

Cultural Adaptation of Migrants in Russia in the Context of European Migrant Crisis

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Nowadays a lot of European countries face complicated times due to the mass refugee flow. Such immigration is followed by a number of significant problems, mainly by the problem of the cultural adaptation of Muslims with their other views, traditions and customs in the host society. Thus, we would like to introduce the experience of the implementation of interethnic relations improvement policy in Russia, which can be interesting to Europe.

Russia is a multinational country with about 200 ethnic groups¹.

¹[Volumes of the official publication of 2010 Russian Census results] ; Volume 4. Ethnic Composition and Local Languages, Nationality/2010 Russian Census. – URL : http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm (Accessed 12 April 2016)

Our multinational country has been developed due to a number of factors (large territory populated with different ethnic groups; role of the state, which unites the multinational society etc.), that have formed the Russian cultural archetype with such important features as:

- prevalence of the spiritual over the material,
- common spiritual values and collectivism,
- desire for justice and truth,
- kindness and hospitality,
- responsiveness, consideration, sympathy,
- forgiveness,
- readiness to help,
- frankness.

All these factors provided quite a favourable environment for the coexistence of different cultures and religions, and the ethnic factor has become one of the important ones in social processes management as well as in the spheres of conflicts prevention and regulation.

The Russian state, which was historically formed by a number of ethnic groups, has a certain advantage due to the accumulation of experience of dealing with such problems. What kind of experience is it then?

First, this is the work in the state national policy regulations sphere (the slide presents the basic documents of the state national policy of the Russian Federation):

- State National Policy Concept of the Russian Federation,
- Law On *the Languages of Ethnic Groups of the Russian Federation*
- Federal Law On *National Cultural Autonomy*,
- Federal Law On *Guarantees of Rights of the Native Born Small Ethnic Minorities of the Russian Federation*.

In the 2000s there were such documents adopted as:

- Federal Target Programme *Consolidation of the Russian Nation Unity and Ethnocultural Development of Russian Ethnic Groups (2014-2020)*
- *Strategy for Countering Extremism in the Russian Federation until 2025*
- *Strategies for State National Policy of the Russian Federation until 2025.*

Harmonization of interethnic relations is one the priority areas in the work of both federal and regional state bodies.

As for the federal level, this area is, first of all, under the control of the Council for Interethnic Relations under the President of Russia, the chairman of which is the President Vladimir Putin. The council is a Presidential consultative and advisory body. Its main responsibility is to ensure cooperation between the federal and regional state bodies, local governments, non-governmental organizations, academic and other organisations on issues of interethnic relations with regard to the state national policy implementation.

As for the regional level, the city of Voronezh and Voronezh region can be seen as a good example of harmonization of interethnic relations.

According to the Russian Census Bureau (2010), population of Russia consists of 178 ethnic groups, including 89 with the number of representatives - 15.

Schedule 1: Population data

Total population	2,335,380	100,00%
Nationality	Number	% from the total population
Русские	2,124,587	90,97%
Украинцы	43,054	1,84%
Армяне	10,369	0,44%
Цыгане	5,153	0,22%
Азербайджанцы	5,085	0,22%
Турки	4,210	0,18%
Татары	3,340	0,14%
Белорусы	3,261	0,14%

Молдаване	2,273	0,10%
Узбеки	1,871	0,08%
Таджики	1,571	0,07%
Грузины	1,488	0,06%

It should be mentioned that in the course of the migration process, the number of representatives from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Moldova has increased significantly (2 times, 1.9, and 1.6 respectively).

It should also be pointed out that migration used to be a resettlement in order to stay permanently in a new place, but now it is mostly a temporary stay in order to earn money on the territory of a particular subject of the Russian Federation. Such change in migration motives results in the reluctance of migrants to adapt to a new sociocultural environment.

However, despite this, Voronezh region can be estimated as an area of moderate interethnic tensions. It should be noted that the most of the conflicts in Voronezh occur spontaneously, they are not planned and they arise only under provocation by one of the parties.

Voronezh region has become the “pilot” one in creating the regional system of interethnic relations monitoring. Centre of Monitoring the Situation in the Interethnic Relations Sphere was established as a part of these project under the Voronezh Region Government².

A great deal of work which concerns interethnic and interfaith relations as well as interethnic conflicts prevention is being done by the National Chamber under the Governor of the Voronezh region, Regional Civic Chamber and Civic Chamber of the City District, City Council of interethnic and interfaith relations as well as the national non-governmental organizations (nowadays there are 43 such organizations in the region). There are meetings of the heads of ethno-national

²Voronezh Region Has Become the Best in the Interethnic Relations Monitoring Sphere <http://www.infovoronezh.ru/News/Voronejskaya-oblast-stala-luchshey-v-sfere-monitoringa-mejnatsionalnyih-otnosheniy-27550.html> (accessed 21 May 2015)

diasporas with law enforcement authorities and migration service representatives, which are held as a part of the National Chamber activities.

Russia has always been a multireligious country, and religious contradictions were not rare even within one ethnic group, which had two different religions (*for instance, the Ossetes and Tatars*). Atheistic ideology of the Soviet Union partially softened those contradictions. However, its collapse led to the intensification of migration flows between the former union republics, so cultural and religious differences arose again. As a result of the migration, a lot of regions became not only multi-ethnic, but also multireligious.

Intercultural contradictions, which arise in the process of other ethnic groups integration with a new society, are often based on the interfaith contradictions that are also the expression of various attitudes to values and norms. Thus, it is important to increase the role of the state in the interfaith relations regulation.

It should be noted that in spite of the differences and peculiarities of religious doctrines they are based on such general moral values as respect for the elder, clemency, justice, loyalty, which means that there is a basis for a dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

In 2007, the Centre for Interethnic Relations Development was established. In 2005, an interfaith council under the Voronezh Region Duma was established. It united the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, organizations of evangelical Christian Baptists over Voronezh region, the representatives of Muslim republics, the chief rabbi of Voronezh and Voronezh region and others.

Apart from the participation in the cultural life of the city, the representatives of the ethnic communities and diasporas take an active part in the preservation and development of their own culture. For example, Armenian community has its own school and youth centre, where the Armenian language is taught, as well as Armenian newspaper. Jewish community is represented by the charity centre “Hesed-Nehama”, Jewish religious community “VERO” as well as youth centre. Korean community holds the events on teaching the Korean language and culture.

The main goals of the Tatar diaspora on the territory of the Voronezh region are: preservation and development of traditions, culture, language of the tatar people in the Russian-language environment; investigation of the origins of the Tatar community in the territory of the Voronezh region as well as documenting its history; cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations of the region on the questions specific to the life of the Tatar community.

The culture of the region also helps the process of integration of the representatives of different ethnic groups. Every year in Voronezh there are the Days of Culture of Ethnic Communities; ethnic diasporas participate in such festivals as the City's Day and the National Unity Day; religious festivals are held as well. It is very important that the representatives of other religions are ready to make some changes in their traditional rites, if they are not typical for the local community.

Special attention is paid to develop interethnic and interfaith tolerance among young people. National public organizations of Voronezh region take an active part in the work with the young people who arrive in Voronezh to work or study: such organizations provide any help in adaptation as well as work to develop preventive measures against interethnic conflicts in the student environment.

The experience of students interaction and coexistence in the institutes of higher education is also important. There are 1000 foreign students studying in Voronezh State University every year, which means that every department has foreign students who are present in lecture rooms along with the Russian students.

The list of activities aimed at cultural integration of international students is extensive. During 2015 the Institute of International Education of VSU carried out the following events:

- 14th city international song and dance festival in conjunction with the Department of Culture of the City administration;
- 11th international festival "Cuisines of the world" with the participation of 24 teams from 21 countries;

- Visits of the city's educational institutions by the international students as well as their participation in the schools' cultural events;
- Cultural event dedicated to the Day of Africa;
- International students' national holidays as well as international student nights;
- Regular meetings of the leaders of international students' VSU organizations.

For example, in May 2016 Voronezh State University hosted a round-table talk "Current problems of interethnic and interfaith dialogue among young people". The main purpose of the roundtable was to create a new format for communication and solving the problems that might occur during the process of adaptation of the international students. Heads of local organizations, international students of the top Voronezh universities, Muslim religious leaders, among many, participated in the meeting.

In the course of the meeting, participants outlined the historical roots of the so-called "Islamic factor", discussed the problems of the international students, and emphasized the importance of personal responsibility of each representative in the course of preservation of stability and the development of tolerance in the society regardless race and religion. As a result, it was decided to keep the existing format of communication and attract a wider range of the region's students.

Also, two months ago, in May 2016, the first meeting of the VSU Russian cultural center, which has also become a platform for communication between representatives of ethnic diasporas, representatives of different confessions, leaders of national cultural autonomies, as well as professors and students of the Voronezh State University.

It is very important to create a friendly and tolerant atmosphere among the international students, involve them not only in the educational and research work together with Russian students, but also promote their communication outside

classroom. And this aspect represents one of the main directions of the VSU international department.

Group activities for international teams, festivals, competitions for first-year students, creative competitions, conferences and round-table talks as well as other events held in VSU - this is the good model of tolerance, which will follow them in their personal life and career.

To sum up, there are several factors, which increase the probability of the successful interculturalization of other cultures and ethnic groups representatives in their host society. These are:

- migration and national policy on the state and regional levels, which gives an opportunity to preserve and develop their own culture;
- cooperation between the representatives of ethno-national communities and diasporas with the governmental bodies to harmonize interethnic relations and promote respect for other ethnic groups representatives;
- active educational work with the young people (including the one within the communities) to develop tolerance and respect for the other cultures and religions.

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