

## MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

**Tatiana Kastouéva-Jean, Research Fellow and Director of the Russia/NIS Center of Ifri**

I have a specific question about migrants. Moldova received many people from Ukraine especially and Kazakhstan and Georgia from Russia after the announcement of the so called partial mobilization. How did you manage this enormous flow of migrants? How can they be integrated? Do you think they will stay? Will they leave? Are you a country of transit for these migrants or a country where they can stay for a longer time? Can I start with Mr. Darsalia?

**Lasha Darsalia, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia**

Thank you very much. First of all, I want to talk about the Ukrainian refugees and then from other countries. I just want to say that Georgia is strongly supporting Ukraine generally, but one of the dimensions of that is the help being given by the government of Georgia to the Ukrainian refugees who are in Georgia. It is several tens of thousands, which is actually a small amount, and there are different programs to support them, including not only physically supporting them, but, for example, several Georgian schools are operating in Ukrainian now for the children who are from Ukraine. However, the major thing I want to say is that a lot of Ukrainians, especially in the beginning of the war, who were in Russia and who could not go back to Ukraine came to Georgia, and we are of course continuing this support.

Regarding the people from Russia or other countries, there are several things which are important to mention. First of all, it is important to understand that citizens of Russia are one thing, but we have to divide them into different groups. You know that Russia has a significant Georgian Diaspora. It is around 800,000 according to the different figures, and yet Georgia is just, for comparison, 3.7 million. We are talking about the people who lived in the 1990s. I am not talking about these traditional Diasporas from the different centuries. A lot of them who are coming are, therefore, ethnic Georgians, who still have links to Georgia. This is one group. The other group is basically people who are coming from the other neighboring countries of Georgia, so ethnic Armenians, ethnic Azerbaijanis and so on. There is a significant part who are fleeing the regime on the ground and there are others who are using Georgia for transit. Two thirds of the people who have come into Georgia leave within two or three weeks. We understand that this can present some risk, but at this moment it was more important to have a discussion on how Georgia had to deal with this issue.

**Tatiana Kastouéva-Jean**

Thank you, Deputy Minister Darsalia. Deputy Minister Vassilenko?

**Roman Vassilenko, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan**

When Russian citizens come to Kazakhstan, they come into a country where Russian is also an official language, prescribed so in the Constitution, along with the Kazakh language, which is the state language. That is one reason they do not face any challenge in terms of communicating. Secondly, out of the 19 million people in Kazakhstan 3.5 million are ethnic Russians, so there is another reason why the influx of, so far, about 100,000 ethnic Russians to Kazakhstan has not been that dramatic. Initially, in September especially, when this partial draft was called, we had about 400,000 come into Kazakhstan, but for now we believe about 100,000 remain. A lot of these people have brought their work with them. They are IT specialists. They work online and through the years of the pandemic learned that it is possible to work remotely, so that is what they do. However, not all of them are IT specialists, so there are other professions, and they seek jobs, and that creates some pressure on the labor market, but it is not huge.

What I think is also important to underline is that these people, when they come to Kazakhstan, they also get immersed in our own culture of living in a very diverse, ethnically and religiously, society that has more than 100 ethnic groups and 17 religions. I think it is quite helpful for them to see with their own eyes what life is like in Kazakhstan.

**Tatiana Kastouéva-Jean**

Thank you very much. Olga, what about Moldova? I think you are a small country, but in terms of the percentage of migrants it was a huge part, especially just after the beginning of the war in Ukraine.

**Olga Rosca, Chief of staff of the Deputy Prime-Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Moldova**

Indeed. Since the onset of the war, Moldova was called a small country with a big heart after thousands of refugees have come to Moldova. Since the beginning of the war, almost 700,000 Ukrainian refugees have crossed our borders. At the peak, those who stayed represented about 4% of our population. Currently, the number has stabilized at around 80,000. Some people have moved on to the European Union. Some people have returned to Ukraine once the Russian Army left Kyiv. This has put a lot of strain on our municipal services, on our healthcare, on our education, on our electricity consumption, for that matter, and obviously the border management.

**Tatiana Kastouéva-Jean**

Thank you.