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POLICY BRIEF

Emigration from Russia after 24 February 2022: main patterns and developments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has contributed to a large outflow of active and able-bodied individuals, skilled professionals, and business owners from Russia. Due to the bureaucratic and institutional challenges of traveling to the EU and other Western countries, the majority of Russian migrants settled in Central Asian and South Caucasus countries such as Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, which had been the main donors of migrants to Russia over the previous two decades.

One year after the invasion, Russia's emigration potential is nearly depleted. Neither new mobilisation nor increased combat will result in a new exodus of Russians from the country in the coming years. The countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus are faced with the challenge of properly regulating the influx of Russians in order to reap benefits without exacerbating social tensions in the hosting communities, which may require international actors to interfere. The EU member states will have to develop a more uniform strategy for accepting Russians from risk groups, as well as legal migration pathways for Russians who may benefit the EU labour market. This Policy Brief looks at the main patterns and key developments of migration from Russia after 24 February 2022.[1]

1 The data covers period from 24 February 2022 until March (exceptionally also May) 2023.

POLICY BRIEF

BACKGROUND

Russia's military aggression in Ukraine and the subsequent curtailment of civil rights and freedoms within Russia, which resulted in the persecution of people of certain occupations and vulnerable groups such as journalists, human rights and social activists, LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as massive international sanctions, prompted an exodus of Russians from the Russian Federation in 2022.

Compared to 2021, the migration outflow of the Russian population increased both to the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)[2] – by 339,400 people, or 2.7 times, and to the so-called far abroad (non-CIS countries) – by 51,100 people or 2.9 times more[1]. According to the statistics of Russia and host countries, between 700,000 and 1,200,000 people allegedly left Russia from 24 February 2022 to 24 February 2023. Some left shortly after the open hostilities broke out on 24 February 2022, while others left after mobilisation was declared on 21 September 2022.

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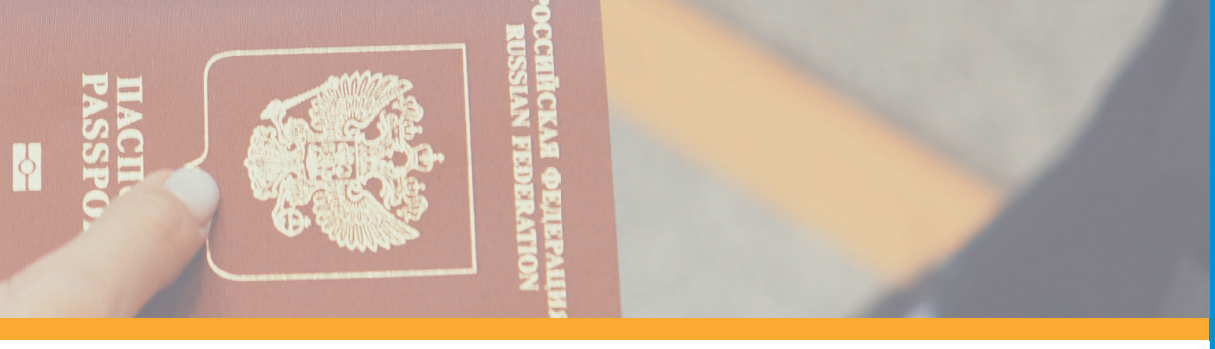
Among the first-wave migrants (February – September 2022), there were primarily freelancers and representatives of small and medium-sized businesses, as well as individuals facing substantial threats to life and safety and experiencing diminishing quality of life. Young people (26-41 years old), both women and men, mostly educated and financially independent, left Moscow, St. Petersburg and other large Russian cities.[2] Most of them spoke English or other foreign languages,[3] were politically motivated, donated money to independent NGOs, signed petitions and shared information on social media. Subsequently, they faced one or another form of political and/or economic pressure that compelled them to flee the country. According to opinion polls, people were leaving on the spur of the moment, without giving it another thought, and have chosen visa-free countries[4] as the key destinations for migration. One fifth of those polled planned to stay in the first receiving country, while 43% intended to move further.[5] Not all migrants who left Russia between February and September 2022 were able to establish themselves outside the country and were forced to return. People were returning because of family, pets and other commitments[6] in Russia; for not being able to get prescription drugs or undergo regular medical check-ups, or for fear of losing a job or being unable to provide for their families. According to polls conducted in March 2022, half of those who had left had adequate financial means to stay outside Russia[7] for three months, while for the majority the only income sources were and continue to be in the Russian Federation. According to the statement made by Maksut Shadayev, Russian Federation Minister of Digital Development, with a reference to mobile carrier statistics,[8] by May 2022, 80% of individuals who departed after 24 February 2022, had returned to Russia.

After the partial mobilisation was announced on 21 September 2022, and the adoption of new articles in the Russian Federation's Criminal Code, such as Article 352.1 Voluntary Surrender into Captivity, Russia experienced a second wave of emigration. The bulk of persons leaving virtually every region of Russia were men aged 18–50 with little interest in politics, no military (combat) experience, and varying physical health[9]. They fled Russia spontaneously, not believing the Russian authorities' assertions regarding the applied criteria and categories of people who are not subject to mobilisation (e.g., fathers of many children; people with chronic illnesses, or those beyond the draft age).

The adoption by Russia's State Duma in April 2023 of a law on launching a unified register of re-servists and persons liable for military service on the Public Services information portal, as well as the introduction of new rules for obtaining electronic summonses to appear in the military

2 The CIS includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan is an associate member of the CIS.



registration and enlistment offices, and the loss of civil rights of individuals evading military service, will all contribute to individual cases of departure, but will not cause a new mass emigration from the country. According to the *Romir* poll, only 15% of Russia's urban population considered leaving the country in August-October2022.[10] However, even those considering emigration are unlikely to leave, given that many lack the necessary contacts, savings and skills. Commitments to family and friends represent other deterrents, as are psychological defence mechanisms that maintain hope for improvement within the country, as well as real or make-believe stigmatization of Russians who have left, both within Russia and abroad.

Only 15% of Russia's urban population considered leaving the country in August-October 2022, but even they are unlikely to leave given that many lack the necessary contacts, savings and skills.

ROUTES AND SCENARIOS OF OUTWARD MIGRATION FROM RUSSIA

In search of safety, Russians left not only for visa-free countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, Serbia and Montenegro, but also sailed on yachts to South Korea[11]; moved to Mongolia and the UAE[12]; sought refuge in Argentina[13] and Mexico[3]; sought asylum in the United States, and repatriated to Israel and Germany.

Migration from Russia after 24 February 2022 featured the following types:

1. 'Ethnic repatriation', which remains available only to a small number of Russian citizens of various ethnic origins.
2. 'Transit migration' covered a number of countries that became temporary entry points for Russians. It is applicable to everyone who left. The duration and geographic destination were heavily conditioned by subjective factors, ethnic origin, occupation, and command of languages.
3. 'Foothold' in countries such as Mongolia, Germany, France and the Czech Republic with some elements of institutional support for Russians from risk groups.
4. 'Business relocation' affected representations of international and Russian companies that left the Russian Federation. Türkiye, Armenia and Central Asia have become the relocation places for the majority of small and medium-sized businesses from Russia.
5. The 'return to Russia' has already affected some of those who left. In the absence of further dedicated humanitarian admission mechanisms, and in view of the continued visa tightening by EU member states and ambiguity in granting asylum to Russian citizens, this will be the most plausible scenario for the majority of Russian migrants who left the country in 2022.

'Ethnic repatriation'

Israel approved accelerated entry procedures for Russians entitled to repatriation. From 24 February to 31 July 2022, over 35,000 immigrants arrived in the country, of which nearly 19,000 came from Russia (49.2% Russian men and 50.8% Russian women[14]). Given that *Sokhnut*, the Israeli Agency for Repatriation, has opened transit camps in Azerbaijan and Finland for Russian citizens of Jewish origin interested in repatriation, the return of Russian Jews to their historical homeland will likely continue.

3 During the first two months of the war, more than 30,000 Russians arrived in Mexico (2.5 times more than in 2017, 2019, 2021). See also: Alicia Caldwell. Ukrainian Refugees Find Easier Path to Enter U.S. at the Mexican Border. Meanwhile, Russians fleeing sanctions and their government have a harder time getting into U.S. 25 March 2022 Available at https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukrainian-migrants-find-easier-path-to-enter-u-s-at-the-mexican-border-11648200602. Accessed 27 September 2022.

The number of appeals for the return of ethnic Germans from Russia to **Germany** reached 3,300 in 2022, exceeding previous years' records. According to the German Commissioner for Minorities and Late Immigrants, the mobilisation of Russians of German descent should be considered by the immigration services as a 'special case' that does not require consent for repatriation in Russia. Under these circumstances, ethnic Germans and members of their families should promptly contact the competent authority, the Federal Administrative Office in Friedland, which has to facilitate the expedited entry, issuance of visas and the postponement of entry dates for persons who have already received return documents and/or who are at risk (males aged 18 to 50 and their family members)[15]. This offers reason to believe that repatriation from Russia to Germany will also continue.

Ethnic emigration from Russia was also observed to the countries of **Central Asia and the South Caucasus**. In the first nine months of 2022, 1,631 Russians applied for **Kyrgyz citizenship**, which constitutes a fourfold increase as compared to the same period of 2021.[16] Kyrgyzstan has also introduced the 'meken card', which grants compatriots with foreign citizenship access to a special procedure for crossing the state border, as well as the right to stay in Kyrgyzstan and obtain education, treatment and employment.

Between the beginning of 2022 and March 2023, around 700 ethnic Kazakhs received the 'kandas' status and repatriated **to Kazakhstan.**[17] The quota for receiving kandas and immigrants for 2023 was increased and set at 8,652 people by order of the Kazakhstani Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. In contrast to the growing trend of leaving Russia for Kazakhstan, the long-term trend of the return of Russian-speaking Kazakhstanis to Russia decreased by 30-50% in 2022, compared to 2012-2019.[18] A similar pattern is observed in **Armenia**, where the migration balance of Russian flows to and from the country totalled 39,000 persons from January to August 2022. For the first time since the Soviet Union's demise, over 25,000 Russian citizens of Armenian origin filed for Armenian citizenship.[19]

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According to the Uzbek Department of Migration and Citizenship of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 318,156 Russians arrived in **Uzbekistan** from Russia during the first nine months of 2022, with males constituting two-thirds of the total. When Russia declared mobilisation, another 189,175 Russians entered the country.[20] According to the Uzbek Directorate of Migration and Citizenship of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 128,981 Russians applied for a residence permit in the country, indicating that the majority of Russian migrants in Uzbekistan consider the country as a long-term destination rather than a transit country. The presence of Russian emigrants in Uzbekistan necessitates additional research and attention.

'Transit migration'

Countries that have become transit hubs and safe havens for Russians who had no chance and/or desire to return to Russia and have not found a (legal) opportunity to move elsewhere, include Türkiye, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, all of which allow visa-free entry to Russians. In 2022, the number of Russians applying for short-term and long-term permits in **Türkiye** was steadily growing, even after the end of the tourist season (see Fig. 1). By the end of 2022, however, the Turkish Statistics Department stopped showing an increase in short-term residence permits, and reflected a decrease in the number of long-term residence permits issued to Russians.

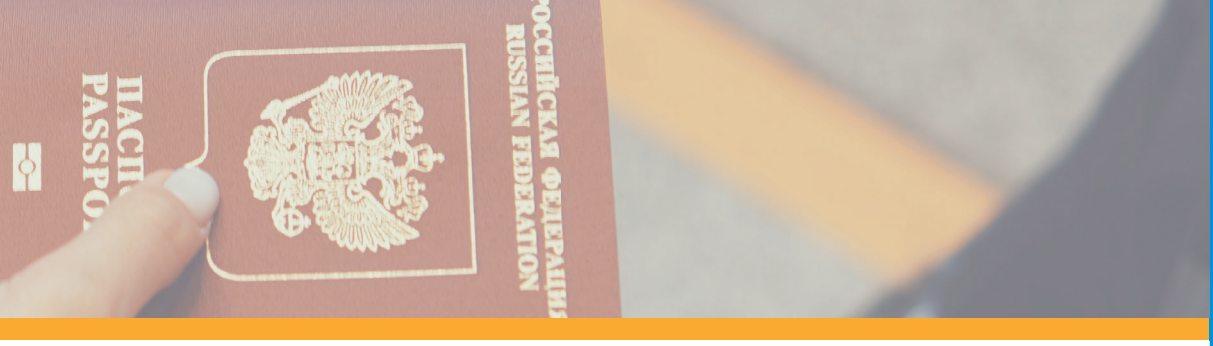
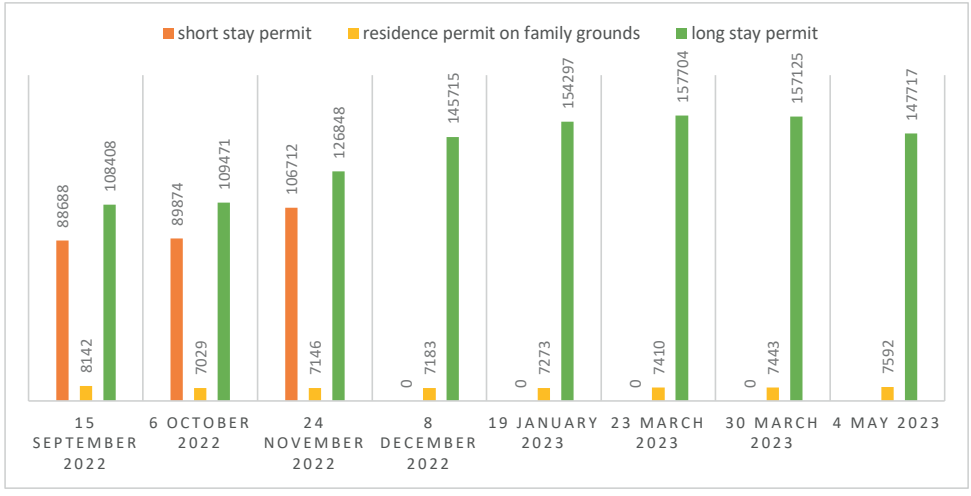


Fig. 1. Number of Russian citizens by legal status in Türkiye in 2022–2023



Source: Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs[21]

The number of Russian citizens arriving in **Georgia** also grew daily after the mobilisation was announced in September 2022. The peak came on 25 and 26 September, when 11,143 and 10,804 Russian nationals entered Georgia, respectively.[22] Over 700,000 Russians crossed the Georgian border in late September 2022, but by mid-October 2022, more than 600,000 Russians left for Europe, Türkiye or Armenia. Only 100,000 migrants settled in Georgia.

Kazakhstan, particularly its northern regions, has become the largest transit point for Russians, owing primarily to its 7,000-kilometer-long common border with Russia. The height of the Russian migratory surge to Kazakhstan occurred in September, when 406,000 Russian citizens entered the country. Between 21 and 30 September, the average daily inflow of Russians was 30,000 people against 6,000–8,000 in other months.[23] Although Russia and **Kyrgyzstan** have no common land border, the flow of Russian citizens in 2022 was also significant (450,463 people arrived, 425,934 departed), with 273,000 Russian citizens registering for temporary or permanent residency.[24]

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'Business relocation'

During the first nine months of 2022, 15,400 companies with Russian capital and founders registered their businesses in **Kazakhstan**, operating mainly in trade, communications and information technology, and consulting spheres.[25] Between April and October 2022, over 170,000 Russian citizens received individual identification codes[26] required for opening and running a business, opening a bank account, registering a car and real estate in Kazakhstan.[27] In the first quarter of 2023, 76 million USD were transferred from Russia to Kazakhstan, representing a 400% increase compared to the first quarter of 2022.[28]

A similar trend was observed in **Uzbekistan**, where the number of newly registered Russian companies has gradually increased from as few as three in January 2022 to as many as 189 in May 2022. The number of firms registered by In the number of registered businesses Russians in Uzbekistan also surpassed those of Chinese and Turkish citizens, which have been visible on the local market in the past years.[29]

Armenia and Türkiye have also emerged as popular destinations for Russian business migration. According to the Armenian Ministry of Economy, Russians opened 2,541 new companies in the country in the first nine months of 2022.[30] During the first half of 2022, 720 Russian companies registered in Türkiye.[31] By the end of the same year, this figure grew to 1,300 (+670% compared to 2021).[32]

'Foothold'

According to media reports, between 21 and 29 of September 2022, 6,268 Russians, mainly residents of the Republic of Buryatia, entered **Mongolia.**[33] Russian citizens can stay in Mongolia visa-free for 30 days with the possibility of extending this period for another 30 days. Following the announced mobilisation and the subsequent influx of Russians into Mongolia, the country's Immigration Agency announced that citizens of the Russian Federation could obtain a simplified temporary residence permit in Mongolia depending on the purpose of their stay (work, study, entrepreneurial activity) and as part of the existing 56 grounds for stay in the country.

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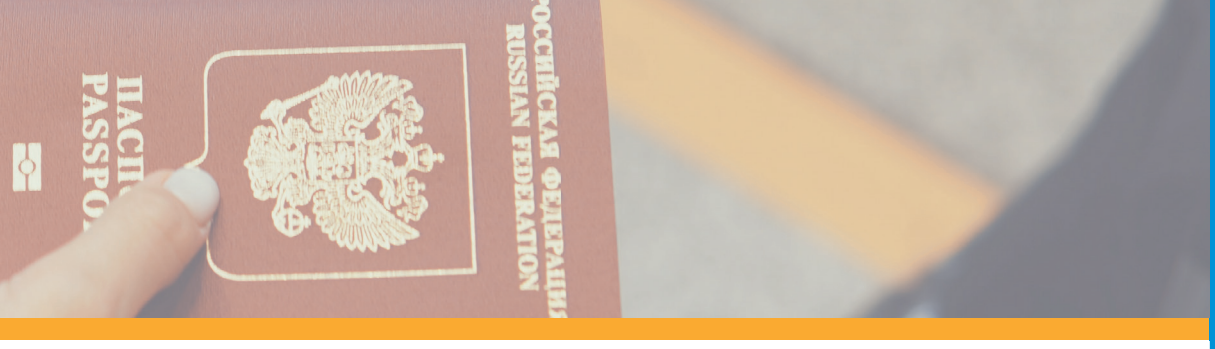
Germany and France created special programs for reception and support, including visa assistance, for Russians in risk groups, which are carried out by international and/or national NGOs, such as *Reporters sans frontières* or the *International Memorial*. To issue a humanitarian visa, German authorities de facto check the applicants against four criteria: long-term cooperation and interaction with German organisations; inclusion of the applicant's name in the list of persons seeking protection and asylum[4]; confirmed facts of persecution by the Russian authorities; political, journalistic and other socially useful activity. Meanwhile, the French authorities issue visas and subsequent residence permits to Russians at risk, primarily if they are proficient in French.[5] Both countries have also emphasised the importance of revising visa policies for Russian citizens and supporting Russians fleeing mobilization[6].

On 20 May 2022, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched a special program to accept and relocate activists, journalists and NGO employees from Russia and Belarus to the **Czech Republic**. The program was launched in 2022 and extended for another year in April 2023. The annual reception and relocation quota is 500 people.[34] Citizens of Russia or Belarus who are (1) freedom fighters, human rights defenders, representatives of civil society, independent media or academia; or (2) forced to leave their country of origin due to active protection of democratic principles, in particular freedom of speech, or due to the impossibility of freely and with impunity to engage in professional activities, or for other reasons related to the threat to human rights and freedoms, are eligible to participate in the program. The program also provides institutional and visa assistance to spouses, minors or adult children in care, and partners in LGBT couples. To participate in the program, candidates have to send an e-mail with supporting documents to the authorized department for human rights of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Czech Republic, however, has chosen not to issue humanitarian visas and grant asylum to Russians who evade mobilisation.[35]

4 Such lists are prepared by public organizations in Germany, confirming long-term and fruitful cooperation with the applicant and threats to his/her life. The lists are submitted for consideration and approval to the German Foreign Ministry.

5 This practice has existed for lawyers, attorneys and human rights defenders of a number of human rights organizations, including lawyers of the Memorial network.

6 France's ambassador to the United Nations and the United States, Gérard Araud, wrote, "It may be the moment to rethink the issue of visas to Russians... Helping the men who want to flee from being mobilized would be a humanitarian and military good decision". 21 September 2022. Available at https://twitter.com/GerardAraud/status/1572568547611770880



HOST COUNTRIES' POLICIES IN RESPONSE TO THE INFLUX OF RUSSIANS

Visa-free countries

The attitude of Central Asian and South Caucasus countries, which have visa-free regime with Russia, to the mass migration of Russians evolved in 2022. Having common cultural and historical links with Russia, they were more receptive to Russian emigrants of the first wave, but less so to the second-wave emigrants. After a year of war, these counties were forced to weight the benefits and drawbacks of migration from Russia, taking into account rising geopolitical tensions, calls for national identity preservation, the weakness of national labour markets and the low competitive advantages of their economies. As of May 2023, attitudes towards Russian migrants varied by county and were heavily influenced by the migrants' professional qualifications and demographics.

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Georgia's position altered the most prominently, as it accepted the whole range of Russian emigration, including political emigrants, dissidents of the Putin regime, as well as representatives of NGOs and independent media, who faced repressions. In the second half of 2022, many Russian oppositionists, independent journalists[36] and Kremlin[37] opponents were denied entry to Georgia. Nona Mamulashvili, a spokeswoman for the United National Movement in Georgia, said that Russians fleeing mobilisation posed "a serious problem for the country[38]." The official data nevertheless reveal that there are still thousands of Russians in Georgia, for whom the one-year visa-free entry and stay remain in effect.

It will be important to monitor how the opening of Georgian airspace and direct flights from Georgia to Russia,[39] as well as Russia's lifting of the visa for Georgian citizens, announced by relevant decrees of the Russian President in May 2023,[40] will affect the status of Russian emigrants in Georgia.

The influx of Russian citizens into **Kazakhstan** sparked public and political debates, as well as media coverage. In 2022, more than half of the 5.6 million foreigners who entered Kazakhstan were citizens of the Russian Federation. Although the President of Kazakhstan announced the need "... to take care and ensure the safety [of Russians coming to the country]"[41] and officials formally stated that Kazakhstan will not extradite Russian citizens evading mobilisation, by the end of 2022, the country's migration services introduced new rules for the stay and movement of Russians. As of 26 January 2023[42], Russians, as citizens of a Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member state, can lawfully stay in Kazakhstan for 90 out of 180 calendar days from the date of crossing the border. At the end of this period, they must seek permits to remain in Kazakhstan, whereas formerly Russians could re-cross the border and thereby prolong their visa-free stay. In addition, the migration services changed the rules for issuing a long-term residence permit, requiring foreigners to present a valid foreign passport, rather than an internal passport of their country of origin. Each foreign citizen will require the actual presence of the accommodation owner or a person acting on their behalf by proxy, or the notarized consent of the owner of the premises where the foreigner will live and be registered, to receive a temporary residence permit.

At the same time, Kazakhstan is interested in the human capital that had left Russia. On 28 February 2023, the Kazakhstani Ministry of Labour issued a list of 21 professions, holders of which among foreigners are subject to a simplified procedure for obtaining a residence permit.[43] This will allow Russian engineers, physicians and IT specialists to get legal status in Kazakhstan for up to ten years without having to prove solvency.

Along with Kazakhstan, other **Central Asian and Caucasus** countries are looking for Russian engineers and IT specialists. **Uzbekistan** has officially become one of the popular destinations for relocation of Russian IT experts, sales and customer service managers, thanks to the relocation program from the Uzbek *IT Park* and a special IT visa valid for up to three years. According to *HeadHunter*, almost 10,000 Russian IT specialists were searching for jobs in Uzbekistan between November 2022 and January 2023.[44]

Kyrgyzstan also launched its *Digital Nomad* program in 2022, open to IT professionals from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Russia. The program allows a foreign citizen to obtain a personal identification code in Kyrgyzstan without requiring a work permit, and grants the right to open and use accounts in the country's banks. In 2022, some 1,000 IT workers from the Russian Federation, who already had an employment contract in Kyrgyzstan, received the 'digital nomad' status.

Kyrgyz hospitality towards newly arrived Russian emigrants has given way to media[45] and parliamentary discussions on the issues associated with this immigration. Kyrgyzstan is becoming more aware of the geopolitical price of recognising Russians as refugees and offering them humanitarian legal status.[46]

The situation with Russians in **Türkiye** was fast changing. While Türkiye first opened its doors to Russian emigrants, it has subsequently tightened the rules for issuing visas and registering Russian citizens. In early October 2022, Kovcheg, a service helping Russians to relocate, reported a number of revoked residency permits in Türkiye, as well as refusals to entry based on tourist visas. In June 2022, Türkiye imposed restrictions on the geography of registering Russians in large Turkish cities, establishing lists of city districts that, even with a rental contract, do not allow the issuance of a residence permit to foreigners.

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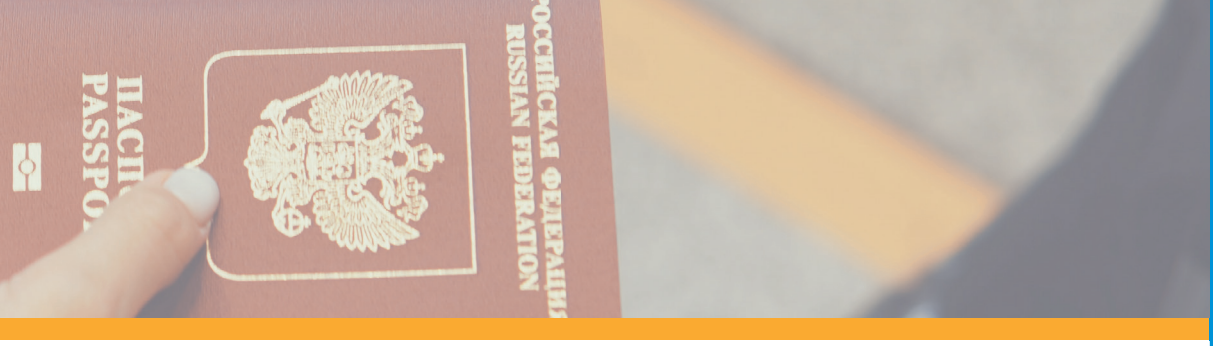
EU member states

The attitude of the EU countries toward Russian migrants gradually tightened during 2022, beginning with the closure of the EU airspace for aircraft from/to Russia in the spring and the suspension of the simplified visa regime in the autumn of 2022, despite the increase in the number of Russian citizens seeking international protection and asylum in the EU. In December 2022, the authorised departments of the EU states were considering 15,767 asylum applications submitted by Russians (up from 7,353 in 2021), while the success rate in the first instance courts stood at 34%.[47] As of May 2023, there are no prerequisites for changing this restrictive stance laid down by the Baltic countries and other EU states having land borders with the Russian Federation.

Within the EU, there are three different approaches to issuing visas, granting asylum and providing support to at-risk Russian citizens:

1. Humanitarian-oriented policy: Germany, the Czech Republic, Lithuania (prior to the adoption of the law 'On additional measures to protect national interests' in April 2023[48]);
2. Relatively flexible visa policy, respecting the rules and restrictions imposed by the EU countries following the abolition of the EU-Russia visa facilitation agreement: Greece, Hungary, etc.;
3. Tight policy: the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Finland, Estonia.

Quite many EU countries, including **Hungary, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Slovenia**, do not have humanitarian programs or mechanisms in place to accept at-risk Russian citizens; however, they



do not tighten the visa regime for Russians, maintaining only visa and institutional restrictions in accordance with the EU sanctions. Thus, **Greece** suspended visa applications for Russian citizens in June 2022, but in the autumn Greek visa centres in the Russian cities of Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Kaliningrad, Kazan, Samara and Ufa were accepting documents for long-term visas (Type D).

Only a few EU countries take a humanitarian-oriented stance towards Russians.

Only a few EU countries take a humanitarian-oriented stance towards Russians. Since the outbreak of the war, **Lithuania and the Czech Republic** have continued to offer open support to at-risk Russians while also maintaining the procedure for issuing visas to other categories of Russians in accordance with the general restrictions imposed by the EU. The Lithuanian Seimas[49] established a procedure for thorough verification of Russian citizens for threats to national security, public order, public policy, internal security, public health and international relations of Lithuania, and also suspended the issuance of visas for citizens of the Russian Federation in the general order. However, if Russians have family members who are Lithuanian or EU nationals, the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry continues to issue visas to them. Furthermore, Lithuania issues humanitarian visas to at-risk Russians.

However, in April 2023, members of the Seimas suspended the Lithuanian e-resident status and the acceptance of new applications from citizens of Russia and Belarus. They also imposed restrictions on acquiring visas, short-term and long-term residence permits, as well as limitations on the acquisition and circulation of real estate in Lithuania, purchased by Russian citizens and/or legal entities controlled by Russians. The exception applies only to Russians with a permanent or temporary residence permit, as well as those who inherit real estate.[7]

Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Estonia and the Scandinavian countries take a tough stance. Since March 2022, **Estonia** has completely suspended the issuance of both national visas (Type D) and short-term Schengen visas (Type C) for citizens of the Russian Federation.[50] **Poland**, suspending the issuance of D and C visas[51] for Russians, has a de jure mechanism for granting humanitarian visas to citizens of Russia and Belarus.

On 29 September 2022, the President and Government of **Finland**[52] approved restrictions on the entry of Russian citizens into the country, commencing 30 September 2022, for an indefinite period of time until withdrawal. Russia's mobilisation constitutes a 'threat to the international relations of Finland', according to Art. 6 §1 of the Schengen Code, and hence the granting of short-term Schengen visas (Type C) for at-risk persons and/or those seeking asylum is not subject to approval. Although **Finland** does not issue humanitarian visas to citizens of the Russian Federation, they can apply for asylum on the Finland-Russia border, according to a press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the country's border service.[53] The country is still discussing the feasibility of developing humanitarian programs and/or visas for Russians in need of asylum and international protection.

Due to Russia declaring the personnel of the Dutch consulate persona non grata,[54] **the Netherlands** has not issued short-term Schengen visas (Type C) to Russian citizens since 27 April 2022. The country halted processing of asylum applications from Russians subject to mobilisation,[55] but allowed Russians already present in the Kingdom to remain. At the same time, the period for considering asylum applications from Russian citizens who arrived in the Netherlands before February 2022 has increased to 18–21 months. The Secretary of State for Asylum, Eric van der Burgh, announced in December 2022 that 'the threat of being mobilised in Russia cannot be the legal basis for asylum in the Netherlands'.[56]

7 Article 3(2) of the Law on Imposing Restrictive Measures Regarding the Military Aggression Against Ukraine applies from 1 July 2023 until 2 May 2024. https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35403&p_k=2&p_t=284347&p_kade_id=9

Norway also announced the temporary suspension of the Norwegian-Russian agreement on simplified visa issuance beginning 22 September 2022; however, it allows Russian citizens with valid documents (visa, residence permit) to enter with certain restrictions and accepts visa applications from Russian citizens. Norway, which has received about 300 asylum applications since Russia's mobilisation, will not evaluate these claims until a new procedure for considering asylum applications from Russian citizens is approved.[57]

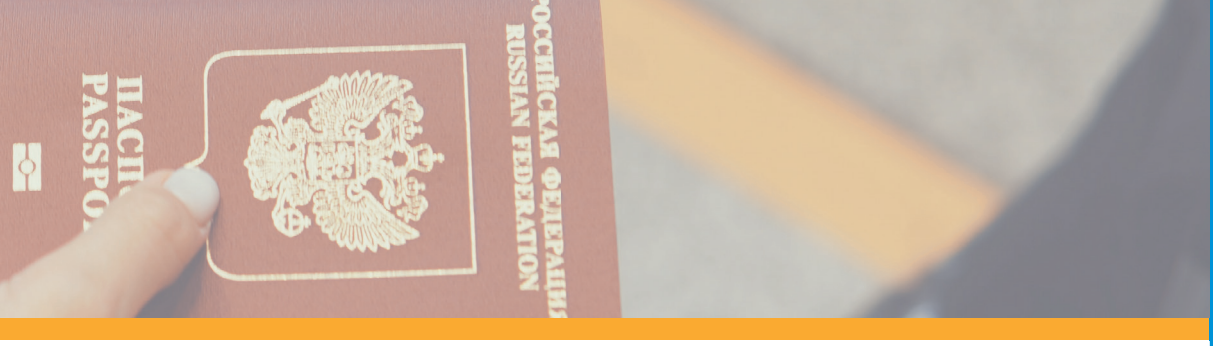
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One should not expect a similar departure of Russians en masse from the country, comparable to the flows of 2022. At the same time, return may become a more viable option for many.

After Russia's adoption of the law on the creation of an electronic register of Russian reservists in April 2023, new conscription rules with the use of electronic summonses, another wave of mobilisation or even if military clashes between Russia and Ukraine intensify, one should not expect a similar departure of Russians ***en masse*** from the country, comparable to the flows of 2022, since the emigration potential of Russians remaining in the country is limited. At the same time, return may become a more viable option for many. As was observed in 2022, Russian emigrants will be returning due to a lack of humanitarian reception programs and support outside their country of origin, as well as the load of personal, social or professional commitments.

Given fewer bureaucratic barriers and the possibility to communicate in Russian, as well as the understanding of political and legal realities, visa-free states of Central Asia and the South Caucasus, primarily Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, remain the main destination for Russian emigration. Along with Türkiye, these countries benefited the most from Russian emigration through the influx of qualified workers and the relocation of income-generating businesses. Throughout the coming year, they will retain their interest in qualified emigrants from Russia or repatriation of Russian citizens of Central Asian or Caucasian ethnic origin. In the near future (anywhere for up to three years) a new inflow of Russians into these countries might shift the ethnic balance of the titular nations and become a cause of social tension. It is unclear to what extent Central Asian and South Caucasus states will be able to capitalise on the gained economic, financial, human resources and emerging benefits. To optimise social processes inside these countries, including support for national labour markets and interaction between local and foreign populations, they may need financial and institutional support from international donors.

In comparison to the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus, EU member states reaped far less from the migration of Russian human capital due to their disparate approaches towards Russians leaving their country. To unify the programs and efforts of humanitarian support for certain categories of Russians within the EU, EU member states need to legally assess the programs for admitting at-risk Russian citizens existing in the Czech Republic, Germany and France. Based on the practice of the EU Court of Justice and the courts of EU member states, it is also necessary to analyse and provide a legal evaluation of the feasibility of granting asylum and humanitarian protection to citizens of the Russian Federation evading mobilisation and unwilling to participate in hostilities in Ukraine. With the tightened visa regime and the suspension of the EU-Russia visa facilitation agreement, it would be important to maintain a flexible visa policy and consider additional ways of legal migration to EU countries for at-risk Russian nationals, as well as certain groups of the Russian population, such as young people, researchers and qualified workers, as well as Russian citizens who have family and/or relatives in the EU, to avoid a new *iron curtain*. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to consider creating additional legal migration pathways for Russian qualified or skilled labour that is of interest to the EU labour market.



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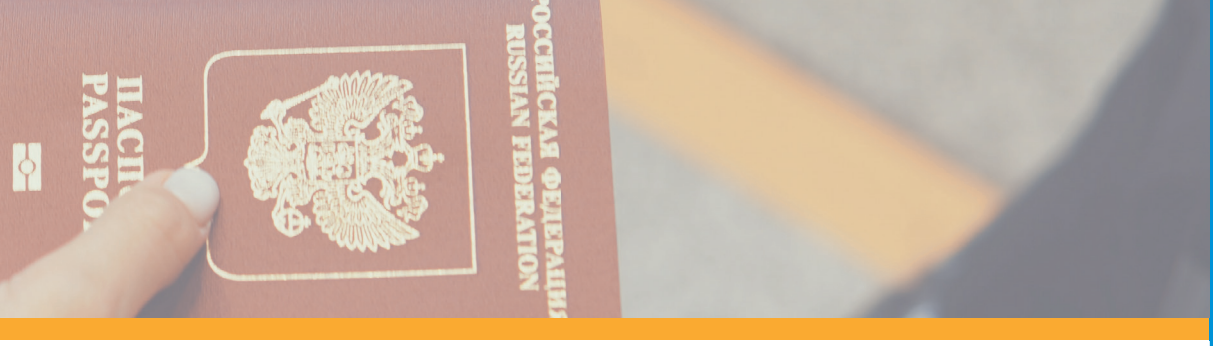

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POLICY BRIEF

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