

R. Zh. Kelinbayeva* , **B.K. Sarsenova** , **Ch.B. Zhumagulov** ,
Z.A. Tolekov , **S.K. Kassymgaliyev** 

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

*e-mail: zhar80@mail.ru

THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN IN THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION SYSTEM

In this paper the theoretical and methodological aspects of migration processes research, focusing specifically on "labour migration" are examined, theories of migration of population and workforce by domestic and foreign scholars are analyzed. Historical periods of the development of labour migration in Kazakhstan and the main trends of external labour migration in the modern era are discussed. The characteristics, motives, distinctive features, types, and indicators of labour migration are highlighted. Special attention is given to identifying the primary reasons and factors of external labour migration. The directions of migration in Kazakhstan and the main sectors attracting foreign labour are analyzed. External labour migration in Kazakhstan is presented as a result of socio-economic development and implemented migration policies. As a result of the study, it is concluded that Kazakhstan is a recipient country within the post-Soviet space; with its labour market being supplemented by foreign labour and low-skilled labour immigrants primarily from Central Asian countries. A notable feature of the flow of labour migration from Central Asian republics to Kazakhstan is a high proportion of illegally employed among them. At the same time, one of the significant trends in external labour migration is the decrease in the emigration of compatriots alongside a substantial outflow of skilled professionals, in other words "brain drain." It is noted that despite the existence of numerous scientific studies on migration, the aspects of labour migration in the Republic of Kazakhstan remains insufficiently presented.

Key words: population migration, labour migration, labour market, Republic of Kazakhstan, foreign labour force.

Р.Ж. Келинбаева*, Б.К. Сарсенова, Ч.Б. Жумагулов,
З.А. Толеков, С.К. Касымғалиев

Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан

*e-mail: zhar80@mail.ru

Қазақстан Республикасы халықаралық еңбек көші-қон жүйесінде

Бұл жұмыста көші-қон үдерістерін, атап айтқанда «еңбек көші-қонын» зерттеудің теориялық-әдіснамалық аспектілері қарастырылады. Отандық және шетелдік ғалымдардың халық пен еңбек көші-қоны теориялары талданады. Қазақстандағы еңбек көші-қонының тарихи кезеңдері және қазіргі кезеңдегі сыртқы еңбек көші-қонының негізгі үрдістері зерттеледі. Еңбек көші-қонының ерекшеліктері, көші-қонға түрткі болған мәселелері, айрықша қасиеттері, түрлері мен белгілері ашып көрсетіледі. Сыртқы еңбек көші-қонының негізгі себептері мен факторларын анықтауға ерекше көңіл бөлінген. Қазақстандағы көші-қон бағыттары мен шетелдік жұмыс күшін тартудың негізгі салалары талданады. Қазақстандағы сыртқы еңбек көші-қоны – әлеуметтік-экономикалық дамудың және жүзеге асырылып жатқан көші-қон саясатының нәтижесі ретінде ұсынылған. Зерттеу нәтижесінде Қазақстан посткеңестік кеңістіктегі донор ел емес, реципиент ел екені анықталды; Қазақстанның еңбек нарығы шетелдік жұмыс күшімен және негізінен Орталық Азия елдерінен келген біліктілігі төмен еңбек иммигранттарымен толығып отырады. Орталық Азия республикаларынан Қазақстанға еңбек мигранттары ағынының ерекшелігі – олардың көпшілігінің заңсыз жұмыс істеуі. Сонымен қатар, сыртқы еңбек көші-қонының негізгі үрдістерінің бірі – білікті кадрлардың айтарлықтай кетуі аясында отандастардың эмиграциясы көлемінің азаюы, яғни «ақыл-ойдың сытылуы» үдерісі. Еңбек көші-қоны мәселелеріне арналған ғылыми еңбектердің көптігіне қарамастан, Қазақстан Республикасындағы еңбек көші-қоны аспектілерінің зерттелуі жеткіліксіз екендігі атап өтіледі.

Түйін сөздер: халықтың көші-қоны, еңбек көші-қоны, еңбек нарығы, Қазақстан Республикасы, шетелдік жұмыс күші.

Р.Ж. Келинбаева*, Б.К. Сарсенова, Ч.Б. Жумагулов,
З.А. Толеков, С.К. Касымғалиев

Казахский национальный университет им. аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан
*e-mail: zhar80@mail.ru

Республика Казахстан в системе международной трудовой миграции

В работе рассматриваются теоретико-методологические аспекты исследования миграционных процессов, в частности, «трудовой миграции», проанализированы теории миграции населения и рабочей силы отечественных и зарубежных ученых. Рассматриваются исторические периоды развития трудовой миграции в Казахстане, а также основные тенденции внешней трудовой миграции на современном этапе. Раскрываются особенности, мотивы, отличительные свойства, виды и признаки трудовой миграции. Особое внимание уделяется определению основных причин и факторов внешней трудовой миграции. Проводится анализ их направлений в Казахстане и основных сфер привлечения иностранной рабочей силы. Внешняя трудовая миграция в Казахстане представлена как результат социально-экономического развития и проводимой миграционной политики. В результате исследования выявлено, что Казахстан является страной-реципиентом на постсоветском пространстве; рынок труда Казахстана пополняется иностранной рабочей силой и трудовыми иммигрантами с низкой квалификацией, в основном из стран Центральной Азии. Характерной особенностью потока трудовых иммигрантов из республик Центральной Азии в Казахстан является высокая доля среди них нелегально занятых. Вместе с тем, одной из основных тенденций внешней трудовой миграции является сокращение объема эмиграции соотечественников на фоне существенного оттока квалифицированных кадров, иначе говоря «утечки умов». Отмечается, что несмотря на наличие значительного количества научных трудов, посвященных изучению миграции, проработанность аспектов трудовой миграции в Республике Казахстан представлена недостаточно.

Ключевые слова: миграция населения, трудовая миграция, рынок труда, Республика Казахстан, иностранная рабочая сила.

Introduction

As of 2024, according to the data of the United Nations, there are more than 284.5 million migrants worldwide. Among these, according to the estimates of the International Labour Organization (ILO), 255.7 million are of working age (15 years and older), with over 167.7 million being labour migrants which is over 30 million higher than in 2013. (ILO global estimates on international migrants in the labour force). According to the World Bank data, the volume of remittances sent by migrants to low- and middle-level income countries reached \$669 billion in 2023. (<https://data.worldbank.org/>).

The migration flow happening in the world is driven by differentiation of socio-economic development of countries.

Migration is driven by two factors: “pull” – higher salary and level of working conditions as well as “push” – socio-economic problems in their home countries. In the developed countries foreign labour resources have become a common occurrence, while emigration has turned into one of the main ways to improve welfare level for the citizens of developing countries.

International migration, regardless of its type, brings significant changes in the lives of both re-

ceiving and sending countries. Developed countries strive to use migration as a key factor in advancing national human capital, the economy, and the social sphere. Thanks to the specialists who arrived, the spheres of high-tech, science and medicine are developing; those who arrived for the educational purposes are sources of financial income for educational institutions, and low-skilled immigrants are in demand in the sphere of small and medium-sized businesses, reducing labour costs.

At the same time, increasing the scale of international labour force migration caused a series of serious problems, including an increase of interethnic tensions, growth of crime among migrants, and shadow income, as well as aggravation of the situation with drug trafficking and other offenses. These processes negatively affect the development of society, triggering larger-scale destructive processes such as interethnic conflicts, a rise in political tensions, and so on. (<https://lk.msu.ru/>).

For effective societal governance and the implementation of efficient socio-economic policies, it is essential to be able to orientate in the scale of migration flows and the composition of migrants, as well as to identify the factors driving migration and determine its consequences. Migration is characterized by an immediate response to political and so-

cio-economic changes in society. At the same time, migration impacts the change of the structure and size of the population, demographic processes, ethnic composition, as well as the lifestyle and standard of living of the population.

The active participation of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the system of international relations, increased investments in the country's economy, the active growth of domestic business, the rise in the average wage level, significant interest from entrepreneurs in inexpensive labour, and many other factors are driving the continued growth in the number of incoming labour force to the republic. Labour migration, which was previously characterized by a change in permanent residence for work purposes, is now represented by a growing share of labour force arriving for temporary and seasonal work. At the same time, the geographical scope of this type of migration is expanding. Today, the Republic of Kazakhstan is simultaneously one of the major centers of labour migrant inflow, as well as a supplier of labour force to other countries' markets.

Materials and methodic

The study of labour migration included several successive stages and the application of specific methods.

A review of domestic and foreign literature on the research topic was conducted, including scientific literature, academic journals, statistical reports, internet resources, and databases dedicated to labour migration, which allowed for the systematization of the results of previous studies and academic works to identify key aspects of labour migration in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Primary statistical material collection, data grouping, and subsequent analysis of statistical information, which was carried out using methods such as generalized indicators, tabular and graphical methods, took place. To calculate indicators of population's migration flow, identify their patterns, integrate characteristics and summarize data the methods of direct accounting, calculation based on registration data, assessment of migration balance and etc.

For the analysis and formation of the statistical database, official data were used from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the information-analytical system "Taldau," the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Migration Service Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, data from

the World Bank Group on post-Soviet countries and Kazakhstan, the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration and others. Data collection was conducted both across Kazakhstan as a whole and by regions and cities of the republic, and for comparative analysis of international trends, data from the countries of Eurasian space were used, which allowed for a more accurate understanding of the phenomenon of labour migration in the country.

Given the lack of detailed data on labour migration, caused by widespread illegal migration, the limited data from certain countries, the mobility of migrants, and etc., the indicators of the volume of international personal remittances, which are indexes for labour migration volumes, were used. Strong and weak sides of the current labour migration system were identified with the help of SWOT analysis.

Thus, the combination of analysis of literary and statistical methods made it possible to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the development of labour migration on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The results of the study and the conclusions drawn can serve as a basis for developing migration policy and strategies for managing migration processes, as well as for improving mechanisms for regulating and supporting labour migrants in the country.

Literature review

Migration is one of the pressing issues of the global community, that plays an important role in the matters of globalization of regions, and its study always attracts the interest of researchers from various fields.

The numerous theories of labour migration from Western scholars that were developed over the past century and a half indicate a sustained interest in its study and the growing importance of the role of migration in the life of society. The economic-stimulating aspect of international labour migration was highlighted as early as the mid-20th century in the works of several scholars, who, in their theoretical concepts, considered the role of migration as a factor in the development of receiving and sending countries.

The theory of human capital (J. Becker, H. Clarke) considers the development of human resources as a type of investment. According to this theory, education and science are the driving forces of a development of a country, while migration impacts an individual's personality and psycho-emotional state. In the New economic theory of migra-

tion (O. Stark, E. Taylor), the purpose of migration is not only income generation but also the reduction of risks associated with underdeveloped labour markets in the migrant's home country. The theory of labour market segmentation and dual labour markets (M. Piore, A. Port) examines the dual segmentation of labour markets in industrial and post-industrial countries: citizens work in high-paying sectors, while foreign labour occupies low-paying sectors. In the neoclassical theory (J. Harris, M. Todaro), labour force migration is explained by economic disparities between countries and differences in wage levels. (Piore, 1979), (Elmesov, 2021), (Sergazin et al., 2023).

The "pull-push" theory (E. Lee) explores the forces that push migrants away from the country and the forces that attract them to developed countries. Factors influencing migration include the economic development of a country, the quality of life of the population, the availability of opportunities for talent development, and other aspects. (Everett, Lee, 1966).

The theory of social capital (D. Massey, L. Goldring) emphasizes return migrants and their influence on the local labour market. "Social capital" refers to various governmental, public, and commercial institutions that can act as "intermediaries" between migrants. These institutions may include employers or organizations that fulfill work orders. (Douglas et al., 1993).

Within the sociological approach to studying labour migration, the "migration networks" theory by D. Massey is highlighted. In this theory the influence of established close social relationships (kinship, clan, and others) on the migration motivation of economically active population is explained.

An extension of the migration networks theory is the theory of cumulative causations. The existence of stable network connections contributes to the self-perpetuation of migration processes, which leads to the inertia of migration flows and the possibility for society to resist restrictive migration policies.

In the concept of a new international economic order (W. Bohning, J. Bhagwati), the development of a "comprehensive and fair compensation mechanism" for countries, where workforce emigrates from, is considered. The authors focus on the qualitative characteristics of labour migrants and the negative consequences of mass emigration of highly skilled labour from developing countries.

The theory of migration systems offers an interdisciplinary approach to migration processes as a constant connection between donor countries and

recipient countries. The founders of this concept are considered to be Michael Cretu, Helen Zlotnick and others, who actively developed the theory in the 1990s (Zlotnik, 1992).

All theories demonstrate a certain continuity—authors build on the experience of previous scholars, most of whom focus on push-and-pull factors as well as Ravenstein's laws (Ravenstein E, 1985). Migration theory responds to general scientific trends such as the mathematical modeling of the 1960s, globalization, the gender approach, and others.

Significant contributions to the development of theoretical and methodological approaches to studying population and labour migration in the context of a market economy have been made by Russian and Soviet authors such as T. I. Zaslavskaya, V.A. Iontsev, V. I. Perevedentsev, L.L. Rybakovsky, and A.V. Topilin. In the works of O. D. Vorobyeva, G.I. Glushchenko, Z. A. Zayonchkovskaya, T.D. Ivanova, S. V. Ryazantsev, A.G. Vishnevsky, E. M. Andreeva, O. A. Kozlova, and others the socio-demographic and economic aspects of preparing and implementing state socio-economic policy, state regulation of migration, and its legal framework are analysed. In the works of A. V. Dmitriev, A. I. Kuzmin, N. P. Neklyudova, V. A. Ponomarev, K. O. Romodanovsky, and P. Yu. Strovskiy specific aspects of the problems associated with regulating external labour migration are addressed (Bobilev, 2009, 10, p.73). The management of labour resources, the preservation and accumulation of human capital, and the development and utilization of labour potential are explored in the works of N. A. Belkina, R. I. Kapelyushnikov, A. G. Korovkin, N. M. Rimashchevskaya, I. V. Soboleva, and A. Kh. Makhmutov. (Yakshibayeva et al., 2016). Researcher E. Yu. Sadvovskaya's studies focus on trends in illegal migration in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

The founders of migration and demographic science within modern domestic political science include M. B. Tatimov, N. V. Alekseenko, and A.B. Galiyeva. Among representatives of domestic science, migration issues are addressed in the works of prominent Kazakhstani scholars and researchers such as R. B. Absattarov, E. M. Ishmukhamedov, K.E. Narmatov, N. V. Romanova, T. S. Sadykova, I. S. Sarsenbayev, and K. L. Syroezhkin.

Among researchers of modern migration processes in Kazakhstan, F. G. Alzhanova, G.N. Nyusupova, A. A. Kenzhegalieva, B. Sagintayev, T.Sletneva, and others can also be highlighted. Their works cover various aspects of migration in Kazakhstan, including internal and external migration, regional economic development, demographic

processes, and the socio-economic consequences of migration flows. These studies explain the demographic, social, economic, and cultural aspects of migration, as well as the impact of these processes on society (Alzhanova, 2023), (Nyussupova, 2007), (Nyussupova et al., 2023) (Duisen G.M., 2024).

Overall, the issue of labour migration requires the joint efforts of political scientists, economists, sociologists, demographers, and others, necessitating an interdisciplinary approach to the study of migration processes in general (Elmesov R, 2021). At the same time, despite the large number of studies in the field of external labour migration, several issues require in-depth and complex examination of this process, as well as scientific explanation and justification of approaches to optimizing state governance from the perspective of the country's modern socio-economic development.

Results and discussions

Labour migration refers to the movement of people within a country or between countries for the purpose of employment. According to the modern definition by the United Nations, a labour migrant is “a person who will engage, is engaging, or has engaged in payed activity in a state of which they are not a citizen” (<https://www.un.org/ru/documents>). Today, it is known that the majority of migration processes worldwide are driven by labour migration. This is because the movement of the working population between countries is motivated by the search for higher wages and the desire to improve their socio-economic status. Unlike other types of migration, labour migration maintains a continuous connection between the migrant and their homeland.

Thus, in modern relations, migration processes are a critically important issue for human life. This concept requires special attention in both domestic and international studies, as well as a clear definition of its place and role in international political and social matters. The issue of migrants is so significant that it can transform society as a whole, and therefore, it must be taken into account in state governance, regulation, and societal development.

Mass migration of population in the second half of the 20th century is a significant phenomena in the life of the global community. International (external) migration manifests itself in various forms: labour, family, tourism, and others. Labour migration has become an integral part of the process of internationalization of global economic life. Each country strives to effectively utilize labour resources not only within its national economy but also in the global economy. The international labour market is formed based on the migration of the workforce.

International labour migration is one of the complex elements of international economic relations, primarily because this process involves people, as opposed to the exchange of goods or movement of capital.

Most scholars distinguish two different types of labour migration: economic and non-economic. Non-economic reasons include political, national, religious, family-related, and other factors. This encompasses the unification and dissolution of states, natural disasters, wars, ecological causes, and personal circumstances. Economic reasons are related to the varying levels of economic development of countries. Labour force moves from countries with lower living standards to those with higher ones. In this case, migration is often driven by differences in wage conditions (Figure 1) (Bauer, 2022).

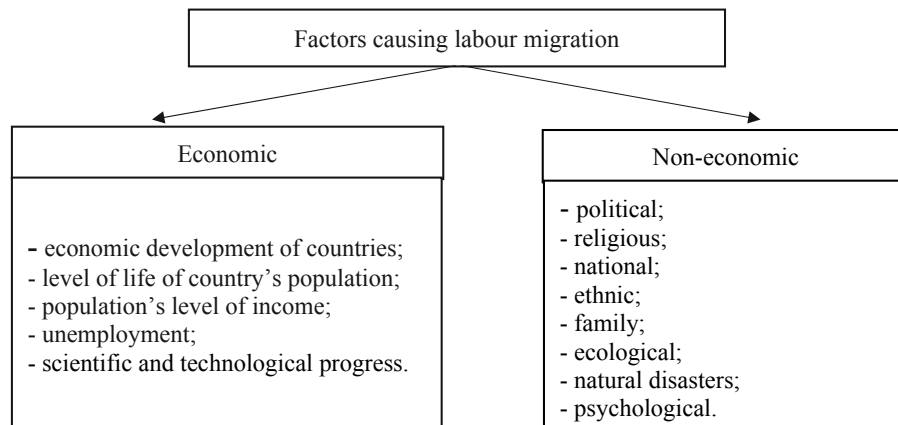


Figure 1 – Factors causing labour migration (Bauer M, 2022).

A key economic factor affecting migration of labour resources is unemployment in certain less developed countries. The inequality in the global economic structure which is expressed in better living and work standards in countries with high economic potential on one hand, and high unemployment and low income in home country on the other, trigger migration flows of population. At the same time influence of multinational corporations on the migration is great through the integration of labour capital, relocation of workforce and capital into regions with surplus labour for increasing the effectiveness of the economy.

In the last decades, process of globalization and the tightly connected to it “information revolution” have strongly influenced the formation of migration flows. As a result, potential workers are increasingly interested in moving abroad. In turn, employers not only have the opportunity to gain additional profits from employing foreign workers but in practice are also compelled to adhere to the strict logic of competition. A distinctive feature of the current stage of international labour migration is the diversification of its qualitative composition. The majority of foreign workers represent hired agricultural and industrial labour, primarily performing low-skilled labour. A specific set of professions characteristic of migrants has formed in leading developed Western countries. These are typically jobs involving heavy physical labour, monotonous tasks, health hazards, and roles that do not require specialized education (e.g., loaders, cleaners, assembly line workers, etc.). Such niche is taken by work migrants even despite unemployment this professions are not in demand by the local population (Zabirova, 2003). Kazakhstan, being a member of the international community, is actively involved in these global migration processes.

The history of labour migration in Kazakhstan reflects the dynamic changes in the country’s economy, politics, and society over several decades. It encompasses the periods of the Soviet Union, the attainment of independence, and the modern era characterized by globalization and economic integration.

Collectivization and Industrialization: In the 1920s–1930s, Kazakhstan became a key region for Soviet industrialization. During this time, large-scale resettlement of populations from other regions of the Soviet Union occurred for work on industrial projects and in agriculture due to the projects of collectivization and creation of state farms (sovkhozes) and collective farms (kolkhozes). There were also

instances of forced relocation of ethnic groups (Germans, Chechens, Ingush, and others) to Kazakhstan. The construction of major infrastructure projects and factories was often carried out using forced labour from GULAG prisoners, further contributing to the migration of labour to the region.

Post-War Period (1950–1980s). In 1954, a large-scale campaign to develop virgin lands began, within which hundreds of thousands of people from the European part of the USSR to Kazakhstan were brought to advance agriculture. This was one of the largest migration campaigns, in which volunteers, Komsomol members, and other citizens took part. During this period, Kazakhstan became one of the USSR’s industrial hubs, attracting workers to metallurgical plants in Temirtau and Karaganda and to the development of mineral deposits. The mass migration of labour led to significant alterations of Kazakhstan’s demographic structure, increasing the population of Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and other ethnic groups.

- **Return of Ethnic Kazakhs (1990–1991):** During this period, the was launched, aimed at Repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs (1990-1991) from Uzbekistan, Mongolia, China, and other countries, which was facilitated by “Nurly Kosh” state program for integrating into Kazakh society.

- **Independence Period (from 1991).** Was characterized by significant economic challenges and decrease of social protection in the country as a result of the collapse of centralized planning system. It lead to an increase of unemployment, mass migration in search of employment abroad.

- **Stabilization and Economic Growth (2000–2010s):** In the early 2000s, Kazakhstan experienced economic growth driven by the development of the oil and gas sector. This attracted foreign specialists and workers for work in the oil and gas industry.

- **Modern Period (2010–Present):** Since the 2010s, Kazakhstan has actively worked on improving the system of regulation of labour migration and its legal framework. New laws and agreements have been adopted to protect the rights of labour migrants, facilitate their integration, and improve their working and living conditions (Zayonchkovskaya T, 2007). Kazakhstan’s accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2015 has also facilitated increase of migration flows and labour market integration, simplifying migration for workers from member countries. Kazakhstan works with aim to attract highly skilled specialists, creating conditions for their work activity which is reflected in the Concept of migration policy for 2023-2027 (Concepts

of migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022).

In recent years, it can be noted that Kazakhstan has become increasingly active in attracting foreign labour. This trend is supported by data from the World Bank on remittance flows to and from Kazakhstan between 2010 and 2023, as illustrated in

Figure 2. The volume of remittance from the republic consistently exceed the value of remittances into the republic by an average factor of 10. However, data show a slight decline in the value of remittances from Kazakhstan starting in 2015, accompanied by a simultaneous increase in the value of remittance into the country.

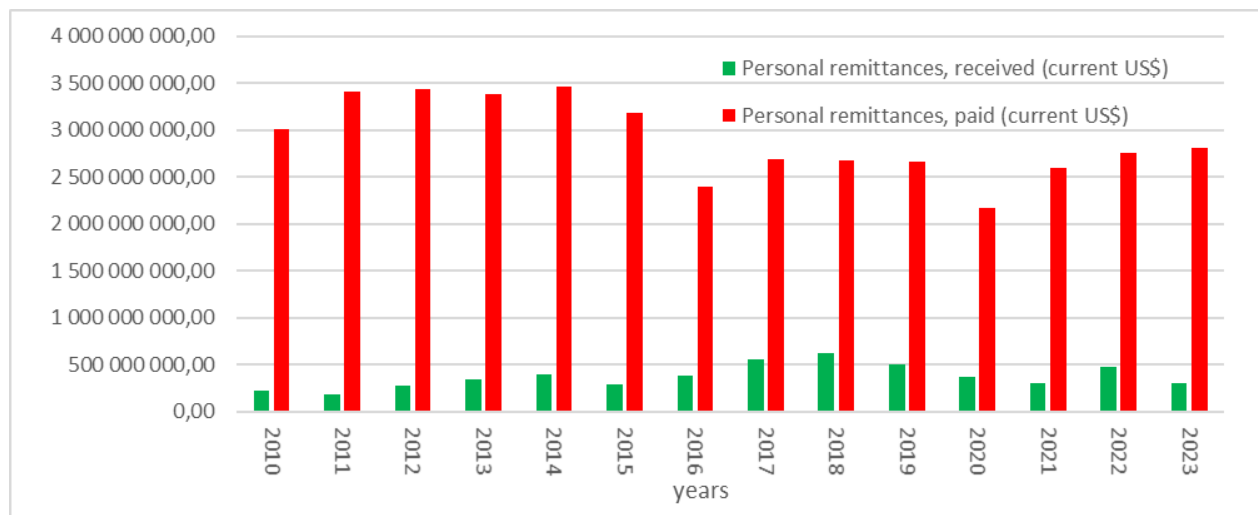


Figure 2 – Volumes of remittances from and to Kazakhstan for 2010-2023 гг. (USD)

Note: compiled by authors based on the source (<https://data.worldbank.org/>).

A comparative analysis of remittance inflows and outflows in 2023 among CIS countries also confirms Kazakhstan's role as a recipient country for labour immigrants (Figure 3). As shown in Figure 3, in 2023, Ukraine (\$14,967 million) and Uzbekistan (\$14,169 million) ranked as the top countries in terms of remittance inflows. Tajikistan held the third position (\$4,634 million), followed by Georgia (\$4,201 million). Kazakhstan ranked last in terms of remittance inflows in 2023, with \$304 million.

The picture is entirely different when it comes to remittance outflows: here Kazakhstan is ranked second, surpassed only by the Russian Federation. The data on the chart clearly show a significant excess of remittance outflows (\$2,809 million) from Kazakhstan over inflows (\$304 million) to the country. Kazakhstan stands as the only country in the CIS

space with significant excess of outflow remittance. Thus, Russia and Kazakhstan are main recipients of labour immigrants within the Post-Soviet region, simultaneously remaining donor countries. However, in proportional comparison to Russia, Kazakhstan is relatively more of a foreign labour force recipient country than a donor country.

When analyzing remittance flows, it is essential to consider their share in the GDP of recipient countries, i.e., their impact on national economies (Figure 4). The data in the chart indicate that in some post-Soviet countries, remittances in 2023 accounted for a significant portion of their GDP: in Tajikistan – 38.4%, in Kyrgyzstan – 20.4%, in Uzbekistan – 13.9%, and in Georgia – 13.7%. Notably, the contribution of remittances to Tajikistan's economy exceeds the revenue from the export of domestic goods to global markets (Rahmonov, 2022).

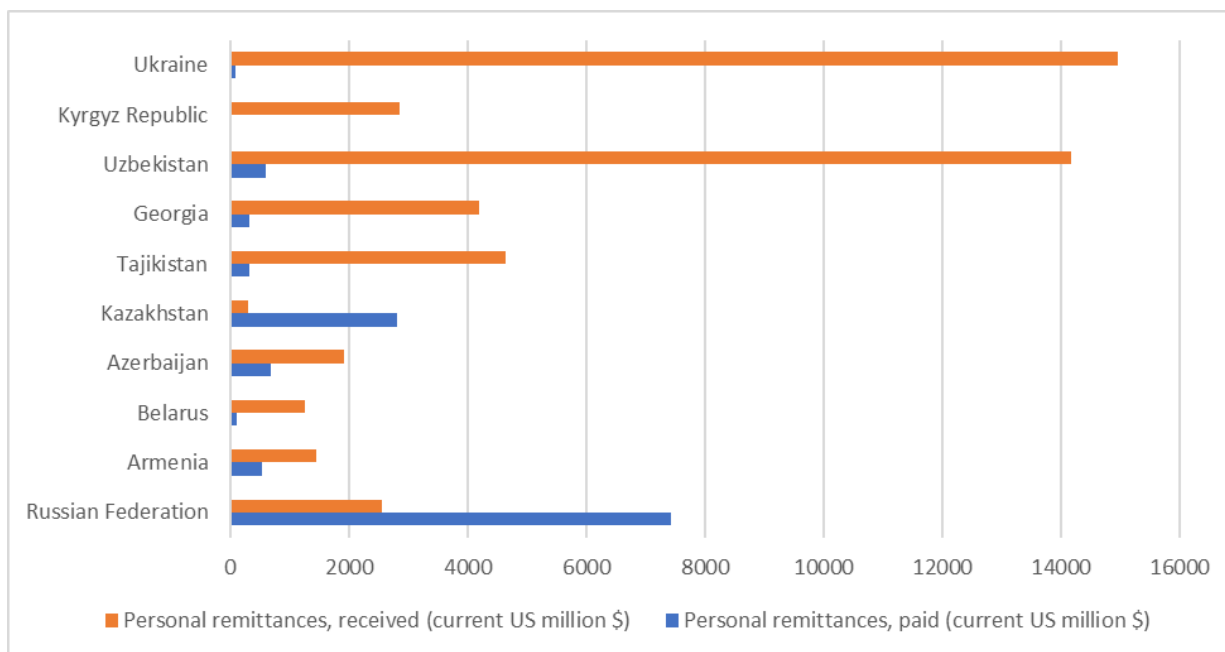


Figure 3 – Volumes of remittances from and to Kazakhstan for 2010-2023 rr (USD)

Note: compiled by authors based on the source (www.gov.kz/memleket/entities)

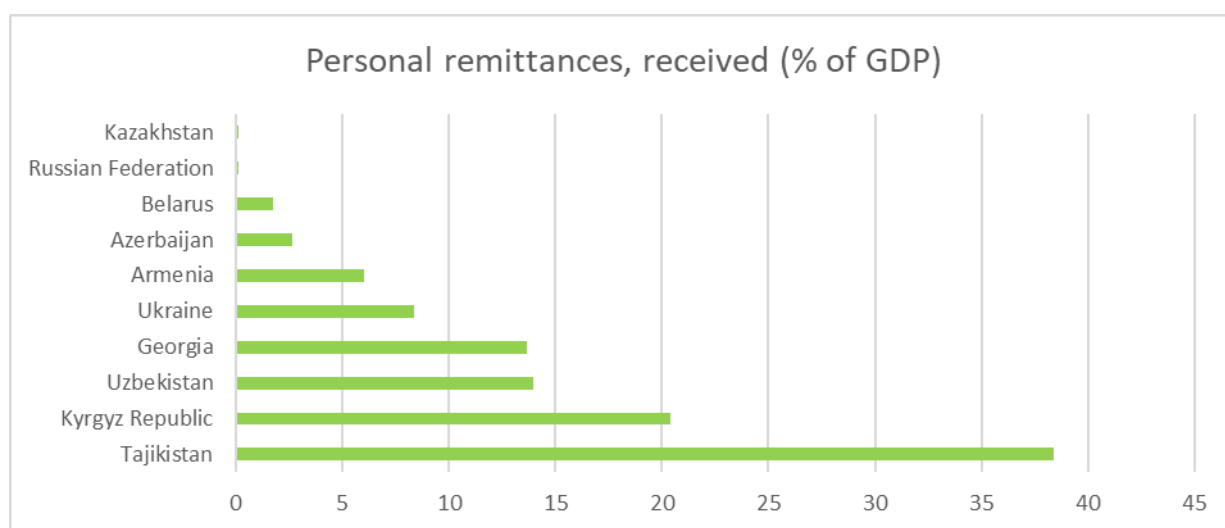


Figure 4 – Inflow of remittances as a share of GDP among countries in the post-Soviet space in 2023, million USD

Note: compiled by authors based on the source (<https://data.worldbank.org/>)

Remittances take a significant place and play a positive role in the formation of national economy of these countries. Most other them are also primarily donors on both global and regional scale. In Kazakhstan, however, the share of remittances in GDP was only 0.1% – the lowest figure not only among Central Asian countries but across the entire post-Soviet space. Kazakhstan changed the direction and

position in the system of international migration of the global labour market from an exporter (primarily to Russia) to an importer of labour (mainly from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan). This is evidenced by the fact that remittances from Kazakhstan began to significantly exceed remittances sent into the country from abroad. Among neighbouring countries, a similar trend is observed in Rus-

sia, which has traditionally been a labour importer. Thus, during the 2000s, a regional (or Central Asian) migration subsystem began to form within the Eurasian migration system. Within this subsystem, Kazakhstan acts as a recipient country, while other countries in the region function as donor countries of labour force. This situation has arisen thanks to the rapid economic growth in Kazakhstan, which nowadays is a regional economic leader and a center of economic attraction in the region (Rakhmetova et al., 2024).

As of start of 2024, according to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 12,882 foreign citizens are working on the territory of Kazakhstan as per set quota. Of these, 65% hold work permits across various categories, ranging from executives to skilled workers and specialists.

In 2022, approximately 400,000 foreign citizens arrived in Kazakhstan for work, of which the largest amount are migrants from Uzbekistan (200,000 people), Kyrgyzstan (40,000), and Tajikistan (35,000).

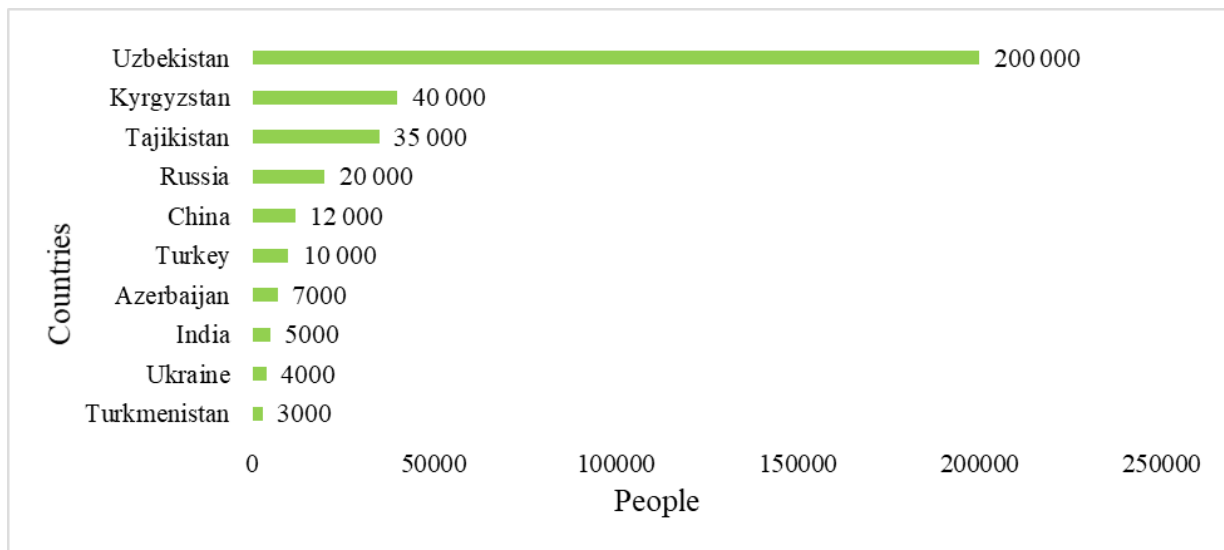


Figure 5 – Number of labour immigrants arriving to Kazakhstan by country of arrival, 2022
([http: www.gov.kz/memleket/entities](http://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities))

Unfortunately, in both Kazakhstan's and UN (DESA) statistics there is no official data on the profile, experience and reasons for stay of labour migrants which complicates the understanding of the labour migration phenomenon in the country.

The regional distribution of labour migrants in Kazakhstan is shaped by several factors. Economic factors, such as the development of the oil and gas, mining, and agricultural industries, create a high demand for labour, attracting immigrants. Unity and similarity of linguistic, historical and cultural environment, alongside the geographic proximity of Central Asian countries and Kazakhstan, ease the process of migration. Additionally, stability in geopolitical aspect, developed system of social support and legal protection of labour migrants make Kazakhstan more attractive to workers from neighboring countries.

Kazakhstan's southern regions border with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, while the northern and western regions border Russia, which influences the flows and distribution of labour migrants across the territory of the republic.

In 2023, the highest number of international labour migrants settled in the following regions: Almaty city (27%), Mangystau Region (23%), Astana city (15%), Almaty Region (13%), and Karaganda Region (5%). The main cities attracting labour migrants include Almaty, Shymkent, Aktau, Atyrau, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Semey, and others. The attraction of migrants to work in these cities mainly depends on the region's economic characteristics and the availability of jobs in various sectors.

External labour migration raises several challenges in the Republic of Kazakhstan, including the illegal presence of migrants in the country. This

creates difficulties in the sphere of border control, security, and maintaining public order. In the international community, illegal labour migration is seen as one of the primary threats to national and global security, alongside terrorism, transnational organized crime, and the illegal trafficking of drugs and weapons.

The reasons for the increase in illegal labour migration from Central Asian countries to Kazakhstan lie in the disparity of economic development of Kazakhstan and other republics of the region. Kazakhstan's labour market attracts migrants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and China. Information on the number of illegal migrants from Central Asian countries in Kazakhstan is currently fragmented. According to approximate estimates, more than 700,000 foreigners arrive in the republic annually, of which 600,000 are migrants from CIS countries, the number of illegal migrants increases each year.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of illegal labour migrants (guest workers) in Kazakhstan

due to the informal nature of their stay and activities. According to various estimates, the number of illegal labour migrants in Kazakhstan ranges from 200,000 to 1 million people. These figures are based on research by non-governmental organizations, international agencies, and sociological studies. Since the accounting of illegal migrants is challenging, official data may be understated. In 2023, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan reported that around 30,000 illegal migrants were identified and deported.

To protect the domestic labour market, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the population of the Republic of Kazakhstan annually establishes and distributes quotas for attracting foreign workers to Kazakhstan based on employers' needs. For example, in 2016, their share was 0.41% of the total workforce, and in 2022, it decreased to 0.31%, or 28,300 people. The peak number of foreign workers under the quota was recorded in 2015 and 2016 (37,900 and 36,700 people, respectively).

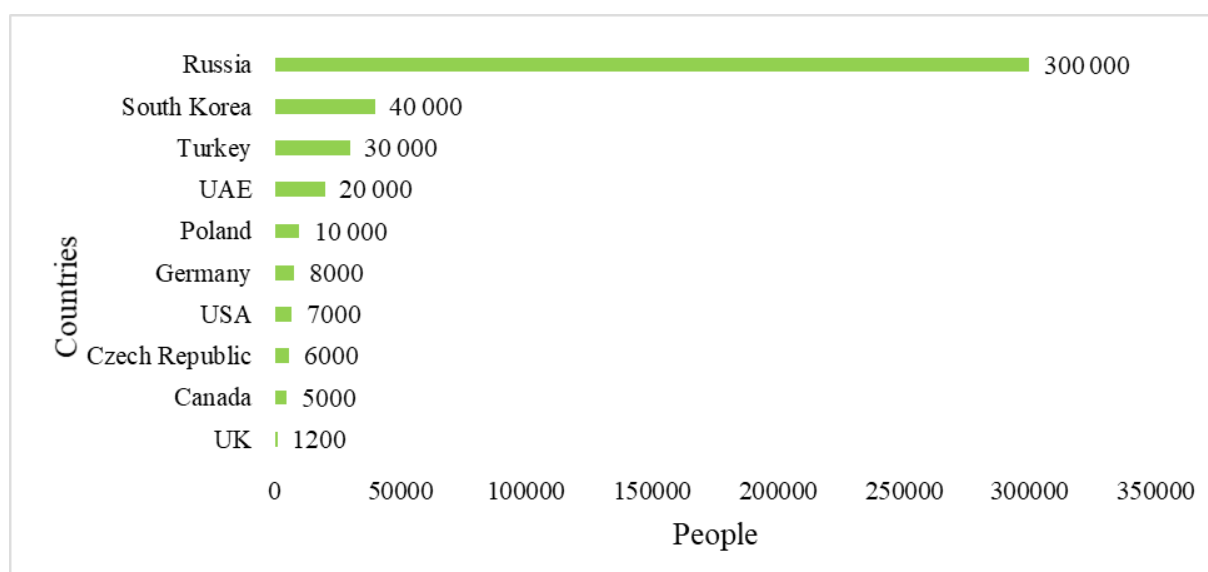


Figure 6 – The number of labour emigrants by country, 2022
(www.gov.kz/memleket/entities)

According to the Migration Committee, in 2022, about 450,000 citizens of Kazakhstan went abroad in search of work. The majority of them headed to Russia (about 300,000), 40,000 to South Korea, 30,000 to Turkey, 20,000 to the United Arab Emirates, and others (Figure 6) (www.gov.kz/memleket/entities).

According to government data, in 2023, 194,000 Kazakh citizens were engaged in labour migration. Of these, 84% worked in Russia, and only 9.3% were in European countries. The choice of Kazakhs in favor of the Russian labour market is due to several factors: higher incomes and broader market opportunities; similar cultural traditions and a common

language, which ease the adaptation of migrants in the host country; geographical proximity and the availability of transportation between the countries; historical ties, which make migration socially acceptable. Additionally, the migration legislation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the European Economic Union, which provides visa-free entry and simplified border crossing procedures for EAEU residents, is an advantage for choosing EAEU countries. However, the salary offered by Russian employers is significantly lower than in European countries.

External labour migration presents Kazakhstan with complex challenges and problems, among which is the “brain drain” – the loss of highly qualified specialists due to migration. This issue significantly impacts Kazakhstan’s economic development by slowing down innovations and reducing produc-

tivity. For example, in 2022, about 130,000 people left Kazakhstan. Around 30% of them (39,000 people) were specialists with university or secondary specialized education, holding professions such as:

IT specialists: 8,700 people (about 22% of the total number of highly qualified expatriates).

Engineering and technical workers: 7,800 people (20%).

Medical workers: 4,200 people (10.8%).

Scientists and researchers: 3,500 people (8.9%).

Teachers: 2,900 people (7.4%).

Below is the SWOT analysis of labour migration, which helps to assess various aspects of migration processes, identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with this phenomenon. This is an important tool for developing effective migration strategies and making informed decisions (Table 2).

Table 2 – SWOT Analysis of External Labour Migration

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement of qualification and professional skills; - Development of international business connections and opportunities for exchange of new knowledges and technologies; - Mastery of foreign languages; - Increase in financial flows, support of financial system; - Cultural exchange, improvement of mutual understanding and social harmony of different ethnic groups of migrants; - The possibility of starting a business based on the acquired knowledge after returning to the country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decrease of highly skilled labour resources leads to an aging workforce and weakening of the professional potential of the country; - Inefficient spending on education and professional training; - Risk of a lack of mentors for the next generation; - The “brain drain” phenomenon; - Aging populations in sending countries and growing populations in receiving countries, which may put pressure on social services and infrastructure; - Language and cultural barriers, as well as discrimination from local residents.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic development. Labour migration helps develop industries facing labour force shortages, such as healthcare, construction, and information technologies; - Cultural exchange. Migration fosters better understanding of different cultures and strengthening of international ties; - Development of the global labour market. Labour migration stimulates the growth of the global labour market, easing international trade and economic integration; - International connections. Migrant flows can strengthen Kazakhstan’s international connections with other countries, creating opportunities for knowledge and experience exchange; - Increased tax revenues. Migrants working in Kazakhstan can boost tax revenue to the state budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nationalism and xenophobia. Increase of labour migrants may contribute to nationalist and xenophobic sentiments and consequently restrictions of migration policies; - Economic competition. Migrant flows may create competition in the labour market, raising unemployment levels among the local population; - Economic instability. Uncontrolled migrant flows may lead to economic instability in receiving countries due to labour market shifts and public spending; - Security. Uncontrolled migrant flow may increase crime rates, human trafficking, and breaches of public safety; - Terrorist threats. Uncontrolled labour migration heightens the risk of terrorism, illegal weapons and drug trafficking.

Conclusion

The results of the conducted research allowed for a better understanding of the complexity and multifaceted nature of labour migration processes

in Kazakhstan and highlighted the following main trends in its development. Kazakhstan, as a donor country in the international labour market, is simultaneously a recipient country in the space of Central Asia and the CIS countries. Labour migration closes

the deficit of workers in the republic and contributes to the development of sectors of the economy (construction, agriculture, and industry), and also promote the growth of domestic consumption. Migrants help to fill labour force shortages and also contribute to the growth of domestic consumption. The outflow of qualified personnel from the country is compensated by the influx of migrants, but mainly of lower qualifications, which creates an imbalance in the labour market.

Labour migration raises the need to address issues of migrant integration, preventing discrimination, adapting them to Kazakhstani society, and ensuring equal rights and working conditions. It is important to develop an effective migration policy that takes into account the needs of the national economy and ensures security and fairness in the labour market. This includes creating jobs for local residents as well as monitoring the working conditions of migrants.

Kazakhstan is also an important transit point for migrants heading to Russia and other CIS countries.

This creates additional opportunities for economic cooperation and strengthening ties with neighboring states.

The collection and organization of statistical data on labour migration is complicated by many factors, including the diversity of migration forms, the lack of unified international standards, the prevalence of illegal migration, difficulties in determining the status of migrants, and insufficient coordination between government bodies. All of this makes it difficult to create an accurate and reliable picture of labour migration, which significantly complicates the development of effective migration policies and the forecasting of trends of labour migration.

Thus, labour migration in Kazakhstan has both positive aspects and certain challenges. To effectively manage migration flows, it is necessary to create a balanced policy that will contribute to improving economic indicators, solving demographic problems, and ensuring fair conditions for all labour market participants.

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Авторлар туралы мәлімет:

Келинбаева Роза Жармухаметовна – PhD, әл-Фараби атындағы ҚазҰУ-дың география және табиғатты пайдалану факультеті география, жерге орналастыру және кадастр кафедрасының аға оқытушысы (Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: zhar80@mail.ru)

Сарсенова Баянсулу Қутлұмуратовна – 8D05202 – География 1-курс докторанты, әл-Фараби атындағы ҚазҰУ (Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: bayansulusarsenova@gmail.com)

Жумагулов Чингиз Бауржанович – 8D04103 – Мемлекеттік және жергілікті басқару 3-курс докторанты, әл-Фараби атындағы ҚазҰУ (Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: c.zhumagulov@gmail.com)

Толеков Зангар Алимович – 8D05202 – География 2-курс докторанты, География, әл-Фараби атындағы ҚазҰУ (Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: tolekov.zangar04@gmail.com)

Касымғалиев Сымбат Қуатович – 8D07304 – Жерге орналастыру 3-курс докторанты әл-Фараби атындағы ҚазҰУ (Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: Symbat_1997.kz@mail.ru)

Information about authors:

Kelinbayeva Roza – PhD, Senior Lecturer of the Department of Geography, Land Management and Cadastre, Faculty of Geography and Environmental Management al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty, Kazakhstan e-mail: zhar80@mail.ru)

Sarsenova Bayansulu – Doctoral student 8D05202 – Geography al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: bayansulusarsenova@gmail.com)

Zhumagulov Chingiz – Doctoral student 8D04103 – Public and Local Administration al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: c.zhumagulov@gmail.com)

Tolekov Zangar – Doctoral student 8D05202 – Geography al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: tolekov.zangar04@gmail.com)

Kassymgaliev Symbat – Doctoral student 8D07304- Land Management al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail: Symbat_1997.kz@mail.ru)

Сведения об авторах:

Келинбаева Роза Жармухаметовна – PhD, старший преподаватель кафедры географии, землеустройства и кадастра факультета географии и природопользования КазНУ им. аль-Фараби (Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: zhar80@mail.ru);

Сарсенова Баянсулу Қутлұмуратовна – докторант 1 курса 8D05202 – География КазНУ им. аль-Фараби (Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: bayansulusarsenova@gmail.com);

Жумагулов Чингиз Бауржанович – докторант 3 курса 8D04103 – Государственное и местное управление КазНУ им. аль-Фараби (Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: c.zhumagulov@gmail.com);

Толеков Зангар Алимович – докторант 2 курса 8D05202 – География КазНУ им. аль-Фараби (Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: tolekov.zangar04@gmail.com);

Касымғалиев Сымбат Қуатович – докторант 3 курса 8D07304 – Землеустройство КазНУ им. аль-Фараби (Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: Symbat_1997.kz@mail.ru).

Received: January 24, 2025

Accepted: April 27, 2025