are singling out the Baltic states as geographic priorities for their strategic development. For instance, at the level of the leading Russian universities, one of such organizations is the Baltic Federal University, which defines its strategic development through the prism of its location on a special territory bordering the countries of the Baltic region. However, finding similar examples among the universities of St. Petersburg, which have strong innovation, research, educational, and cultural potential, is difficult. In addition, greater international cooperation is required to address social issues (largely reinforced by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic) in the fields of environment protection, education, healthcare, and medicine, which can enhance the cooperation between Russia and the Baltic states.

The prospects for expanding economic interaction and harnessing the potential of "soft power" between Russia and the Baltics in the context of regionalization of value chains require discussing the implications for economic policy. The prospects for the regionalization of chains can form a new round of growing interest in cooperation on both sides and will thus provide a revision or, rather, an expansion of the economic policy's toolbox of all parties involved.

Policy implications

The study of foreign economic relations between Russia and the Baltic states suggests a high level of stability of ties and a weak response to economic and geopolitical shocks. The Baltic states, being an integral part of the Soviet Union, were well integrated into the system of foreign economic relations of the USSR. The developed infrastructure, including hard (e. g., roads, railways, ports) and soft one (e. g., business communities, inter-firm ties, national diasporas), largely determined the preservation of relations between Russia and the Baltics, which in the modern period can be generally described as tense. In particular, in 2000—2019, the mutual trade within GVCs constantly expanded largely due to the activities of multinational companies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the challenges in global manufacturing and temporarily disrupted value chains. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy has been significantly stronger than that of previous crises, including the global financial and economic crisis of 2008—2009 [35]. Along with the temporary effect of chain disruption, there is an expected long-term effect associated with the restructuring of models of global production and international cooperation.

New challenges for global production can become a factor in the structural transformation of economic relations between Russia and the Baltic states. From the possible scenarios of recovery and changes in GVCs, the most likely scenario is the regionalization of chains in Russia and the Baltic states, including the building of their own chains at the regional level in traditional industries (agro-industries, steel industry, mechanical engineering, chemical industry) and relocation of available capacity into the home region (e. g., in the automotive industry, chemical industry, wood processing).

We also observe the expansion of the prospects for regionalization within the framework of non-economic cooperation to address global challenges provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic, including those in the fields of education, environment protection, health care, and medicine. Such cooperation, in our opinion, can become an instrument of «soft power» and contribute to the development of economic relations.

Considering the experience of foreign economic interactions between Russia and the Baltic states, and the persisting difficulties in relations at the interstate level, new challenges in the transformation of chains make it possible to formulate consequences for state policy aimed at transforming the structure of the Russian economy and repositioning in global production.

1. At the level of individual Russian regions of the northwest, we advise considering the implementation of a policy aimed at developing production potential, supporting mutual direct investments, and building regional value chains with the Baltic states. To date, an argument could be that only in the Kaliningrad region is the expansion of border ties a priority of its socio-economic development. We posit that this practice can also be transferred to the other territories of the Russian northwest.

2. As the prospects of the lifting of the regime of mutual sanctions between Russia and the EU remain uncertain, the development of cooperation in industries not under this regime is especially important for the regionalization of GVCs. This is primarily related to industrial cooperation in the field of research and development, as well as the provision of services that require highly skilled labour. For these purposes, we advise considering the possibility of developing networks of international cooperation in the field of industrial knowledge and technologies, including on the basis of leading universities in the Baltic states and the border regions of Russia.

3. The role of «soft power» in the establishment of economic cooperation between Russia and the Baltic states in the new conditions has significantly increased. Additionally, expansion of interaction with business, national diasporas, and an increase in the role of socially oriented non-profit organizations are considered directions for its further improvement. First, we recommend developing tools for the formation and strengthening of cross-border ties of business communities, including the consolidation of ties between national entrepreneurs and representatives of national diasporas abroad; attracting business to the implementation of social functions; supporting social projects and joint initiatives of representatives of diasporas. As for the regional-level tools, we recommend developing regional programs to support small and medium-sized businesses'

initiatives to enter the Baltic states' markets, as well as socially oriented business initiatives in the fields of education, culture, art, to expand cooperation between Russia and the Baltics.

4. To expand cooperation, we recommend increasing the number of mutual entry points of Russia and the Baltic states. First, concerning Russia, it is necessary to spread the practice of the Kaliningrad region, as a region strategically oriented toward cooperation with the Baltic states, to other regions of northwest Russia. It is important to consolidate at the level of strategic priorities, to expand interaction with the Baltic states on the infrastructure, to support small and medium-sized businesses in the border areas, large scientific and educational centres, and cultural centres. This will set a framework for the development of specific interaction programs, for example, international competitions for start-ups and innovative entrepreneurship, joint development projects in the fields of educational, medical, tourism services, and the formation of relevant clusters in border areas.

5. The potential for the development of cooperation between Russia and the Baltics and accumulated successes of individual regions in cross-border cooperation determine the possibility of processing certain elements of economic interaction between the northwest regions and the Baltic states, with subsequent use in other Russian border territories.

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The authors

Dr Yuri V. Simachev, Director, Centre for Structural Policy Studies, Higher School of Economics national research university, Russia.

E-mail: yusimachev@hse.ru

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3015-3668

Dr Anna A. Fedyunina, Leading Research Fellow, Centre for Structural Policy Studies, Higher School of Economics national research university, Russia.

E-mail: afedyunina@hse.ru

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2405-8106

Yuliya V. Averyanova, Intern Researcher, International Laboratory for Intangible-driven Economy, Higher School of Economics national research university in St Petersburg, Russia.

E-mail: javeryanova@hse.ru

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5574-3536

COMMUNICATION OF COVID-19 CONSEQUENCES IN THE BALTIC STATES INFORSPHERE

V.I. Zabotkina [1]
O.V. Pavlenko [1]
E.L. Boyarskaya [1, 2]
E.Yu. Moiseeva [1, 3]

[1] Russian State University for the Humanities
6 Miusskaya square, Moscow, 125993, Russia
[2] Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University
14 A. Nevskogo St, Kaliningrad, 236016, Russia
[3] Maxim Gorky Literature Institute
25a Povarskaya St, Moscow, 121069, Russia

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This article seeks to describe the dynamics of COVID-19 in the Baltic States and to analyse the ways of communicating the threat and its consequences. Particular attention is paid to the media strategies pursued in the study area. The research is based on Russian and English texts from the Baltic media, WHO official documents and datasets, as well as initiatives of the Baltic Sea region organisations (2020) counteracting COVID-19. A combination of these sources builds up an objective view of the situation and demonstrates how the pandemic and its consequences are represented in public consciousness given a certain pragmatic goal. The pandemic is a new type of threat; its consequences demonstrate a tendency towards negative synergy and a category shift from soft threats to hard ones. The research shows that several key strategies — counter-active, projective, conservative, mobilising, resilient, and reflective — are used to communicate the threat and its consequences in the media.

Keywords:
threat, risk, assessment, consequences, strategy, communication.

Introduction

Over recent years, global risks and threats have multiplied. Countries in different regions of the world are facing threats they have never faced before.

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The end of 2019—2020 and several years before them contributed to a new understanding of global and regional risks and threats as well as their scale and consequences.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in January 2020, is one of the most serious threats of its kind. The history of humanity is a history of pandemics and epidemics — from the bubonic plague in the Middle Ages to epidemics of the contemporary period. Since the 19th century, epidemics caused by different influenza strains have been registered in almost all countries of the world. According to different estimates, the outbreak of the H1N1 virus, commonly known as the Spanish flu, took a toll estimated at 50 to 100 m people. Earlier epidemics caused by coronaviruses were less devastating: severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), the first coronavirus epidemic, killed more than 800 people in 2002—2003. Then Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) broke out, taking a toll of 912 lives. Most deaths occurred within the Arabian Peninsula.[1] Although viruses and bacteria that caused epidemics and pandemics in the past continue to coexist with humanity, contemporary medicine and pharmacology, as well as international cooperation in disease prevention and control, managed to hold them at bay. The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented challenge because of the number of cases and the morbidity and mortality of the virus. The timeline of the pandemic suggests that humanity will have to live with COVID-19 for a long time.

The pandemic began less than a year ago, but the scale of the threat is unprecedented. The danger of COVID-19 is not only its mortality — the pandemic has affected almost all aspects of public life. Thus, assessing the consequences of this type of threat is of particular interest. It is too early to draw final conclusions since the second wave, which first emerged at the end of August 2020, offers no hope of a swift end of the pandemic. Still, we can identify and group key consequences of COVID-19 and examine responses of pandemic-stricken countries and regions.

This study aims to track and analyse the dynamics of COVID-19 in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, as well as to explore how the consequences of this threat are communicated in the region. Special attention is paid to the media strategies adopted by the Baltics and the objectives achieved by communicating the threat.

The detection of threats, the investigation of their consequences and the way they are communicated have been in the focus of international research over the past decade. The profusion of studies in this field points to steady academic interest in this problem. Remarkably, most of the relevant works were published in 2015—2020. Their authors overview existing threats and risks

[1] How do pandemics end? *BBC news*. URL: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-876f42ae-5e44—41c0-ba2d-d6fd537aadfe (accessed 07.10.2020).

[1; 2] and assess economic [3], environmental [4], and sociocultural threats [5]. A prominent endeavour in the last category is the thesaurus of sociocultural threats [6; 7]. The Baltic region, which is a major macroregion of Europe, and challenges and threats faced by its countries are also the subject matter of recent publications [8—12].

The stages and central concepts of the study

This contribution describes the dynamics of COVID-19 in the three Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) — members of the EU and constituents of the Baltic Sea region. Understanding this 'double affiliation' is essential because the study uses official COVID-19 policy documents of European, regional, and national levels. First, the key concepts employed in this research must be defined.

Risk is understood as an event or condition that, when in effect, will have negative consequences for countries, industries, population, and individuals.

Threat is defined as an external poorly controllable (or uncontrollable) event that might cause damage or is perceived as such by countries, industries, population or individuals. A threat is a combination of factors and conditions that can have a damaging effect on the individual and society. A threat always brings about danger. In this analysis, danger denotes the condition of an object exposed to a threat.

The analysis of risks and threats as communicated in the English-language media of the Baltics was carried out in three stages.

At stage one, statistical data on the progress of the pandemic of the Baltics were selected based on the reliability of the source, representativeness, and the relevance of described parameters. All these requirements were met by data from the World Health Organisation,[2] the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC),[3] and reports from the ministries of health of Latvia,[4] Lithuania,[5] and Estonia.[6] These sources provided comprehensive coverage of threats and risks of the pandemic as well as of the national strategies for mitigating them.

[2] World Health Organization. URL: https://covid19.who.int/ (accessed 01.11.2020).

[3] European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. URL: https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en (accessed 01.09.2020).

[4] Veselibas ministrija. URL: https://www.vm.gov.lv/lv/ (accessed 01.09.2020)

[5] Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania. URL: https://sam.lrv.lt/en/ (accessed 01.11.2020).

[6] Ministry of Social Affairs, Terviseamet URL: https://www.terviseamet.ee/et (accessed 01.11.2020).

A selected website or periodical had to satisfy the following conditions: it is a trustworthy regional medium; it has a strong web presence; it is regularly updated; it has a 2019—2020 print or online archive [12; 13].

The study also used documents of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, publications from European programmes and projects run in the Baltics, reports from news agencies, and articles from the *Baltic Times, Baltic Rim Economies, Baltic News Network, Baltic Course*, and other media. As an additional source of information, the English-language COVID-19 Corpus was used alongside digests of popular Russian- and English-language Baltic websites and news aggregators. This array of sources aided in creating a total picture of the Baltic media agenda over the study period.

At stage two, articles and news items were selected that were conceptually and thematically relevant to the subject of research –risks and threats faced by the Baltics amid the pandemic. The identification of the threat and its consequences was carried out based on Melvin Mencher's scale of newsworthiness. The following newsworthiness factors were considered: timeliness, prominence, impact, conflict, and the unusual [13]. When selecting a source or material and identifying a threat, its scale, and consequences, the occurrence of references was taken into account to estimate the newsworthiness of events, the actual interest in them from the regional media, and public response.

At the final stage, goals and strategies of communicating threats and their consequences are analysed using examples from the Baltic media.

Grouping the key consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic helped describe the threat, place it within the systems of political discourse and collective consciousness, and juxtapose it with other types of challenges and threats.

The COVID-19 pandemic in the Baltics

Obviously, the main news of the end of 2020 — the beginning of 2020 was the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated by the WHO, on 1 November 2020, the number of cases worldwide was above 45m and 1.2m people died.[7]

The virus has done what 'no other virus or bacteria has done over the past 100 years: 'it locked in most of the planet's population and paralysed the public and economic life of many states. It remains a mystery to the world academia. … Yet SARS-Cov-2 deserves credit for helping us understand: the threat of a

[7] World Health Organization. URL: https://covid19.who.int/ (accessed 01.11.2020).

new infection is as real as it was 100, 200, or 300 years ago'.[8] The pandemic has affected the lives of all the Baltic Sea countries on the macro- and microlevel. It has interfered with globalisation, integration, and regionalisation.

Before tracking the dynamics of the pandemic in the Baltics, it is important to look into the regional situation and how the three countries perform on some key indicators compared to other Baltic Sea states. Fig. 1 shows the pandemic timeline in the region. The first COVID-19 cases were confirmed in all the Baltic States nearly at the same time — from the end of February to the first week of March 2020. This is a natural state of affairs in a region bound together by close economic, social, and cultural ties. The epidemic progressed very similarly in the Baltics: a sharp increase in the number of cases in March and April was followed by a prolonged plateau until September 2020, a slight rise in cases in September, and a rapid spread of the infection in October 2020. The number of cases was going up the fastest in Poland, particularly in October 2020.

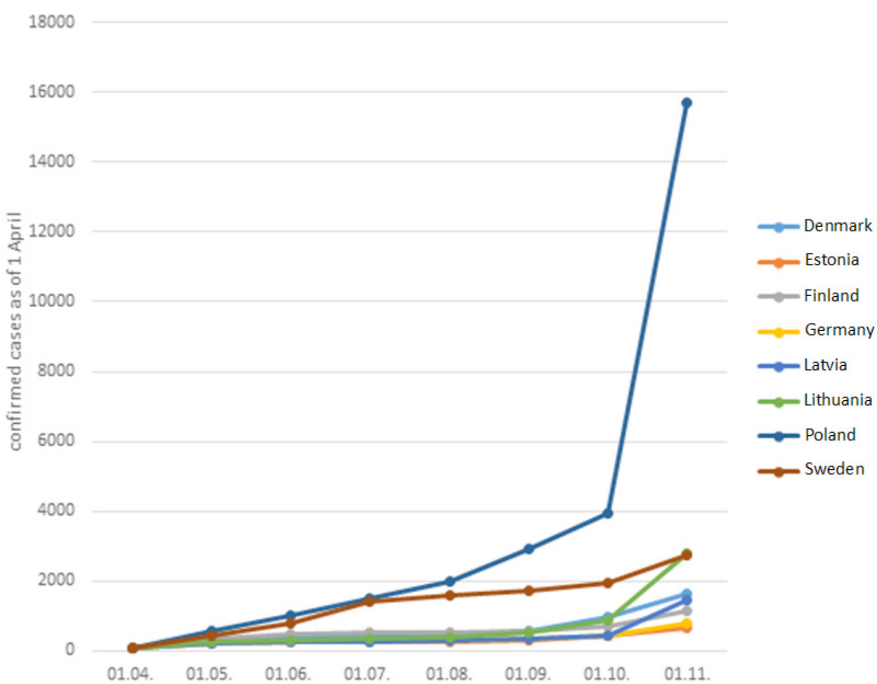

Fig. 1 The progress of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Baltic Sea states

Source: prepared by the authors based on data from the European CDC[9]

[8] Alkhovsky, S. The epidemics of the future: what threats are to be expected? *RBC*. URL: https://trends.rbc.ru/trends/social/5ecbb0b99a79471c99221ca2 (accessed 05.09.2020).

[9] Distribution of cumulative reported cases. *European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control*. URL: https://qap.ecdc.europa.eu/public/extensions/COVID-19/COVID-19.html#country-comparison-tab (accessed 01.11.2020).

The per-capita spread rate varies in the region from 1278.6 cases per 100,000 population in Sweden to 291.6 in Finland. As of the time of writing, the lowest death per 100,000 rate is in Latvia at 3.7, the highest, in Sweden, at 57.5 (Table 1). Overall, the pandemic has been milder in the Baltics that in the other Baltic Sea states. This can be a result of early restrictions (including those on public transport and mass gatherings), self-isolation and quarantine, adequate policy responses, effective health services, and responsible behaviour of the community. The extent of the efforts to fight the pandemic is evidenced by the data collected by the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and the preparedness of the countries of the region to respond to an escalation of the pandemic.[10]

Table 1

Comparative indicators of the development of the pandemic in the Baltic Sea states (WHO data of 1.11.2020)

Country	Total cases	Cases per 100,000 population	Mortality	Mortality per 100,000 population
Germany	532 930	640.8	10 481	12.6
Poland	362 731	955.6	5 631	14.8
Sweden	132 050	1278.6	5 938	57.5
Denmark	46 351	796.0	721	12.4
Finland	16 113	291.6	358	6.5
Lithuania	14 824	530.5	165	5.9
Latvia	5 894	309.0	71	3.7
Estonia	4 905	369.1	73	5.5

Source: World Health Organization[11].

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have lower morbidity and mortality rates compared to other Baltic Sea states (only Finland is doing better). Nevertheless, the three countries have been fully exposed to all the negative effects of the pandemic.

[10] Handling and Combating the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Baltic Sea Countries. Handling and Combating the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Baltic Sea Countries. URL: http://www.bspc.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BSPC_Handling-and-Combating-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-in-the-Baltic-Sea-Countries.pdf (accessed 09.10.2020).

[11] World Health Organization. URL: https://covid19.who.int/ (accessed 01.11.2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic as a type of threat. The synergy of negative effects

This section attempts at characterising and grouping key consequences of the pandemic, which is viewed as a threat of a special type. Although pandemics, as well as other epidemics and diseases, are traditionally classed under soft threats (see Global Risk Analysis, 2020),[12] they have a wide range of consequences. The COVID-19 pandemic is a global phenomenon that has pronounced *geopolitical, economic, ecological, social, and technology-related consequences* at a regional level.

Geopolitically, the pandemic has led to the severance of traditional ties, involuntary self-isolation of states, border closure, and, in many cases, restrictions on national travel. The Baltics joined the common EU response and imposed travel limitations. The Union introduced a 'colour-code' system. 'Red' areas had more than 50 cases per 100,000 population over 14 days; 'orange', from 25 to 50; 'green', below 25. The scope of testing was taken into account when calculating those figures.

Mobility rights have been traditionally viewed as an essential freedom, and travel restrictions have damaged whole industries of the Baltics' economies and caused a collapse in public optimism, although the Baltics left the borders open for some categories of travellers.

The closure of borders and travel restrictions had serious repercussions on the economy. Tourism and transport were the first industries to feel the pinch. Regional airlines, for example, the Latvian AirBaltic, had to suspend all flights until mid-April 2020. Later, it would substantially reduce the number of connections.[13] Over two months, from April to May, 580 flights were cancelled.[14] The company had to dismiss at least 250 of its 1600-strong staff.

In *economic* terms, the Baltic Sea states went into the so-called coronavirus recession, which became apparent as the stock market crashed in March 2020. The economies of the Baltics have suffered very badly in the pandemic. Small and open, the economies of the three states have relatively strong transport industries, which were severely affected by plummeting external demand. Pandemic control measures have influenced household consumption patterns, in-

[12] *The Global Risks Report,* 2020. URL: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risk_Report_2020.pdf (accessed 01.08.2020).

[13] Cummins N. airBaltic Suspends All Flights Until Mid April // *Simple Flying*. URL: https://simpleflying.com/air-baltic-suspends-all-flights (accessed 20.05.2020).

[14] Kaminski-Morrow D. Air Baltic to cut staff as coronavirus ends positive run // *FlightGlobal*. https://www.flightglobal.com/airlines/air-baltic-to-cut-staff-as-coronavirus-ends-positive-run/137190.article (accessed 12.05.2020).

dustrial production, and the once rapidly growing tourism sector. Tax reliefs and the rather quick relaxation of restrictions have supported the economic activity. Thus, the decline of the GDP in the Baltics will probably be less substantial than in other EU member states. Fitch Ratings expects the public debt/GDP ratio to reach its maximum in Lithuania and Estonia and to approach that in Latvia.[15] Public debt will rise to a record high in the region, responding to the alarming budget deficit situation.

The Baltics estimate that their economies will fall by a total of 8% in 2020.[16]

Social consequences include an increase in the unemployment rate, which also applies to structural unemployment, enormous pressure on the health system, a growing mortality rate, and pervasive depression as a repercussion of quarantine and self-isolation. In January 2020, the unemployment rate in Latvia was at 6%. September's data show an upward trend (8.1%).[17] In Estonia, the unemployment rate was 4.1% in January and 7.1% in September 2020. The latter figure is the highest since 2016. The total number of unemployed reached 49.4 thousand people, which is a clear sign of how the COVID-19 crisis has affected the country.[18] Lithuania has suffered more than the other Baltic States. Its unemployment rate was 9.2% in January and above 14% in September. The number of people looking for a job reached 243,371.[19]

The environmental and technological effects of the pandemic have not been fully evaluated so far. ' [A] t one end of the scale, there is … a reduction in emissions from transport and shutdown production facilities, a decline in water and electricity consumption due to the closure of stores and offices. On the other, there is disposable personal protective equipment (PPE), extra packaging, panic buying, etc.'[20] A major challenge is the utilisation of used masks and gloves after the introduction of mandatory wearing of PPE in public.

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[15] Baltic Sovereigns Facing Growth and Fiscal Shock // *Fitch Ratings*. URL: https://www.fitchratings.com/research/sovereigns/baltic-sovereigns-facing-growth-fiscal-shock-30—09—2020 (accessed 01.10.2020).

[16] Coronavirus: Baltic states open a pandemic 'travel bubble'. *BBC News*. URL: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52673373 (accessed 18.05.2020).

[17] Unemployment rate in September 2020. *CSB of Latvia*. URL: https://www.csb.gov.lv/en/Statistics/COVID19/Unemployment-rate-in-September-2020 (accessed 28.10.2020).

[18] Employment Rate in Estonia decreased to 68.10 percent in the first quarter of 2020 from 69.20 percent in the fourth quarter of 2020. *Trading Economics*. URL: https://tradingeconomics.com/estonia/employment-rate (accessed 00.00.2020).

[19] Employment Rate in Lithuania decreased to 71.40 percent in the second quarter of 2020 from 73 percent in the first quarter of 2020. *Trading Economics*. URL: https://tradingeconomics.com/lithuania/employment-rate (accessed 28.10.2020).

[20] What will be discarded after the pandemic and what can help the planet right now. *RBC*. URL: https://trends.rbc.ru/trends/green/5e8b405c9a7947028ac3bf50 (accessed 18.05.2020) (in Russ.)

The virus survives in sewage, as Finnish physicians and ecologists have shown.[21] Quite unexpectedly, a group of ecologists have pointed to the substantial environmental impact of internet streaming, which has grown incredibly since most employees were transitioned to remote working and school children and university students, to remote learning. HD video streaming in 3G networks is associated with an extra 90g/h of greenhouse emissions. In February-March 2020, the use of streaming services went up 30%. In March this year, a major hub of European servers, DE-CIX, which is located in Frankfurt, recorded data throughput at 9.16 Tbit/s — the highest ever measured worldwide. This is equivalent to over 2m HD videos transmitted at the same time.[22]

In terms of the *magnitude of its effect*, the COVID-19 pandemic is a rare case of a threat targeting both the individual and society. Social networks fail, people are faced with a loss of social status due to unemployment, depression caused by self-isolation and restrictions affecting public life is omnipresent. The pandemic can be described as both a *hard and a soft threat*. As the traditional definition of hard threat suggests, it includes security risks, violence, military conflicts, abuse of power, and technology abuse (including that of information technology). Soft threats are personality disorders, poverty, unemployment, a potential loss of cultural identity, etc. From this perspective, the pandemic has the features of both types of threat since it endangers society and the individual as well as leads to unemployment, depression, and uncertainty fatigue. The true psychological consequences of the pandemic are still unknown. What is clear now is that they will make the top of the negative effects of the pandemic. As a study carried out at Vilnius University's Centre for Psychotraumatology in summer 2020, when the spread of the virus temporarily slowed down, most respondents '… felt very scared, anxious, sad or lonely. Almost half of them were affected by restrictions on contacts with relatives; one-fourth experienced difficulties in adapting to the new state of affairs'.[23]

The common classification of threats by the *time of appearance* (they are divided into traditional, new, and recent ones) does not apply to the current pandemic. On the one hand, the previous century saw several major epidemics and the Spanish flu pandemic, and thus COVID-19 can be viewed as a traditional

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[21] Coronavirus found in waste water in Helsinki and Turku but not at other sites monitored weekly. *TLH.FI*. URL: https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en/-/coronavirus-found-in-waste-water-in-helsinki-and-turku-but-not-at-other-sites-monitored-weekly] (accessed 06.06.2020).

[22] German experts calculate impact of streaming and video games on environment. *Kommersant*. URL: https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4485170 (accessed 11.09.2020) (in Russ.).

[23] Most people struggle with stress, and emotional toil disturbs daily life. *Sputnik*. URL: https://lt.sputniknews.ru/society/20201101/13556662/Zhitelyam-Litvy-dali-sovety-dlya-psikhologicheskogo-zdorovya-vo-vremya-COVID-19.html (accessed 01.11.2020) (in Russ.).

rather than a new or newest threat. On the other hand, as long as the scale of its consequences and strategies to control it are considered, it is a recent threat, similar to antibiotic resistance, biohacking, and technology abuse. Until 2020, humanity was never faced in its recent history with a threat of such magnitude and with such versatile repercussions.

When analysing and evaluating the consequences of a threat, it is essential to consider both the above characteristics and the media response. The latter factor is subjective for the most part. Its value varies depending on the time, scope, and objectiveness of media reports, whether information about risks may be withheld, and whether the risk of threat is downplayed or exaggerated in the eyes of society. Objective coverage contributes to the prompt introduction of protective measures and the calibration of risk management options.

The goals and strategies of communicating threats

Alongside the consequences discussed above, it is imperative to study media strategies, which have an enormous influence on the formulation of strategies for the socio-political narrative generated and/or propagated by the media in the Baltic Sea region and the world amid the COVID-19 pandemic. What is unique to the current situation is that the global spread of the pandemic and the similarity of its consequences across the world make it possible to identify different national media strategies for communicating the threat and its effects. Common strategies for communicating the threat will be examined below using examples from the Baltics media and official sources.

In the thick of the pandemic when the hazard is both *omnipresent and new*, it is impossible to predict how the situation will develop in the future and what strategy each country will choose. Our study shows that, when raising awareness of all things coronavirus, the media of the three Baltic States confined themselves to factual information and refrained from making judgments. This approach was used to inform people of the actual state of affairs, using figures, situation reports, diagrams, descriptions of symptoms and modes of transmission, etc. Major news agencies, aggregators, and search engines launched their own coronavirus trackers, maps, and counters that accumulated available information. An illustration of this is the news item published by the *Baltic News Network (BNN):*

> Across the Baltic states, over the past day to Wednesday … Lithuanian health authorities have confirmed 73 new cases of COVID-19. Meanwhile, 12 new cases

> have been found in Latvia and 57 in Estonia. 12 new coronavirus infection cases were found in Latvia over the course of the past day, which means the total number of COVID-19 patients since the start of the pandemic is 1,572 in the central Baltic country. The latest data on Estonia showed 3,033 confirmed COVID-19 cases, which means 57 new infection cases were found in the country over the past day.[24]

This approach to communicating threats is used not only by regional media but also by national authorities and international organisations. For instance, it is employed in documents prepared by the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference. These papers contain facts and reports on the spread of the virus on the Åland Islands, in the Baltics, Germany, Poland, Russia, and Sweden. Supplying information without commentary or analysis is not a full-scale strategy, yet the provision of factual information also serves its purpose. What makes a media strategy a strategy is the formulation of the goal and the attainment of the expected result. The analysis of the Baltics media space during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that it imparts information with the following aims: a) to control the spread of COVID-19; b) to provide comprehensive coverage of the pandemic, based on constant updates; c) to separate real news from fake reports (rumours, unverified data); d) to identify newsworthy coronavirus-related events; e) to prevent panic; f) to instil in society set behaviour patterns for responding to the coronavirus.

Our analysis of the media space demonstrates that there are at least six principal media strategies — *counter-active, projective, conservative, mobilising, resilient and reflective*. These strategies are universal since all of them are used to communicate threats either individually or collectively, depending on what goal they must achieve. Below, we will consider each of them in detail.

The *counter-active strategy*, which is used by all the Baltic States to communicate the threat, calls for firm action against the threat and a tit-for-tat response: each threatening thesis presented in the media has an antithesis that activates a counter-agenda, which seeks to repel the direct invasion of public life by reports on the threat. This is a strategy of conflict, either an over or a covert one, which implies that the positions of the opposing sides may reverse. In case of a global threat, this strategy attempts to dispel, eviscerate the threat to strip it of its dominance.

[24] Latest infections with COVID-19 in Baltic states, 2020, *BNN*. URL: https://bnn-news.com/latest-infections-with-covid-19-in-baltic-states-217186 (accessed 23.09.2020).

A vivid example of this strategy used in social media is a tweet by the Prime Minister of Latvia, Saulius Skvernelis. He emphasises the need to counter the threat, points to past experiences, and expresses his hope that the consequences of the pandemic will be overcome by common action:

> Throughout history, the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have been exposed to a variety of challenges. We will overcome this one as well, thanks to excellent understanding and coordination.[25]

The *projective strategy* focuses on communicating short- and long-term response plans, not all of which may be implemented in practice. Yet, the job of the media, particularly of official outlets is to show that projections are possible. The central message is that 'we' are not giving up, we will continue to fight.' An example of the projective strategy at play is the following item from the Baltic News Network:

> Latvia's government approved Healthcare Ministry's proposed strategy for limitation of COVID-19. This strategy provides four risk categories, with the first the lowest and fourth the highest. Latvia is currently in the third risk category, explains Latvia's Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš. The plan, which details restrictions at specific infection indexes, outlines three factors that may lead to the fourth risk category.[26]

The obtained findings suggest that the projective strategy has two main variations, radical and moderate. A radical strategy produces ideal models of the future, a new reality, and new identity strategies. An illustration of such a strategy is a quotation from the speech of the First Deputy Chancellor at the Government of Lithuania, Luka Savickas, which was published by the koronastop.lrv.lt news portal:

> In his presentation on Lithuania's economic response to the pandemic, the Deputy Chancellor Savickas has said that 'Lithuania sees this crisis not only as a challenge but also as an opportunity: first, the countries will seek to shorten and diversify supply chains; second, Lithuania has a chance to become one of the EU hubs for life sciences, research and industry; third, food supply chains will become shorter and thus add to greater sustainability; fourth and fifth, the economy will move faster to a digital and green economy.[27]

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[25] Saulius Skvernelis, *Official Account of Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania*, URL: https://twitter.com/Skvernelis_S/status/1261158322692030465 (accessed 15.05.2020).

[26] Latvian government explains what could happen if Latvia enters 'red zone' with COVID-19// *BNN*. URL: https://bnn-news.com/latvian-government-explains-what-could-happen-if-latvia-enters-red-zone-with-covid-19—218295 (accessed 28.10.2020).

[27] Lithuania's efforts to combat COVID-19 come into world's spotlight. *Korona Stop*. URL: https://koronastop.lrv.lt/en/news/lithuanias-efforts-to-combat-covid-19-come-into-worlds-spotlight (accessed 22.05.2020).

A moderate projective strategy suggests an extrapolation of positive past and future trends, as seen in the following quotation: ‘Will the tight restrictions return? Latvia’s waiting for the Ministry of Health to decide. Latvia is dealing better with the coronavirus than its neighbours do. Still, we cannot afford to be complacent, epidemiologists warn’.[28]

The *conservative strategy* means resistance to the destabilisation of public life and appeals to the established systems of values, norms, and principles that constitute the ‘natural course of things’. The conservative strategy thrives on the heroic deeds of the past, placing the threat in the context of earlier challenges: not once was society put to sore trials, perhaps more serious and widespread than the current one, yet it prevailed thanks to unity and other virtues. Leaders of nations are usually among advocates of the conservative idea, and the job of the media is to convey the messages of heads of states. The conservative strategy sets out to bring to the fore eternal values and inspire people to take common action. The fact that the media resort to it indicates how serious the threat is. The conservative strategy is sought-after in the most difficult situations, such as the current pandemic:

> The head of the Estonian Cabinet, Jüri Ratas, address the nation on the spread of the coronavirus, says a post on his Facebook page. He spoke in Russia, although the only official language in the country is Estonian: ‘This weekend and next weeks will decide whether we stop the virus or not. For that, we only have one formula: we have to adhere to the rules. … It is vital to brief your family, friends, colleagues, and everyone else on these rule. It is ‘us-time’ now, not ‘me-time’…[29]

The *mobilising strategy* is about pulling together the resources of society, as shown in the following excerpt from the *Baltic Course*:

> Latvian society needs to mobilize in order to be able to stop the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the country through joint efforts, President Egils Levits emphasized in a message to the public on Sunday.
>
> ‘There is no room for chaotic action or overconfidence in Latvia. We need to be rational. Our goal is to break the spiral of the pandemic. We need to be decisive,’ said Levits.[30]

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[28] Will the tight restrictions return? Lativa’s waiting for the Ministry of Health to decide. *Baltnews*. URL: https://lv.baltnews.com/mir_novosti/20200807/1024100899/Vernutsya-li-strogie-ogranicheniya-Latviya-zhdet-resheniya-Minzdrava.html (accessed 07.08.2020).

[29] Yuri Ratas: the coming weeks will determine whether we will stop the virus or not, 2020, *ERR.ee*. URL: https://rus.err.ee/1070038/obrawenie-juri-ratasa-predstojawie-vyhodnye-i-nedeli-opredeljat-ostanovim-my-virus-ili-net (accessed 28.03.2020) (in Russ.)

[30] Levits calls on public to mobilize to stop spread of COVID-19. *The Baltic Course*. URL: http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets_and_companies/?doc=160281&output=d (accessed 26.10.2020).

As a rule, a champion of public interests is chosen to drive mobilisation. To follow this strategy, the media need a prominent public figure, preferably, a professional or an activist who embodies courage and occupational ethics and acts as a situational opinion leader whose expertise is much sought after. Unlike the counter-active strategy, this strategy suggests proactive defence rather than an attack. In the pandemic, the media have found heroes of the time among physicians, volunteers, and social workers, whose personal example highlighted by the media inspires people to rise to the challenge. Using the mobilising strategy, the media have motivated their audiences to abide by the rules, use protective equipment, help each other, and keep clam. An example of this strategy is the following quotation:

> Rally of gratitude: how people support doctors fighting coronavirus. Doctors have always saved human lives, but, in the pandemic, their work holds the answer to the question 'when will everything get back to normal?' As medical professionals deal with the coronavirus, people all over the world rally in their support. Applause, words of gratitude, and shining lights — people are extremely grateful to doctors and are trying to support them as much as they can'.[31]

The media use the *resilient strategy* less often than the other ones. In most cases, it is employed when reporting tragic news, for instance, mortality-related materials. In the pandemic, the stoic strategy has gained traction as the gravity and scale of current threats has increased. An example of the stoic strategy is the following excerpt from a speech of the President of Latvia Eglis Levits, which was published in the *Baltic Course*:

> 'Every day come new alarming figures about the spread of the pandemic. It's not just statistics — our fellow human beings are also behind it,' the president said, adding that 'today we must not listen to the populists, as their fake news threatens our fellow human beings and the public as a whole'.[32]

The resilient strategy for communicating threats draws as a rule on identity and the strength of character. It was extensively used during the lockdown when calls for stoicism permeated the media.

The information space was filled with stories of how important it is *not to do* something — not to visit public space, not to use public transport, not to leave home, not to see friends, etc. 'Stoic' news cites examples of true grit and composed acceptance.

[31] The act of gratitude: people support medics who fight the coronavirus, 2020, *Baltnews*. URL: https://lv.baltnews.com/video/20200325/1023780505/Aktsiya-blagodarnosti-kak- podderzhi vayut-vrachey-boryuschikhsya-s-koronavirusom.html (accessed 26.10.2020).

[32] Levits calls on public to mobilize to stop spread of COVID-19. *The Baltic Course*. URL: http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets_and_companies/?doc=160281&output=d (accessed 26.10.2020).

The *reflective strategy* is aimed at an internal transformation, a search for new rationales, distancing, withdrawal, and finding welcome distractions to preserve one's identity without abandoning the principal values. Using the reflective strategy, the media circulate and promote information on how to take advantage of self-isolation by pursuing hobbies and engaging in all kinds of online activities. These stories help people overcome the difficulties that come hand in hand with the threat. Still, the psychological and other 'soft' consequences of the pandemic are yet to be analysed.

An example of the reflective strategy is the following excerpt from an item published in *Vestnik Tartu*:

> Residents of Tartu on self-isolation: no time to be scared. All of us have gone through the trying times of isolation as COVID-19 began to spread. Schooling, business, all other aspects of life were affected. Medical professionals, sociologists, and psychologists are yet to analyse what happened to us over those nine weeks. Vestnik Tartu offers its own chronicle of the Tartu quarantine told by its witnesses and participants who live in the neighbourhood.[33]

The way printed and electronic media manage communication, which is their primary task, depends on their target audience, whose reaction can be anything — from indifference to panic. The perception of threats depends on many factors — social standing, the system of values, the feeling of security/insecurity, etc. Negative content focusing on a threat of any category (in this case, that of the spread of COVID-19) is reinforced by expert evaluations that verify the threat and related risks, even the more so when much-discussed events are concerned. The factors that may distort the perception of risks in collective consciousness include popular sentiment. Immersion in the problem makes anything related to it a major talking point, and the media will publish any, even unverified, information.

Analysis of risks and threats necessitates understanding the consequences of tampering information. The reaction of the audience aids in both monitoring public opinion and drawing attention to the aspects of the problem that require everyone to contribute to its solution. In the case of COVID-19, the media not only aggregate information coming from the authorities, doctors, and experts but also acquaint wide audiences with the rules of a new reality.

Conclusions

The above analysis showed that the consequences of the spread of COVID-19 in the Baltics can be divided into five groups — geopolitical, economic, eco-

[33] Residents of Tartu about self-isolation: there was no time to be scared, 2020, *Vestnik Tartu*. URL: https://vestniktartu.ee/tartu/zhiteli-tartu-o-zhizni-v-samoizolyaczii-ne/ (accessed 16.06.2020) (in Russ.).

logical, social, and technological. As the situation progresses, the five groups become ever more intertwined. There is a *negative synergy* of threats. From the perspective of its causes and possible consequences, one type of threat can be classed under several categories. For example, the involuntary severance of regional ties and the deteriorating economic performance of the countries in question are inseparably linked to social issues — a growing unemployment rate, isolation-related depression, uncertainty about the future, etc.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the trend towards re-categorisation: the scale, consequences, and gravity of threats that were once viewed as soft cause them to assume characteristics of hard threats. Diseases were viewed as soft threats before the pandemic since, in recent history, they never affected all aspects of public life across the globe.

The scale of the pandemic and its consequences places high emphasis on public relations and the communication of the threat in the local media space. The communication of the threat can pursue various goals: controlling the spread of COVID-19; providing comprehensive coverage of the pandemic; separating real news from fake reports (rumours, unverified data); identifying newsworthy coronavirus-related events; preventing panic; instilling in society a set of behaviour patterns for responding to the coronavirus.

To achieve these goals, a range of media strategies is employed. These are counter-active, projective, conservative, mobilising, resilient and reflective strategies. All of them have been actively employed by English- and Russian-language media of the Baltic States to give the pandemic extensive coverage.

COVID-19 is a new type of threat. Different groups of its consequences are still to be analysed. Many countries are now facing the second wave of the pandemic, re-introduction of quarantine, full or partial lockdowns, transition to homeworking, etc. The protracted crisis will aggravate the effects described in the study and call for new approaches to communicating the threat as a newsworthy concern.

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The authors

Prof. Vera I. Zabotkina, Vice-rector for International Cooperation, Director of the Centre for Cognitive Programmes and Technology, Russian State University for the Humanities, Russia

E-mail: Zabotkina@rggu.ru

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6674-8052

Prof. Olga V. Pavlenko, First Vice-rector, Vice-rector for Research, Russian State University for the Humanities, Russia.

E-mail: pavlenko@rggu.ru

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5734-4048

Dr Elena L. Boyarskaya, Associate Professor, Institute for the Humanities, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, Russia; Research Fellow, Centre for Cognitive Programmes and Technology, Russian State University for the Humanities, Russia.

E-mail: EBoyarskaya@kantiana.ru

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0179-8643

Dr Ekaterina Yu. Moiseeva, Research Fellow, Centre for Cognitive Programmes and Technology, Russian State University for the Humanities, Russia; Senior Research Fellow, Maxim Gorky Literature Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia.

E-mail: sokruta@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7275-1714

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