The State program for voluntary resettlement of compatriots: Ideals of citizenship, membership and statehood in the Russian Federation

Prologue

In February 2012, president Vladimir Putin published an article \(^1\) in the newspaper *Komsomol’skaya Pravda* entitled “Building justice. A social policy for Russia”. In the text the president, *inter alia*, gave what may be seen as an order to revive and prolong the State program for resettlement of compatriots abroad that had been launched in 2006/2007, and which was originally intended to last until the end of 2012. The program, as he admitted, had not achieved the desired results, but was to be improved rather than abolished. “In order to solve the demographic problems we need a clever migration policy with clear criteria serving actual needs, which [at the same time] hinders potential ethno-cultural and other risks. We need a migration inflow of about 300 thousand people a year” (Putin 2012). This desired flow of migrants, as becomes clear in his text, was conceived of as consisting first and foremost of “our compatriots living in the near and far abroad, [also] foreign specialists with high qualifications, [and] promising youths.” His message was that new measures had to be developed in order to support people who want to return to their “historical motherland”. “The main criterion for those who want to live and work in Russia is a readiness to embrace (gotovnost’ prinimat’) our culture and our values.”\(^2\) It thus expressed an explicit intention to cover a pragmatic need in Russia for qualified labor and for increasing its population, but also to allow people with a cultural attachment to Russia return to their “motherland”. Thus, the program had a dual motivation: both to bring together the Russian nation, and to serve the
practical needs of the Russian labor market. Exactly how the relationship between these two motives should be understood was not clear.

**Introduction**

This paper studies the State program for voluntary resettlement of compatriots abroad\(^3\) (the State program). It presents an outline of the program, its intentions and aims, including an analysis of how it was represented in the media in its period of revival from January 2012 to the middle of March 2015. In this period a number of changes were made to make the program more attractive, and the fact that the total number of participants rose dramatically increased its importance in a way that merits attention. The paper corroborates earlier research that points to an ambiguity in the term “compatriot” that allows the Russian authorities to use it for different political purposes\(^4\). It argues that in relation to the State program the Russian authorities rely heavily on pragmatic explanations for why they want to welcome “compatriots” for permanent residency – both in the program documents and the media representations of the program. Identity or ethno-cultural considerations are also present in the representations, but even in some of the newspaper articles where Russia is described as the historical motherland of the immigrants the pragmatic need for labor and for increasing the population is emphasized. It will be argued that although the term “compatriot” is used to “sell”/present them as desired immigrants and as “ours” to a population skeptical towards immigration, the Russian authorities also see a need to stress that their return to Russia is in Russia’s pragmatic interest. The paper shows how the program and the concept of “compatriots abroad,”\(^5\) the official definition of which is vague with regard to who it includes, feature in various discourses on demographic problems as well as inter-ethnic relations. From spring 2014 on, the State program became an issue also in relation to refugees from Ukraine.
who fled to Russia during the escalating conflict and war. Suddenly the majority of “compatriots” coming to Russia were (Russophone) Ukrainian citizens.

The paper investigates a number of questions: Who are the “compatriots”? How are they represented and defined? How do Russian media representations of the program comply with the official description of it in the program document? Are national identity considerations or economic and security issues dominant in the representations? In seeking to answer these questions the paper also shows how Russia as a country is framed in two selected media outlets. Is it presented as an attractive workplace/country of residence, as a beloved homeland, as a country with serious demographic problems, as a harmonic multi-ethnic society, or as a county with ethnic tensions? Who is eligible for Russian citizenship and how are the borders between “us” and “them” drawn?

The paper first briefly presents theoretical debates on policies of inclusion and exclusion before it provides historical-political context for the State program. The program is then presented in detail followed by a section on methodological choices that introduces the main empirical part of the paper: a discourse analysis of media representations. I conclude that although the stated aims and purpose of the State program vary depending on what discourse it is part of, a pragmatic discourse on compatriots as skilled labor is generally present in the representations.

Citizenship and migration policy

In a world of migration, states have become increasingly concerned with defining who is eligible to become their citizens. Although many contemporary polities mostly seem interested in limiting the inflow of immigrants, some, often at the same time, worry about their decreasing population and/or their need for supplementary labor from abroad. The state
is facing what James Hollifield has called a liberal paradox: For economic reasons governments need to keep their national economies and societies open to trade, investment, and migration, but simultaneously, domestic forces, out of self-interest, may push the same governments towards greater closure. In other words, states need immigration, but as immigration potentially creates discontent among the local population they have to calibrate their policies carefully.

Bridget Anderson argues that “modern states portray themselves not as arbitrary collections of people hung together by a common legal status, but as a community of value, composed of people who share common ideals and (exemplary) patterns of behavior expressed through ethnicity, religion, culture, or language – that is, its members have shared values.” This community is delimited on the outside by the non-citizens and inside the borders of the state by “failed citizens”, that is, criminals, drug addicts and others who do not fulfill the criteria of being “good citizens” sharing the values of the community. The ways in which non-citizens may become citizens therefore not only reflect legal technicalities but tell us something about how membership and statehood of specific states and their national identities are imagined.

The model of nation-state membership – a homogenous nation within the borders of a country – is in itself ambivalent to the admission of immigrants to citizenship, and the nation-state as such is “a figment of the sociological imagination”. In his seminal work Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany Roger Brubaker claimed that states are unequally disposed to accept immigrants as citizens because they are formed under particular historical circumstances shaped by their historic origins. Moreover, the conception of national identity prevailing in a state will have an effect on citizenship rules. Until recently Germany represented an ethnic model where membership was based on common descent, language and culture, whereas France represented a civic or republican model where the nation was defined
as a political community based on a constitution, laws and citizenship. The latter was more inclusive to immigrants, not only to people of similar ethnic origin.\(^{11}\)

The citizenship regimes of most states do not fit squarely into one model or the other, but using the distinctions that Brubaker's model provides as a theoretical framework may be of value. Other scholars have shown how states change their citizenship policies according to the current situation and needs.\(^{12}\)

In relation to immigrants, citizenship has at least two different meanings: “as a legal status, citizenship denotes formal membership (nationality)” and “as an identity, citizenship refers to the shared understandings and practices that constitute a political community.”\(^{13}\) The identity aspect has an impact on who has access to citizenship. National identity considerations (the predominant image of the nation and the boundaries of the imagined “we”) have proved to be crucial in the shaping of citizenship policy also in Russia.\(^{14}\) However, as this article shows, these policies seem, at least rhetorically, simultaneously to be driven to a large extent by practical economic and security concerns.

**Citizenship and migration policy in the Russian Federation**

The citizenship and migration policy in the Russian Federation is undergoing rapid changes. According to Konstantin Romodanovskiǐ, head of the Federal Migration Service (FMS), there has been a switch to a migration policy that focuses more on “quality than quantity”.\(^{15}\) Since the early 2000s Russia has seen a large influx of temporary labor migration from former Soviet republics, especially the economically struggling Central Asian states Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but also from Ukraine – whose citizens are often seen as “most favored” labor migrants due to their similar ethnic origins and their fluency in Russian. At the present moment, however, access to the Russian labor market for citizens from many post-Soviet republics has become stricter. Whereas CIS citizens\(^{16}\) could formerly enter Russia
freely on their internal passports, since January 2015 entrance is possible on external passports only. Since 2015 a certificate of knowledge of Russian language, history and legislation is required for foreigners to acquire a work permit, residence permit, and citizenship. Exceptions are made for highly qualified specialists, participants in the State program and a few other categories.

Russia is in need of workers. The number of people entering working age does not balance those who exit it. The Russian state has therefore stated as a priority goal to increase its population, also through migration. The 2007 *Demographic policy concept* singles out citizens of other post-Soviet states as subjects of special interest to Russia when it comes to increasing the population to 145 million people by 2025. Facilitating and stimulating resettlement of compatriots to Russia for permanent residency is listed as one of the main tasks in the Concept for state migration policy until 2025. The Migration policy concept reflects a shift to a more pragmatic and differentiated migration policy, for instance with plans to implement a “points system” for deciding who will get permanent residency status in the country”, “simplified access to citizenship for entrepreneurs, investors, qualified specialists and their families…” and “differentiated programs for short and long term labor migration…for instance programs that attract highly qualified specialists and qualified workers in professions needed on the Russian labor market.”

The attitude of Russian citizens towards immigration has been shown to be quite negative and is likely to have an impact on migration policy. According to a survey conducted by the All-Russian centre for public opinion (VTSIOM) in 2013 they think that immigrants bring more problems than positive effects to the country. Two thirds of the respondents believed that increased numbers of immigrants lead to more crime and corruption, and 56% agreed that immigration increases competition on the labor market. However, most Russian citizens (58%) supported the idea that Russian and Russian speaking immigrants should be accepted even if
the entry of other ethnic groups to the country should be limited. 58% supported the entry of young and educated people and agreed that the entry of people unable to work or with a low level of education should be restricted (53%). 24

In 2015 the Levada centre found that xenophobic sentiments in Russian society had decreased compared to the previous two years. Their sociologist, Karina Pipiya, explained that this did not reflect a more tolerant Russian society, but rather showed that Russian citizens’ attention had been redirected towards other topics such as the Ukraine crisis and the political conflict with the West. “The national sentiments are in a ‘dormant mode’, people had not become more loyal.” 25 In the 2015 survey 65% of the respondents were of the opinion that the settlement of some ethnic groups (tekh ili inykh natsii) in Russia should be restricted. This was a quite significant number, although lower than the result in 2013 when 81% agreed with this statement. The concept of “Russia for Russians” was supported by 51% of the respondents in 2015 whereas in 2013 66% had been supportive of this slogan. 26

The migration and citizenship policy debates in Russia, still somewhat flavored by the country’s Soviet past, have been dominated by the question of the status and rights of other former Soviet citizens. In the 1990s, after the collapse of the USSR, Russian citizenship policies were shaped to adjust to the new realities and consequently very liberal towards these groups. According to the Law on citizenship in the Russian Federation (RF) from 1991, all citizens of the former USSR who were permanent residents in Russia when the law entered into force automatically obtained Russian citizenship. Other former USSR citizens who were not resident in Russia at the time could apply for Russian citizenship through simplified procedures. 27

In 2002, after president Putin had come to power, the law on citizenship was revised, and some people who had previously been regarded as “ours” were turned into “others.” Most
post-Soviet citizens now had to go through the same procedures as other foreign citizens to acquire Russian citizenship. This implied a process similar to what is common in many other countries, taking up to 7 years, with a minimum of 5 years’ permanent residency in Russia. The equation of former Soviet citizens with foreigners from “the far abroad” contradicted the national idea of many Russians. For them, this idea still extended beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. The law was amended less than a year later for some categories of post-Soviet citizens, but until the implementation of the State program most post-Soviet citizens had no more preferential mechanisms for gaining Russian citizenship than other foreign citizens.

The revival of the State program

According to the presidential directive from 2006, the intention of the State program was strictly pragmatic: “to combine the potential represented by the compatriots abroad with Russian regions’ need for development”. The program hence adds to other measures taken in order to stimulate population growth and “stabilize the population of the Russian Federation”, such as encouraging people to have more children, reducing the number of deaths, and regulating migration. “Compatriots, raised in Russian cultural traditions, who speak Russian and who do not want to lose their ties to Russia, are more capable (в наилучшей мере способны) of adapting to the host society and taking part in its system of positive social networks.” The document stated that at the time the migration flows had “a spontaneous character,” and that this “leads to an imbalanced labor market in the regions and creates a situation of increased nationalist sentiments and xenophobia.” In other words, Russia should encourage “desired” migration. In the revived version of the program nationalist sentiments and xenophobia are not mentioned, but the focus on attracting compatriots as one way of solving the demographic problem remains the same. The new version also emphasizes that the program is first and foremost directed at increasing the population in “territories that are
strategically important for Russia," thus underlining population growth as important for state security.

The State program was originally intended to be implemented between 2006 and 2012. Within this period an evaluation of the Federal Subjects and their need for labor resources was to be carried out and regional programs to be developed and approved. Information campaigns within and outside the borders of the RF and a monitoring of the “migration potential” were planned and conducted. During the first years of its existence the program was shown to be quite inefficient, but in 2012/2013 it was revised and extended to include more Federal Subjects (now 58) after removing some administrative barriers. Whereas in September 2012 RIA Novosti reported that 80,000 people had been repatriated since the start of the program, the FMS stated in 2014 that more than 200,000 compatriots had been resettled through it.

Until changes were introduced in the program in 2012/2013, compatriots had to find and fill specific vacancies before they were allowed to move to Russia. Its new incarnation, however, also welcomes applications from people already living in Russia. Students enrolled at Russian universities as well as people planning to start their own business there may apply. The new program also allows the compatriots to bring not only their spouses, but also parents, siblings and children. What further makes the program more attractive is the fact that the understanding of the “territory of settlement” has been widened. Whereas previously the compatriots were bound to a particular administrative district within a Federal Subject, they may now search for work in places of their own choice within the entire Federal Subject.

In addition to providing temporary residence permits outside of the set quotas for labor, the new program, like the old one, gives simplified access to Russian citizenship. Participants are exempted from three of the provisions in article 13 of the law “On citizenship in the RF”:
They do not have to live 5 years in Russia in order to apply for citizenship and there is no requirement that they must know Russian or that they can document a legal source of income to provide for their living. Whether there in fact is no requirement in all cases is impossible to say, but in the process of selecting participants these provisions make it possible for the authorities to accept people with other qualities on an individual basis. Perhaps more importantly, the regions develop their own programs and determine their own selection criteria. As an example, in the program document of Novosibirsk region, participant status is granted primarily to compatriots already living in Russia (with temporary residency, a residence permit, or temporary refugee status) who want to live permanently in Novosibirsk region and who are able to document that they are working legally in the country. Secondly, working age compatriots from outside with the right qualifications, who aim to fill vacant positions according to the needs of the labor market in Novosibirsk region, to get an education or to invest or run a business there, are also eligible. If none of these criteria is fulfilled the application may be rejected. If false information about the applicant, his/her work experience, or relatives living in Novosibirsk region is given, this may also lead to rejection. Apart from the use of the word “compatriot”, whose meaning will be elaborated on below, the criteria of acceptance are thus quite pragmatic, stressing employment or employment prospects as a prerequisite. According to the program document, those who have already proved to be suitable workers may stay, and those whose qualification and skills suit the need of the region may come.

The State program gives participants benefits such as free travel to Russia, a monthly allowance for up to 6 months in case of unemployment, compensation for expenses related to the resettlement process, and so on. In the application form information about age and education level is asked for, and there are also questions about “nationality” (ethnicity) and religious affiliation. Answering the two latter questions is voluntary, and whether or not they
have implications for who is accepted, is impossible to say. Who exactly the program is
directed at is unclear, largely due to the many potential interpretations of the word
“compatriot”.

**Compatriots as institutionalized ambiguity**

Already in a study from 1998 on migration, displacement and identity in Post-Soviet Russia,
Hilary Pilkington\(^{39}\) noticed that in Russian newspapers the term “compatriots”
(*sootechestvenniki*) had become “increasingly popular” when referring to people migrating in
the post-Soviet space as a result of the dissolution of the USSR: “..it incorporates a potentially
unlimited section of the population in the ‘near abroad’ since it sets criteria of neither
ethnicity nor citizenship for membership in the group.” She further stated that the term was
employed in government circles to denote Russian citizens living in the “near abroad”,
stateless persons in the former Soviet Union (that is, those former Soviet citizens not holding
citizenship of their state of residence), and former Soviet citizens who had gained such
citizenship but who sought to retain their links with Russia. Already at that point in time
Pilkington saw the use of this term in official circles as a “wider strategic development in
policy towards the ‘near abroad.’”\(^{40}\)

A legal definition of “compatriot” is given in the law “On State Policy of the Russian
Federation towards Compatriots Abroad”, a definition which is valid also for the State
program. The first version from 1999 defined compatriots as those who were born in one
country and who share a common language, religion, cultural heritage, customs, and traditions,
as well as their direct descendants, except descendants of persons belonging to the titular
nation of foreign countries. In 2010 the definition, as noted by Oxana Shevel, became even
wider, now including “people living outside the borders of the Russian Federation who made
a free choice in favor of spiritual and cultural connection with Russia and who usually [kak
According to Shevel, with the elusive concept of “compatriots” and the State program Russia has institutionalized ambiguity by creating “a legal formula that is sufficiently vague to accommodate a wide range of policy objectives which Russia has now or may have in the future towards former Soviet citizens and the post-Soviet region”.42 For instance, the state’s use of the concept of compatriots relates to what researchers of Russian nationalism see as an ethnic turn in Russian politics of nation building43 and ”a pronounced ethnic Russian center of gravity” in the “Russian civilization.”44 However, the program is open to all Russian-speakers with cultural ties to Russia, and not formally restricted to ethnic Russians. Below the media discourses on the State program and its multiple potential meanings are examined.

**Discourse analysis and selection of data**

In this paper the term “discourse” is defined as framings of phenomena that are maintained through communicative practices.45 A discourse on a subject is formed through repeated articulations that contain positions on what constitutes the relevant facts and correct interpretations regarding the phenomenon. The sum of all discourses that are identified as competing with each other for dominance within a debate, is referred to as ”the order of discourse”.46 “By concentrating on the different, competing discourses within the same domain, it is possible to investigate where a particular discourse is dominant, where there is a struggle between different discourses, and which common-sense assumptions are shared by all the prevailing discourses.”47 Below, I will identify what discourses relate to the State program – the program’s order of discourse, and what picture of Russian statehood, citizenship, and national identity is being transmitted through the representations of the program and the debates surrounding it. When identifying various discourses I focus
particularly on lexical choices and lexemes as carriers of ideological presumptions, values, and worldviews.

The point of departure for any discourse analysis is that discursive accounts of reality have real social consequences. “...the discourses, by representing reality in one particular way rather than in other possible ways, constitute subjects and objects in particular ways, create boundaries between the true and the false, and make certain types of action relevant and others unthinkable. It is in this sense that discourse is constitutive of the social.” Discourse theory uses the notion “floating signifiers” for elements that are especially flexible when it comes to expressing different meanings. “Floating signifiers” are signs that different discourses compete over to fill with content. In this paper I see the concept of “compatriot” as a floating signifier, whose content seems to be adjusted and altered according to which discourse it is a part of.

For the purposes of this study a corpus of texts has been retrieved from two media outlets in the period from January 2012 to mid. March 2015: The daily newspaper Rossiiskaia Gazeta (RG – “the Russian Newspaper”) and the news agency Regnum. Regnum provided a ready dossier on the State program, whereas for RG I conducted word searches in the database Integrum, which contains all Russian dailies. Later the Regnum dossier was also supplemented by Regnum texts retrieved in the Integrum word search. Rossiiskaia Gazeta was chosen because it is one of the Russian dailies that had published most on the State program. The newspaper is issued by the Russian government and first appeared in November 1990. All official documents are printed in RG when they enter into force. The newspaper also prints articles and interviews and publishes commentaries on new policies. RG is printed in 41 cities and has 32 offices around the country. The circulation is 171,005 (as of June 2011) and the paper appears five days a week. I did not count or make use of the
official documents that appeared in the word search, and when they had been excluded, the number of relevant texts from RG included in the analysis amounted to 48.

Regnum (est. 1999) was chosen as a news agency with extensive coverage of different Federal Subjects. This was essential since the State program is implemented regionally with regional programs supported by the Federal level. The texts in Regnum tend to reflect material submitted by state-based actors around the country but quite often also provide more analytical texts. The number of Regnum texts analyzed is 532.

For the purposes of this study non-opposition news outlets were selected. I was not particularly looking for criticism of the state in general, but rather wanted to see how the State program was represented in what the state considers as acceptable terms. Whereas brochures, official speeches, and law texts outline the intentions behind the program – the program “as conceived” – the media representations give more information about the program “in practice”, and about its reception among the public as well as among state officials. This type of media analysis also makes it possible to follow any changes in the representations of the State program chronologically.

The corpus of texts consists of a mixture of printed opinions, expert accounts, and general news reports. The authors are not only journalists working in the newspaper or the news agency; other voices are also allowed to come to the fore in both RG and Regnum. Both news outlets quote state officials quite extensively, and the general impression is that the opinions or information they give is seldom challenged. Although a close scrutiny of the articles shows a clear tendency to emphasize the pragmatic justification of the program, who the compatriots are depends to a large extent on how the concept “compatriot” is re-contextualized in the media reports. This is discussed in more detail below.
The historical motherland

Even if frequently construed in the media as a way to meet the need for skilled labor in the regions, the State program is also depicted as a way for compatriots to return to their historical motherland. Russia has – at least rhetorically – been paying more attention to its diaspora abroad. At a World congress for compatriots held in St. Petersburg in October 2012 Prime Minister Medvedev said that “the development of the Russian (rossiĭskiĭ) ethno-cultural space (etnokul’turnoe prostranstvo) is one of the main directions of our state policy.” Along with maintaining Russian language and culture and defending the rights and legal interests of compatriots, it was stated as a priority to facilitate voluntary resettlement of compatriots to their historical motherland (istoricheskaya rodina). According to Grigoryi Karasin, deputy director (zamglav) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: “compatriots raised in the traditions of Russian (rossiĭskaya) culture, (and) who speak Russian, will without any doubt find themselves a worthy place in Russia. For those who have made this decision [to come to Russia] we are obliged to create good conditions and help them pass bureaucratic hurdles…” Thus, the State program and the actual resettlement of compatriots from abroad to Russia are framed not only as a beneficial policy with regard to demography and economic development. Representatives of the state also frame it in terms of a duty of the motherland to welcome “compatriots” home.

An understanding of a “compatriot” (compatriot abroad) as a person for whom Russia is their “historical motherland”, is repeatedly transmitted through the texts. There are several examples that confirm that being born in Russia is not a prerequisite for Russia being someone’s “historical motherland”. On 2 February 2012 RG carried a report about a group of “Old Believers” from Latin America who had “returned to the motherland of their ancestors”. In the 1920s their relatives had fled from the revolution, crossed the ocean, and settled in the new continent. The text did not give any information about why they chose to go
to Russia, or whether they speak Russian. The fact that they are “compatriots” remained unquestioned: “The authorities in Ussuriisk are hoping that the hard-working and sober compatriots will help to revive agriculture in the area.”

69 RG further reports that according to the Russian embassy in Bolivia, one thousand Old Believers from Latin America are planning to settle in Primorskii region. 60 The emphasis on the “compatriots” as hard-working as well as the fact that they are supposed to revive the agriculture in the area shows that their presence is also perceived as being in Russia’s pragmatic interest.

In an interview with Regnum 61 the FMS representative in Latvia mentioned the Old Believers as an example when defining “compatriots” as

“people who live outside the borders of Russia and are connected to her (Russia) by blood and cultural ties. There are many such people in the world. For instance, not long ago Old Believers from Bolivia moved to the Primorski territory, having kept their unique, old Russian culture in a century of exile.”

62 This reflects a view of citizenship policy based on the jus sanguinis principle, or even an enlarged principle in which not only blood, but also cultural belonging is relevant when a state grants citizenship.

In March 2012, Regnum reported that Cherkess (Circassians) (also called Adygeans) from Syria “are ready” to move to Russia “making use of their status as compatriots”. The Cherkess are an ethnic group originating from North Caucasus. Some of them left the Russian Empire in the aftermath of the Caucasian wars (19th century); thus, their ancestors have lived outside Russia for several generations. According to an MP from the parliament of the Republic of Adygea, Mugdin Chermit, the Cherkess from Syria are ready to move not only to Adygea “from where most of this diaspora originates, but to any Russian region”. “Almost all the Cherkess wanting to settle in Russia have a profession and an education – from medical to vocational. According to the leader of [the republic of] Adygea, there is no distinction between [ethnic] Russians and Adygeans in the republic, when we speak of compatriots.”

63
Here we see that the discourse on the State program as a way of supplying qualified labor meets a discourse representing a multi-ethnic Adygean republic where Cherkess/Adygeans are accepted by the local government as rightfully belonging in Russia.

Under the headline “The resettlement program for compatriots does not work because it is unclear who are counted as compatriots – opinion,” Regnum printed an article by Rais Suleîmanov, head of a center for regional and ethno-religious research in the Volga region. Suleîmanov criticizes the term “compatriot” for being interpreted so broadly that “all CIS citizens may be considered eligible for participation in the program,” and “native inhabitants (korennie zhiteli) of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and so on may simply come here as compatriots.” He stated that this confusion made society skeptical towards this “without any doubt necessary project.” It was therefore necessary to limit “the understanding of ’our people’ (who as a result of the breakup of the USSR remained in [other parts of the USSR]) to those who are capable of simplified naturalization in Russia, which they see as their historical motherland.” Suleîmanov further complained that (ethnic) Russians from Tashkent or Dushanbe had met so complicated procedures in Russia “that it made others lose their wish to return to the motherland.” Although in these representations national identity considerations are clearly important, we note that in some of them the pragmatic economic aspect is also emphasized.

**Migrant vs. Compatriot/”pereselenets”**

The compatriots (sootechestvenniki) who move to Russia are often referred to by the Russian word “pereselentsy” (pl.). This is perhaps due to the name of the State program, which uses the related noun “pereselenie” for “resettlement”. Normally the word “pereselenets” (sg.) is translated into English as “migrant”, “immigrant,” or “emigrant”. The Russian prefix “pere”
signifies movement from one place to another and is used in the verb “to move”/”resettle” – “peresel’tsia”. “pereselenets” shares the root “sel” with the verb “selit’sia”, which means “to settle”. Literally – a person who has moved somewhere to settle down. According to Ozhegov’s Russian dictionary “pereselenets” means either a person who is settling down in a place where people did not live before, or a person who has temporarily resettled. When used in relation to the State program, though, it often seems to designate someone who has come to Russia for permanent residency and citizenship.

The word “migrant” is also used in Russian. This is the term used for labor migrants - “trudovye migranty” – and “illegal migrants” – “nelegal’nye migranty” or “nelegaly”. It has many negative connotations as it is often used in relation to crime commited by foreigners, to low paid, illegal work, and to low levels of education. In discourses on migration, the term “migrant” is also used about bona fide Russian citizens who belong to certain ethnic groups, especially citizens from the North Caucasus, who many Russians regard as undesirable migrants when they move outside “their own” Federal Subjects. This must partly be blamed on the Soviet legacy of “titular nationalities,” still used to name many Federal Subjects (Chechen republic, Tatarstan, Chuvashia etc.). In relation to the State program it is interesting to observe that “migrant” is seldom used about “compatriots”, and if it is, then it is used together with “compatriots” and “pereselentsy”, simply as a means of varying the language, while it is specified what kind of migrants they are. In a Regnum report from Tambov this is evident:

“This wave of migrants [the compatriots] are not at all refugees, who have lost everything and who are unable to accommodate to the new conditions [...] These people want to create their lives here, they are interested in Russian culture and according to their employers they are very hardworking and skilled.”

In several of the examined texts the two terms “migrant” and “compatriot” are juxtaposed, underlining that “compatriots” are not “migrants” in the established negative way. A comment
from Gennadiǐ Shabaev, a Communist Party (KPRF) representative in Bashkiriia (the Republic of Bashkortostan) is striking:

“We need to bring back to Bashkiriia from the CIS countries and Central Asia our compatriots: Russians, Tatars, Bashkirs and representatives of other nationalities who traditionally and for centuries lived in this territory… These people, in contrast to migrants, share our common culture and our spiritual values.”

Here, the author embraces a multi-ethnic understanding of “the nation”, although leaving out “migrants” as people who do not “traditionally” belong.

In another text the head of the FMS in Leningrad region, Elena Dunaeva, states that “the program is good because these [the compatriots] are people who know the culture, language, traditions, [they are ] not temporary migrants. They are people who commit themselves to the RF.” This is further evidence that the concept “compatriot” has the concept “migrant” as its “constituting other”.

As a reaction to the changes in the State program that facilitate easier access to citizenship for compatriots and their families, the Vice Director of the CIS institute Vladimir Zharikhin stressed the importance of paying attention to which “pereselentsy” are given citizenship and the necessity of demanding that they renounce their former citizenship before becoming Russian citizens. “If not, he fears that Russia will get millions of ‘guest worker –repatriates’ (gastarbeitery-“repatrianty”), who have all the rights of a Russian citizen but who live their lives in their old motherland.” At the same time, Zharikhin supported the changes in the program and recognized that the previously long waiting process for citizenship made it less effective in attracting “honest immigrants (pereseleltsy)”. “For those who are determined to build their lives in their historical motherland [Russia] the simplified access to a [Russian] passport is fully justified.” Zharikhin thus seemed to draw a quite clear distinction between “ours” and “others”.
According to deputy director of the Institute for ethnology and anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Vladimir Zorin, “A migrant should know the language and the legislation, the history, and the culture of the recipient country. First and foremost because he is then better protected, he is more difficult to fool and trick into ‘grey schemes’. Secondly, being familiar with the historical and cultural roots [of the country] and living according to them, he will ‘fit’ better into the collective of workers and will annoy his neighbors less.”

The fact that participants in the State program are exempted from the tests in Russian language, history, and legislation puts them in a different position than other immigrants. The label “compatriot” in a way serves to certify them as “ours”, be it through their ancestors’ ties to Russia, their commitment to Russian language and culture, or their professional skills.

It ought to be mentioned that the debates are not unambiguously critical towards temporary labor migration. When RG reported on a suggestion from a Liberal-Democratic party (LDPR) Duma deputy to halt all labor migration (work permits to foreigners) for the next five years with the exception of highly qualified specialists and “compatriots”, the newspaper was very critical of this suggestion: “That migrants are necessary for the Russian economy is recognized at the highest level of the state. This is written in the migration policy concept, which is written by the best experts in the country and signed by the president.”

Still, state officials such as the head of the Federal Migration Service, Konstantin Romodanovskii, distinguish quite clearly between desired and less desired immigrants. “Concerning the State program, the head of the FMS hoped that this year the record of 62 thousand compatriots moving to Russia in 2012 will be surpassed,” RG reported on 16 June 2014. Romodanovskii was quoted as stressing that “it is important that those who are needed come, and even more important that they do not leave again.” In the same text it is stated that ”speaking of migration in general, the number of foreigners entering Russia has decreased by 20% in one year. According to Romodanovskii, “that is noticeable, not only in
the system [it is unclear what system he was speaking of] and the streets but in the numbers of crimes that we are detecting.’”76 Thus, fewer foreign migrants equals less crime, whereas more compatriots equals more skilled and needed workers.

Compatriots as skilled labor

*Regnum* has printed frequent reports on the regional resettlement programs. These texts are often without analytical commentary and seem like direct reproductions of information given by the press service of the relevant local authorities. They are accounts of how the program is progressing in various Federal Subjects. The typical data provided are figures on how many compatriots have arrived under the program in the year in question compared to the year before and in total during the program’s period of existence, including how many per cent of these are of working age and with higher education or professional training. Often it is noted from which countries the compatriots come. From Novosibirsk region it was reported in 2012 that 2700 compatriots had moved there since the launching of the program in 2008. “The largest share of the compatriots are citizens from the republic of Kazakhstan. The region is also interesting for people from Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Latvia, Turkmenistan, Belarus, Israel, Germany, Moldova, and Lithuania.”77 Unsurprisingly, post-Soviet republics are consistently where most compatriots come from.

*Regnum* also reports on the regions’ accomplishments when it comes to attracting compatriots through the program. Under the headline “Omsk region surpassed (певыполнили) their one-year target for resettlement of compatriots”, the readers were told that interest for the Omsk region among compatriots had increased and that 1203 compatriots had moved with their families to Omsk, not 979 as originally planned. There are no negative connotations in the text related to this fact, and the reader is given the impression that Omsk region has performed better than expected.
Several reports give accounts of the future prospects for resettlement in specific regions. The figures for how many individuals/persons the region plans to accept for resettlement through the State program within a specific period of time are often stated, as well as what kind of “compatriots” it is in need of in terms of the immigrants’ professional skills. The lexeme “kadry”, a quite technocratic term translating as “manpower/staff/personnel,” is often used:

“Omsk region is interested in qualified specialists-compatriots (kvalifitsirovannie spetsialisty-sootechestvenniki)...According to the regional minister of labor and social development, Oleg Bibika, they are oriented towards accepting compatriots representing those professions that are needed the most in the Omsk region. One of the main tasks is to ensure an inflow of qualified labor (kadry) to the countryside.”

In these accounts there is no mention of any "historical homeland", and the meaning of the floating signifier “compatriot” seems to be determined on the basis of a person’s work performance and professional skills.

Representatives of the local authorities frequently mention demographic problems as a reason for attracting compatriots to the regions. The governor of Novgorod oblast, Sergei Mitin, explained in an article in Regnum in March 2012 that the population of this Federal Subject was decreasing by 4500 people per year: “Taking this into account – by attracting labor resources from among our compatriots abroad we may improve the demographic and economic development of the region.” The governor of Pskov, Andrei Turchak, gave vent to similar thoughts in another article: “We need compatriots from other regions and from the post-Soviet area, preferably with a good education, knowledge of the Russian language and our traditions, people with professions that meet the demands of the labor market in Pskov.”

The regional accounts in Regnum further confirm the assumption that historical belonging and emotional affiliation with Russia is not enough to be considered a “compatriot”. In a report
from Kursk region the local head of the FMS said that in the space of five months they had accepted 869 applications through the State program and declined 58. The reasons named for rejection were lack of professional skills, low levels of education and qualifications, having reached retirement age, and lack of relevant vacancies. Being a “compatriot” historically and culturally does not necessarily guarantee participant status in the State program. The regions are free to set their own criteria and select suitable “compatriots” accordingly.

It should be noted that although some texts very much give the impression that thousands of compatriots are ready to move to Russia, more skeptical voices are also heard. Igor’ Pavlovskii, the head of a working group for cooperation with compatriots abroad in Leningrad region and at the same time deputy director of the Regnum news agency, was asked why the State program, before its revival, had not worked. The main reason that he noted was that the compatriots are not guaranteed a job in Russia; in addition he mentioned that there are large differences in housing prices. The program did not work because “no matter how bad the life situation of a compatriot is abroad, his stable instability is better than guaranteed instability in Russia.” In another interview, an “expert on Central Asia” said to Regnum that “In order [to convince] 'smart' and 'educated' people to go to Russia, the country will not only have to ease the access to citizenship but to attract ‘brains’ by means of high wages and other benefits. At the moment ‘brains’ are not sufficiently appreciated, and that’s why they ‘drain’ to the West.” Thus, the texts give no unequivocal narrative of Russia as a great and attractive country for resettlement. Both RG and Regnum open their columns to a more complex picture.

Inter-ethnic relations

The Russian language uses two adjectives with different meanings where in English we have only one word, “Russian.” “Rossiiskii” underlines “Russia” as a state, a civic entity, whereas “russkii” is used when “Russian” expresses cultural-ethnic identity. There are also two
concepts signifying the Russian people; “rossiiane” – all citizens of Russia (all nationalities living within the borders of the Russian Federation), and “russkie” – the ethnic Russians. Research has shown that while some readers in 2006 understood “rossiiane” to mean “all citizens of Russia”, others interpreted the meaning as identical to “russkie”, that is, ethnic Russians.  

In the discourses revolving around the State program “rossiǐskii” is normally used when “compatriot” is accompanied by an adjective. “Russian” as an ethnic category, however, is also present in the debates. RG 85 reports that the main “provider” (postavshchik) (the newspaper’s inverted commas) of compatriots is Uzbekistan. In second place is Kazakhstan and third and fourth are Ukraine and Moldova. Vitaly Jakovlev, a representative from FMS, commented that “…out of those who agreed to fill in their nationality (ethnicity) (which is not compulsory) 65% stated their nationality as (ethnic) ‘Russian’”.

The ethno-linguistic category “Slavic” also appears in one of the Regnum texts. Here, the head of the FMS in the Kaliningrad region, Sergei Savin, says that “The people who come here are mostly from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. They are ethnic Slavs (litsa slavianskoǐ natsional’nosti) and by profession they are teachers, builders, and doctors.” 86

In other texts compatriots are implicitly understood as being ethnic Russians. This is evident in a discourse on Russians in other former Soviet republics and international relations in the post-Soviet area. Discrimination of Russians in these now sovereign states is stated as one of the reasons why the Russian state decided to offer “compatriots” simplified access to citizenship. Pavel Dyatlenko, referred to as an expert from the “Polis Asia” center, literally said that “The implementation of faster access to citizenship for Russian (rossiǐskie) compatriots first and foremost concerns the population in post-Soviet states and weakens
[Russia’s] dependence on illegal labor migration. This step [to implement such a policy] is a long-term political answer to the rising nationalism of the titular nations in several Post-Soviet republics, which is partly marked by anti-Russian (anti-ruskiĭ) and anti-Russian (anti-rossiĭskiĭ) sentiments. The concept of “Anti-rossiĭskiĭ” I here interpret as negative sentiments towards Russia as a state, not only towards Russians as an ethnic group.

In a later report the same expert said that a significant decrease in the number of “Russian (rossiiske) compatriots” may worsen the situation and perspectives for the remaining Russian speakers in post-Soviet countries. “In almost all post-Soviet countries Russian (rossiiske) compatriots are met with official or non-official discrimination, xenophobia and increased, unpunished titular nationalism”. Here he seems to distinguish clearly between the Russian (rossiiske) compatriots, on the one hand, and the titular population of post-Soviet states, on the other. Thus, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks and others are not considered “compatriots”. Although he is using the adjective “rossiĭskiĭ” it is quite clear from the context that he is first and foremost speaking of ethnic Russians.

Under the title “Settlers (pereselentsy) from Georgia to Russia are mainly attracted by financial-economic possibilities – opinion”, Regnum published the “Georgian expert” Zaal Andzhaparidze’s thoughts about why people from Georgia move to Russia through the program. Andzhaparidze states that the [ethnic] Russian population in Georgia is not oppressed and that the financial-material situation – unemployment and other social problems – is the main motivation for those who leave. Wages are also lower in Georgia. Later in the text, however, Andzhaparidze confirms that there is also a “cultural factor”: “the Russian language is forced out of all spheres, and it is becoming harder for the Russian speaking population to adapt and integrate into Georgian society.” This is due to what he calls “mental consequences” of the war in August 2008 which create “migration sentiments” among the “Russian speaking population” in Georgia.
Thus, we see that in some of the representations “compatriots” are represented as mostly ethnic Russians or other Slavs. It is also clear that some see the program first and foremost as a mechanism for discriminated ethnic Russians in other post-Soviet countries to return to their “motherland”. It is worth noting that those who describe it in this way were non-state actors and not representatives of the State.

**Ukrainian refugees – compatriots**

Before Euromaidan and the ensuing armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian citizens were often present among other nationalities when Regnum listed the countries from which “compatriots” moved to Russia through the State program. In 2012 Regnum also mentioned Ukraine in relation to the State program as one of the countries with “the largest migration potential.” In 2014, the State program is mentioned particularly often both in RG and Regnum in relation to Ukrainian citizens, interchangeably referred to as “refugees”, “Ukrainian citizens”, “pereselentsy”/immigrants and “compatriots”.

In March, before pro-Russian protesters took over administrative buildings in Eastern Ukraine and the conflict escalated into war, RG reported that the Russian border control had recorded more than 700 thousand Ukrainian citizens coming to Russia since the beginning of the year.

Romadanovskiǐ, head of the FMS, commented on the numbers as follows: “Without doubt – this is not economic migration, this is due to a fire in our neighbor’s house”...“We can speak of symptoms of an impending humanitarian catastrophe”. In the same text it was noted that “the regional authorities are preparing to meet the Ukrainian brothers in a worthy manner if this becomes necessary.”

From this time on the purpose of the State program widens to providing a fast track of integration and access to citizenship for Ukrainian citizens. It is interesting to note that already at this point it is taken for granted that some of the Ukrainians fleeing from conflict...
are interested in becoming Russian citizens. Offering them participation in the State program is framed as a means of helping the refugees:

“Tambov region is ready to accept refugees and house them, and also to make all who are interested aware of the program for voluntary resettlement of compatriots” …“Due to the deteriorating situation in Ukraine the regional department of FMS in Tambov has created a working group that handles all questions concerning simplified access to Russian citizenship.”

In March it was also reported that for instance in Yamal “applications from Ukrainian citizens participating in the State program will be considered before others.” “If needed, Yamal will help the citizens of Ukraine and Crimea in every possible way,” said Aleksander Mazharov, deputy governor in Yamal-Nenets autonomous district:

“All over the country there are meetings in support of the Russian speaking population in Crimea and Ukraine, also in Yamal. It is easy to understand the concerns caused by the situation among Yamal’sy (people from Yamal) originating from Ukraine. In Ukraine they have relatives and friends…Yamal will do everything possible to support the Ukrainian people.”

From this account it becomes evident that Yamal already has a Ukrainian minority who is regarded as “yamal’tsy”, thus, they are “ours” at the same time as Ukrainians are recognized as one people (narod). In the texts examined Russia is never spoken of as the Ukrainians’ “historical motherland”, but Ukrainians are several times referred to as “brothers” or citizens from a “brother state” (bratskoe gosudarstvo). In an interview with RG, where Romodanovskiĭ assured the readers that access to Russian citizenship is already simplified for Ukrainians and that they have various possibilities to formalize a prolonged stay in Russia, he added: “After all, they are practically our relatives (rodnye lyudi). Therefore this is almost internal migration.”

Referring to the Ministry of regional development, Regnum reports that “Most subjects of the RF that participate in the State program are ready to accept Ukrainian citizens and their families in excess of the fixed numbers for this year, and to help them in the process of
settlement.” Thus, as shown above, in several reports the Ukrainian citizens become some sort of favored compatriots that are to be helped, partly within the regional programs for voluntary settlement of compatriots. Although the people fleeing to Russia from Eastern Ukraine probably constitute an ethnic mix of Russians, Ukrainians and even some smaller minorities, no ethnic distinctions are made in the Russian discourse. These people are simply referred to as “Ukrainian citizens”, “refugees” and so on.

In some reports the discourse on the need to help the Ukrainians is related to the discourse on skilled labor. In August 2014 the governor of Chuvashiya stated that “The situation in Ukraine will get worse; therefore we need several different ways of resettling refugees. We need to provide Ukrainian citizens with work in those professions where workers are needed.” Vice premier Dmitrii Kozak declared at a government meeting that “Many Ukrainian citizens want to go to the Far East – which fills a need also for our country. Therefore, last week the regions were told to increase the parameters for the regional programs for voluntary resettlement of compatriots to 20 thousand.”

Under the headline “Yaroslavl region is ready to accept (prinyat’) refugees from Ukraine” it is said that the refugees from Ukraine “may request a place in the program (khodotaistvovat’ ob uchastii).” Maria Leshonkova from the Yaroslavl department of the FMS told Regnum that those eligible to participate in the program are “compatriots living abroad, who are 18 years or older, and who have the competence and qualifications that correspond to the program’s requirements.” The text says nothing about whether the requirements will be different for refugees from Ukraine or not.

In an article entitled “10 Ukrainian citizens remain in Rostov region within the framework of the State program” Regnum reports on the first Ukrainians acquiring participant status in this region. Regnum writes that while the quota for participants was set at 390, 441 had already
applied. “When selecting participants for the program qualified specialists and workers in those spheres where there is a lack of labor (kadrovyi defitsit) are given priority. The Rostov region is still in need of specialists within healthcare and education.”102 In the same text it is reported that 39,500 Ukrainian citizens have found “temporary shelter” in the Rostov region.103 Thus, in this account far from all Ukrainians seem to be considered as potential citizens and the requirements for participation in the program are emphasized.

There are also several examples making it clear that the Ukrainians in question actually meet the requirements stated in the program:

“In Kurgan, 5 refugees from Ukraine become participants of the State program for resettlement of compatriots” …”According to the director of the Department for economic development, business and trade, Olga Pecherina, all applicants have professional education and are ready to work in the city. Some of them are already employed or do internships in companies in Kurgan. The age of those wanting to take part in the program is from 24 to 46.”104

In one of the interviews with Romodanovskiǐ referred to above, RG asked if there are any “pluses” (anything positive) deriving from the fact that so many Ukrainians come to Russia:

“Without any doubt there are: Everybody who has come from Ukraine is a great demographic support to our country. More than ¼ million people are potentially ready to integrate into Russian society”...”The requests for the State program for voluntary resettlement of compatriots abroad have increased significantly – more than 500 Ukrainian citizens apply every day.”105

In some Regnum headlines there is no explicit reference to the conflict in Ukraine at all:

“Pskov authorities: Ukrainian citizens’ interest in the region is increasing”106, “More than 50 Ukrainian citizens have moved to Pskov region”107, “Compatriots from Ukraine apply to resettle in Chuvashia”108. Thus, although the State program certainly becomes a means of
helping Ukrainian refugees, the initial intention of the program – to attract labor – is still highly prominent in the media representations.

**Conclusion**

Many contemporary states – and Russia among them – are facing a liberal paradox: At the same time as the state is in need of immigration for economic and demographic reasons, citizens’ discontent with the inflow of immigrants often pushes the state towards stricter and less inclusive policies. With the State program for voluntary resettlement of compatriots it seems that Russia has tried to circumvent this paradox by setting out to attract “compatriots” for permanent residency and citizenship, i.e. people abroad who by definition already belong to the Russian “community of value”. The compatriots are thus construed as desired immigrants that with little effort may become part of Russian society and contribute to its economic development.

As this study shows, there is no unequivocal understanding of who the “compatriots” are, and the criteria for being a “compatriot” change from one text to another. In some texts, having Russia as the historical motherland is presented as sufficient for gaining “compatriot” status. Old Believers from Latin America and Cherkess from Syria, whose ancestors at some point in history lived in Russia, apply to come to Russia under the program. Although this criterion of “historical belonging” opens up the State program to all people with blood ties to the multiethnic Russian Federation, other texts directly or more implicitly give a narrower interpretation of the “compatriots” as ethnic Russians or even as working age people with professional skills needed in particular regions. Although to welcome compatriots who feel that they belong in Russia is sometimes framed as a duty of the motherland, an articulated need to resettle compatriots for demographic and labor market reasons is expressed more frequently.
One way of delimiting something is to contrast it with what it is not. The repeated dichotomy between “migrant” and “compatriot” in the texts is telling; “compatriots” are not “migrants” in the established negative sense, on the contrary, they are desired potential citizens. In the section on inter-ethnic relations above it became evident that some participants in this discourse have clear perceptions about which ethnicities should not be covered by the “compatriot” label. For instance, this is normally the case with the titular groups in most post-Soviet states, including states that supply much of the labor migration to Russia. These groups, it is reasoned, do not have Russia as their “motherland” since they have “a state of their own”. However, although it is not explicitly stated that refugees from Ukraine have Russia as their historical motherland, they are without any doubt regarded as “compatriots”, and the State program is framed as a favorable way for them to gain citizenship and inclusion in the Russian society and labor market.

To offer participation in the State program is clearly presented as one way of helping the Ukrainian citizens, but at the same time it is framed as a win-win situation whereby Russia boosts its population with Russian-speaking manpower. In this way the program complies very well with the official purpose of attracting skilled labor to meet demands in the Russian regions. Although the program’s order of discourse also includes discourses of a less pragmatic character, this initial aim is almost constantly visible. In many representations skills and employability actually seem to be what really characterize a “compatriot”. Even in the report about the Old Believers from Latin America it was stated that they would hopefully revive the agriculture in Russia’s Far Eastern district, and several reports define qualifications and skills as a prerequisite for gaining participant status in the program.

When president Putin in his 2012 article emphasized the need to revive the State program and attract “compatriots” and foreign specialists he formulated the main criterion for living and working in Russia as “the readiness to embrace our [Russian] culture and our values”. There
are no ethnic requirements attached to this “readiness”, hence, the statement may well be read as expressing an underlying civic understanding of the nation. At the same time, the phrase “our culture and our values” does not antagonize readers with a more ethnic understanding of the nation since they can read it as referring to “their” (ethnic) culture and values. Hence, the president potentially reaches out to people with various perceptions of the nation, much in the same way as the concept “compatriot” is flexible enough to cover different needs.

The State program for voluntary resettlement of compatriots indeed seems well suited to cover a wide range of policies – be it to welcome ethnic Russians who are allegedly discriminated against in the countries of which they are legal citizens, to turn Ukrainian refugees into Russian citizen-workers, or simply to select the most suitable workers to fill the professions needed in various regions. However, as this study shows, state officials often use pragmatic-economic explanations to justify the resettlement of compatriots. Thus, rhetorically at least, being a compatriot is not always enough to resettle in Russia; skills and workability are demanded. The overarching purpose of using the category of “compatriots” in this context is perhaps still that Russia tries smoothly - without stirring up anti-migrant sentiments and inter-ethnic conflict – to secure population growth and sufficient skilled labor through immigration.

1 http://www.kp.ru/daily/25833/2807793/


3 “Gosudarstvennaia programma po okazaniiu sodei’stviia dobrovol’nomu pereseleniiu v Rossiiiskuiu Federatsiiu sootechestvennikov, prozhivaiushikh za rubezhom”

Often referred to simply as “compatriots” since the context clarifies whether or not they are Russian citizens or “compatriots abroad”.


Anderson 2012


Brubaker 1990


Citizens from states with membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States, an organization existing since the dissolution of the Soviet Union

Members of the Customs Union, i.e. Belarus and Kazakhstan, are excepted from this rule, so are Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine temporarily, http://ria.ru/society/20150101/1041122254.html


According to ROSSTAT the population in 2007 was 142.8 million whereas in 1999 the number was 148.3 million. Available at:


Points are given according to level of education, age, work experience, knowledge of language. Used for instance in Australia.

Kontseptsiia 2012, Article a and b

VTSIOM: Sredi rossiyan rastet negativnoe otnoshenie k migrantam, available at https://russian.rt.com/article/13355


Lhor 2013, see also Salenko, Alexander (2012) Country Report: Russia, EUDO Citizenship Observatory, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

Salenko 2012


In 2014 yet another category were granted simplified access to Russian citizenship: «Russian speakers» (nositeli russkogo yazika) - a person who «speaks Russian and uses Russian in their daily and cultural life, if this person or their relatives live or formerly lived in the Russian Federation or on the territory that belonged to the Russian Empire or the USSR within today’s borders of the Russian Federation”.


Gosudarstvennaia programma 2006

Gosudarstvennaia programma 2012

Gosudarstvennaia programma 2006
According to FMS statistics. In 2012, 62,893 people came to Russia through the program. That was twice as many as the year before and 50.1% of the total number that had come since the program was launched. http://www.fms.gov.ru/programs/fmsuds/monitoring/4_kv_2012.pdf. On 1 January 2015 the total number of participants was 164,300 since the program was launched and when including their families, 355,100. http://www.fms.gov.ru/programs/fmsuds/monitoring/4_kv_2014.pdf


Gosudarstvennaya programma 2012


Shevel, Oxana (2011) “Russian Nation-building from Yel’tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic or Purposefully Ambiguous” in Europe-Asia Studies, 63:2, 179-202, p.192

Shevel 2013, p. 141


Jørgensen and Phillips 2013


Jørgensen and Phillips 2002


Jørgensen and Phillips 2013, 39
In the word search I used the combination “pereselenie” and “sootechestvennik” as this proved to retrieve the most relevant texts. In addition I did a search on “Ukraina”, “bezhenets” (refugee) and “sootechestvennik” to be sure of catching a representative body of texts related to the State program and the escalating Ukrainian conflict.

http://www.rg.ru/about/

The Regnum foundation’s board of directors is since 2014 headed by Aleksandr Bespalov of Gazprom.

Among the articles from Rossiiskaya gazeta, the majority of which are directly concerned with the program, 62.5% emphasised the pragmatic aspects of the program program (skills, demography, working age). Among the Regnum articles, which are concerned with the program to a varying degree, more than 40% of the total still emphasise the pragmatic aspects. This means that even in this group, the pragmatic aspect is dominant in most of the articles more directly concerned with the program.


RG December 7, 2012

RG December 7, 2012


RG February 2, 2012

RG February 2, 2012


Regnum February 9, 2012


Regnum March 20, 2012


Regnum June 28, 2013

While the concept clearly derives from Soviet nationality policy the actual term “titular nationalities” has been introduced into the Russian language quite recently, as a calque from English.


“V Bashkirii obsuzhdaют neobkhodimost’ trudovoï migratsii i vozvrata byvshikh sootechestvennikov”


Rossiïskaia gazeta June 24, 2013


Rossiïskaia gazeta June 16, 2014


Rossiiskaia gazeta, March 6, 2014


Regnum March 13, 2014


*Regnum* November 27, 2014


*Rossiiskaia gazeta*, September 23, 2014

