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New Directions of Labor Migration From Tajikistan: The Case of the UK


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Abstract. Introduction. Tajikistan is one of the few countries in the world whose state budget is largely based on tax revenues from remittances from citizens working abroad. The deterioration of the economic situation in Russia has forced migrants to look for a new direction of labor migration. In particular, the Government of Tajikistan itself is interested in reorienting migrants to a new direction. In 2021, Tajikistan signed an employment agreement with the United Kingdom (UK) and the Republic of Korea to send seasonal migrants. **Goals.** The article aims to identify the prospects and trends in the development of labor emigration from Tajikistan to the UK, as well as the features and channels of seasonal migration from Tajikistan to the UK. **Materials and methods.** In this study, statistical and sociological research methods are used. The statistics includes numbers of seasonal migrants from Tajikistan for a variety of years. A content analysis of interviews with labor migrants to the UK has been conducted. The analytical method includes systematization of the materials of recruitment agencies' websites and bilateral agreements of the Republic of Tajikistan with foreign countries. The data are provided by the Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, the National Statistical Service of Great Britain, World Bank, International Organization for Migration (IOM). Currently, the Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan has information on the unemployment rate in

the country, the economically active population, as well as the number of Tajik migrants until 2021, the World Bank provides data until 2021. Data on the number of seasonal migrants and the structure of labor migration from Tajikistan at the end of 2022 are published in annual or quarterly sections and posted on the official website of the National Statistical Service of the UK. *Results*. The UK, which needs cheap labor for agriculture, after BREXIT was forced to expand the geography of attracting labor. In addition to the traditional region of hiring seasonal workers — Eastern European countries (Poland, Baltic states, Bulgaria), labor resources began to be actively attracted from Central Asian countries, including Tajikistan. The main factor in attracting migrants from Tajikistan to the UK is the shortage of labor in the country's labor market after leaving the EU. The main reasons for the reorientation of Tajik migrants from the Russian labor market to the UK are as follows: economic crises in Russia; tightening of migration policy towards Tajik migrants; the spread of English among the youth of Tajikistan, etc. Migration of low-skilled citizens of Tajikistan began in the second quarter of 2021. The main type of migration from Tajikistan to the UK are seasonal migration. The main channel of emigration from Tajikistan to the UK are public and private recruitment agencies. The main one from the bottom is the state institution — Center for Counseling and Pre-Departure Training of Migrant Workers.

Keywords: labor migration, seasonal migration, Republic of Tajikistan, UK, recruitment agencies, migration service, working conditions, adaptation, Tajik migrants.

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Новые направления трудовой миграции из Таджикистана: на примере Великобритании


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Аннотация. *Введение.* Таджикистан — одна из немногих стран в мире, государственный бюджет которой в значительной степени формируется за счет налоговых поступлений от денежных переводов граждан, работающих за рубежом. Ухудшение экономической ситуации в России вынудило мигрантов искать новое направление трудовой миграции. В частности само правительство Таджикистана заинтересовано в переориентации мигрантов на новое направление. В 2021 г.

Таджикистан подписал трудовое соглашение с Соединенным Королевством (UK) и Республикой Корея об отправке сезонных мигрантов. *Целью* данной статьи — выявить перспективы и тенденции развития трудовой эмиграции из Таджикистана в Великобританию, а также особенности и каналы сезонной миграции из Таджикистана в Великобританию. *Материалы и методы* исследования. В настоящем исследовании использованы статистические и социологические методы исследования. Данные статистики включали численность сезонных мигрантов из Таджикистана за ряд лет. Был проведен контент-анализ интервью с трудовыми мигрантами, имевшими опыт работы в Великобритании. Аналитический метод включал систематизацию материалов сайтов рекрутинговых агентств и двусторонних соглашений Республики Таджикистан с зарубежными странами. Данные предоставлены Агентством по статистике при Президенте Республики Таджикистан, Национальной статистической службой Великобритании, Всемирным банком, Международной организацией по миграции (МОМ). В настоящее время Агентство по статистике при Президенте Республики Таджикистан располагает сведениями об уровне безработицы в стране, экономически активном населении, а также количестве таджикских мигрантов до 2021 г., Всемирный банк предоставляет данные до 2021 г. Данные о численности сезонных мигрантов и структуре трудовой миграции из Таджикистана на конец 2022 г. опубликованы в годовом или поквартальном разрезе и размещены на официальном сайте Национальной статистической службы Великобритании. *Результаты.* Великобритания, нуждающаяся в дешевой рабочей силе для сельского хозяйства, после BREXIT была вынуждена расширить географию привлечения рабочей силы. Помимо традиционного региона найма сезонных работников — стран Восточной Европы (Польша, Прибалтика, Болгария), трудовые ресурсы начали активно привлекаться из стран Центральной Азии, включая Таджикистан. Основным фактором привлечения мигрантов из Таджикистана в Великобританию является нехватка рабочей силы на рынке труда страны после выхода из ЕС. Основными причинами переориентации таджикских мигрантов с российского рынка труда на Великобританию являются: экономические кризисы в России; ужесточение миграционной политики в отношении таджикских мигрантов; распространение английского языка среди молодежи Таджикистана и др. Миграция низкоквалифицированных граждан Таджикистана началась во втором квартале 2021 г. Основными видами миграции из Таджикистана в Великобританию являются сезонная миграция. Основным каналом эмиграции из Таджикистана в Великобританию являются государственные и частные кадровые агентства. Главным снизу является Государственное учреждение «Центр консультирования и предотъездной подготовки трудовых мигрантов перед отъездом».

Ключевые слова: трудовая миграция, сезонная миграция, Республика Таджикистан, Великобритания, рекрутинговые агентства, миграционная служба, условия труда, адаптация, таджикские мигранты

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1. Introduction

Labor migration has become the main source of income and welfare of households for many residents of Tajikistan [Mohapatra 2013: 143]. Labor migration plays a huge role for the country as a whole. Thus, according to the World Bank, 35–45 % of Tajikistan's GDP is formed due to labor migration. About 500–600 thousand citizens of Tajikistan are involved in work abroad, which is 20–25 % of the economically active population of the country [World Development 2022]. The main areas of emigration from Tajikistan in the 2000s were and still are the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan [Yugai 2022: 212]. However, economic and geopolitical crises forced

Tajik citizens to look for new directions to work abroad.

In recent years, the UK has become a popular destination for migration from Central Asian countries in general, as well as from the Republic of Tajikistan in particular. The “discoverers” of this direction of migration were students and highly qualified specialists from Tajikistan. However, recently, migrant workers, including seasonal ones, have become a noticeable contingent among Tajik migrants to the UK.

Recruitment agencies in the UK have begun to actively work with the state structures of the Republic of Tajikistan to attract Tajik workers. Since April 2021, the British compa-

ny “Pro-Force” has been recruiting Tajik workers for UK agricultural enterprises [Pro-Force 2022]. There is a mechanism of organized recruitment of labor in Tajikistan for the agricultural segment of the British labor market, which includes government agencies, recruitment agencies and agricultural companies.

2. Literature review

In the scientific literature, labor migration from Tajikistan to the Russian Federation became mainstream in the early 2000s. The study of new directions of labor migration from Tajikistan to the countries of Europe, Asia and North America begins later with the orientation of migration flows, primarily to Turkey, the Republic of Korea and the Persian Gulf countries in the mid-2010s. K. P. Kurylev, R. M. Kurbanov, A. B. Makenova, A. A. Khotivishvili believe that the scale of various forms of migration from Central Asia to European countries is increasing, including family, economic, educational, and political ones. At the same time, they consider the demographic factor (population growth) in the countries of Central Asia to be the main reason for the growth of migration [Kurylev et al. 2018].

Also, scientists of the Institute for Demographic Research FCTAS RAS are actively studying the reorientation of Tajik labor migrants. S. V. Ryazantsev sees as the main reason for the reorientation of Tajik migrants to new directions (countries) the active policy of governments to attract labor migrants from Central Asia, including Tajikistan, as well as the rigidity of migration policy and growing competition for Tajik workers in the Russian labor market with parties of citizens from the EAEU countries who do not require work permits [Ryazantsev, Rakhmonov 2020].

A. Kh. Rakhmonov, within the framework of his dissertation research and publications devoted to this topic, came to the conclusion that the reorientation of Tajik migrants to European countries begins in the mid-2010s, after the currency crisis in Russia, when the incomes of migrants in dollar terms sharply decreased due to the collapse of the ruble in 2014–2015. In 2022, the military conflict, new sanctions, the departure of foreign companies, mobilization, economic problems in Russia led to a deterio-

ration in the situation of migrant workers, as well as their reorientation to other directions [Rakhmonov 2021b].

In June–August 2019, IOM conducted an online survey among young individuals from Central Asian countries residing in Germany, the UK, the USA, South Africa, Canada to determine the reasons why migrants leave to earn money abroad, called the main factor of emigration — obtaining a high-paying job and improving the socio-economic situation, as well as the presence of clear career prospects.

Yu. Yu. Komlyakova believes that the main channel of emigration from Central Asian countries to Western countries are private recruitment agencies, the so-called assistants of migrants who are engaged in the transportation of people. Their services consist in organizing the migration process, as well as preparing answers to questions at the embassy when interviewing for a visa [Komlyakova 2016]. A. Abdullayeva in her monograph considers student migration as the main channel of labor migration from Central Asian countries to Europe. Migrants from Central Asian countries migrate to European countries as students, after graduation they turn into labor migrants [Abdullayeva 2017].

One of the important factors of the outflow of EU- and EEA-based migrants from the UK, according to researchers D. Syme, M. Moskal and N. Tyrell, is the immigration policy of the UK. After the country leaves the EU, in order to obtain a work visa, all citizens, including EU citizens, must score at least 70 points due to a combination of the following skills: education, salary, knowledge of English, sponsorship from an employer who must have a sponsorship license to hire a foreign employee, etc. [Sime, Moskal, Tyrell 2020]. All these led to the difficulties of obtaining a UK work visa for EU citizens.

Although J. Portes, professor of economics at King's College London, believes in his research that the main reasons for the outflow of European migrants from the UK after the country's exit from the European Union is not the UK's immigration policy, but the drop in the exchange rates of pound sterling, which reduces the relative value of wages in the UK [Portes 2022].

3. History of Tajik migration

After the collapse of the USSR [Shubin 2016: 33], there have been three stages in the history of emigration from Tajikistan:

At the first stage (1991–2003), migration took place in the form of a flow of refugees, which were caused by the civil war [Nazarshoeva 2019: 83]. Tajikistan was mostly left by Russian and Russian-speaking families. By the time of the collapse of the USSR, in 1989, there were 398 thousand Russians in Tajikistan, which was 7,9 % of the population of the republic [Lysenkov 2003: 112]. According to the census, in 2000 the number of Russians in Tajikistan amounted to 68.2 thousand individuals, which was 1,1 % of the total population of the republic [Nikolaeva 2015: 105]. In 1991–2000, about 330 thousand Russians left Tajikistan.

The second stage (2004–2014) was represented by the migration of ethnic Tajiks to the Russian Federation and other CIS countries. The first place among the main reasons for the modern emigration of the indigenous population of Tajikistan, as in many countries, is occupied by economic problems [Ismoilova 2014: 177]. The high level of poverty of a significant part of the population, the acute shortage of jobs at home caused mass labor migration. For 10 years (2004–2014), according to the Demographic Yearbook of Tajikistan, on average, the share of ethnic Tajiks from the total number of migrants traveling abroad from Tajikistan amounted to more than 50 %.

The third stage (from 2014 to the present) is characterized by the diversification of the directions of youth migration [Rakhmonov 2021a: 18]. The reason was the spread of English, German, Turkish and Chinese languages in Tajikistan. After gaining independence, many private universities were opened in the Republic of Tajikistan, state universities also increased the number of faculties and specialties. In recent years, 18 private schools have been opened, of which 10 schools teach in English, 2 in German. Significant factors that influenced the change in the directions of migration of young people from Tajikistan to other countries, primarily to Germany, also became — the currency crisis in the Russian Federation, Western sanctions, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The currency crisis

in the Russian Federation, Western sanctions, and the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine also became significant factors that influenced the change in the directions of migration of young people from Tajikistan.

4. Demographic trends and the situation on labor markets as the basis of labor migration from Tajikistan to the UK

The main reasons for migration from Tajikistan abroad are traditionally considered the low wages, as well as high unemployment in the republic. According to the Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, the unemployment rate in the country in 2021 was only 2,2 % of the economically active population [Government Decree 2020], while the unemployment rate according to the ILO methodology was much higher — 7,7 % [World Development 2022]. An important factor contributing to the diversification of labor migration directions is the high share of young people in the labor market of Tajikistan, including those with new life values. In recent years, cohorts of Tajik youth have been formed, who have received higher education in foreign universities and their branches in Tajikistan, who speak foreign languages, have career plans, seek to travel, are focused on Western values and world socio-cultural trends [Rakhmonov 2022a: 62]. In addition, the geopolitical and economic crises in Eurasia and Russia, as well as the active policy of countries with labor-deficit economies to attract workers from Central Asia, contributed to the reorientation of some young people from Tajikistan to new directions.

Of all European countries, it is the UK that feels an acute shortage of human resources to ensure the development of labor-intensive and at the same time non-prestigious sectors of the economy (agriculture, transport, construction, service sector, utilities) [Portes 2022: 88]. The COVID-19 epidemic significantly increased the shortage of labor resources in the British labor market: in January 2022, half a million workers were missing in the country [Wang et al. 2022: 251]. According to the National Statistical Service of the United Kingdom, from March to May 2022, the number of vacancies reached a new maximum of 1,3 million positions (half a million more than before the pan-

demic) [Office for 2022]. In the first quarter of 2022, for the first time since the beginning of accounting, there were fewer unemployed than vacancies across the country. The labor shortage situation is due to a combination of the pandemic and BREXIT [PM's Commons 2019]. The most affected industry was agriculture, which was in dire need of seasonal workers who traditionally came from the EU during planting and harvesting [Portes, Springford 2023: 22]. The share of temporary (seasonal) workers in 2022 increased to 150 % compared to 2021 (Table 1). There is a personnel shortage in the industry. Workers from other EU countries do not come because they cannot get UK work visas: salaries in this industry are low, and the salary threshold for obtaining visas is high.

The minimum hourly wage in UK agriculture in 2020 was 8,72 pounds of sterling, in

2021 — 8,91 and in 2022 — 9,5 GBP [Wage rates 2022]. In 2020–2022, the average wage of an agricultural worker in the UK was USD 2,287 per month. At the same time, in Tajikistan, the lowest level of wages has remained in the agricultural sector for many years [Highest-paying 2022]. In 2020–2022, the average wage in agriculture in Tajikistan was only USD 66 per month (Fig. 1). Of course, this was an important pushing factor in the migration abroad of Tajiks with experience in agriculture.

According to the National Statistical Service of United Kingdom, as of March 2022, 277 thousand work visas were issued to foreigners, which is 2,5 times more than in 2021. About 66 % of the issued visas in 2022 were received by qualified employees (Table 1).

All these circumstances together open up opportunities for labor migration to the UK for wor-

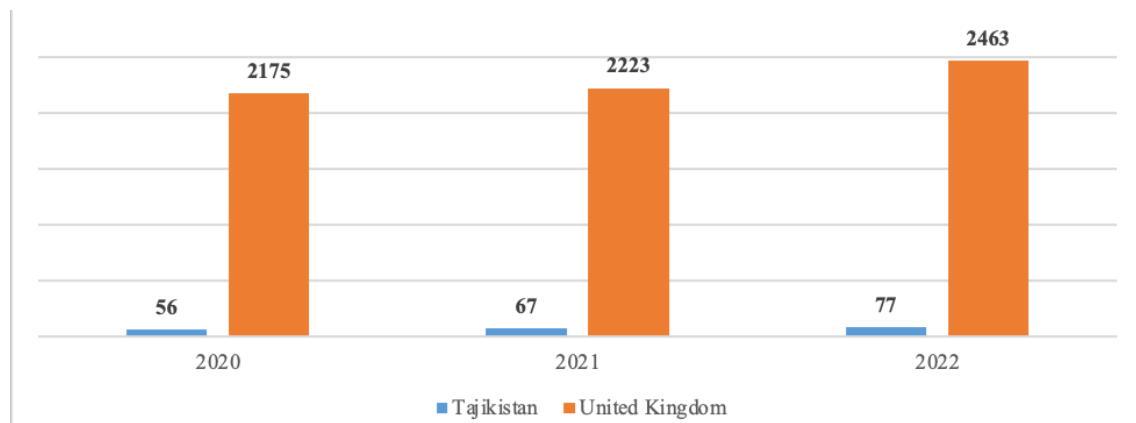


Fig. 1. Average monthly wages in agriculture in Tajikistan and the UK, 2020–2022, USD [Agency on 2021]

[Илл. 1. Средняя заработная плата работников сельского хозяйства в Таджикистане и Великобритании, 2020–2022 гг., долл. США]

Table 1. Numbers of work visas issued to foreign citizens to enter the UK in January–March 2020–2022 [Office for 2022]

[Таблица 1. Количество рабочих виз на въезд в Великобританию, выданных в январе-марте 2020–2022 гг.]

Categories of employees	January–March 2020, thousand units	January–March 2021, thousand units	January–March 2022, thousand units	Visa issuance growth index in 2022 compared to 2020, %	Visa issuance growth index in 2022 compared to 2021, %
Qualified employees	110,0	76,1	182,2	66	139
Seasonal workers	40,3	24,2	60,3	50	150
Other types of workers	29,1	17,1	28,2	3	65
Highly qualified specialists	5,3	3,7	6,5	23	76
Total	185,0	112,0	277,1	50	129

kers from other countries who are willing to work on less attractive terms than Europeans or immigrants from countries that are traditional suppliers of labor to the British labor market [Jafari, Britz 2020: 33]. As a result, Tajikistan has now appeared among the new countries of origin of labor migrants to the UK.

5. Trends of labor migration from Tajikistan to the UK

Initially, labor migration from Tajikistan to the UK was represented exclusively by highly qualified specialists and students. But after leaving the European Union, the UK faced a serious shortage of agricultural workers, as their recruitment was difficult in Eastern European countries [Dorn, Zweimüller 2021: 53]. British farmers said that without foreign labor, fruits and vegetables will rot in the fields. The British government responded by promising to provide up to 40,000 six-month visas to foreign migrant workers this year. Many British farmers have shown interest in hiring people from Central Asian countries, including Tajikistan, for seasonal work.

Migrant workers began to be invited as part of a special program of the Government of the United Kingdom. The scheme for attracting seasonal workers was “launched” in 2019 and extended until 2024 [Najibullah 2022], since British agricultural enterprises and farmers are in serious need of labor for harvesting vegetables and fruits, and other agricultural work. Since 2021, organized temporary labor migration began, when the British company “Pro-Force” began inviting Tajik citizens to engage in seasonal works. Sending Tajik workers to the UK is carried out with the assistance of the Migration Service and the Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment, as well as the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in London.

According to the National Statistical Service of the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Labor and Pensions of United Kingdom issued 1,1 thousand permits for seasonal work to citizens of Tajikistan in 2021. In 2022, the number of labor migrants from Tajikistan in the UK amounted to about 4 thousand people. During 2010–2022, 99 % of the flow of Tajik migrants to the UK were seasonal migrants, as well as 95 % of the total influx of labor migrants in 2021–2022 (Table 2).

Table 2. Numbers of labor migrants from Tajikistan in the UK in 2010–2022, individuals [Office for 2022]

[Таблица 2. Количество таджикских трудовых мигрантов в Великобритании, 2010–2022 г.]

Year	Labor migrants	Seasonal workers
2010	1	2
2012	3	2
2013	7	2
2014	4	2
2015	5	1
2016	5	8
2017	3	5
2018	3	2
2019	6	7
2020	3	4
2021	7	1 079
2022	17	3 944

A significant migration of seasonal workers from Tajikistan to the UK began in the second quarter of 2021 — 115 people. In the second and third quarters of 2021, the flow of seasonal migrants amounted to 376 and 587 people, respectively. In 2022, the scale of seasonal migration of Tajiks to the UK increased in its scale, reaching a peak in the second quarter — 2,039 people (Fig. 2).

6. Ways of recruiting labor migrants from Tajikistan in the UK

The United Kingdom, which is in need of cheap labor for agriculture, after BREXIT [Sargent 2023: 117], was forced to expand the geography of attracting labor. In addition to the traditional region of hiring seasonal workers — the countries of Eastern Europe (Poland, the Baltic, and Bulgaria), labor resources began to be actively attracted from Central Asian countries, including Tajikistan.

The main ways of recruiting workers in Tajikistan to work in the UK are: 1) government agencies of the Republic of Tajikistan (Migration Service, Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment); 2) British recruitment agencies “AGRI-HR” and “Osrodek-HR”; 3) self-employment of migrant workers.

The process of organized recruitment of labor in Tajikistan to work in the UK is structured as follows:

1) The Migration Service of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment of the Republic of Tajiki-

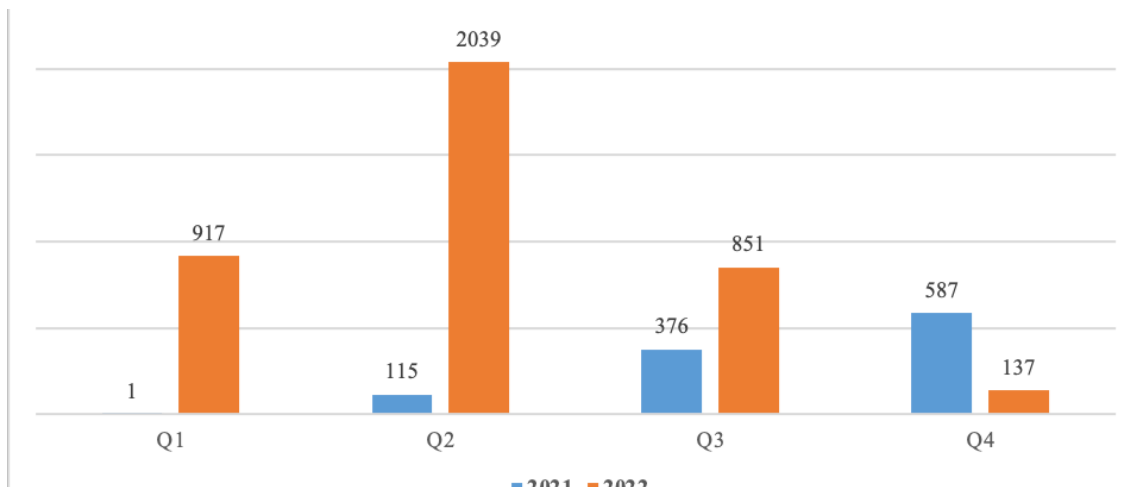


Fig. 2. The number of seasonal workers from Tajikistan in the UK by quarters 2021–2022, people [Office for 2022]

[Илл.2. Количество сезонных таджикских работников в Великобритании, 2021–2022 гг, по кварталам]

stan organize the selection of willing citizens to work at UK agricultural enterprises;

2) through the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in London, lists of applicants are sent to the recruitment agencies “AGRI-HR” and “Osrodek-HR”, “Pro-Force” and “Fruitful-Jobs”, which are engaged in the employment of Tajik workers in the UK;

3) employees of the British recruitment agencies “AGRI-HR” and “Osrodek-HR” conduct interviews with potential workers and select candidates;

4) potential migrants should contact the centers for counseling and training of migrant workers before departure at the Migration Service of the Republic of Tajikistan.

The cost of a trip to the UK for selected migrants ranges from one to one and a half thousand US dollars. An employment contract is concluded between a migrant and a company for six months, after the contract the worker must return to Tajikistan [Shodiev 2022].

Recruitment agencies recruit Tajik personnel mainly for the two largest agricultural companies in the UK — “Pro-Force” and “Fruitful-Jobs”. For example, the British private employment agency “AGRI-HR” works under the Program of seasonal agricultural workers in the UK. Tajik migrant workers learned about the AGRI-HR agency in Moscow, where the company opened a recruitment program from CIS countries to the UK for the company “Fruitful-Jobs”. Selection and employment through

the agency “AGRI-HR” takes up to a month. After the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, AGRI-HR suspended its work in Russia and began recruiting personnel directly in the countries of Central Asia.

From an interview with Sukhrob Ulmasov, a 30-year-old resident of Dushanbe, a labor migrant employed through the recruitment agency “AGRI-HR”: “The program has become available to citizens of countries outside the European Union since 2019. In order not to be deceived, I carefully studied the agency’s data, learned about its activities through other sources on the Internet and then contacted them” [Shodiev 2022].

Despite the Russian language is not required for Tajik workers when they are selected for a job in the UK through recruitment agencies, the interview is more often conducted in Russian, also in the UK all supervisors and foremen speak Russian with migrants from Central Asia [Serebryany 2022].

As the mechanism of organized labor migration to the UK developed, fraudulent schemes began to arise. Some scammers take advantage of the fact that people do not know the basic rules of employment, obtaining a visa, do not speak foreign languages. In this regard, the British company “Fruitful Jobs” urged potential applicants in Central Asia to apply exclusively through the only recruitment agency “AGRI HR”. And the Migration Service of the Republic of Tajikistan asked citizens not to

trust any persons or intermediary enterprises, and if cases of fictitious job offers are detected, they should contact the Migration Service hotline.

On the website of the operator “Concordia” one can find a complete list of recruiting agencies that work with citizens of Tajikistan. In addition to these recruiting agencies, four other licensed recruiting agencies work with Tajik citizens [Agency on 2021].

Labor migrants who have worked for several seasons in the UK exchange contacts with their employer and come for new periods, as a rule, independently, without needing the help of recruiting agencies and the migration service.

It should also be noted that some highly skilled migrants from Tajikistan use the seasonal labor migration channel to get to the UK and then find a job in their specialty.

7. Working conditions and adaptation of Tajik labor migrants in the UK

Tajik migrants are assisted in the adaptation of migrants to the British labor market by centers for counseling and training of migrant workers before departure in Tajikistan, where potential migrants undergo pre-departure language and adaptation training courses.

The emerging social networks of Tajik migrants in the UK are of great importance in successful adaptation. Some migrants, while in the UK, actively use social Internet networks, talk about living conditions, work, expectations, adaptation.

According to Sukhrob Ulmasov, a Tajik migrant working in the UK: “*The best option is when you go to England in a group, for example, of four people, preferably close acquaintances. There you will create your own mini-team, work together, live in a common room, support each other. This is very important*” [Serebryany 2022].

The main working conditions of Tajik migrants in the UK: 1) 40-hour working week; 2) weekly payments; 3) a minimum wage in accordance with the UK law is GBP 8,91 per hour (ca. TJS 120); 4) working day begins at 6.00 AM, a short break every two or three hours of work, an hour for lunch, working day ends at 3.00 or 4.00 PM; 5) in addition to

weekends, migrants also have a short vacation, which can be taken off in parts or in whole to drive around the country and see the cities. For six months of work, the vacation is 14 days. If the migrants did not spend it, monetary compensation is paid upon dismissal; 6) despite the fact that knowledge of English is not required for migrants, farmers conduct English lessons twice a week at the expense of the employer [Shodiev 2022].

From an interview with Karimjon Sukhailov, a resident of Tursunzade, who also went to the UK for seasonal migration: “*I worked in a rural area of Kent, located in the southeastern part of England. It is also called the “garden of England” because of the abundance of growing fruits, vegetables and flowers. We were picking strawberries, raspberries, then picking fruit, and when the harvesting was over and it got cold, we went to the neighboring district, where we worked at a factory sorting and packing vegetables and fruits*” [Shodiev 2022].

As a rule, payment for accommodation (about GBP 60 per week) is calculated from the salary of seasonal workers. Usually workers live near the place of work. British farmers and companies provide three types of housing: 1) “caravans” — trailers in which four people live; 2) “singlerums” — rooms for single living; 3) “boxes” — rooms for couples. The farmers also have places for recreation, outdoor sports, a gym and a small village shop.

According to a Tajik migrant, Karimjon Sukhailov: “*Conditions here in England are, of course, much better than in Russia. As for the cabins, we lived for two people in a room. There is a kitchen and showers, a laundry room. The house is equipped with the necessary furniture, interior items and kitchen utensils. There is a free laundry service. For food, on average, about 35–40 pounds were spent per person for a week. Usually they cooked the food themselves, after work, with enough to last for lunch the next day. Once a week, on weekends we rested or played football, tennis, went to the nearby city. But they didn’t spend much*” [Fazliddin, Yusufi 2023].

Migrants from various CIS countries, as a rule, communicate with each other in Russian, and with immigrants from Eastern European countries — in English.

From an interview with a Tajik migrant, Sukhrob Ulmasov: *“If you speak English a little and can figure out the contract, then this is, of course, good. As it turned out, there are a lot of experienced workers from Poland, Moldova, and Ukraine. They explained to us the working conditions, translated the words of the bosses. However, there is not much to say here. I found out the conditions, clarified what was unclear, and go to work. And the hard workers won't stay here without money”* [Shodiev 2022].

Citizens of Tajikistan mostly migrate to the UK in an organized manner, which means there are no such violations as non-payment of wages by the employer, nor there are violations of the rights of foreign citizens, as compared to the Russian Federation.

From an interview with a migrant who worked for five years in private construction firms in Russia and came to work in the UK: *“In Russia I earned an average of about USD 500 a month, in Britain over the last month I earned about one and a half thousand dollars. In Russia, there is never a guarantee that the employer will pay the money. There is lawlessness there, and in Britain I feel protected by the law”* [Najibullah 2022].

Tajik migrant workers feel more comfortable and safe in the UK, despite the language barrier, do not experience discrimination based on ethnicity and race, law enforcement agencies and employers.

From an interview with a 25-year-old Tajik migrant who came to the UK in May 2022: *“I have never felt safe in Russia, and I have been subjected to racial discrimination and harassment by both employers and law enforcement officers”* [Najibullah 2022].

From an interview with Suhrob Ulmasov, who worked in Wales: *“We can say that we are pioneers in this direction among the Tajiks, as large groups, as far as I know, have not yet left here for agricultural work in Britain. I must say right away — the locals are friendly to visiting workers there. This is already a big plus”* [Karaev 2022].

8. UK migration policy on seasonal migrants from Tajikistan

Before the UK left the EU [Dorn, Zweimüller 2021: 57], the flow of seasonal mi-

grants from Central Asian countries, including Tajikistan, was regulated on the basis of common European legislation. On February 26, 2014, the European Union adopted a law establishing conditions for citizens of non-EU countries wishing to work in its member states for a short period of time as seasonal workers, often in agriculture and tourism. The Law protected the rights of migrant workers from exploitation during employment [Seasonal workers 2014].

After Brexit, the UK's policy towards seasonal workers has significantly changed. There is a maximum stay of seasonal workers from five to nine months during any twelve-month period. Once in the UK, foreign workers have the right to extend their employment contract or change employers, provided that they meet the conditions of entry and have no grounds for refusal. Within the maximum allowed period of stay, the authorities may allow employees to renew their contract with the same employer more than once, as well as conclude contracts with more than one employer. In order to attract more seasonal workers to agriculture, since October 2022, the UK government has raised wages from the minimum rate to the level of the rate of skilled workers — GBP 10.10 (USD 12.20) for each hour of work [Shodiev 2022].

Seasonal migrants from Tajikistan have equal rights with citizens of the host country in terms of employment conditions (minimum working age), working conditions (payment, working hours, holidays, conditions of dismissal), access to health care, compliance with safety regulations. Equal rights also apply to basic types of social security (sickness, disability, old age benefits), vocational training, seasonal work consultations offered by employment agencies, and other public services (with the exception of public housing) [Employment as 2014].

9. The place of United Kingdom in the process of bilateral cooperation of the Republic of Tajikistan with foreign countries in the field of labor migration

In order to develop international relations in the field of labor migration and protect the rights of migrant workers abroad, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan signed 30 international documents with 12 countries, including 10 intergovernmental agreements and

20 bilateral interdepartmental documents [Toiri 2023].

The Republic of Tajikistan has a bilateral agreement in the field of labor migration with such countries as the Russian Federation, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Poland, Qatar, Republic of Uzbekistan, the UAE, Republic of Türkiye, Republic of Korea, and the Kyrgyz Republic.

To redirect the flow of Tajik labor migrants, the Agency for Employment Abroad was established under the Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment of the Republic of Tajikistan. The Agency has started its work to organize recruitment and dispatch of migrant workers to Poland and Republic of Türkiye; there is also an agreement with Romania. Many private agencies that lost their income and went bankrupt due to border closures during the pandemic could not send migrant workers. Currently, many private employment agencies have shifted their focus to exporting labor resources to Europe, Canada and the USA.

As practice shows, the system of organized employment abroad has significant advantages in terms of protection of rights and access to medical services if it is well regulated and complies with international standards. When migrant workers arrive in the recipient country, the responsibility for accommodation, access to medical services, housing conditions, work permits, as well as sanitary standards rests on employers. Employers must also ensure the organized departure of migrant workers from their country of residence after the expiration of the contract.

The practical organization of the flow of migrant workers from Tajikistan to the UK is based on agreements (contracts) between government agencies of Tajikistan and British recruitment companies. For example, in 2021, the Center for Pre-Departure Counseling and Training of Migrant Workers at the Migration Service of the Republic of Tajikistan signed a cooperation agreement with the British recruiting company “Pro-Force”.

On March 28–29, 2023, 23 documents were signed between the Republic of Tajikistan and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland within the framework of the Investment Forum in London [London hosted 2023]. The Forum was attended by more than

250 executives, representatives of ministries and departments, businessmen and investors, CEOs and representatives of companies and corporations. The purpose of the Forum was to strengthen and develop economic and investment cooperation through a dialogue between businessmen and investors.

The scale of labor migration from Tajikistan to the UK is gradually increasing, but so far they are not very large. The main constraining reasons are the lack of the necessary qualifications and knowledge of the English language.

10. Conclusion

The main reasons for migration from Tajikistan abroad are traditionally considered the low wages, as well as high unemployment in the republic. Labor migrants from Tajikistan mainly migrated to Russia and Kazakhstan [Rakhmonov 2022b: 125], but gradually European countries, including the UK, are gaining popularity among Tajik migrants. The interest of British employers in Tajik migrants began to grow after Brexit, the consequences of which were an increasing shortage of labor in agriculture.

Initially, labor migration from Tajikistan to the UK was represented exclusively by highly qualified specialists and students. But the worsening economic situation in Russia and the shortage of workers in the UK labor market have opened the way for low-skilled Tajik migrants to this country. The main channels of emigration from Tajikistan to the UK were organized migration (through the Migration Service of Tajikistan, recruitment agencies) and independent channels.

The main activity of Tajik migrant workers in the UK is agricultural work. Despite the short period of employment — up to six months, it is the UK that is becoming the new area of labor emigration from Tajikistan. However, it is too early to talk about the complete reorientation of migrants from the Russian labor market to a new direction of labor emigration, but economic difficulties in the Russian economy, the rigidity of the Russian migration policy, the decline in wages in the Russian labor market, as well as the growing demand for labor in the British labor market contribute to the reorientation of part of the flow of labor migrants from Tajikistan to the UK.

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