

Labor migration in the near-border region of Russia: analysis and forecasting

Socio-economic development of a territory is closely connected with availability of labor forces. In case of their deficiency a phenomenon of labor migration appears – population flow with the aim of getting employed. The distinctive importance of labor migration is felt at Far Eastern Federal District (FEFD) of the Russian Federation (the RF) during realizing of capital-intensive projects for developing of mineral deposits. Near-border position of southern Far East regions of the RF causes dynamical development of the international labor migration.

The Jewish Autonomous region (the JAR), a sub-federal unit of FEFD, is considered as an example of a near-border territory with intensive labor migration. The surface of the JAR can be compared with a small European country (36.300 sq. km are considered.).

For a long time the Far East has supplied the migrants into the central regions of Russia. 11 300 migrants left the Far East in 1989-1990, i.e. the value of migration became negative in formation of district population [1] within these years. By the present time the migratory decrease still remains in the district, it comprised 19 200 people in 2008 [2].

However opposite tendencies are registered in foreign labor dynamics in the district. The number of foreign citizens, officially working at enterprises of FEFD, has increased to 3.9 times from 2002 till 2008, having reached more than 174 000 people by the beginning of 2009. The share of foreign workers in the district comprised 7.2% from their total number in Russia. We shall emphasize, that FEFD population share comprised only 4.6% from the total number of RF population as of the beginning of 2009.

A distribution of foreign labor migrants within sub-federal units of FEFD in 2002 and 2008 (Fig. 1) reflects a priority of southern sub-federal units of the district. However we shall point out a considerable growth of the corresponding index in the Sakhalin area (20 000 people more or 12 % more), which is caused by the realization of investment projects in the district, meaning the involvement of foreign workers.

On the whole almost 60 % from the total number of labor migrants of the district are presented in 4 southern sub-federal units of FEFD in 2008 (Khabarovsk Territory, Primorsk Territory, the Amur Region and the Jewish Autonomous Region).

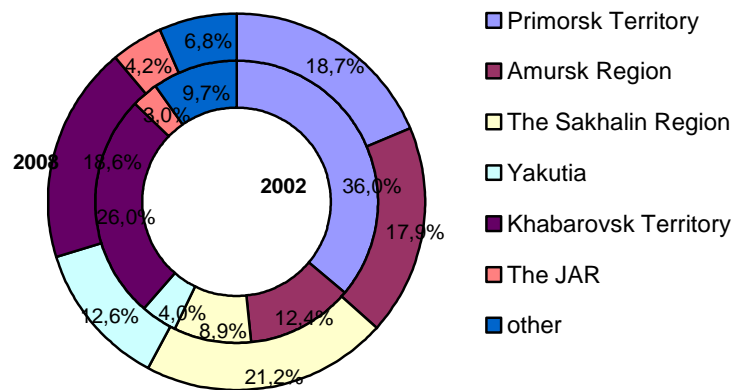


Fig. 1 – Distribution of foreign labor in sub-federal units of FEFD, %

On the whole, in 2007 foreign workers arrived to the district mainly from China - about 40 % from the total number of foreign labor, from Korea - 15 % and from the CIS countries - 28 % [3]. The maximum share of Chinese citizens from the total number of foreign labor is registered in the considered southern regions of FEFD: the JAR and the Amur region in 2008 (91.4 % and 72.4 %, accordingly). We shall point out, that this index constantly exceeded 90 % in the JAR within the last ten years. Active growth of the Chinese citizens share in the total number of foreign labor occurs in the Amur region since 2002 (37.2 %) and remains till present time. The share of foreign labor in the total number of the employed comprised 8.5 % in the JAR in 2008 (including the Chinese labor – 8.2 %), in the Amur region – 7.5 % (including the Chinese labor – 5.5 %).

Thus, the JAR has a unique, in comparison with other sub-federal units of FEFD's south, geographical structure of an involved foreign labor. The revealed specific is considered to be especially critical and partly problematical due to region near-border location, and also current political recommendations, consisting in "...attraction of labor force, but not a simple attraction, but attraction exactly to those industries and to those territories, where they are mostly required"[4].

The JAR, being a problematic region, is characterized by a rather low standard of living in comparison with adjacent sub-federal units of FEFD. Remoteness from the economic centre of Russia, near-border position of the JAR have caused the specific of its labor market formation and migratory processes.

It is possible to identify two stages within the period from 1993 till 2008 from the point of view of migratory flows' prevailing direction in the region: international (general dynamics of migration in the region is caused by balance of the international migration) and inter-regional (a dominating direction of migratory flows - inter-regional, inside the country) [5].

On the whole, the mechanical decline in population comprised 14 000 people from 1993 till 2008, including international migration - almost 12 000 people.

An issue of foreign labor attraction and employment becomes actual in the result of the developed tendencies, expressed in the population outflow from the region.

The number of foreign workers, involved in JAR economy, has increased to 15 times within 1999-2008, which comprised 7404 people in 2008. The indisputable leader among the labor donor countries in the JAR is China: in 1999 the share of the Chinese workers comprised 94.3 % from the total number of the involved foreigners, in 2008 – 91.4 % (Fig. 2).

Proceeding from the designated feature of migratory processes in the JAR, we raised an issue about maximum permissible number of foreign labor on its territory. The thresholds of foreign

workers share in a number of the employed, economically active people and in the total number of population in the JAR were calculated within the context of this research.

Considering the possibilities of mixed marriages, the threshold of «assimilation» safety is calculated for the near-border territory, which equals to 3.5 % from the number of the employed or 1 % from the total number of region population. In case of foreign labor temporary injections necessity (not more than 10 years), this threshold can comprise 9 % from the number of the employed taking into account the corresponding restrictions in respect of immigrants.

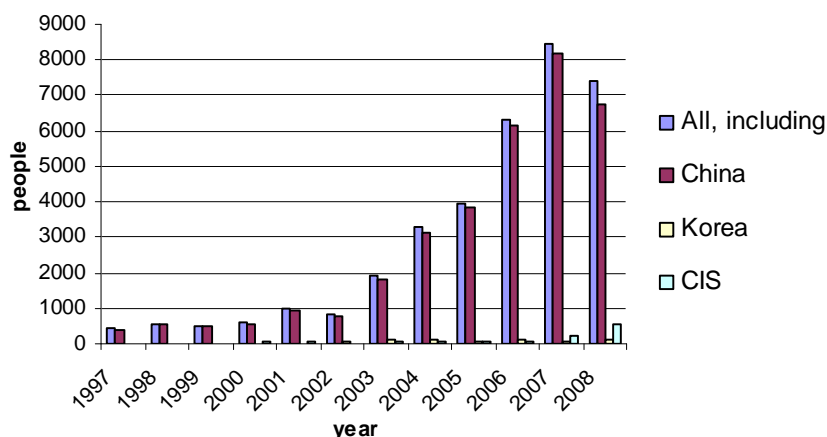


Fig. 2 – Number of foreign citizens employed in the JAR, people

According to the received forecast (Fig. 3), it is unsafe for the JAR to employ the big number of citizens from the People’s Republic of China (more than 8000-9000 people). An average variant of the forecast is considered to be admissible within 10 years (2000-8000 people) and the preferable variant is the strict restriction of the Chinese labor number (up to 2000 people).

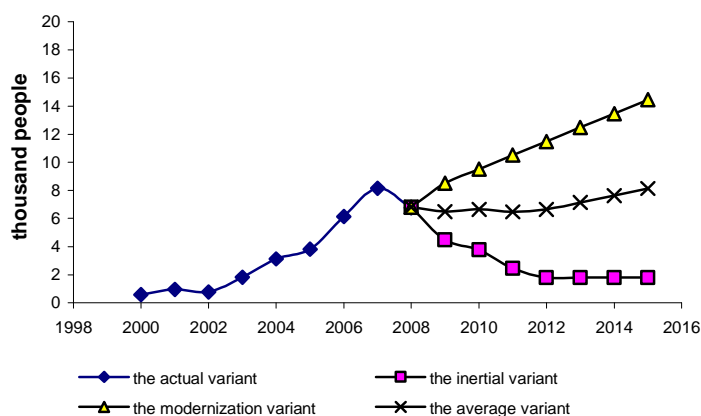


Fig. 3 – The actual and forecast dynamics of Chinese workers number in the JAR

The results of this research can be used for the analysis and forecast of labor migration dynamics and its influence on socio-economic development of any territory subject to significant migratory interactions.

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