**Abstract**

**RS-151**

Title: «Evaluation of social tension risks and measures proposed to increase social sustainability»

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**The object of the study** is Russian population.

1. **Goal of research:** identification and systematization of social tension risks and evaluation of their incidence to develop the measures aimed at increasing social sustainability.
2. **Methodology:** content-analysis of mass-media publications, quantitative data analysis of surveys, qualitative analysis of focus groups data, analysis of open data of Federal State Statistic Service and Ministry of Finance, analysis of mass-media publications concerning healthcare and educational issues, systematization and analysis of studies devoted to education and healthcare.
3. **Empirical base of research:** mass-media publications in 2019-2020 (aggregated in Public.ru and Google news), results of public opinion surveys conducted in 2020: “Readiness to changes” (f2f interviews, sample size - 6000 respondents), “National development goals perception and relations between population and state” (online interviews, sample size - 6000 respondents), “Social consequences of pandemics in Moscow” (online interviews, sample size - 2572 respondents), the Survey of migrant workers aimed clarifying of the peculiarities of their lifestyle and migration plans during pandemic period (telephone interviews, sample size - 304 respondents), data of online focus groups conducted in 2020: “COVID-19 pandemics in Russia: standard of living, adaptation strategies and social tension” (14 FGDs in total), “Problems of healthcare and COVID-19 pandemics in Russia: the doctors’ opinion” (9 FGDs in total), “Educational strategies: the influence of pandemics on plans concerning university enrollment” (9 FGDs in total), open data of Federal State Statistic Service and Ministry of Finance, publications in open sources devoted to healthcare and educational issues.
4. **Results of the research**: During the implementation of the study the complex analysis of potential sources of social tension (both appeared during the pandemic period and existed before) was conducted.

The analysis of publications in mass media since 2019 till March 2020 showed the most significant points of social tension that existed before COVID-19 pandemics. The population was mostly concerned about the political issues. Ecological problems (including opening landfills, environmental pollution) and illegal construction can cause the dissatisfaction of citizens.

By the beginning of 2020 according to the survey results the Russians evaluated their life with moderate pessimism. But after the pandemics began the evaluations became worse that caused the increase of social tension.

The assessment of risks of social tension based on macroeconomic indicators gave the ability to describe the implications of crisis connected with COVID-19 spreading, that touched upon the Russian economy. According to experts’ opinion the corona crisis will result in considerable decrease of Russian GDP in 2020, the growth of unemployment, the drop of real wages and other incomes that will also suffer from drop of export income of the economy. In accordance with analysis of budget risks for social sphere, the reduction of tax revenue into the budget and lower contribution to off-budget funds should be expected because of economic crisis.

The evaluation of the effects of measures proposed to maintain the income and employment level show that these measures will reduce the decline in citizens’ income but they will not be enough to maintain the income level in 2020. So to increase the social stability and maintain the income level of the population the set of social policy measures is proposed, including rising the limits for providing employment support, rising the limits for providing unemployment benefits etc. The assessment of costs of such measures (taking into account already existing measures and the coverage of population) showed that the necessary additional financing will achieve 435,3 – 452,7 bln rubles or 0,40 – 0,41% of GDP.

After the evaluation of macroeconomic indicators, the analysis of several areas of Russian society that can contain most relevant points of social tension was performed. Such spheres as healthcare, education, the standard and quality of living were analyzed and the assessment of perception of Russians position in social structure and attitude towards state policy was done.

According to the results gathered during healthcare analysis, there is a strong request from population for better control over the quality of medical services that can’t be totally satisfied now. The lack of medical staff, their attitude as well as problems with access to elective health care and long waiting for it can increase the social tension, especially in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. To reduce the risks of social tension all the problems listed above should be effectively solved.

The analysis of factors that cause the social tension on educational field demonstrated the core problems in each level of education. The main issue of pre-school education is its poor accessibility and quality. The school education faces the other problems like bad skill acquisition, bulling, high differentiation in educational results among regions. During pandemic period the parents suffered from additional burden in looking after pre-school children and children at remote learning. The problems of professional and higher education are connected with low return on education and inconsistency with labor market request. Implementing the remote learning also makes sharper the issues of socio-economic inequalities, availability of electronic resources, the level of teachers’ skills and many others.

In the context of quality of living assessment, the pessimistic evaluations of material well-being of Russian should be mentioned. That can be explained by the pandemic conditions. But in general, the subjective perception of well-being, consumer behavior concerning large purchases didn’t change significantly compared to previous years. The steps done by the government during corona crisis are evaluated rather well. Right now people are afraid of job loss and growth of prices for day-to-day goods. They are much less worried about long-term consequences like depreciation of savings, property, long-term price growth for expensive goods.

The issues of pensions are also important in the context of standard and quality of living evaluation. In 2020 there is an increase of those who don’t care about the sources of living in older ages and the decrease of those who rely on state pensions. But there is still a request for strong state guarantees for normal life in old age and larger state expenditures on paying the pensions.

The results of focus group discussions supplement the evaluation of standard of living as an area of social tension. During self-isolation period (since April till June 2020) all social groups experienced the difficulties. In spite of all information about the danger caused by the illness the issues of material well-being appeared to be more important. The measures of social support didn’t have the large impact on standard of living, they are seen as not effective and insufficient. After the restrictions were lifted the standard of living and the income level started recovering according to the answers of FGDs participants. But Russians are still not confident about their future that makes them to invent strategies to survive in short-term perspective rather than wait for welfare recovery.

Speaking about the different inequalities as a source for social tension one should mention that before the COVID-19 pandemic in all levels of Russian society the idea about too high- and unfair-income inequality prevailed. The beginning of current crisis was characterized by large gained contradictions about the gap between the richest and the poorest and the deficit of interpersonal trust that cat become more evident under new socio-economic conditions.

The evaluation of National development goals perception demonstrates that the respondents are more concerned about the goals of income growth, poverty reduction, life expectancy increase and improving the living conditions. According to the opinion of most of the Russians the state should help the people who are not able to maintain the proper standard of living themselves. But half of all respondents suppose that only people who agree to make some actions to improve their lives can pretend on social benefits.

The assessment of COVID-19 impact on labor migration in Russia shows that migrants experienced the most serious problems in April when only 52% of those who worked in February were employed. But since May, after the restrictions removal, the labor market started recovering. The labor migrants who usually have small supply of money faced serious difficulties. Due to that they were more afraid of unemployment than of illness. In spite of all problems labor migrants don’t plan to leave Russia: 78,9% plan to stay here, and only 10,0% - wait out the crisis back home.

1. **Level of implementation, recommendations on implementation or outcomes of the implementation of the results:** some results of the study were used in the preparation of analytical notes and expert opinions in 2020. The results of this work can be used to identify the core points of social tension in Russia and develop the measures to maintain the social stability.