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Kazakhstan's management of migration: Adapting to new circumstances

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Abstract

Since its independence, migration flows in Kazakhstan have fluctuated considerably. Key events over the last four years, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and the full-scale war in Ukraine, have significantly impacted these flows. While migration and its trends have previously been researched, the most recent trends remain under-studied. This study employs semi-structured elite interviews with key stakeholders, including representatives from relevant international organisations, NGOs, and private consultancy firms. Additionally, document analysis was used to triangulate the data findings. Key findings from the interviews indicate that the primary influx of migrants, including IT specialists and business owners, was predominantly attributed to Russia's war on Ukraine. Despite Kazakhstan implementation of some measures to enhance migration management including key incentives in the migration policy concept for 2023-2027, several issues remain unaddressed. Despite progress, challenges in migrant support, administrative processes, work permit regulations, visa policies, international support systems, employment agency oversight, migration policy, and labour quotas remain, necessitating continued policy refinement and international cooperation. Moreover, the thesis offers recommendations for developing effective migration management, drawing on insights from expert interviews and document analysis. The results of this study contributes to the academic understanding of new migration trends and policy responses in Kazakhstan.

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Introduction

Since its independence, migration flows in Kazakhstan have fluctuated considerably.

Notwithstanding, several key events over the last four years, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic and full-scale war in Ukraine, have had a substantial impact on migration trends in the country. In 2020, global lockdowns and travel restrictions reduced the migration flows. Two years later, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, resulted in a new trend of migration from Russia to Kazakhstan. While the topic of migration and its trends have previously been researched, most recent migration trends remain under-studied (Mussina et al., 2020; Bokayev et al., 2022; Khamzin, Khamzina, Aldabergenova, et al., 2023; Kappassova et al., 2024). Therefore, this study comprehensively analyses ongoing migration trends and management changes in Kazakhstan, exploring the following questions: How has the migratory situation changed post-pandemic and in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine? What steps can Kazakhstan take to develop effective migration management? In addressing these questions, this study contributes to the academic understanding of new migration trends and policy responses in Kazakhstan.

This paper is organised into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides the necessary historical context and understanding of migration trends and policymaking from the start of independence in 1991 to the pandemic period. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework that underpins this thesis, detailing the analytical approaches employed. Chapter 3 introduces the research methodology and outlines the methods and techniques used to gather and analyse data. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and provides a detailed examination of the collected data. Finally, Chapter 5 interprets these findings within the context of the theory outlined in Chapter 2, concluding the implications of the research.

Chapter 1: Regulatory Developments and Migration Trends

1.1. 1991-2007

The first regulatory body for migration in the country following independence was the Department of Population Migration, under the Ministry of Labour of the Republic of Kazakhstan, established in 1992 by the Resolution of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Enactment of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Immigration". The provision on the regulatory body was enacted with the main responsibility of monitoring the affairs of migrants and formulating a legal infrastructure for migration control (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 1055, 1992). At that time the country experienced a notable decline in total population, with the number of Kazakh citizens and other populations residing in the country dropping from 16.5 million in 1991 to a lowest point of 14.9 million in 2001 (World Bank, n.d.-a). During this period, 1.5 million Russians (26.1%), 593,000 Germans (62.7%), 328,000 Ukrainians (37.5%), Belarusians (37.1%), and Tatars (22.4%) left newly independent Kazakhstan (Rowland, 2001, pp. 601-604). In parallel, there was a significant increase in the number of Kazakhs returning (Rowland, 2001, p. 584, Nowicka, 2020, p. 112). Accordingly, the largest number of Kazakhs came from Uzbekistan (53,538), Mongolia (42,426), Turkmenistan (28,218), and Russia (24,480) (Rowland 2001). 579). In 1991, the total migration net balance amounted to -104 thousand people, the country experienced the most negative migration balance in 1994, with -504 thousand people. According to Rowland (2001), between 1989 and 1999, a large number of emigrants from Kazakhstan were Russians, Germans, and Ukrainians, as emigration from the former USSR became more feasible. An important stage for Kazakhstan was the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991 (Commonwealth of Independent States Declaration, 1991). A year later, an agreement was signed on the visa-free movement of nationals of member countries (Agreement on Visa-Free Movement of Citizens of the States of the Commonwealth of Independent States, ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1992). Thereafter, in 1993, Kazakhstan signed the Treaty on the Establishment of the Economic Union, subjecting members to conclude special agreements regulating labour migration and mutual welfare obligations (Resolution of the Supreme

Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 2586-XIII-V, 1993). Furthermore, in 1994, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, put forth a proposal for Eurasian integration, serving as the foundation for the current Eurasian Economic Union (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019).

Based on Karassayev et al. (2022), during that period Kazakhstan's primary objective was to re-establish connections with Kazakhs who emigrated during various historical periods and to encourage them to return to their homeland. Policies to return Kazakhs from the former Soviet republics have set an initial course for Kazakhstan's migration management (Mussina et al., 2020; Nowicka, 2020). The reflection of this might be observed in the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the development of the State Programme of Population Migration" on 11 January 1995. The main focus of the resolution was the development and establishment of legal and economic conditions for the regulation of migration flows, concerning the return and remigration of Kazakhs.

Regarding foreign nationals, on June 19, 1995, Kazakhstan enacted the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners, that guaranteed all rights and freedoms and imposed obligations established by the Constitution, the laws of the country, and international treaties ratified by Kazakhstan, establishing provision of general rules and conditions of entry and exit of foreigners (Law No. 2337, 1995). Later, in March of 1996, the "Instruction on the procedure for issuing visas of the Republic of Kazakhstan was presented, providing rules for issuing visas to foreigners including 9 categories: diplomatic, official, regular, private, tourist, study, work, medical treatment, and permanent residence (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1996). In May 1996, Kazakhstan signed the Treaty on Integration in the Economic and Humanitarian Fields, allowing the free movement of labour between Kazakhstan and Belarus, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan (Law No. 1-1, 1996).

Further developments were prompted by the Law on Migration, adopted on 19 December 1997 (Law No 204 on Population Migration, 1997). The law focused primarily on repatriated ethnic Kazakhs,

known as "Oralmans". Also, the regulatory body overseeing migration underwent a reorganisation from the Department of Migration under the Ministry of Labour into an Agency for Migration and Demography following the previous legislative framework, underscoring the fundamental principles of the freedom of choice of residence for all individuals, alignment with the Republic of Kazakhstan's laws and international standards, as well as adherence to the guidelines of the International Organization for Migration (Law No. 204 On Migration of Population, 1997).

The turning point in Kazakhstan's migration occurred in 1998. The "Ruble crisis" (1998) in Russia, presented Kazakhstan as a more attractive destination for migrants from Central Asian countries, given its geographical proximity and cultural similarities (Zhaksybayeva & Nurzhanova, 2018). According to the International Labour Organization (2008), the influx of immigrants was predominantly driven by economic motives, primarily searching for employment. After 2000, this trend became more apparent as the economy grew steadily compared to other Central Asian countries, as reflected in the World Bank's GDP indicators (World Bank, n.d.-b). The challenge driven by the inflow of immigrants was also noted in the Migration Policy Concept of 2000 (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 1346, 2000). The concept highlights that the permeability of borders with the Commonwealth of Independent States exacerbated the problem of illegal migration, revealing the need for measures to control illegal labour migration and to regulate the processes of exit and deportation of foreign nationals (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 1346, 2000). The main objectives were the creation of a national system for the registration of foreigners and stateless persons and the development of specialised centres for temporary accommodation and organised return. Year after, in 2001, the signed treaty Eurasian Economic Community was ratified, providing a coherent approach of member countries to the labour migration concerns (Law No. 172, 2001).

Subsequently, on October 29, 2001, A Sectoral Programme of Migration Policy for the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2001-2010 was adopted (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of

Kazakhstan No. 1371, 2001). The program was structured in two stages. The first stage 2001-2005 was aimed at transitioning from a net negative to a positive migration balance, creating conditions for securing migrants' rights, pursuing bilateral agreements, cooperation with NGOs, and regulating emigration to protect the domestic labour market. While the first stage of the programme was primarily concerned with repatriating ethnic Kazakhs back to their homeland. The second stage for 2005-2010, however, was focused on the foreign nationals, strengthening the positive net migration balance by attracting highly qualified specialists and foreign investors. The programme defined migration policy measures, including licensing and quotas for the employment of foreign citizens as well as ensuring the priority rights of Kazakhstani citizens to occupy vacant positions compared to foreign citizens in the same job positions and qualifications. Reflection of the programme can also be attributed to the recruitment of specialists from China under quotas (Sadovskaya, 2019). According to the Bureau of national statistics of the Agency for strategic planning and reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2023), from 2003 to 2008, the total number of immigrants from China was 27 thousand people. Later, in 2004, a Joint Decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan introduced expanding terms of the Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners established in 1995, providing more detailed criteria for inviting foreign nationals for companies, non-governmental organisations, and private invitations, setting the list of documents for business, tourist, and private purposes, as well as procedures for obtaining permits and visas (Joint Decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 215, 2004). Along with the growth of illegal migration, it is worth highlighting that the "Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others" concerning human trafficking, was ratified only in 2005 (Law No. 100, 2005). However, in 2006, a significant change was made to the Criminal Code, Article 128, regarding human trafficking. Whereas the previous law considered the problem of trafficking merely in terms of exploitation (OSCE, 2010). The new law of 2006 enlarged the list of offences, despite this, the new Article 128 did not correspond to the definition of trafficking in human beings as set out in the "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children,

supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational organised Crime," that Kazakhstan signed in 2000, but did not ratify at that time (Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 167, 2006).

Also, in 2006 a bilateral agreement was signed between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan on labour migration and the protection of migrant workers' rights (Law No. 187, 2006).

Later, in 2007, the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted a Concept on Migration Policy for 2007-2015. Along with the resettlement of "Oralmans," the policy document acknowledged an increase in both the number of foreign labour and illegal migration. It can be observed that the policy focus stated in the concept was more focused on the attraction of qualified foreign specialists and the simplification of the procedure for them, as well as incentivizing foreign enterprises that train and employ local personnel. Following the previous concept's propositions, the new one stressed the problem of shortage of skilled labour in sectors with an insufficient local workforce.

According to the Bureau of national statistics of the Agency for strategic planning and reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2023b) between 2000 and 2005, there was a significant growth in the number of immigrants. In 2000, the number of immigrants from China was 189, which increased to 5,829 by 2007. The number of migrants from Mongolia in 2000 was 658, which rose to 3,706 by 2007. From neighbouring Central Asian republics, in 2000, the number of immigrants from Uzbekistan was 12,810, from Turkmenistan 2,058, from Kyrgyzstan 1,673, and from Tajikistan 617. By 2004, the number of immigrants had significantly increased only from Uzbekistan, reaching 35,795, and further reaching its peak in 2005 to 44,648. The number of immigrants from Turkmenistan continued to grow until 2004, reaching 3,266, then declined in 2005, and recovered in 2006 with a growth of 90.45% (4,565 people). In contrast, the number of immigrants from Tajikistan decreased, amounting to 261 in 2004 and 197 in 2005. The number of migrants from Kyrgyzstan in 2004 was 2,612. It is noteworthy that in 2000, the largest number of immigrants came from Russia (23,941 people), but by 2005, Uzbekistan represented the largest influx of immigrants.

Analysing the statistics from 2000 to 2007, it can be observed that by 2004, the migration balance shifted from negative to positive, reaching 2,789 people, later increasing to 22,668 in 2005, with a subsequent growth of 45.76% in 2006, amounting to 33,041 people. The shift from negative to positive net migration balance marked achievement of the goal set in the Sectoral Programme of Migration Policy for the Republic of Kazakhstan for the 2001-2005 period. Despite the increase in the number of immigrants, these numbers were shaped by the decrease in emigration from the country. In 2000, the total number of emigrants was 155,749, with the main destination countries being Russia (108,724), Germany (35,938), Belarus (3,265), Ukraine (2,172), Israel (1,278), and Uzbekistan (1,277). It is worth noting the decreasing trend in emigration for countries such as Russia (until 2007), Germany from 2001 to 2007 (until 2012), Belarus until 2006, and Ukraine until 2006 with a slight increase of 0.75% in 2007. Emigration to Israel decreased from 2000 to 2005, with a slight increase of 4.24% (123 people). On the other hand, the number of emigrants to China increased from 1 person in 2000 to 407 people in 2003, experiencing a decline until 2007. By 2006, the total number of emigrants decreased to 33,690, followed by an increase of 25.96% in 2007 and 6.72% in 2008. The main destination countries for emigration in 2007 were Russia (37,704 people), Germany (1,848 people), Belarus (805 people), Uzbekistan (423 people), and Ukraine (539 people).

The main reasons for the large outflow in the 2000s can be identified as continuing repatriation measures and the return of nationals from the former USSR to their historical homeland. However, The Global Financial Crisis of 2007 also had a significant impact. Although the total net migration balance was 33,041 people in 2006, it significantly decreased by 66.82% to 10,962 people in 2007, and further dropped by 89.81% to 1,117 people in 2008.

1.2. 2008-2014

It should be noted that the protocol Kazakhstan signed in 2000, "To Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime" was ratified only in 2008 (Law No. 37-IV, 2008).

As the problem of shortage of qualified specialists in the country intensified, within the framework of the rules of the state scholarship programme "Bolashak" sending Kazakh students abroad, the requirement of returning the graduate on the competition back to Kazakhstan to work or reimbursement of funds for training was introduced (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 573., 2008). Despite these regulations, a considerable number of graduates tend to move and work abroad (Bokayev et al. 2022). According to Bokayev et al. (2022), this problem is attributed to the lack of job opportunities as well as the inability to utilise their knowledge and skills in Kazakhstan.

Later, in 2009, the Nurly Kosh programme for 2009-2011 was introduced (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 1126, 2008). Despite the problems of qualified labour shortages and the inflow of low-skilled migrants acknowledged in the concepts, the initiatives of the government were merely concerned with the issues of "Oralmans,". According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2010), the program did not address other problems related to migration and was limited to the assistance provided to repatriates. At that time, the number of foreign citizens employed as undocumented migrant workers began to grow in Kazakhstan, particularly in the construction and agricultural sectors (Bokayev et al., 2020). Between 2004 and 2010, Uzbekistan was the main country sending migrants, contributing the net balance of 191,247 people, followed by China at 33,357, Mongolia at 25,392, Turkmenistan at 20,180, and Kyrgyzstan at 12,531 (Bureau of national statistics of the Agency for strategic planning and reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023). In contrast, substantial outflow to Russia and Germany was observed, with net losses of 156,887 and 31,883 people, respectively. At that time, the labour market was underperforming and not fully capitalising on the country's human and economic resources, despite a consistent reduction in unemployment rates (BMP, 2010). Although Russia offered higher wages, many migrants preferred Kazakhstan because of the cultural and linguistic similarities that facilitated smoother interactions between employers and workers. Another important factor aggravating the problem of illegal migration is the corruption of border posts, allowing the unimpeded movement of people (Marat, 2009).

Thereafter in 2011, Kazakhstan experienced a significant progression in its legislative framework with the introduction of a new law "On Migration" (Law No. 477-IV, 2011). Under the new law the following terms have been defined in the basic concepts: permit for permanent and temporary residence, permit to hire foreign labour force and employ a foreign worker, inviting person and quota to hire foreign labour force.

Later, on 21 January 2012, a unified information system "Berkut" was also introduced to register passports of foreigners and stateless persons at checkpoints, and to ensure data integration and interdepartmental interaction (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 148, 2012).

In addition, in 2012, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Russia established the Eurasian Economic Space, functioning as a single integrated market for the future Eurasian Economic Union based on the Eurasian Economic Community, concerning the labour movement, abolishing the quota system, and mandatory work requirements.

Further legislative amendments introduced a labour tax, obliging migrants to pay for the individual labour tax and obtain a work permit "patent" in addition to the contract with the employer to stay and work legally as domestic workers, as well as obliging employers to have a limited number of five employees in domestic work (Law No. 153-V, 2013). Also, to hire foreign workers, employers were required to secure pre-approval, which is managed through a quota system to regulate the inflow of workers (FIDH, 2016). However, despite the introduction of measures to legalise illegal migration, there were issues with circumventing the patent system by acquiring a patent and signing a contract with a front person, which allowed migrants to work outside the jobs specified by the patent. Additionally, there was the problem of false reasons for entry, presented as tourism, education, or private purposes, while in reality, the actual objective was employment (FIDH, 2016). A similar issue is attributed to labour migrants from CIS countries, who are not required to obtain a visa under the Agreement on Visa-Free Movement of Citizens of the States of the Commonwealth of Independent States (1992). By

those means migrants were able to enter the country with a touristic purpose and then work with no permit, thereby circumventing the status of migrant workers. This trend underlined the challenges of fully integrating migrants into the formal economy and persistent barriers to fully realising the legalisation objectives.

According to Kenzhebekova (2013) and Isa (2018), the reluctance or inability to enter into formal employment contracts and legalise themselves as migrant workers was driven by particular factors, including employers' unwillingness to comply with tax obligations, a strict five-day registration requirement, and a general lack of awareness of legal benefits. As a result, migrants were often forced to purchase "patents" - permission to work in the household, without formal employment, sometimes resorting to bribery to secure minimal legal protection.

In 2013, agreements were signed between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, ratified by Law No. 201-V (2014), which included coordination between human trafficking and illegal migration. However, despite the agreement, there were no laws specifically addressing the problem of human trafficking in Kazakhstan, with only international law norms relating to human trafficking included in some sectoral legislative acts (Khamzin, Khamzina, Mukhamedzhanov, et al., 2023). Thus, the problem of human trafficking persisted in Kazakhstan as a shadow phenomenon.

Subsequently, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine marked another key shift in Kazakhstan's migration patterns. According to Hanks and Tatibekov (2023) since 2014, Kazakhstan's economy has been contracting due to international sanctions affecting Russia as a key trading partner and the simultaneous fall in global oil prices. According to World Bank data (n.d.-c), Kazakhstan's GDP dropped from 236.63 billion US dollars to 137.28 billion in 2016.

Another important moment for Kazakhstan was the proposal of the Belt and Road Initiative initiative by the President of China during his visit to Kazakhstan in 2013. While the initiative document did not address migration matters, all projects under the initiative concerned the movement of

labour (Sadovskaya, 2019). Since 2013, the number of labour migrants from China under the quota has increased significantly, reaching a peak in 2015 with 1,733 people (Sadovskaya, 2019, p. 9).

While the total net migration balance remained positive from 2004, with a decline during the 2007 crisis, its number recovered by 2010 (15,516 people), subsequently decreasing to a negative value by 2012 (-1,426). The number of emigrants began to exceed the number of immigrants into the country

Between 2008 and 2014, there was a considerable decrease in the number of immigrants. In 2008, the total number of immigrants was 46,404, with a slight increase of 1.32% in 2010. However, by 2014, the total number had decreased to 16,784. While the number of immigrants from Uzbekistan was growing until 2010, reaching 21,160, in the following years, their numbers tended to decline. Similarly, immigrants from Russia continued to decline. In 2008, the number of Russian immigrants was 9,769, but by 2014, the number had notably decreased to 3,711 people. A similar trend of decline was observed for immigrants from China. While in 2008, their number reached the highest level for the period of 2000-2023, with 6,328 immigrants, by 2014, it considerably decreased to 630 people. It is also important to note that while the number of immigrants from Germany experienced a consistent decline until 2013, increasing by 4.14% in 2014. A similar trend was observed for immigrants from Ukraine, with an increase of 3.62%.

The number of emigrants in 2008 was 45,287 people, decreasing by 24.96% in 2009 (33,985) and by 21.90% in 2010 (26,541). Only in 2011 the total number of emigrants increased by 24.03%, subsequently decreasing until 2013, with 24,384 people, and then rising to 28,946 in 2014. The country with the highest outflow of emigrants in 2008 was Russia (41,159 people), with a trend of decreasing emigrant numbers until 2011, followed by an increase of 27.03% (29,850 people) and a decrease until 2013 (20,839). In 2014, the increase in emigrants to Russia was 14.49% (23,859 people), indicating a new trend for outflow. The second most popular country for emigration was Germany (1,590 people), followed by Belarus (694 people) and Ukraine (378 people). The trend of decreasing emigration to Germany was observed until 2012 (818 people), increasing by 47.43% in 2013 and acquiring a growth

trend. The number of emigrants to China persisted but remained relatively small. Moreover, since 2013, a trend of increasing emigration can be observed.

1.3. 2015-2021

In 2015, the largest number of immigrants was represented by citizens of Uzbekistan, totaling 7,592 people, with a continuing trend of decline. In contrast, the number of immigrants from Turkmenistan increased by 35.40% (765 people), and from Tajikistan slightly by 6.6% (210 people) in 2015. At the same time, the number of immigrants from Kyrgyzstan decreased by 25.43% in 2015, their inflow continued to fluctuate, increasing only in 2017 and 2020.

It is also noteworthy that the number of immigrants from China increased by 98.25% (1,249 people) in 2015 compared to the previous year, with a slight upward trend until 2017. However, this number decreased by 54.76% to 1,364 people in 2018, compared to 3,015 people in 2017. Additionally, the immigration trend from Germany underwent some changes. While there had previously been a tendency of decreasing numbers of immigrants from Germany, starting from 2013, the trend became more fluctuate with increases of 26.14% in 2015, 5.14% in 2017, and 7.98% in 2019. Similarly, the number of immigrants from Ukraine had predominantly decreased before, it began to rise in 2015, amounting to 143 people in 2015 and 291 in 2017, subsequently declining until 2020.

Further amendments were made in 2015 to change migration patterns and address the shortage of skilled workers. These changes deliberately reduced the employment costs for foreign skilled workers below those for unskilled labour, relaxed the quota system, and allowed skilled migrants an employment search period of three months (Joyamerger, 2016). Additionally, amendments were made to the law "On Population Migration," incorporating the concept of intra-corporate transfer (Law No. 477-IV, 2015). In addition, as a measure to regulate the labour market and the ratio of foreign specialists in companies, Law No. 559 (2016) established the rules under which at least 70% of management positions in companies must be held by citizens of Kazakhstan, and 90% for roles involving skilled professionals and workers.

While, the problem of skilled labour shortage has been growing, and since 2016, the number of Kazakhs who have left in search of better jobs outside of the country has increased. Between 2016 and 2019, Russia and the European Union were the primary destinations, followed by the United States, Canada, South Korea, and Japan. Moreover, the number of professionals seeking jobs abroad doubled in the following five years because of oil price changes and economic crises (Khasimov et al., 2022).

At the same time in 2015, Constitutional Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 438-V (2015) introduced the concept of the International Financial Centre Astana (IFCA), a territory within the city of Astana that has a special legal regime in the financial sphere. Accordingly, foreigners who are employees or participants of the centre were exempt from paying individual income tax on income from activities under an employment contract until 2066, provisioning an entry visa for foreigners valid for up to five years. It is worth noting that the preference for a 5-year visa validity period is available only for MFCA participants, other visa categories provide a maximum period of three years, which was also fixed in the Joint Decree of the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2016). Additionally, in the amendment to the Law on Migration of Population of January 11, 2020, submission of migration cards were replaced with a border crossing mark, which signifies the beginning of the duration of stay in the country (Law No. 477-IV, 2020).

Subsequently, in the amendments to the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 148, (2012), Kazakhstan established a visa-free regime for up to 30 days for citizens of 45 countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, implementing registration in a simplified manner (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 838, 2016).

An important event during this period was the hosting of EXPO-2017. According to the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2023b), despite the preceding trend of declining immigration, in 2017 the number of immigrants increased by 13.38%. The main countries of origin were Russia (4,346 people), despite a decline in

previous years, with an increase of 16.73%, China (3,015 people) with an increase of 42.62% compared to the previous year, the USA (101 people) with an increase of 152.50%, Afghanistan (129 people) with an increase of 230.77%, Canada (34 people) with an increase of 70%, and Korea (41 people) with an increase of 51.85%.

The evolution of migration policies continued with the adoption of a new migration policy concept for 2017-2021. Following previous concepts, acknowledging the problem of skilled labour shortage (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 602, 2017). In addition, stressing difficulties with an oversupply of low-skilled labour from neighbouring countries. The main aims of that period were the facilitation of work permits and the liberalisation of visa conditions for foreigners (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 602, 2017). In addition to the inconsistency of the regional quota for the attraction of foreign labour with the plans of socio-economic development within strategic programs. As well as stressing the need for better statistical recording of all flows of the foreign labour force, both skilled and unskilled, including workers from Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) countries. While Kazakhstan had been trying to attract skilled workers, by 2018, the national "Bolashak" program had awarded approximately 3,000 Bolashak scholarships and trained over 10,000 specialists, 44% of these graduated in the UK and Ireland, 26% in the USA and Canada, 14% in Asia and Oceania, 8% in continental Europe, and 8% in Russia (Bokayev et al., 2020). Despite this, Bokayev et al. (2020) revealed that a significant number of graduates aged 23-28 tend to leave the country after completing their compulsory requirements to return and work in Kazakhstan, identifying economic factors as the driving force.

According to Ibraeva (2018), one of the biggest centres of attraction for migrants from Kazakhstan was the Russian Federation, where the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) considerably influenced this trend, as well as the successful repatriation policy of the Russian Federation from the former Soviet Union republics, contributing to further outflows. Moreover, the primary direction of migrants from Kazakhstan for education remains in Russia (IOM & KazISS, 2019).

Statistics indicate that between 2009 and 2019, the number of full-time students from Kazakhstan enrolled in higher education programs in the Russian Federation increased annually, with the highest number recorded in 2018, of 40 thousand students (IOM & KazISS, 2019, p. 16).

Before the pandemic, in 2018, the "patent" system introduced in 2013 was improved by opening migration service centres in all regions of the country, providing "patents" to foreigners, and in 2021, this function was transferred to public service centres (Khamzin, Khamzina, Mukhamedzhanov, et al., 2023).

In addition, the amendments to the law "On Migration of Population" of the population were made in 2021, while in a previous version of the law, the authorised body could only propose to the government quota allocation, in the 2021 amendments, the body itself sets the quota for the recruitment of foreign labour force (Law No. 477-IV, 2020). As part of the 2021 changes, the issuance, renewal, and revocation of a labour immigrant's permit have been provided to local executive bodies, which were not previously stipulated (Law No. 477-IV, 2021). Moreover, the legislation was also supplemented by the introduction of single-entry electronic visas for business, tourism, and medical treatment without requiring an embassy visit (Joint Order of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 21165, 2020).

Later in 2020, at the height of the pandemic, Kazakhstan, among 103 states signed a Joint Statement on the Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants dated 12.06.2020. As noted by Khamzin, Khamzina, Aldabergenova, et al. (2023), the restrictions imposed in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the presence of seasonal foreign workers in the labour market. At that time, the number of foreign workers in Kazakhstan under the quota was 17.3 thousand people, which is equal to 0.19% of the total labour force of the country, which is significantly less than the 2019 - 31.9% (Alshanskaya & Azatbek, 2022). Moreover, the number of workers employed by individuals under a "patent" has declined markedly, the vast majority of whom were Uzbek and Kyrgyz nationals (Khamzin, Khamzina, Aldabergenova, et al., 2023).

During the pandemic Kazakhstan suspended the Visa-free regime for citizens of 57 countries and 72-hour transit for citizens of China and India (Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021). Public services such as document processing, issuance of visas, and labour "patents" were subjected to restriction. Also, initiatives during the state of emergency and within 60 days after the termination of visas, residence, and work permits with expired terms were recognized as valid, allowing migrants to legally stay in the country. Additionally, a transitional period was established until 5 June 2021, during which foreign citizens were exempted from administrative liability for violation of migration legislation related to restrictive measures. Moreover, in cooperation with Russia, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, transit passage of citizens of these countries through Kazakhstan was organised (Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021).

Based on data from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2023b), in 2020, the influx of immigrants decreased by only 7.22% compared to 2019, further decreasing by 2.91% in 2021, amounting to 11,370 people. Notably, despite restrictions, the number of migrants from Turkey increased from 136 to 312 in 2020. In contrast, the decrease in the influx of immigrants from China was observed only in 2021, sharply falling by 83.97%, from 1,553 to 249 people.

Regarding neighbouring Central Asian countries, the number of immigrants from Kyrgyzstan increased from 2019 by 24.33% (465 people) in 2020 and by 20.65% (561 people) in 2021. Meanwhile, the number of immigrants from Uzbekistan decreased by 38.81% to 2,554 people in 2020, followed by an increase of 63.82% in 2021. The number of immigrants from Turkmenistan also increased from 879 people in 2019 to 1,189 in 2020, then decreased by 70.82% to 347 people in 2021. Conversely, the number of immigrants from Tajikistan fell by 26.18% in 2019 compared to 2018, amounting to 172 people, then increased by 56.39% to 269 people in 2021. It is important to note that 2021 had the lowest number of immigrants to the country within the period from 2000 to 2023.

The number of emigrants significantly decreased by 35.68% to 29,088 people in 2020, subsequently increasing by 10.89% in 2021. The main countries of emigration were Russia (26,717), Germany (3,138), Poland (459), the USA (338), Belarus (288), and Uzbekistan (287). At the same time, the trend observed since 2013 of increasing outflow to Russia declined in 2020, amounting to 25,126 people, with a slight increase of 6.33% during the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching 26,717 people. Moreover, the trend of increasing emigration since 2013 declined after the year 2021.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

According to the definition of new institutionalism, institutions are the "rules of the game" in society or the human-made constraints that shape human interaction (Schotter, 1981, p. 11, as cited in Hodgson, 1998, p. 179). These institutions encompass not only organisations but also integrated and systematised social entities such as money and laws (Hodgson, 1998, p. 179). Furthermore, no institution is ever 'complete', but is always in a state of development, representing the product of human activity and the result of political struggle (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013, p. 73).

The contestation that occurs during ideological struggles for institutional change serves as a source of contingent effects that shape the policy paths chosen by actors during and immediately after conflict (Blyth, cited in Lowndes & Roberts, 2013, p. 156). According to Lowndes & Roberts (2013, pp. 157-158), contingent effects have both temporal and spatial dimensions. Temporally, some effects have an immediate impact on the behaviour of actors, while others only become apparent over time. Spatially, the behaviour of actors outside the immediate policy arena can influence those within it, even if the peripheral actors did not plan for or recognise their impact. Under the pressure of time, political actors create institutions that often include contradictions and compromises. Although actors may be aware that their actions may have long-term or broader consequences, they often take a 'calculated risk' in the hope that the worst scenarios will not occur (Pierson, 2000, as cited in Lowndes & Roberts, 2013, p. 157).

For instance, Massey et al. (1993, p. 461) argue that the imbalance between supply and demand for entry visas creates a niche for entrepreneurs who provide legal and illegal entry services for immigrants. This situation leads to further exploitation, prompting humanitarian organisations to intervene on behalf of immigrants. Such intervention establishes an additional form of social infrastructure, which over time strengthens and increases international migration flows. As organisations develop to support and promote international movement, migration flows become more institutionalised and less dependent on the initial factors that triggered them. The overall direction of these changes increases the likelihood of new movements, a process known as cumulative causation. This means that each act of migration shapes the social context in which subsequent migration decisions are made, increasing the possibility of further movements (Massey et al., 1993, p. 451). Thus, migration flows become self-reinforcing and continue over time.

Contrary to profit-seekers who do not seek to fulfil the common interests of all members of society, Non-profit organisations (NGOs) have advantages in supporting vulnerable groups compared to government agencies (Sama, 2012). These advantages include flexibility, lack of bureaucratic procedures, cost-effectiveness, the ability to involve beneficiaries in their activities, and the ability to adapt to changing conditions and community needs (Browne 1990; Lindenberg & Dobel 1999, cited in Sama, 2012). NGOs can be seen as institutions that bridge civil society, the state, and markets, operating in the organisational domain and ensuring the sustainability of civil society institutions favourable to the most vulnerable segments of the population (Cameron, 2000). Moreover, NGOs play a crucial role in providing direct assistance to migrants, such as legal aid, healthcare, and integration support. These efforts complement those of governmental agencies and international organisations, resulting in a more comprehensive response to migration issues. Therefore, conducting an analysis of data obtained from NGOs, organisations, and firms that assist with visa acquisition is equally important as analysing data from governmental institutions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The study employs two qualitative research methods: document analysis and semi-structured elite/expert interviews, with the rationale for a comprehensive understanding of the migration dynamics in Kazakhstan, providing the ground for data triangulation.

3.1. Research Design

The research design is structured around a historical event research framework, which examines events with significant developmental impacts and tests the implications of a general theory (Halperin & Heath, 2020). In particular, this research focuses on the post-pandemic period and the war in Ukraine, as well as the transformation of migration dynamics and legislative, regulatory, and policy changes.

3.2. Participant selection

A purposive sample was used to recruit participants for the study. This method was employed to validate that the participants possess the required knowledge and expertise to meaningfully contribute to the research project. Upon the compilation of the study 9 participants were enrolled and interviewed (see. Appendix A). Participants were found on the LinkedIn website, with a specific search within relevant organisations. Furtherly recruited by email invitation. Individuals lacking expertise in migration studies and those who had only recently assumed their current positions and possessed no substantial experience in the field were excluded.

3.3. Data Collection Methods

The data collection process involved document analysis and semi-structured elite/expert interviews. Accordingly, publicly available documents were gathered for analysis, including reports, policy documents, and legal acts from relevant government entities, as well as other relevant documents, such as think tanks, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations. Following the general interview guidelines and ethical implications approved by the ethical committee

of Maqsut Narkibayev University, semi-structured elite/expert interviews with participants were conducted. Before the interview, the participants were provided with a consent form containing information about the study and the procedures to be followed. All interviews were conducted in Russian language. The majority of them lasted approximately 60 minutes, with some questions omitted due to the lack of sufficient information on migration-related tendencies among some experts, not related to their job specifications or expertise. Data collection was conducted on a voluntary basis, utilising face-to-face and virtual interviews in organised meetings held via the Zoom platform. Some of the interviews were conducted in organisations' offices and cafés. No compensation was provided for participation in the interview process since the research team lacked the funding. To ensure the validity of the obtained data, detailed notes were taken during the interviews by all three members of the research team. This approach was employed to prevent any instances of alienation of data, the detailed notes were taken by means of handwriting and typing on Google Docs platform, to avoid potential risks, all data was directly anonymized. In addition, the interview responses were accessed exclusively by three research participants using the inbuilt function of providing access to the document via email. The comprehensive data collection strategy described above enabled us to increase the credibility of the findings.

3.4. Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was employed to provide a comprehensive analysis of migration trends and management. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis enables a comprehensive examination of the entire dataset, allowing for in-depth exploration of specific aspects of a phenomenon. Following the data analysis procedures, the initial step in identifying themes was familiarisation with the notes. Inductive coding was subsequently performed. The primary method for coding was descriptive coding, reflecting themes or patterns that were immediately apparent (Cope, 2010). The codes were manually assigned using the "comments" feature in Google Docs, a web-based document editing platform, the phrases, sentences, and paragraphs were attributed to explicitly reflect a

particular extract of information (Appendix A.) After the initial round of coding, codes deemed irrelevant to the study were excluded. The total number of codes that emerged was 556, with the recurring codes combined to create 226 unique codes, 197 codes were utilised for analysis. These codes were subsequently transferred to Google Sheets for further aggregation into themes within the second round of coding (Appendix A). The interview responses with assigned codes and tables with codes were accessed exclusively by three research participants using the inbuilt function of access to the document via email. The codes for the analysis were selected according to their relevance to the research questions of the study. The derived codes were organised into themes, in accordance with Creswell (2011) to provide a qualitative description. Key subthemes were derived to provide a more detailed analysis.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis with the approval of the ethics committee of Maqсут Narikbayev University. The harm or discomfort experienced by our participants did not exceed that typically encountered in their everyday professional lives, as the professionals, the participants were accustomed to regular interactions with researchers and journalists. Participants for the interview were approached solely for their professional knowledge and expertise, possessing the roles of representatives of the stakeholder institutions relevant to our study. Following these standards, a consent form was provided before the start of the interview. The form included information about the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research, along with the measures taken to ensure confidentiality, incorporating anonymization throughout the entire research process. Additionally, the consent form included the benefits of participation, as it provides the platform to highlight and draw attention to issues within migration management that might not have been recognized before, as well as the potential implications of the findings for their work. During the interview stage, the information provided by participants was written on paper in the form of detailed notes, upon completion, the notes were shared with participants for their approval and any additional comments.

3.6. Limitations

The limitations in time and resources restricted participant recruitment, narrowing the perspectives covered in our study. Moreover, some participants were reluctant to respond to our interview requests. Therefore, analysis of asylum seekers and refugees was omitted.

Chapter 4: Findings

To answer the research questions three main themes were identified: Evolving Migration Trends, Recent Policies and Enhancements, and Disadvantages of Kazakhstan's migration management.

4.1. Evolving Migration Trends

The theme incorporates sub-themes: Characteristics of Migration, Reasons for movement, Specific Migrant Origins and Destinations and Impact of immigration of foreigners.

A primary finding was that the migration trend was not significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, six Experts¹ highlighted that there was no notable difference or substantial gap in percentage and that the overall trend was consistent. It was evident that, following the reopening of borders, patterns merely recovered to their pre-Covid levels. Five Experts² clearly referred to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict as a pivotal shift in migratory patterns. Furthermore, five Experts³ pointed that the influx from Russia was persistent and will keep continuing. In contrast, Experts (C) and (F) identified a recent trend of immigrants returning to Russia. Furthermore, there was a debate among Experts about how welcoming Kazakhstan was to newcomers. Expert (E) claimed that the country was hospitable to Russians, while Expert (D) argued that the market was not open to them. As discussed by the Experts, the influx of foreigners to Kazakhstan varies in different situations. In accordance with Expert (C), some immigrants stayed in Kazakhstan due to their in-demand skills or small businesses, while others chose to leave. However, the influx of labour migrants was relatively small, and there is

¹ Experts (A,B,C,D,E,F)

² Experts (B,C,D,E,F)

³ Experts (B,E,F,G,H)
(See. Appendix A)

still a need for a labour force. Furthermore, as Expert (D) highlighted, significant impact of the war might be observed in specific sectors, particularly referring to the influx of IT specialists to Kazakhstan. According to Expert (E), a notable influx of IT specialists fell on the "first round" of the migration. Although, as Expert (C) observed, IT specialists did not stay for long and used Kazakhstan as a transit country. As some Experts concluded⁴ Kazakhstan served as a primary transit country due to the impact of Western sanctions and the inability to obtain Schengen visas, as well as the disagreement with the political situation in the homeland, prompting people to relocate in search of better conditions abroad. In addition, Expert (C) observed a growing trend of individuals seeking temporary residence permits to engage in legal employment in Kazakhstan. The closure of numerous companies' branches and headquarters in Russia, resulted in a shortage of job opportunities for these professionals. As a result, many of them relocated to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. According to Expert (D), approximately 3 million Russians crossed the border with Kazakhstan between September 2022 and January 2023. Following the company relocation, employees from Russia and Belarus moved to Kazakhstan. As a result of the influx, as Experts (C) and (D) indicated, the country's inflation rate, property prices and the cost of services have risen. According to Expert (C), Kazakhstan was called a "Big Village" in terms of living standards, leading people from Russia to move to Dubai, Turkey, Thailand, or other Central Asian countries where the cost of living is lower.

Moreover, a considerable number of low-skilled workers from Central Asian countries, particularly Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, have immigrated to Kazakhstan, mostly working in agriculture, as well as occupying jobs as loaders and security guards. According to Expert (B), after the war, there has been a noticeable trend where Central Asian citizens, who previously tended to emigrate to Russia, are now increasingly choosing Kazakhstan as their destination. At the same time, a significant number of them are illegal migrants, as observed by Expert (D), filling the shortage of labour in the construction sector. Moreover, as Experts (C) and (D) highlighted, the influx of Central Asian migrants and asylum seekers was not causally related to the development of Kazakhstan's migration

⁴ *Experts (A,B,C,D)*
(See. *Appendix A*)

policies. Rather, as a consequence of the deterioration in their home countries, in terms of economics, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the War in Ukraine. According to Expert (D), Kazakhstan remained an attractive destination for migrants from Central Asian countries.

Additionally, some Experts provided insights on other nationalities immigrating to Kazakhstan. According to Expert (C), immigrants from China were attracted to projects such as the Astana Light Metro, with many pursuing business opportunities, predominantly in western cities of Kazakhstan. However, it is notable that immigrants from China also occupy positions in the retail sector, as noted Expert (I). Furthermore, highly skilled professionals from Italy, Europe, and the USA immigrate to Kazakhstan to work for major companies, including TengizChevroil and Eni S.p.A. Along with that, there is a significant presence of Turks drawn by business prospects and an established diaspora as mentioned by Expert (C). In addition people from South Asia frequently migrate to Kazakhstan for educational purposes as Expert (D) noted. However in terms of labour migration, Expert (G) emphasised that migrants from India and Pakistan are strictly regulated to engage only in priority types of activities.

Regarding the selection of cities, Almaty is perceived as a more attractive destination for foreigners, offering a greater range of opportunities for business development. Astana is regarded as a more favourable location for IT specialists with regard to digitalization, with the Astana Hub and Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) also contributing to its appeal. Western cities are typically associated with natural resource extraction companies with oil and gas being the most prominent sectors.

In terms of emigration from Kazakhstan, there is a tendency for people to engage in seasonal work abroad as a "means for families to earn money", as noted by Expert (E). Each year, approximately 5,000 individuals travel to the UK and around 15,000 to South Korea, as well as to Europe, the United States, and the Czech Republic for agricultural jobs and other unskilled labour positions. Despite the challenging nature of these jobs and the cultural differences encountered, most workers return home

afterwards. Common jobs include truck driving, harvesting (such as cherry and raspberry picking), construction work, waiting in the hospitality industry, and factory work. According to Experts (C) and (D), emigration is predominantly undertaken by qualified people, as the process requires considerable investment, including the purchase of tickets, travel costs, and language skills. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of these qualified professionals seek employment at major corporations, such as Airbnb, Booking.com, and Google. The main driving factors for emigration, as highlighted by Experts (C), (D), and (E), include the inability to fully utilise their knowledge domestically, more favourable working conditions abroad, and better employment opportunities. Additional motivations include the political situation in Central Asia and currency devaluations. Regarding the prospective evolution of the migratory situation in Kazakhstan, some Experts anticipate that the prevailing trend will persist, with the majority of migrants continuing to come from Russia and Ukraine.

4.2. Recent Policies and Enhancements

The findings indicate a positive trend in a country's migration policies and regulations. Notably, Kazakhstan has made significant progress in digitalizing its migration services, as highlighted by all Experts. Accordingly, Kazakhstan's migration services have been integrated into the eGov platform, enabling better document processing. The digitalization of services has led to the online processing of work permit applications, thereby simplifying and accelerating relevant processes. This trend towards simplification has made processes easier, faster, and more transparent, as well as reducing corruption. Moreover, Kazakhstan is actively developing its IT sector, with initiatives such as the Astana Hub and AIFC facilitating the registration of Limited Liability Partnerships (LLP) and the employment of foreigners in the IT field.

Regarding the measures to protect the domestic labour market, quotas, local content restrictions, and requirements for foreigners remain in place. The Ministry of Labour allocates quotas annually, considering the number of unemployed people to avoid exceeding the unemployment level. The annual number of quotas is revised each year. In 2008, approximately 65,000 individuals were included in the

quota and approximately 20,000 individuals were currently included. Although quota allocation is used to regulate the quantity of foreign workers in Kazakhstan, it may also affect labour force shortages. Also, companies are required to adhere to local content requirements. This stipulates that 70% of positions in managerial roles must be filled by Kazakhstani citizens, while 90% of skilled worker roles must be filled by Kazakhstani citizens. Furthermore, special commissions require Kazakhstani citizens to be hired and trained instead of hiring foreigners. To obtain a work permit, companies must confirm the qualifications of the foreigner, including a higher education diploma and at least three to five years of work experience.

Correspondingly, Experts have highlighted several ongoing enhancements in Kazakhstan's migration policy, including improvements in legislation and the expansion of visa-free regimes. Expert (A) noted that migration legislation in Kazakhstan is improving each year, with rules being revised to simplify the list of required documents and reduce the processing timelines. Kazakhstan's visa-free regimes are continuously expanding, with citizens of 82 countries currently having the opportunity to enter the country without a visa. Additionally, as Experts note Kazakhstan plans to sign agreements with South Korea, Qatar regarding the protection of migrants' rights, and the United Kingdom under the Employment Permit System (EPS), indicating efforts to strengthen cooperation in employment and migration. According to Expert (C), another crucial area that is being improved is youth involvement, noting steps taken to enhance the participation of youth in governance by the current government.

4.3. Disadvantages of Kazakhstan's migration management

A key finding was that the main problems motivating people to emigrate are poor working conditions, the treatment of workers in the workplace, and the problem of overwork that persists. Moreover, the lack of specific legal provisions also affects the activities of private employment agencies, which aggravates the situation for both citizens leaving Kazakhstan in search of work and migrants as stated by Expert (F). As a result, the laws that should regulate employment security do not work. As noted by Expert (G), the law protecting migrants' rights and the labour code do not address the

issue of employing foreigners without a contract. This leads to violations of their permitted stay, resulting in deportation and a re-entry ban for up to 5 years, while the employer merely pays a fine for the violation. At the same time, the need for measures to address the problem of human trafficking is obvious. As Expert (G) states, the legislation of the Republic also does not provide certain regulations for private employment agencies, which then violate human rights. Expert (B) noted a crucial need for political and economic change, with an increasing number of young people considering leaving the country for a promising future. In those terms, corruption represents a significant challenge that exacerbates the country's economic situation as it was emphasised by Expert (C). Concurrently, the issues of cost of living, taxes for businesses, and wages require enhancements.

Expert (D) highlighted the need for solutions in the form of enhanced educational standards and a more conducive work environment for the younger generation, particularly for those who have recently graduated from university and are eager to contribute to the workforce. In addition, the undervaluation of workers implies the need to raise the status of skilled professionals. Some qualified workers tend to leave the country because of negative attitudes. Another crucial issue pertains to the necessity of enhancements in the monitoring data system. The existing system, which encompasses foreigners' immigration, integrating border services, migration services, and national security committees, needs additional enhancement in terms of technical aspects that delay the visa issuance process. Similar problems are observed for Temporary Residence permit issuance. In addition to the aforementioned improvements, the data system must also undergo simplification and operational discretion, particularly regarding the time required for visa processing.

Regarding potential enhancements, it is evident that additional visa categories are required. The need for enhancements in the migration law, the labour code, and tax code was also mentioned by Expert (B), while it poses no instructions on how foreigners should act in some situations, so it is easier for Migration Services to "reject immigration". For instance, if a Russian citizen wishes to establish an LLP in the country, they are required to obtain a residence permit rather than a visa. This discrepancy

highlights the lack of alignment between temporary residence permits and needs. The limited list of current visa purposes is limiting individuals, forcing them to falsely claim other purposes for country entrance. In addition, some categories do not align with individuals' specific needs. Furthermore, Expert (B) highlighted the inflexibility of legislation, stating that individuals who possess work experience but lack a diploma will be denied a work permit because of the absence of a diploma, effectively excluding them based on their educational qualifications alone. Meanwhile, some Experts argue that the inflow of foreigners and migrants might be more beneficial since the country experiences a workforce shortage, while others argue that regulations by quotas and requirements protect the domestic market. Additionally, Expert (A) highlights that Kazakhstan might benefit from offering foreign investors more privileges and faster access to visas than regular working visas. Additional initiatives to simplify visa issues and overstaying the deadlines on the spot could simplify the process of staying in the country for foreign citizens. As Expert (E) notes, migrants crossing the border cannot physically manage to apply to the services for legalisation of their stay in due time.

4.4. Human Trafficking

As Expert (H) noted, the opening of borders undoubtedly affected the situation of human trafficking. If 70% of those involved in human trafficking were foreign nationals, then often more than half of them, about 60%, were citizens of Uzbekistan. Furthermore, as Expert (H) emphasised, Kazakhstan is the only country in Central Asia that does not have a separate law on national counter-trafficking in human beings. The current legislation allows cases to be initiated only under related articles, such as restriction of freedom, prostitution, involvement of minors in prostitution, or, for example, the organisation of a brothel. There are often elements of human trafficking that are very difficult to prove, and the fact of purchase and sale is also very difficult to prove because, according to our criminal legislation, the definition of human trafficking begins with the words "purchase and sale." The problem is also exacerbated by the lack of legal frameworks in the legislation regarding the activities of private employment agencies, as noted by Expert (F). Their control and activities are not

regulated in any way. Both Experts (F) and (H) noted a significant problem in the discrepancy of statistics. While applications to the Ministry of Internal Affairs are declarative in nature, NGOs often identify cases of human trafficking and help to extract people from exploitation, protecting their rights.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Migration in Kazakhstan after the pandemic has shown that institutions established by immigrants before the pandemic remain stable despite external shocks. Although experts have not noted significant changes in the country's migration situation after the pandemic, and have rather attributed these changes to the beginning of the war in Ukraine (see Chapter 4), it is quite challenging to delineate the changes following the COVID-19 pandemic and the lifting of restrictions from the onset of the war. This is because the gradual lifting of restrictions and the restoration of flows coincided with the start of the war. The restoration of the unilateral visa-free regime for citizens of 57 countries came into effect on January 1, 2022, while the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine occurred on February 24, 2022 (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 286, 2021; Address by the President of the Russian Federation, 2022). Meanwhile, the opening of land borders for citizens of Russia, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan was only undertaken on April 11, 2022, and the cancellation of the requirement to provide a vaccination passport and a negative PCR test result for Covid-19 when crossing the border occurred on June 8, 2022 (The Press Service of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022; Resolution of the Chief State Sanitary Doctor of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 27, 2022). According to data from the Kazakhstan Committee on Statistics, in 2022, the influx of immigrants increased by 57.85% compared to 2021. In particular, the influx of Russian citizens grew by 70.46%, from 3,456 to 5,891 people, while the influx from Ukraine and Belarus did not change significantly, with only an increase in the number of immigrants from Belarus in 2023 by 72.22%, amounting to 155 people, compared to 90 people in 2022. Simultaneously, there was a decrease in the outflow of emigrants from the country by 25.14% in 2022, amounting to 19,383 compared to 2021 (26,717 people), with a subsequent reduction of 33.35% (11,737 people) in 2023. This reduction in outflow has never been observed before. The total number of immigrants in 2022 increased by 57.85%

compared to the previous year, while the number of emigrants decreased by 25.14%. In the following year, 2023, the number of emigrants decreased by another 33.35%, amounting to almost half the number of people leaving compared to 2021. The net migration balance for 2022 and 2023 amounted to -6,722 and 9,293 people respectively. It is noteworthy that a positive net migration balance in Kazakhstan had not been observed since 2011. Moreover, analysing the statistics from 2000 to 2023, the lowest number of emigrants from the country was also recorded in 2023.

Moreover, as the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2022) reports, in 2022, the largest number of arrivals were Russian citizens (2,900,000 people). While previously the average daily immigration of Russians was about 8-9 thousand people per day, in 2022 the average daily influx of Russians reached up to 30,000 people per day.

Despite the desire to capitalise on the influx of specialists mentioned in Kazakhstan's migration policy concept for 2023-2027, presented in Government Resolution No. 961 (2022), Kazakhstan was unable to fully benefit from this influx. This is because the influx of Russians was predominantly characterised by transit movements.

Since September 21, 205,000 Russian citizens have left Kazakhstan for other countries: 47,000 to Uzbekistan, 46,000 to Kyrgyzstan, 37,000 to Turkey, and 19,000 to the UAE (Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022). Furthermore, as experts noted, the increased cost of living also influenced the outflow of Russians. In 2022, there was a sharp rise in rental housing prices. From February to March, a slight increase of approximately 22% was observed, followed by a significant rise from July to October, increasing by nearly 54% compared to the same month of the previous year (Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023a). At the same time, there was a sharp increase in the prices of consumer goods and services. By May 2022, the increase amounted to 19% (food products), 14% (goods and services), 11.9% (non-food products), and 9.1% (paid services), with an average increase of approximately 91.97% from May 2021 to May 2022 (Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022).

It should also be noted that significant institutional changes were facilitated by the development of the IT market and the process of digitization in Kazakhstan. Projects such as Astana Hub and AIFC, providing tax preferences for companies and foreign citizens, also stimulated the influx of foreigners. The relocation of companies and their support in relocating employees boosted the influx of foreigners into Kazakhstan's labour market. By August 2023, more than 40 firms had relocated from Russia, including both international and Russian companies (The Press Service of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023). However, it is difficult to attribute the influx of foreign IT specialists to the country solely to Astana Hub, as IT specialists are more mobile and not tied to a specific location, having the ability to work for companies outside the country. Respondents noted that the main flow of foreign citizens from Russia headed to major cities such as Astana and Almaty, as they offer greater prospects for work and business.

Furthermore, it can be said that the Belt and Road Initiative, launched in 2013, has also significantly influenced the number of foreign specialists in the country. Experts note that foreign specialists from China often head to the western part of the country due to the presence of large extractive companies. For instance, in Trofimova's (2023) article, it is noted that China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), one of the largest oil companies, is a shareholder in many Kazakhstani extractive companies. Additionally, the construction of an automobile manufacturing plant in Almaty could be factors contributing to the influx of Chinese citizens. According to information, the number of immigrants from China increased from 249 to 416 people in 2022 and by 137.26% in 2023, amounting to 987 people, making China the fifth largest source country of immigrants in Kazakhstan.

Migrants from Turkey were attracted by business and educational opportunities, whereas migrants from South Asian countries were more attracted by educational opportunities in Kazakhstan. Based on statistics, the number of students from India has been steadily increasing, amounting to 3,500 people in 2017 and 7,321 people in 2022 (Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022).

During this period, Kazakhstan continued to be a key destination for migrants from Central Asian countries, a significant number of whom came from Uzbekistan (2,300,000 people), Kyrgyzstan (730,000 people), and Tajikistan (330,000 people) (Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022). The influx of immigrants from Central Asian countries also underwent changes. The number of immigrants from Uzbekistan increased by 58.48%, from 4,184 in 2021 to 6,631 in 2022, and 6,519 in 2023, making it the second-largest source country of immigrants after Russia. A significant increase in the influx of immigrants was also observed from Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, at 82.53% and 82.42% respectively by 2022, with a subsequent increase of 30.14% and 84.20% in 2023, amounting to 639 immigrants from Tajikistan and 1,166 from Turkmenistan, making them the 7th and 3rd largest source countries of immigrants in Kazakhstan. The influx of migrants from Kyrgyzstan remained stable, showing an average growth of 23.79% from 2019 to 2022, increasing only in 2023 by 44.15%, amounting to 1,022 people and making it the 4th largest source country of immigrants. The pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis exacerbated the situation for Central Asian countries, as the region heavily depends on growth factors such as remittances and the export of raw materials, as well as an undiversified production and export structure, job shortages, and a high level of informal employment in some countries (OECD, 2020). The subsequent border closures and the decline in international demand during the pandemic significantly impacted the economies of these countries.

As experts noted (see. Chapter 4), the primary types of employment for migrants from these countries in Kazakhstan were in the agricultural and construction sectors. Despite the influx, the shortage of labour remains a pressing issue, which is also highlighted in the Migration Policy Concept for 2023-2027. This document characterises internal migration from villages to cities as an additional problem and a burden on infrastructure and the construction sector (Government Resolution of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 961, 2022).

While the migration situation has undergone significant changes, Kazakhstan's policies - such as the quota system, restrictions on the percentage of foreign nationals, and necessary conditions for

issuing temporary permits aimed at supporting the domestic labour market - have significantly limited foreign workers interested in working in Kazakhstan and possibly contributed to the labour shortage problem. The rigidity of the legislation is also evident in the requirements for foreigners to obtain work permits: having work experience but lacking a diploma subjects the immigrant to a denial of the work permit, excluding them solely based on the absence of educational qualification. Furthermore, the inadequacy of the legal framework regarding both local and foreign workers, the undervaluation of labour, overwork, low wages, and lack of social protection significantly affect the situation of workers in the country, leading to an outflow of the workforce from the country. At the same time, legislative failures, specifically the lack of a legal framework for private employment agencies, fail to guarantee the protection of the rights of workers wishing to go abroad. The law regulating the activities of private employment agencies, adopted in 2018, and subsequent amendments do not establish mechanisms for feedback and control over the effectiveness of these agencies, nor specify the minimum content of the contract between the agency and the job seeker (Decree of the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 217, 2023).

At the same time, immigrants face the issue where employers intentionally do not sign contracts with them, thereby causing them to violate legal residency terms. In case of a violation, the employer is only required to pay a fine, whereas the migrant may be deported from the country. In the event of a repeated violation, the migrant can be banned from entering the country for five years in accordance with Law No. 477-IV (2024). Additionally, the current "patent" system - work permits for migrants in domestic households has its shortcomings. As noted earlier (see Chapter 1. - 2015-2021), migrants often purchase patents but do not work for private individuals. Furthermore, the lack of protection for low-skilled migrants and the absence of legalisation methods in case of overstaying also expose them to the risk of human trafficking, as they fear deportation and entry restrictions. It is important to note that the issue of human trafficking and the vulnerability of both migrants and citizens of Kazakhstan must be addressed through the adoption of the "Law on Combating Human Trafficking in the Republic of Kazakhstan," which is currently under consideration. The law aims to expand the concept of crimes

related to human trafficking, redefine "exploitation of a person," and introduce the terms "victim of human trafficking," "potential victim of human trafficking," and "vulnerable situation." It also seeks to establish an interdepartmental commission as the authorised body in the field of combating human trafficking, including the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Labor and Social Protection (Media Center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024; Vaal, 2024). The problem is further aggravated by the lack of trust in law enforcement agencies and insufficient informational support. According to a report by Winrock International et al. (2022), migrants in all Central Asian countries expressed distrust in law enforcement agencies, perceiving the police as part of the problem rather than the solution. Additionally, a study by the IOM conducted among migrants in Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent indicates that women are more informed about available services. Specifically, 67% of women know about access to medical services, compared to only 44% of men, with 77% stating they do not know where to seek medical help. In the field of education, 53% of women and 27% of men are aware of access to financial services, and 59% of women compared to 36% of men. This lack of knowledge also extends to awareness of risks and programs. Interviews revealed that 70% of respondents are insufficiently informed about safe migration, the risks of human trafficking in Kazakhstan, and where they can seek assistance (Winrock International et al., 2022). In this sense, institutional failures can hinder the legal integration of migrants into the labour market and their protection.

As part of its efforts to improve migration policy, Kazakhstan has introduced the Concept for 2023-2027, outlined in Government Resolution No. 961 (2022). This comprehensive plan addresses various issues raised by experts, as detailed in Chapter 4, and aims to create favourable conditions for migration while attracting global talent. The plan involves several key initiatives. It includes engaging leading foreign universities in academic mobility programs and developing double-degree education. Additionally, the government seeks to attract top teachers and scientists in high-demand fields and technologies by providing them with long-term visas and residence permits. To stimulate business immigration, the concept proposes liberalising the tax system and offering preferences under investment

obligation agreements. It also includes revising conditions for obtaining investor visas and participating in the Astana International Financial Centre's investment tax residency program. The "e-Visa" program will continue to be developed, with new relaxed visa policies introduced, along with residence permits for high-demand professionals. A special visa for "digital nomads," known as the Neo Nomad Visa, will allow for long-term residence in Kazakhstan without the right to employment. For monitoring and controlling migration, a digital system for registration, accounting, and monitoring migrants' stays will be implemented. This system will include a special service package with a bank card and a SIM card. Kazakhstan also plans to fulfil its obligations to assist refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons. In terms of emigration, the country will support its citizens in concluding labour contracts with foreign employers, ensuring their rights and working conditions are protected abroad. Moreover, mechanisms for regulating private employment agencies will be reviewed, and bilateral agreements to protect the labour rights of Kazakhstani citizens will be established.

Despite the aforementioned issues, Kazakhstan is taking steps to improve its migration policy. For instance, on February 14, an agreement was signed with Qatar on the regulation of the employment of Kazakhstani workers in the State of Qatar (Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024). In cooperation with South Korea, work is underway to include Kazakhstan in the "Employment Permit System" (The Press Service of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024). Additionally, there are agreements on strategic partnership and cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom (The Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024).

As part of legislative measures adopted since 2022, notable changes include the introduction of mandatory fingerprinting for foreigners aged sixteen and older and stateless persons when applying for temporary or permanent residence permits, seeking refugee status, or obtaining visas for the Republic of Kazakhstan. This fingerprinting system aims to improve migrant identification, enhancing security and control over illegal migrants (Law No. 50-VIII, 2023). Additionally, the Visa Run regime was abolished

on December 31, 2022, limiting foreign citizens, including those from EAEU member states, to a 90-day stay within a 180-day period, while exempting EAEU workers whose stay is tied to their employment or civil contract duration (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 1146, 2022). Furthermore, the notification of the internal affairs authorities about inviting an immigrant has been simplified through the online platform "e-Qonaq" (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 148, 2022). Additionally, the process of issuing Individual Identification Numbers (IIN) and Electronic Digital Signatures (EDS) for potential investors has been simplified in the Kazakhstan consular offices abroad (Official Information Resource of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The post-pandemic period has shown a rapid return to previous migration levels, while the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has introduced new dynamics, causing a significant influx of migrants into the country. Analysing the changes in Kazakhstan's migration policy from independence to the present day, significant steps have been taken to improve the legislative framework in the field of migration. Despite a comprehensive regulatory framework and numerous initiatives, Kazakhstan continues to face some challenges. These include retaining skilled labour, integrating unskilled migrants, managing illegal migration, and protecting migrants' rights. Although the Migration Policy Concept for 2023-2027 acknowledges these issues and proposes measures to attract skilled specialists and simplify migration processes, several measures highlighted by our experts still require attention, including:

1. Information Support and Training for Migrants:

It is recommended to distribute informational booklets for immigrants at border checkpoints and airports. These booklets should contain introductory and explanatory materials about deadlines, authorities to contact, and other important aspects of staying in the country.

2. Improving Processing of Applications and Documents:

There is a need to introduce rapid processing of applications and documents, which includes improving the online platform "Government for Citizens" to accelerate processes and reduce bureaucratic barriers for migrants.

3. Easing Requirements for Obtaining Work Permits:

It is recommended to ease the requirements for obtaining work permits and extend their validity periods. This will facilitate the attraction of qualified specialists and provide more stable conditions for labour migration.

4. Revising Long-Term Visa Issuance Policy:

The introduction of long-term visas, similar to the practices in the USA or Europe (Schengen visas), should be considered. This will create more attractive conditions for foreign specialists and investors.

5. Establishing Support Centers for Kazakh Labor Migrants Abroad:

Support centres for Kazakh labour migrants abroad should be established to provide advisory and practical assistance. These centres will help migrants adapt to new conditions and ensure their rights and interests.

6. Regulation and Licensing of Private Employment Agencies (PEAs):

It is recommended to establish minimum qualification and resource requirements for private employment agencies. Agencies should be required to make deposits to ensure the return of migrants in case of dismissal. Additionally, minimum requirements for the content of contracts between agencies and job seekers should be defined to protect the rights of migrants.

7. Improving State Migration Policy:

The work of the Migration Committee should be strengthened, its staffing capacity increased, and coordination with other state bodies improved. This will create a more effective and coordinated system for managing migration processes.

8. Reviewing and Increasing Quotas for Foreign Labor:

Addressing them, Kazakhstan will be able to better align its migration strategies with long-term demographic, economic, and social goals, ultimately leading to a more balanced and sustainable migration system.

It is recommended for future research to broaden the analysis to cover asylum seekers and refugees, integrate migrants' perspectives, delve deeper into legislative analysis, and utilise other methodologies to better understand the complexities of migration management and policy effectiveness.

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Appendix A

List of Interviewees

Date	Name	Organisation	Location
April 11, 2024	Expert (A)	Representative of WPK company	Talan Towers Offices, Dostyk str. 16
April 12, 2024	Expert (B)	Representative of WPK company	Talan Towers Offices, Dostyk str. 16
April 17, 2024	Expert (C)	Representative of Dos-Immigration company	Interview via Zoom
April 5, 2024	Expert (D)	Senior Project Assistant at International Organisation for Migration	Talan Towers, Dostyk str. 16
April 23, 2024	Expert (E)	Representative of WPK company	Interview via Zoom
May 14, 2024	Expert (F)	Representative of Non-Governmental Organization "Rodnik"	Interview via Zoom
April 26, 2024	Expert (G)	External Collaborator at International Organisation for Migration	Maqsut Narikbayev University, Korgalzhyn hwy. 13
May 16, 2024	Expert (H)	Representative of Non-Governmental Organization "Sana Sezim"	Interview via Zoom
May 14, 2024	Expert (I)	Representative of Non-Governmental Organization "Rodnik"	Interview via Zoom

Appendix B

Codebook

Current Policy and Regulation Enhancements	Example of a code	Number of codes
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<p><i>Removing barriers</i></p>	<p>Expert A: '...in Kazakhstan, in order to somehow relieve the burden and attract more investors and tourists, they try to remove all these barriers, which favourably affects the projects...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Dactyloscopy</i></p>	<p>Expert E: 'I would also add that since 2024 we have now introduced fingerprinting, so also regulation means not only restriction on entry, it means that people can come, it is already as people who have entered - flows are regulated already on the territory of the country, and fingerprinting can also, in fact, of a certain kind, helps law enforcement agencies to keep records of those who enter and if there are offenders, to stop such measures and prevent possibly certain offences, to keep records on immigrants...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Visible improvements in cities</i></p>	<p>Expert E: 'But for the city of Almaty, we have everything transparent here, all the expats who are hired, also everything on them, most of them are our clients, we ensure proper formation of documents, and clients receive everything in time. The work of public bodies and the quasi-public sector has improved significantly than it was before...'</p>	<p>1</p>

<p><i>Tightening of TRP rules</i></p>	<p>Expert E: '...temporary residence permits, and at this stage, of course, a certain number of immigrants are filtered out. Why? Because at the moment the procedure for obtaining a temporary residence permit has become stricter, more stringent. Now it is required to confirm the address of residence, to provide data of the landlord. If earlier there were cases of falsification of addresses, now, due to such urgency, some people could not, that is not our clients, and according to market observations, we saw that there were cases of improper execution of documents, then they were already annul...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Balance of local and foreign employees</i></p>	<p>Expert A: 'Because these companies will not only attract foreigners, but they realise that it is necessary to take into account the local content of Kazakhstanis, and in this respect we do not feel such a negative impact, and colleagues, and clients, and employees do not comment that we have a lot of foreigners in our company. This is not felt at all and has not happened at all.'</p>	<p>2</p>
<p><i>Digitalisation</i></p>	<p>Expert D: 'In terms of e-government, it's evolving, you know, we're in the top 10 for e-Government...'</p>	<p>10</p>
<p><i>Agreements</i></p>	<p>Expert D: 'At the government level, agreements are being signed to regulate employment, recently with Qatar...'</p>	<p>4</p>
<p><i>Trend for nationalisation</i></p>	<p>Expert E: 'In Kazakhstan, the number of projects led by foreign companies is decreasing and there are certain tendencies towards nationalisation, i.e. the requirements for Kazakh content in contractors and service providers are quite high...'</p>	<p>1</p>

<i>Enhancements</i>	Expert E: 'Therefore, by tightening or making this kind of procedure for issuing residence permits more transparent, more strict, Kazakhstan, of course, has regulated the flow of labour migrants from these countries...'	12
<i>Visa-free regime</i>	Expert F: '...to South Korea because there are agreements between the countries...'	7
<i>Simplified system</i>	Expert C: 'In general, we have a systematic approach in migration policy, as I have been in this field since 2008: everything was being simplified.'	11
<i>Better conditions for businesses</i>	Expert B: 'I would also like to note that even without this, Kazakhstan is actively developing the IT sector, the same Astana Hub, MFCA, which facilitates conditions both for the registration of LLPs and for foreigners in Kazakhstan who work in the IT sphere...'	1
<i>Sufficient conditions for students</i>	Expert D: 'Kazakhstan maintains a high level of medical education inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union...'	3
<i>Ongoing enhancements</i>	Expert C: 'I like Tokayev's policy now, that he is not afraid to hire young energetic people...'	16
<i>Positive dynamics</i>	Expert C: 'In 100 kilometres from Almaty, Astana everything is worse, and the further away it is, the worse it is. In the same regions everything is very difficult with compliance. But there is a positive dynamic, and I think it will slowly gain momentum...'	1
<i>Quota limits</i>	Expert G: 'Quotas are based on the type of activity, and accordingly permits are issued according to the availability of qualifications...'	4

<i>Protection of the domestic market</i>	Expert F: 'There are restrictions: firstly, work visas are only granted to those who pass all the procedures and get on a quota list of companies that can provide them with work...'	13
<i>Prerequisites for a work permit</i>	Expert C: 'It must be a high school diploma, must have at least five years of experience.'	4
<i>Selection of workers</i>	Expert A: '...foreign labour force after such a good selection, i.e. it's not just taking someone off the street and sending them to Kazakhstan. Companies conduct interviews, select the right people...'	2
Migration Trends and Patterns	Example of a code	Number of codes
<i>Increase in the number of migrants</i>	Expert F: 'Only taking into account the special operation we have an influx of Russians who for various reasons are crossing the border of Kazakhstan...'	6
<i>Variability of flows</i>	Expert C: '...there are some small businesses or people who can do something and are in demand here. This is the category that came to us, most of them stayed, but there are also those who left...'	5
<i>Large outflow</i>	Expert G: 'Statistics for 2022: the number of people who left Kazakhstan - 2.5 million, including Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, UAE - 290 thousand, China - 172 thousand, Egypt, Georgia, Thailand - including tourist, labour purposes, etc.'	4
<i>Trend change</i>	Expert C: 'The connection was there, but it wasn't as strong; we didn't feel it very much. There were a lot of people who came, but as I mentioned above, now there is an exodus of people.'	3

<i>Insignificant migrant labour inflow</i>	Expert D: 'Firstly, I don't think the influx is large...'	
<i>Insignificant outflow to Ukraine</i>	Expert D: 'And Kazakhs did not go to Ukraine to work, and even if they did, the numbers were insignificant, a maximum of 250 people...'	1
<i>Inflow of illegal migrants</i>	Expert D: '...there are a lot of illegal migrants, mostly from Uzbekistan, but they are needed because not all Kazakhs want to work in factories. There are many Bi Group projects where contractors, subcontractors are citizens of Uzbekistan who are ready to work for small wages, performing their work with high quality...'	1
<i>Foreign labour reduction trend</i>	Expert C: 'In general, there is such a tendency to reduce the foreign labour force...'	1
<i>Kazakhstan as a destination country</i>	Expert D: 'But Kazakhstan remains a 'destination country' for Central Asia...'	1
<i>Kazakhstan as a transit country</i>	Expert B: 'Someone comes here to temporarily relocate, get a Schengen visa and go further to Europe. Because they cannot get a Schengen visa in their own country, only through Kazakhstan, and this also increases the flow.'	9
<i>Transit country for skilled specialists</i>	Expert C: '...qualified specialists cannot find a job, so they come to Kazakhstan, go to Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan...'	1
<i>Insignificant number of emigrants</i>	Expert D: 'Having said that, we have a fairly insignificant number of those who leave, the country loses nothing...'	1
<i>Outflow to the Russia persist</i>	Expert F: 'Many, by the way, have returned to Russia, I know about that too...'	2

<i>Former nationals seek return</i>	Expert C: 'Definitely no one has left for Russia or Ukraine, on the contrary, they mostly return from there. We have a lot of requests when former compatriots who want to return, get authorization documents or residence permits to work here fully...'	1
<i>No significant changes were observed</i>	Expert F: 'If we talk about trends and tendencies, practically nothing is changing.'	9
<i>Recovery of patterns</i>	Expert A: 'Now everything is already normalised, restored.'	4
<i>Inflow continuation</i>	Expert B: 'Or, for example, this foreign company needs foreign employees to work here in Kazakhstan, and they send them here. We, for example, closed in Russia, opened in Kazakhstan, and we need to send you there to raise our branch there. So it seems to me that the influx will continue because of the ongoing war.'	7
Characteristics of Migration	Example of a code	Number of codes
<i>Seasonal work abroad</i>	Expert D: 'There are about 5,000 people going to the UK for seasonal work on the programme, seasonally, for 6 months and back...'	1
<i>Border crossing</i>	Expert E: 'And they crossed the border not only by air but also by land, but all of them, of course, crossed the border legally...'	1
<i>Outflow to 'hubs'</i>	Expert G: 'One might be travelling to Germany to visit relatives, or Germany is more used as a 'hub', like Turkey. Turkey and Germany are 'hubs', or Emirates as a 'hub', looking at where you are going. If a person is going to America, for example, they may not say they are going to America. He may say he is going to the Emirates, he has a ticket to the	1

	Emirates, and he has a connection there...'	
<i>Temporary work-related migration</i>	Expert F: 'What are the target groups? They are students, those who are travelling for temporary jobs...'	4
<i>Occupations of labour migrants from Central Asia</i>	Expert B: '...they are more like category four employees, loaders, security guards, etc...'	1
<i>Outflow of low skilled labour</i>	Expert D: 'The bulk are low-skilled workers who go to jobs like 'truck drivers', 'cherry pickers', or to South Korea to work in factories...'	7
<i>Outflow of highly skilled specialists</i>	Expert F: 'These are specialists in demand in Western markets who work under contract...'	8
<i>Destinations of labour migrants</i>	Expert A: '...concerning business migrants or migrant workers, this is mainly related to fields or factories in whose projects foreign states are investors or founders...'	1
<i>Immigrant occupations</i>	Expert I: 'Kyrgyz mainly work in fields and markets, Uzbeks - mainly in construction, flatbread shops, service stations. Tajiks - mainly in the trade of dried fruits at markets and also in construction. That is, the market is divided in such a way...'	2
<i>Brain drain</i>	Expert E: 'The main motivator is work, so it is mainly workers and skilled personnel, specialists.'	5
Reasons for movement	Example of a code	Number of codes
<i>Economic reasons for immigration</i>	Expert B: 'Perhaps this can be linked to the fact that COVID-19 has economically affected these countries like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, where there may have been reduced earning opportunities, and so people from these countries are coming to Kazakhstan to provide for their families...'	1

<i>Reasons for the inflow of Chinese</i>	Expert I: 'Also work, there are a lot of Chinese in the markets, they are somehow legalised...'	2
<i>Unattached to any place</i>	Expert D: 'IT market is global, specialists do not need to be in our country...'	3
<i>Difference in living standards</i>	Expert C: 'comparing Kazakhstan and Moscow the standard of living is quite different...'	1
<i>Reasons for the inflow of Turks</i>	Expert C: 'Why the Turks? Well, it's a difficult question. I don't know how to answer it, for sure, I can only logically guess that in Turkey, as far as I know, it is difficult to get a higher education. Those people who came to us are opening cafes, canteens, and selling clothes here. Those people who could not get higher education there. And in principle, we have a large Turkish diaspora here, so they are probably comfortable here...'	1
<i>Reasons for outflows</i>	Expert E: 'Regarding students, in my opinion, not so many of them leave, as there is a good grant programme in Kazakhstan'	4
<i>Other reasons for emigration</i>	Expert B: 'I cannot directly link this to the situation in Ukraine, i.e. the fact that our Kazakhs are leaving, but if we refer to social networks, to the comments that Kazakhs write under certain news posts, I can note that people are alarmed in general by the political situation in neighbouring countries...'	3
<i>Not caused only by the war in Ukraine</i>	Expert E: 'So not only the war in Ukraine, but also the conflict in the Gaza Strip will affect the number of immigrants...'	2

<i>Deterioration abroad, not improvement in the country</i>	Expert C: 'Kazakhstan has become more attractive not because it has taken some measures, but because the situation in other countries is not very good. In Russia, for example, the price for a work permit for Uzbek citizens is quite high. After the recent terrorist attacks in Crocus, many people are leaving there, worried about their safety...'	2
<i>Reasons for the inflow of Ukrainians</i>	Expert C: 'Ukrainians are attracted to our companies...'	1
<i>Reasons for attractiveness</i>	Expert A: 'Why? Almaty is, after all, the centre of such business areas, plus the climate and so on...'	1
<i>Country's attractiveness</i>	Expert D: 'On the contrary, it is good for Kazakhstan that highly qualified specialists leave, because it increases the 'visibility' and 'credibility' of the country in the international arena...'	6
<i>Almaty's attractiveness</i>	Expert F: 'A great many of them are in the city of Almaty, continuing to run their business, working remotely and so on...'	5
<i>Astana's attractiveness</i>	Expert A: 'We have only Astana Hub and MFCA for IT in Astana. But there are different types of activities. If it is about IT, they will definitely register their companies here in the MFCA...'	1
<i>Atyrau's attractiveness</i>	Expert A: 'Atyrau, it's understandable, only those who want to provide service around oil and gas activities go there...'	1
<i>Reasons for immigration</i>	Expert B: 'A lot of people may be moving to avoid sanctions, in Russia many of the same brands that people may have worked for or been attached to in one way or another have closed down, and they often move to Kazakhstan because in Kazakhstan they can use it all further in their lives...'	4

<i>Career growth abroad</i>	Expert B: '...attracted by the opportunity for career advancement and the economic situation in the country to which they are travelling...'	1
<i>Specialists in search of growth</i>	Expert B: 'I have also noticed repeatedly that corporate employees are also keen to further their development and often receive job offers from abroad, especially from the UAE, where they then emigrate as labour migrants...'	1
<i>Tax preferences abroad</i>	Expert E: '...there are some simplified percentages on taxes there. For example, Germany has a very positive and friendly attitude towards immigrants, they have a lot of projects to support immigrants in finding a job, professional retraining, and this is a kind of magnet for choosing Germany as a place to live...'	1
<i>Youth in search of a career</i>	Expert B: 'I think it's mainly 18 to 25 year olds looking for training and employment opportunities, looking to build a career...'	1
<i>Social impact</i>	Expert B: '...they have foreign teachers, you can't deny the fact that Western culture also influences them, they are 'Open Minded', more open to the world and they know their value, that's why they leave...'	1
<i>Relocation support</i>	Expert E: 'These companies were also very, Let's say, covering issues not only financially, but also in general on paperwork to make sure everything went well.'	2
<i>Employee relocation</i>	Expert A: 'But you also have to take into account: there are companies, our clients, who relocated their employees from Russia to Kazakhstan...'	3

<i>Inflow of qualified specialists</i>	Expert E: 'As I have already said, in the second wave, investors, businessmen, management, highly qualified specialists who weighed up the pros and cons came here in the first place. They may have worked remotely at first, and then found work here. The inflow of personnel, in particular highly qualified personnel, is high. And these are mostly citizens of those countries that were directly involved in the conflict...'	1
<i>Relocation of companies</i>	Expert B: 'But plus many companies, branches, representative offices of foreign companies, American, European companies close their branches in Russia and open them in Kazakhstan...'	9
<i>Family reunification</i>	Expert E: '...many came and stayed here to reunite with family...'	1
<i>Cultural differences</i>	Expert C: '...it feels like those guys who left, little by little regret about it - they lack understanding of their surroundings, a different mentality. As the guys told me, arrived in an Uber, and the female passenger did not sit down, he asks why she did not sit down, she said: 'Open the door' We have a taxi has arrived, did not arrive, in half an hour, himself come up, shouting, swearing, and he to her: 'no, I will not open the door' Uber blocked him for three days, did not let him work, because there was a negative review. Now he opens the door to everyone so that there are no negative reviews. Mentally for our...'	1
<i>Personal motives for emigration</i>	Expert E: 'Here they are probably motivated more by personal motivations rather than purely political factors...'	2

<i>Offers from Middle East countries</i>	Expert B: '...about 85% of our clients who seek document legalisation move to Arab countries. This is likely related to the industry.'	2
<i>Outflow of youth</i>	Expert E: 'Mostly young people leave because they are such a brave category of people who are not afraid of anything. They bravely face challenges, and risks are not a problem for them. Therefore, I think the emphasis should be on young people, so that they can live comfortably...'	1
<i>Opportunities</i>	Expert F: 'These are pupils and students who are being educated or invited to be educated...'	9
<i>No language barrier</i>	Expert C: 'The first is the absence of a language barrier, there are schools, kindergartens in Russian...'	1
<i>Fears of Kazakhstani citizens</i>	Expert B: '...Kazakhstanis would not mind moving to a safer country and being sure that tomorrow, for example, we will not become victims of an aggressor...'	2
<i>Political disagreement in the homeland</i>	Expert C: 'Belarus sort of supports the war, and sort of mostly marketers, IT specialists don't really agree with this position, so they leave the country...'	2
Specific Migrant Origins and Destinations	Example of a code	Number of codes
<i>Labour migrants from Albania</i>	Expert A: 'In Astana, for example, Albanians are active...'	1
<i>Labour migrants from Tajikistan</i>	Expert B: '...and Tajikistan...'	1
<i>Labour migrants from Kyrgyzstan</i>	Expert G: '...Kyrgyzstan...'	2
<i>Labour migrants from China</i>	Expert I: 'There were more educated labour migrants from the People's Republic of China that we interviewed.'	6

<i>Labour migrants from Uzbekistan</i>	Expert B: 'Also from CIS countries, for example from Uzbekistan, many labour migrants arrive...'	5
<i>Labour migrants from Ukraine</i>	Expert C: '...the third is Ukrainians...'	1
<i>Labour migrants from Europe</i>	Expert A: 'Kashagan and Karachaganak are also linked to Italy.'	3
<i>Labour migrants from Turkey</i>	Expert I: 'There were also Turkish citizens who have worked here for several years, they are self-sufficient, educated, even bought a house...'	4
<i>Labour migrants from the UK</i>	Expert A: '...The UK...'	1
<i>Labour migrants from the USA</i>	Expert A: 'Tengizchevroil shareholders are Americans'	2
<i>Inflow of highly skilled specialists</i>	Expert I: '...among immigrants of the Russian Federation, labour migrants were the most educated...'	1
<i>Migrants from Russia</i>	Expert B: '...mainly the Russian Federation. Almost immediately after COVID-19, the war in Ukraine started, and due to mobilisation, a large number of Russian citizens started arriving...'	2
<i>Immigration from Russia</i>	Expert F: 'The sanctions have done their job, many businessmen are opening businesses in Kazakhstan because they want to earn money still and somehow legalise themselves. I don't know how many Russians have obtained residence permits, but this trend is probably taking place...'	6
<i>Immigration from Belarus</i>	Expert C: 'A big flow of people is coming from there, from Russia, Belarus...'	1
<i>Immigration from Ukraine</i>	Expert G: '...from Ukraine comparatively less, because men are mostly military conscripts, migrated mostly women, children mostly migrated - not military conscripts...'	3

<i>Emigration to South Korea</i>	Expert D: 'There are about 15,000 people going to South Korea...'	5
<i>Inflow from Azerbaijan</i>	Expert I: 'Azerbaijan...'	1
<i>Emigration to the UK</i>	Expert F: '...to the UK...'	2
<i>Emigration to the USA</i>	Expert B: 'U.S.....'	2
<i>Emigration to Europe</i>	Expert E: '...to European countries...'	3
<i>Inflow from Iran</i>	Expert I: '...the Iranians...'	1
<i>Immigrants from Central Asia</i>	Expert I: '...and a very large number of labour immigrants from Central Asia...'	1
<i>Migration to Central Asia</i>	Expert D: '...while Tashkent, Dushanbe, Bishkek are much cheaper to live in, property is more affordable...'	1
<i>Transit Migration to South-East Asia</i>	Expert D: 'Even further away is Southeast Asia, where you can rent a condominium for \$200, in Thailand, in Vietnam. Where they've already localised...'	1
<i>Inflow from South Asia</i>	Expert G: 'India is listed there, as far as I remember, Pakistan, but everything is tightly regulated there in terms of, if it's foreign workers, they're only on priority activities...'	3
Disadvantages of the current management system	Example of a code	Number of codes
<i>Need for economic and political changes</i>	Expert F: '...it is necessary to form a policy for return. To do this, we need to create opportunities for good earnings...'	7
<i>Enhancing investor conditions</i>	Expert A: '...to create better and more conditions for investors, for foreign investors, so that they have more privileges and they feel it.....'	1
<i>Bureaucratic challenges</i>	Expert A: 'I think that foreigners are willing to pay, overpay, to fly safely without going through this whole procedure. In this respect, I would like to see improvements in our country.'	5

<i>Need for additional privileges</i>	Expert A: '...so that there would be some great privileges for investors...'	1
<i>Inflexibility of legislation</i>	Expert B: '...if a foreigner does not have a higher education, but has a lot of work experience and could be useful for Kazakhstan, he will still be denied a work permit, because the diploma is the main thing. And here, no matter how we prove that we need this employee, because he has a lot of experience, he can help this company and further develop Kazakhstan, he will still be refused, because the legislation in this regard is categorically not flexible...'	1
<i>Need for institutions</i>	Expert D: '...create various institutions, hubs...'	2
<i>Need for improvement of labour conditions</i>	Expert C: 'It's simple here: you have to create conditions for people, for young people...'	6
<i>Problem of overworking</i>	Expert B: 'We have a lot of overwork, employees are working overtime...'	1
<i>Health insurance problems</i>	Expert B: '...we have fewer privileges in terms of health insurance...'	1
<i>Problems of welfare</i>	Expert F: '...it is necessary to stimulate return, because any person thinks about creating a family, not only about professional growth. If he thinks about a family, where to live, wants to live separately from his parents, the salary he will receive will not even buy a view from a window in some house...'	2
<i>Underestimation of specialists</i>	Expert E: '...revision, probably, of wages, minimum wages first of all, because without decent pay it will be very difficult for people to live and exist.'	6
<i>Need for easing migration policy</i>	Expert B: 'As far as workers are concerned, yes, migration policy could be relaxed...'	1

<p><i>Need for requirements reduction for work permits</i></p>	<p>Expert B: '...lower the requirements for work permits or increase the length of stay, because work permits are issued for a year and then they have to be renewed again...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Privileged attitude</i></p>	<p>Expert B: '...foreigners are treated more privileged, as if, if you compare a Kazakhstani and a foreigner, the foreigner will be more likely to be taken. So in general now the conditions are very good, foreigners are not discriminated against. I think it would be possible to leave everything as it is now...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Need for improving data systems</i></p>	<p>Expert B: 'We have a system into which the data of foreigners are entered, which is a bit crude. It's an information system that integrates between the border guard, the migration service and the national security committee...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Need for additional visa categories</i></p>	<p>Expert B: 'In terms of policy, on rules for work permits or visas and invitations, it might be worth adding visa categories. We have a very scarce set: work, business, tourist, and it is not suitable for everyone. Sometimes a foreigner voices his purpose, but it is simply not among the visa categories, and it is not clear to him how to enter in such a case...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Need for additional TRP aims</i></p>	<p>Expert B: 'In terms of policy, on rules for work permits or visas and invitations, it might be worth adding visa categories. We have a very scarce set: work, business, tourist, and it is not suitable for everyone. Sometimes a foreigner voices his purpose, but it is simply not among the visa categories, and it is not clear to him how to enter in such a case...'</p>	<p>1</p>

<i>Need for changes in labour code</i>	Expert G: 'The whole system is 'Not friendly' for migrants, which makes them practically deprived of the right to a fair trial, fair judicial protection, if 99% are convictions against them. Even 99.8%, 95.8%, almost close to 100%, because they don't have normal legal defence and assistance...'	4
<i>Lack of market competition</i>	Expert D: '...but from the point of view of business - it is weakly competitive, because it is dominated by the hand of the state.'	2
<i>Need for taxation changes</i>	Expert D: 'I think we need to develop socio-economic platforms, provide tax preferences...'	1
<i>Nowhere to use skills</i>	Expert D: 'Talking about electricity and engineering, the market is small, 5-6 construction companies, a person can study advanced technologies, but will not find a place to apply them in Kazakhstan...'	1
<i>Need for improvement in higher education</i>	Expert C: '...everything they teach at university, I, for example, except for English, don't use anything else in my work. Everything else I have to learn on my own. It turns out that the quality of education is not adapted...'	2
<i>No need for a quota</i>	Expert C: 'But I generally think we don't need a quota...'	1
<i>Need for business facilitation</i>	Expert D: 'Specialists - only to develop the business...'	1
<i>Unfavourable conditions for small business</i>	Expert C: 'There are a lot of people who would like to come from abroad and work without qualifications. And since there are quotas, special requirements for qualifications, you have to pay state fees, so it's not very profitable for small businesses...'	1

<i>Need for market-oriented policy facilitation</i>	Expert D: 'And we should already be moving away from, still some kind of market-driven policy should be formed, not 'government-driven policy', still need to move away from the idea of dependency, people should stop looking to the government to tell them what to do and how to do it...'	1
<i>Cost of Living</i>	Expert C: 'Almaty, Astana are kind of full, but these steppes are not used in any way. The real estate prices are very high, it seems to me, in the same Europe, there, I read somewhere that in Spain they exchange an apartment for an apartment in Almaty, with a view to the sea, well, it's not quite rational, not reasonable...'	2
<i>Knowledge transfer problem</i>	Expert D: 'Not all diplomas of Kazakhstan are quoted. For example, a medical diploma is quoted in the same way as a medical diploma in Germany, conditionally speaking, but you may need to take additional courses...'	1
<i>Need for emigrant support</i>	Expert G: 'And if they leave, you have to create conditions for them to at least keep in touch with Kazakhstan, for them to remain, Let's say, agents of Kazakhstan abroad...'	2
<i>Need for workplaces</i>	Expert C: 'We need to create conditions for young people to have a place to work...'	1
<i>Need for meritocracy</i>	Expert F: 'So everyone, everyone at their workplace, must fulfil their functional duties. If it is a precinct policeman, then he should know what is going on in his precinct. Some district police officers, in our practice, turn a blind eye to many things...'	3

<i>Need for economic changes</i>	Expert E: '...the financial part, i.e. simplified lending or low interest rates on mortgages, because the incentive to stay in Kazakhstan is often real estate. This need is closed, and a person can quietly grow in Kazakhstan and be motivated to further growth by financial gradation. And the fourth, extreme, I would say - decent pay.'	3
<i>The problem of 'lying and stealing'</i>	Expert C: '...the country's leaders need to stop doing two things: it's as simple as stealing and cheating.'	2
<i>The problem of corruption</i>	Expert F: 'If we take it as a whole, if we put all these puzzles together, then everything will be normal in Kazakhstan. Because if there is no corruption at the border crossing points, and the word 'smuggling' has not been abolished, people are transported, and then they become objects of exploitation.'	3
<i>Income inequality</i>	Expert C: 'We have a very large gap between rich and poor...'	1
<i>Need for youth involvement in governance</i>	Expert C: '...emigration from Kazakhstan has always been relevant, especially among young people who could not find themselves in Kazakhstan...'	1
<i>Reasons to stay abroad</i>	Expert F: '...programs such as Bolashak oblige to return and work for a certain amount of time. This is a system of double standards. A person works out, but in his mind he may want to return abroad...'	5
<i>Better working conditions abroad</i>	Expert G: 'You know that manual labour is paid quite highly there, unlike us. Plus in our country it's all unsafe, there are accidents all the time, everything is outdated, production is not modernised properly. And there, at least, there are some safer conditions.'	3

<i>Higher wages abroad</i>	Expert E: 'Low-skilled workers often emigrate because instead of working in Kazakhstan for a certain rate, they can get a higher income in another country, which becomes a kind of income for the family...'	5
<i>Practices of other countries</i>	Expert A: 'In Turkey, by the way, that's the way it is, that's the way it works. In a Turkish airport, if you exceed your period of stay there, you will not be taken off the flight, but you will be fined so much that you will definitely not violate it...'	11
<i>Importance of national development</i>	Expert D: 'In any case, the decision for a migrant worker to move is his own decision, and the government should not be interested in sending its citizens, it should be interested in developing citizens within the country...'	1
<i>Importance of the return of Kazakhstan citizens</i>	Expert F: 'This is a problem for Kazakhstan, because it is, first of all, young people with good technical or professional potential who study there and then work in another country without seeing themselves in Kazakhstan and without applying their strengths and capabilities here...'	3
<i>Expensive state duty</i>	Expert C: 'And the third point is that you have to pay a state duty for a work permit. The state fee was established several years ago, and the state fee is quite high...'	1
<i>Expensive work permit</i>	Expert C: '...whereas with Ukraine, for example, we have everything complicated. For a Ukrainian to get a work permit, you need about one and a half million tenge per year per person, for a Russian it is 100 thousand tenge ...'	1

<i>Need for measures to legally attract low-skilled labour</i>	Expert H: 'There is a great demand for low-skilled labour in construction, cake shops, and the agricultural sector. It is important to provide for legislative measures to legally attract such labour. If this is done, the rights of foreign citizens will be better protected...'	1
<i>Lack of protection</i>	Expert E: 'We don't have this category protected...'	1
<i>Relatively few permits</i>	Expert C: 'Last year Almaty issued 100 thousand work permits to labour migrants. 100,000 for Uzbekistan, where the population is 35 million, is not much at all...'	1
<i>Shortage of low-skilled labour</i>	Expert C: '...construction companies like BI, Bazis, they have great difficulties with construction workers, constant shortage of labour, but this hinders, of course, the development of the economy.'	2
<i>The Migration Committee is a weak body'</i>	Expert G: '...the Migration Committee is a very weak body. Half of the employees have quit in the last six months, mostly new ones are working, respectively, there is just turnover. There is no one to work. Elementary even, we gave them a request, IOM, and they took three months to respond. There were questions according to the MGI Report, and they took three months to answer, because 5 people quit, 2 new people came, and that's it, nobody knew anything. That's a big problem in public policy...'	1
<i>Lack of information support</i>	Expert F: '...a person still has to think and know the laws of the country he is travelling to because the rules are completely different there. If he is a driver, he should know the rules of the road and how to act in emergency situations.'	6

<p><i>Lack of inspection</i></p>	<p>Expert G: '...any company can be a PEAs activity, and vice versa, a company that is engaged in, it may not indicate in classification of economic activities, absolutely notification, declarative nature, when you register a company, choose classification of economic activities, but nobody checks then whether your activity corresponds to classification of economic activities...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Problem of inter-agency coordination</i></p>	<p>Expert H: 'All anti-trafficking actors must work together in partnership because there is no single organisation that cannot contribute...'</p>	<p>2</p>
<p><i>Prejudicial attitude</i></p>	<p>Expert G: 'The police are very biased towards them. This is all under, say, the slogan of fighting illegal labour migration and any illegals outside the law...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Need for 4P method</i></p>	<p>Expert H: 'Therefore, we need to use the 4Ps method specified in the Palermo Protocol, which is the most effective. What does it mean? It is suppression, prevention, partnership and protection. In this respect, the use of the international 4P method implies that one should pay great attention to prevention activities and provide assistance to victims of trafficking...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Broad formulations of laws</i></p>	<p>Expert G: 'Violations can be different: overdue documents, any violation will be considered grounds for expulsion, because the wording is quite broad, expulsion is applied as a measure of administrative punishment. Imagine, every year 300 thousand foreign citizens commit violations, and 12 thousand on average are expelled, a very repressive approach, a migrant is very vulnerable and unprotected...'</p>	<p>1</p>

<p><i>Failure to recognise the problem</i></p>	<p>Expert G: 'They have these flows already established, Kazakhstan does not. Because all these years, instead of working on it, we did not recognize this problem. We kind of turned a blind eye and worked more as a receiving state, that is, we were more concerned with immigrants. We missed the situation when our citizens started travelling abroad on their own, and naturally, when they started travelling, they started breaking laws...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Lack of shelters for victims of human trafficking</i></p>	<p>Expert F: 'But for a big city like Almaty not to have a shelter for victims of human trafficking this year is a big problem for us, non-governmental organisations...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Lack of trust in law enforcement</i></p>	<p>Expert F: '...statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and statistics of NGOs, which differ from the statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. People turn to NGOs more often because they trust them, but they do not go to the police with a statement for various reasons: they are afraid of law enforcement officers, they do not believe in the triumph of the law...'</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><i>Lack of awareness</i></p>	<p>Expert E: 'Most likely, not many people know that it is necessary to apply to the Employment Department. Most likely, they came to the migration service, then they were redirected to the Employment Department. That is, there may have been such situations...'</p>	<p>1</p>

<p><i>Practices in the treatment of migrants</i></p>	<p>Expert G: 'Usually, like, there are employers who do not register migrants, and these migrants work illegally. They are told: 'if you complain, you will be prosecuted under Article 517 and can be deported from the country' Therefore, they are simply afraid to report to the police and the labour inspectorate that they are working illegally. No labour contract is signed, and employers take advantage of this and get away with it: they can fire them at any moment, or actually throw them out on the street, and they are left without means of subsistence and documents sometimes. They have actually already violated the migration.....!'</p>	<p>2</p>
<p><i>Lack of statistics</i></p>	<p>Expert G: 'The first group, it is practically difficult to trace, because when we talk about labour migrants, the data that government agencies have on labour migrants is data on migrants from third countries, from countries other than the EAEU. This does not include the EAEU countries, and those categories of migrants who do not require authorization.'</p>	<p>3</p>
<p><i>High rate of extradition of foreigners</i></p>	<p>Expert G: 'How many foreigners we have in relation to citizens and how many of them are brought to justice. Those brought to responsibility are practically 99%. The number of expulsions is 11-12% - if a person is expelled, he has no right to enter for 5 years, respectively, there are no criteria for expulsion. Any person can be expelled even for the slightest violations, and this is a violation of basic rights...'</p>	<p>1</p>

<i>Negative experience</i>	Expert A: 'Yes, the violation occurred, and it must be fully paid for, and simply when you are taken off the flight, it is a cost again, you have to buy the ticket again, if it is delayed for two or three days, it is also accommodation, it is the time a person loses, which he had planned to spend with his family. Therefore, if just these moments negatively affect the perception, image of Kazakhstan...'	2
<i>Lack of detention facilities for illegal migrants</i>	Expert F: 'They would live in human conditions for the duration of their stay: bed space, food and so on. They could get professions, which would be useful both for Kazakhstan and for the countries to which they would return.'	2
<i>Data discrepancy</i>	Expert C: 'So although they say there are fewer foreigners, the fact is there are more...'	1
<i>Tight timeframes for asylum seekers</i>	Expert E: 'Regarding asylum seekers, personally, in practice I have come across the fact that many people who entered here after the conflict did not meet the deadlines for submitting applications for asylum seeker status. We have very short deadlines defined by the legislation - it is 5 calendar days...'	1
<i>Shadow phenomenon</i>	Expert G: '...since there is a sampling concept for small business - 15%. All small businesses are not surveyed by statistics, respectively, 85% are 'in the shadows' Just such small companies, small businesses, pose a threat. They do not have the appropriate resources, and they cheat the most, because why would a large company, if it seeks some kind of reputation, behave more conscientiously, and the root of evil	1

	is just in small business, cheating, fraud, etc...'	
<i>Need to develop criteria for deportation</i>	Expert G: '...prescribe certain criteria for deportation. This is the worst thing that can happen - arrest and deportation. As a rule, a person is first put in a temporary isolator in a pre-trial detention centre until there is time to appeal a court act, and he sits in the pre-trial detention centre for 10 days. Then, of course, he is deported and that's it...'	1
<i>Repressive approach to foreigners'</i>	Expert G: '...it is necessary to reduce the repressive nature of administrative legislation'	2
<i>Need for efficient processing</i>	Expert A: '...more, even better terms, some simplifications, operational discretion...'	2
<i>Lack of detailed information</i>	Expert G: '...in general, the picture is clear, although it is impossible to get accurate statistics.'	3
<i>Need for control over PEAs</i>	Expert G: 'On PEAs, this is what we did, it was already the IOM project itself. We have developed recommendations, we propose to fully introduce and authorise the procedure of PEAZs. Right now it is a completely unregulated activity...'	1
<i>Emigration is not a threat'</i>	Expert G: 'If earlier it was seen more as a threat, as an outflow of qualified personnel, as a brain drain, and they tried to do something about it, now they have realised that it is useless to fight it...'	1
<i>Focus on support for emigrants</i>	Expert G: 'It is possible to do something on the contrary to help Kazakhstanis who work abroad and make them agents of Kazakhstan so that they keep in touch with the Motherland. Not to try to bring them back, but to maintain some kind of connection. The attitude of the state towards migrants has probably changed...'	1

<i>Labour force shortage</i>	Expert D: '...as you know, the labour market in the south is oversaturated because of the demographic skew. Yes, we have a labour shortage in the north...'	2
<i>Changes in quota system</i>	Expert E: 'All work permits are given within the quota - this is the maximum number of documents issued for the current year in Kazakhstan, and it is decreasing every year. Of course, we would like to, since Kazakhstan is on the path of development, we need some kind of international exchange of personnel, attraction of foreign experience and increase in the number of quotas for foreign labour force.'	3
<i>Need for citizens' protection</i>	Expert E: 'So, first of all, it's about working with law enforcement so that citizens who are leaving or considering leaving always feel comfortable, so that there are no risks to their safety...'	1
<i>Need for process acceleration</i>	Expert A: '...expediting so that they get visas even faster than the regular work visas that are processed through documentation, maybe to make something easier because, like, investors...'	1
<i>Need for Bilateral labour Agreement</i>	Expert G: 'What is BLA for? For two countries to agree on migrant flows. Let's say we have large flows between Kazakhstan and Poland, Kazakhstan and Germany, Kazakhstan and the Emirates, Kazakhstan and South Korea. We say: 'Let's agree to have an organised recruitment, to protect the rights of Kazakhstani citizens, to count their work experience, to recognize documents, to exchange information in case of difficult situations, to organise readmission, i.e. return.'	3

Human trafficking	Example of a code	Number of codes
<i>Lack of law combating human trafficking</i>	Expert H: 'Kazakhstan is the only country in Central Asia that does not have a separate law on national counter-trafficking in human beings...'	1
<i>Legislation is failing</i>	Expert H: 'Mostly criminal cases are initiated under related articles, such as restriction of freedom, prostitution, involvement of minors in prostitution or, for example, organisation of a brothel. There are often elements of human trafficking, which are very difficult to prove later on, and the fact of purchase and sale is also very difficult to prove, because according to our criminal legislation, the definition of human trafficking begins with the words 'purchase and sale' And the ways and measures taken by the exploiter in relation to the victims.....!'	13
<i>PEAs and Human trafficking</i>	Expert F: 'According to statistics, there are about two hundred private employment agencies (PEAs) in Kazakhstan. Who sees their work? What do they do and what is their focus? The focus of an employment agency is to inform and prescribe, so to speak, a 'safety prescription' for any person who applies to them. So you have to think in that respect too...'	2
<i>Human trafficking - Post-COVID</i>	Expert H: 'The opening of borders has certainly affected the situation with migration, including human trafficking. We thought that if there was COVID, the number of applications to the organisation would decrease; on the contrary, the number of applications increased...'	1

<i>Human trafficking problem</i>	Expert H: 'If we say that 70% of foreign nationals, often more than half of them, that's about 60%, were citizens of Uzbekistan...'	1
<i>Reporting Discrepancies</i>	Expert H: 'It differs in that there are more applications to NGOs and fewer to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but this is due to the fact that in the Ministry of Internal Affairs applications are of a declarative nature, while NGOs often identify cases of human trafficking and the main task of non-governmental organisations is first and foremost to take people out of exploitation and protect their rights...'	1
<i>Human trafficking problem</i>	Expert F: 'Human trafficking is a latent problem. If we are talking to you and we know that there are official statistics, appeals and so on, it does not mean that people are not exploited at the brick factory in Almaty region...'	1
Impact of immigration of foreigners	Example of a code	Number of codes
<i>Consequences of inflow</i>	Expert D: '...in Astana, as you probably know, the real estate market has taken off, apartments at \$1000 that used to cost 200 thousand tenge...'	2
<i>Benefits of foreigners to the country</i>	Expert C: 'In general, I do not think that foreigners are a big problem, let them come, let them work, our country is very big, there are a lot of opportunities, and there is a big shortage of labour force. Well, Let's say, in Almaty, yes, in Astana, big cities - who will go to work as a janitor? Who will go to work as a waiter, if in Europe waiters are 50-60 years old - it's a normal job there, in our country it's a job for students, newcomers, to hang around for a while...'	1

<i>Economic benefits for Kazakhstan</i>	Expert D: 'Economically for the country, it is beneficial...'	2
<i>Benefits for Kazakhstan</i>	Expert C: 'I think there were only pluses for us. As selfish as it may sound, we had a lot of Russians and Ukrainians come to us. Who are these people? They are people who have businesses, respectively, and qualifications. They come here, and there are a lot of IT specialists among them...'	3