

УДК 314.7

MIGRATION FROM RUSSIA TO EASTERN FINLAND

Heikki Eskelinen¹, Aku Alanen²

¹ *Karelian Institute University of Eastern Finland*

² *Statistics Finland*

This paper investigates the trends and characteristics of Russian immigration between 1990 and 2010, with special attention being paid to the regional distribution of migration patterns. The key question concerns the implications of Russian immigration for the development of border regions and cross-border co-operation.

Key words: immigration, regional development, Finland, Russia.

Хейкки Эскелинен, Аку Аланен. МИГРАЦИЯ ИЗ РОССИИ В ВОСТОЧНУЮ ФИНЛЯндиЮ

В статье исследуются тенденции и характеристики миграции из России в 1990–2010 гг., особое внимание уделено региональным особенностям структуры миграционных потоков. Рассматривается влияние миграции из России на развитие приграничных регионов и приграничное сотрудничество.

Ключевые слова: иммиграция, региональное развитие, Финляндия, Россия.

Introduction

The impacts of a change in a border regime on the volume and forms of cross-border interaction, and hence on regional development, are traditional research issues in studies on borders. In Europe, the EU integration process and the opening up of the East-West divide some two decades ago have provided much empirical evidence on these processes. According to mainstream economic theory, the degree of socio-economic integration between border regions is assumed to depend on, firstly, how they are positioned (e.g. in terms of accessibility) in their own institutional and functional environment and, secondly, their population base (and market potential). Many border regions have remained, or turned into, transport corridors, but there are also cases in which the removal of border-related barriers has triggered

economic growth processes on both sides of a formerly closed border, and contributed to cross-border regionalization processes (for economic integration of border areas: see Niebuhr & Stiller [2004]).

This paper focuses on one specific case of how a change of border regime has facilitated new forms of cross-border interaction and provided potential resources for regional development in peripheral border areas: migration from the Russian Federation to neighboring Finland. The disintegration of the Soviet Union launched this process, and in the Constitution of 1993 freedom for movement was officially granted to Russian citizens giving them the right to move permanently abroad [Heleniak, 2001].

Major differences in income levels between Finland and Russia imply that economic incentives exist for potential migrants. However, it has to be stressed here that in comparison to

many large migration streams that were boosted by the collapse of the Soviet Union and resulting upheaval of the East-West divide, this small flow of migrants is highly regulated, and its trends do not necessarily follow changes in socio-economic disparities between the border areas. It is argued here that the investigation of this particular case necessitates that the analysis is informed by context-specific and locally contingent preconditions for cross-border integration or regionalization processes, which have been conditioned by the break-up of the Soviet Union and the resulting systemic change. The structure of the paper is the following. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the Finnish-Russian border and reviews the changes to its regime in the early 1990s. Section 3 describes main trends of migration since 1990, paying particular attention to its geographical distribution in Finland. Section 4 discusses the role of migration from the perspective of the Finnish border regions, which have suffered from structural problems for a long time. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and draws some conclusions.

Institutional Context: Normalization of the Finnish-Russian border¹

The Finnish-Russian border regime has undergone several drastic changes in history due to political and institutional upheavals. For this reason, the volume and structure of cross-border interaction – and also patterns of borderland development – are characterized by distinctive periods. Bilateral economic relations between Finland and the Soviet Union were extensive after the Second World War, but cross-border cooperation in the current meaning of this activity was non-existent. Migration was at a minimal level, and border crossings were linked to official political and economic relations and group tourism. There were only a few crossing-points for passenger traffic, and the bulk of the border region in the Soviet Union was strictly off limits for foreign visitors.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the border regime has remained similar in the sense that a passport and visa (that cannot be bought at crossing-points) are required (with the exception of some specific tourist trips). The border is also still very strictly guarded and there is a zone of restricted access on both sides. As a result, the number of illegal crossings has remained very small. However, the border regime in a wider meaning has undergone profound changes for a

traveler to Russia in the sense that contacts between individual actors are allowed, travel restrictions concerning certain destinations have been removed almost entirely and new crossing points have been constructed. In a word, the border regime has been normalized to a major degree. The impacts are seen clearly in the number of border crossings, which have risen from 1.3 million in 1991 to 8.4 million in 2010 (www.raja.fi). At the same time, the share of Russians among the border-crossers has grown, and currently they account for a clear-cut majority. These border-crossings have created connections that may increase migration potential, which, in turn, increases the number of border crossings as many of those who have moved pay visits to their home country.

To citizens of non-EU countries, the introduction of the Schengen Treaty has set uniform requirements for entry on the external borders of the EU and, thus, the period of a relatively open border turned out to be only temporary in several cases. The Finnish-Russian case makes an exception in this respect due to the fact that there was no period of an open border after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For this reason, Finland's membership in the Schengen Treaty has in fact improved Russian citizens' possibilities for visiting EU countries, and many Russians apply for a Finnish visa for travelling in the whole Schengen Area. Given the fact that the regulation of migration is a competency of individual states, neither Finland's membership in the EU nor the introduction of the Schengen Treaty has had straightforward impacts on the inflow of Russian immigrants to Finland.

In addition to socio-economic factors, ethnicity has played a major role in contributing to, or conditioning, migration both from former Soviet states to Russia and from Russia to other countries. In the latter case, this is clearly seen in the fact that Germany and Israel have been important destination countries [Heleniak op. cit]. The Finnish immigration policy is comparable to Germany in the sense that Russian citizens of Finnish descent have been allowed to move to Finland, and they are seen as so-called return migrants who are entitled to social security. In the early 1990s, this migration flow started spontaneously, and the criteria were not well defined. Since then, relatively tight requirements have been set, which has slowed down this inflow of migrants. It has been estimated that at least 20 000 Russian (and also former Soviet and Estonian) citizens have moved to Finland on this basis. Their mother tongue is either Russian or Finnish.

¹ This account draws on Liikanen et al. [2007].

In addition to the above mentioned group of Finnish descent, migrants from Russia to Finland can be classified into the following three main groups: work-related migrants, those who have married a Finn (typically a Russian woman marrying a Finnish man), and students. A Russian citizen, who comes to work in Finland needs a permit in advance and his/her employer has to apply for it from the labor market authorities.

In comparison to the inflow from Russia to Finland, the outflow from Finland to Russia is very small – the annual average is approximately one-tenth of the inflow. This migration is closely linked to increasing economic relations between these two countries; a typical migrant is an expert who works for a Finnish company that has invested in Russia. The following account focuses on migration from Russia to Finland.

Migration from Russia to Finland since 1990: main trends and patterns

Migrants are usually classified according to their country of origin, citizenship or language. Here, migration from Russia to Finland is investigated according to the last mentioned criterion: the number of Russian-speaking residents in Finland is used as a volume indicator. It is worth emphasizing that this group includes those Russian-speaking inhabitants who lived in Finland already during the Soviet era, and also Russian-speakers who have migrated to Finland from another country, usually from Estonia. However, this language group does not include those migrants from Russia whose mother tongue is not Russian (usually Finnish) or who have moved back to Russia. Almost all Russian-speaking residents in Finland are citizens of Finland or the Russian Federation, or have the citizenship of both these countries.

In comparison to EU averages, Finland has been – and still is – a very homogenous country in terms of ethnicity and language. In 1990, only 0.5 per cent of the people living in Finland (approximately 25 000 inhabitants) did not speak any of the official languages of the country (Finnish, Swedish or Sami) as their mother tongue. Russian-speakers numbered not more than 4000, which is a lower figure than in the early years of the country's independence after the First World War.

During the last two decades, the total number of foreigners Finland has grown rapidly from this very low level. It quadrupled in the 1990s, that is, approximately 100 000 in the year 2000 (2 per cent of the total population), and the number of

Russia-speakers had bounded ahead to 28 000. In 2010, the respective total figure was 224 000 (4 per cent) including approximately 55 000 Russian-speaking residents, who formed the largest single foreign-language group in Finland (followed by Estonians and Somalis). In addition to these Russian-speaking residents, several thousand Russians work in Finland annually in seasonal or temporal occupations, and there are also Russians who have bought a second home in Finland and live in the country during weekends and holidays [Pitkänen, 2011]. Those Russians who work in temporary occupations in agriculture (berry pickers etc.) do not need a work or residence permit.

A majority of migrants from Russia to Finland live in the largest cities and in the eastern border areas of the country, that is, they have settled in the places where Russian-speaking communities are growing, and where contacts to Russia can be maintained more easily due to geographical proximity. The share on Russian-speaking minority is highest in the rural municipality of Tohmajärvi, close to the Niirala-Värtsilä border-crossing point. However, approximately 40 per cent of the migrants live in the Uusimaa region (incl. Helsinki). The growth of Russian-speaking population has been continuous since the early 1990s (see Fig. 1).

Their share has grown most rapidly in the southernmost part of the border region (Kymenlaakso and South Karelia, NUTS 3). This share has exceeded the Finnish average also in the easternmost region of the country (North Karelia). The northernmost parts of the Finnish-Russian border region are almost uninhabited and, thus, geographical proximity does not play a particular role in migration to these regions. Russian-speakers form by far the largest group of foreigners in the eastern part of the country. In the largest urban areas, especially in the Helsinki region, migration is more diversified and there is no single dominant group of foreigners in terms of ethnicity or language: see Fig. 2.

Internal migration – and also emigration in the past – has played an important role in spatial change and regional differentiation in Finland. The main trends have been quite stable for decades in that rural areas and more recently also smaller urban communities lose population due to migration, whereas the largest urban regions, especially Helsinki, continue to grow. In this context, eastern Finland is an archetypal example of a region which has suffered from a relative decline, and even the growth of the region's largest centres have slowed down when surrounding rural

areas are not providing any more migrants. This has resulted in the aging of the population, which has further undermined the regions' development prospects. Against this

background, cross-border interaction and cooperation in general, and migration from Russia in particular, have been seen as potential new resources for development.

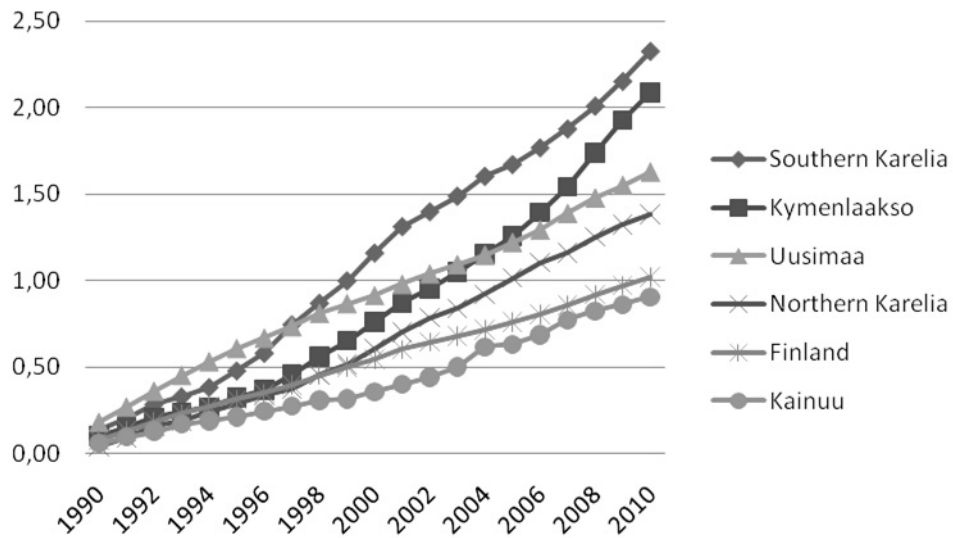


Fig. 1. Share of Russian-speaking population in Finland and in selected regions (border regions and Uusimaa, NUTS 3), 1990–2010

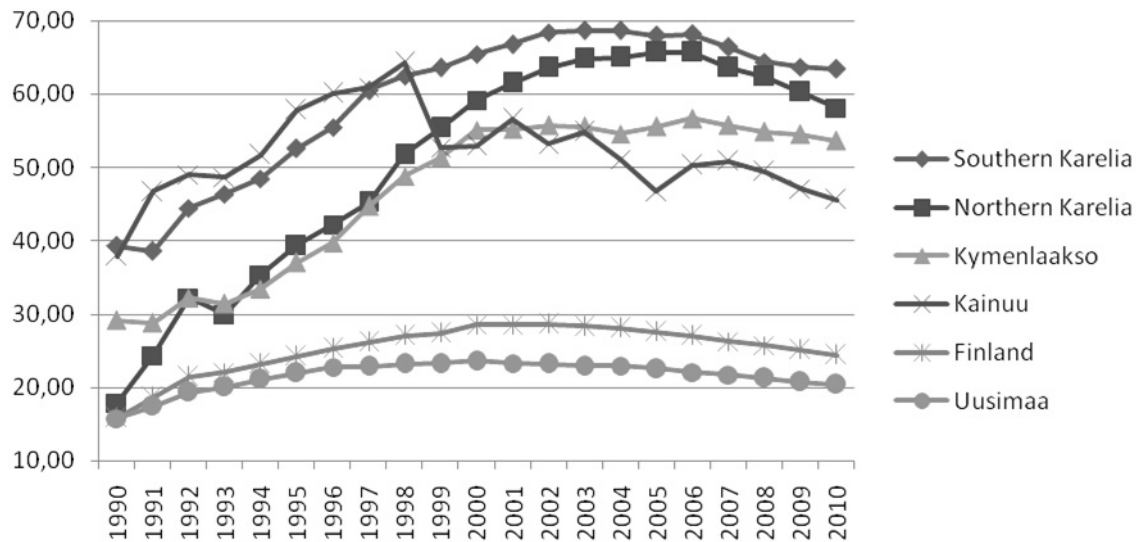


Fig. 2. Share of Russian-speakers of the total population in Finland and in selected NUTS 3 regions (border regions and Uusimaa, incl. Helsinki), 1990–2010

Migration and regional development

The total population of the four regions sharing a border with the Russian Federation (Kymenlaakso, South Karelia, North Karelia, and Kainuu, NUTS 3) was in 2010 more than 40 000 smaller than in 1990. At the same time, the number of Russian-speaking population grew rapidly in these regions; it was only 500 in 1990, but has risen to approximately 10 000 in 2010. This means that migration from Russia had

compensated around one-fifth of the population loss resulting from internal migration and natural population change. The role of immigration from Russia has in this sense been the most important in the region of South Karelia and at a local level in municipalities close to the border-crossing points (see Fig. 1).

Given the fact that unemployment rate is high and economic growth sluggish in border regions, it can be assumed that some Russian migrants move further to more prosperous regions.

However, the empirical data shows that this on-migration is not particularly large. In the region of Uusimaa (incl. Helsinki), the net gain from on-migration is approximately one-fifth of the migration flow which it has received directly from Russia. Also the region of Kymenlaakso, where transit traffic to Russia is an important economic activity, has received some additional migrants through other regions. In contrast, the more peripheral border regions have lost Russian migrants.

Taking into account the migrant groups and their motives, these findings concerning on-migration are not necessarily that surprising, even if there is no research-based evidence on the dynamics of this migration process. Firstly, a migrant who comes for employment needs a work permit in advance. Secondly, many of those who have moved on ethnic grounds are relatively old and therefore their mobility is not very high. Thirdly, Russian women marrying Finnish men are bound to their spouses' places of living.

Conclusions and reflections

Since the early 1990s, the Russian-speaking minority in Finland has grown in numbers to more than ten-fold due to migration and Russians currently form the third largest language group in the country (after the official languages Finnish and Swedish). Overall, this migration flow is well regulated in the sense that individuals do not enter the country in search for jobs, but a work or residence permit is needed in advance. This process started from the specific policy allowing people of Finnish descent to "return" to Finland (in some cases, their ancestors had never lived in the current Finnish territory), but currently migration for employment is growing and there is an increasing

group Russians who have gained experience from seasonal work or studies in Finland.

Geographical proximity and urbanization economies seem to bear influence on migration flows. Most migrants move to the largest cities (especially Helsinki) and areas close to crossing points. Even if the numbers are small in a European and international comparison, this migration flow is already of importance for regional development in eastern Finland. In addition to its impacts on population structure in declining communities, it also creates a population group that has cultural and professional competence on both sides of the border. This human capital is an important potential resource for cross-border interaction and co-operation, initiating processes that create a more integrated Finnish-Russian borderland.

Literature

Alanen A. Etelä-Suomi ja rajamaakunnat vetävät venäläisiä // *Tieto & trendit*. 2006. Vol. 3. P. 58–61.

Alanen A. Suomessa jo 50 000 venäjänkielistä // *Tieto & trendit*. 2009. Vol. 6.

Heleniak T. Migration and Restructuring in Post-Soviet Russia // *Demokratizatsiya*. 2001. Vol. 9(4). P. 531–549.

Liikanen I., Zimin D., Ruusuvuori J., Eskelinen H. Karelia – A Cross-Border Region. The EU and cross-border region-building on the Finnish-Russian border. University of Joensuu, Publications of the Karelian Institute. Joensuu, 2007. N 146.

Niebuhr A. & Stiller S. Integration Effects in Border Regions – A Survey of Economic Theory and Empirical Studies // *Review of Regional Research*. 2004. Vol. 1. P. 3–21.

Pitkänen K. Contested Cottage Landscapes: Host perspective to the increase of foreign second home ownership in Finland 1990–2008. *Fennia*. 2011. Vol. 189. P. 43–59.

СВЕДЕНИЯ ОБ АВТОРАХ:

Эскелинен Хейкки

профессор
Карельский Институт Университета Восточной Финляндии
п/я 111, 8010 Йоэнсуу, Финляндия
эл. почта: Heikki.Eskelinen@uef.fi
тел.: +358 50 5958180

Аланен Аку

Статистическая служба Финляндии
FI-00022
эл. почта: Aku.Alanen@stat.fi
тел.: +358 9 17341

Eskelinen, Heikki

Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland
PO Box 111, 8010 Joensuu, Finland
e-mail: Heikki.Eskelinen@uef.fi
tel.: +358 50 5958180

Alanen, Aku

Statistics Finland, FI-00022
e-mail: Aku.Alanen@stat.fi
tel.: +358 9 17341