**Abstract**

**RS-147**

Title: **«**"Brain drain" and homecoming. Migration of students and highly qualified specialists»

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1. **Goal of research:** The goal of the project was to understand the reasons for the departure of specialists from Russia in recent years (from 2010 to 2016), the development of their careers and life trajectories abroad, whether they are considering further possibilities of returning to their homeland. We also sought to understand why professionals who worked or studied abroad eventually returned to Russia.
2. **Methodology:** The research methodology was based on a qualitative study. Interviews were conducted with emigrants who left Russia, as well as those who returned from abroad.
3. **Empirical base of research:** We conducted 100 interviews, with a special guide designed for each group of informants (“emigrants,” “returnees”). The result of the study was a database of audio, as well as transcribed interviews.
4. **Results of research:** The results of the study indicate that “pushing out” factors prevail among the reasons for the departure of highly qualified professionals from Russia. They include financial difficulties, the relative marginality of the Russian scientific environment, shrinking of political freedoms, an aggressive social environment, ethnic or gender discrimination, and an unsatisfactory business culture. These factors are pushing professionals towards making decisions to leave Russia. For many, this step is formulated as irreversible.

Among the highly skilled immigrants who left Russia in recent years, there is a large proportion of those who knew a foreign language before departure. These people who are not afraid of the new, are looking for non-standard trajectories and are willing to take risks. Many people have had previous experience of relocating.

Most often, the choice of the country to move to is dictated by pragmatic factors: the country gives permission to work after the end of the training course; it is easy to get a visa for an entrepreneur; personal arrangements with an employer; a suitable government program for recruiting immigrants, etc. Some decide to get a second degree: this also becomes a strategy of migrating to another country.

For many of our respondents, dissatisfaction with the social environment and political situation in the country has been accumulating for several years. Notably, the social and political motives of emigration are mentioned not only by specialists working in the humanities or social sciences, but by engineers as well.

In general, political events Russia in 2012–2014 and the growing support for the government the population at large were perceived by many as leading to restricting their rights and freedoms. These events have caused a sense of apathy and their own marginality for people with an active civic stance.

Most of the specialists who went abroad do not break their ties with Russia completely. Most of those who left for Russia have relatives there, many maintain professional contacts and even joint projects. This gives reason to hope that, under favorable circumstances, some of them would be able to bring their acquired knowledge and unique experience to Russia.

For some professionals, returning to their homeland is desirable, but only if the environment (political, social, economic) which caused their departure to begin with changes. All specialists who left Russia took into account the overall context including the political and economic situation in the country they were moving to, professional opportunities, social benefits.

At the same time, some young people who have not yet settled down permanently in other countries are open to the possibility of returning to Russia. Still, this is rather a measure of the last resort which they are willing to consider only if they cannot get a job in the West.

Strongly opposed to return those who already have a stable job, a house, whose children enrolled in a local school. This is due to the fact that they have already found their niche, many are talking about moving to another country as an important stage in their careers. As a rule, such specialists already know how to build a career abroad, and they see a return to Russia rather as its termination. Those who settled down in other countries with their families no longer want to revise what they have been able to build.

1. **Level of implementation, recommendations on implementation or outcomes of the implementation of the results.** The results of the study can be used for developing recommendations for government agencies implementing programs aimed at returning the highly qualified specialists working abroad back to Russia.