

The impact of migration on the sending country is usually analysed in economic terms. However, transnational transmittances may also have very different character: migration boosts exchange of knowledge and experience, ideas, norms, values, and patterns of behaviour. Thus, we can speak of cultural, social and even political remittances.

Analysis of political remittances is usually limited to the effects of transnational political participation of migrants in the narrow understanding – voting in home country elections, supporting home country political parties. However, in limited democracies such forms of political participation often are ineffective, while the broadly understood civil society – non-governmental organisations, independent media, artistic groups contesting the political reality – are of considerable significance. As a result of repressions from the authorities, which intensified after the Bolotnaya Square protests and the annexation of the Crimea, from 2010 many Russians left their country due to limited possibility to continue their activities and in fear of persecution. Many of them have found a new home in EU member-states, in particular in Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, the UK, Finland and Spain (Sergeeva, 2015). Preliminary research demonstrates that many of them continue their socio-political activities in the host countries (e.g. For Free Russian association, in Warsaw, transnational Free Russia Forum in March 2016 in Vilnius). The question is whether and in what form recent Russian immigrants with experience in civic and political participation in home country continue their activities upon emigration? How migration context shapes forms and strategies of civic participation and political activism? Can we speak about transnational political remittances in this case? What is the role of transnational social networks and of characteristics of the host country (associations legislation, migration regimes, presence of settled diaspora)?

Hypotheses:

- 1) Migration context may both mobilise and inhibit civic participation and political activism of former activists leaving homeland on political grounds. Forms, strategies and policy areas and target audiences change as a result of migration.
- 2) The destination country characteristics, in particular the civic opportunity structure, the presence of settled Russian diaspora, migration and migrant policies shape strategies, forms and policy areas of transnational civic participation and political activism.
- 3) The character of social networks shapes strategies, forms and policy areas of transnational civic participation and political activism. Transnational value-based social networks encourage civic and political mobilisation of immigrants and contribute to transnational political remittances flows.
- 4) Political transfers, resulting from transnational civic participation and political activism of migrants contribute to the diffusion of democracy and European norms and values both directly, and in the form of reverse transfers, by shaping the political debate on Russia in the receiving country.

To check these hypotheses we will first have an online survey targeting recent migrants from Russia to EU states self-identifying as ‘political emigrants’ and analysis of Russian internet resources related to the most recent wave of migration from Russia to the selected EU countries (NGO web-sites, internet portals, blogs, Facebook groups) and analysis of civic and political initiatives and activities undertaken by Russian migrants to EU states after 2010. The main method will be in-depth interviews with immigrants from Russia who were engaged in different forms of civic participation and political activism in their home country and continue their engagement in the host country, albeit in a different form and selected members of their social networks: opinion-makers from host countries and Russia.

The research results will contribute to the understanding of the different forms of transnational transfers, including political remittances. It will also contribute to the research on non-parliamentary forms of political participation and the role of the civil society in weak democracies. Moreover, the research will contribute to the knowledge of the role of social networks by developing the concept of value-based social networks that facilitate and encourage transnational social activism and political participation. The research results will broaden our understanding about the channels of democracy diffusion as well as may serve as a basis for the formulation of recommendations for the EU institutions on the policy towards Russia, including supporting democracy and rule of law.