

EXPLORING LABOR MIGRATION PATTERNS AND SOCIOECONOMIC RAMIFICATIONS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Formulation of the problem. Labor migration has emerged as a significant socioeconomic phenomenon in Uzbekistan, impacting both the sending regions within the country and the receiving countries abroad. This research paper aims to analyze the patterns of labor migration within Uzbekistan and to other countries, while also assessing its socioeconomic implications. *The purpose of the article* is to analyze and evaluate the schemes of labor migration in Uzbekistan, taking into account their socioeconomic consequences, as well as studying the volume of labor migration, the main directions and motivations of migrants, determining the impact of this phenomenon on the economy, the labor market, the social sphere and other aspects of public life in Uzbekistan. *The object of the study* is labor migration schemes and their socio-economic consequences in the context of Uzbekistan. *The methodological basis* and information base of the research are current scientific and applied research, statistical information. The article uses a number of methods, including analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalization. *The main hypothesis* of the study is that the analysis of labor migration schemes and their consequences will reveal the key factors that influence this process and its impact on the economy, the labor market, the social sphere and other aspects of public life in Uzbekistan. We assume that such an analysis will allow us to develop effective strategies and policies to optimize labor migration in order to ensure sustainable socio-economic development of the country. *Presenting main material.* The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of labor migration data and qualitative interviews with migrants and relevant stakeholders. By understanding the drivers and consequences of labor migration, this research provides valuable insights for policymakers to design effective strategies that maximize the benefits and minimize the challenges associated with labor mobility. *The originality and practical significance of the study* lies in a comprehensive approach to the analysis of labor migration schemes and its socio-economic consequences in the context of Uzbekistan, new insights into the relationship between labor migration and the country's development, revealing the peculiarities of this phenomenon in the Uzbek context. The practical significance of this article is that it can serve as a basis for the development of effective strategies and policies for the management of labor migration in Uzbekistan. Conclusions of the study can be useful for governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with issues of migration and socio-economic development. The findings of the study indicate the need to develop comprehensive programs to support migrants, as well as the need to reform the labor migration management system in Uzbekistan in order to ensure sustainable development of the country and improve the quality of life of migrants and their families.

Keywords:

labor migration, higher qualifications, population, paid work, labor force.

ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ СХЕМ ТРУДОВОЇ МІГРАЦІЇ ТА ЇЇ СОЦІАЛЬНО-ЕКОНОМІЧНИХ НАСЛІДКІВ В УЗБЕКІСТАНІ

Постановка проблеми. Трудова міграція стала значним соціально-економічним явищем в Узбекистані, яке впливає як на регіони відправлення всередині країни, так і на приймаючі країни за кор-

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доном. Ця дослідницька стаття спрямована на аналіз моделей трудової міграції в Узбекистані та в інші країни, а також на оцінку її соціально-економічних наслідків. *Мета статті* полягає в аналізі та оцінюванні схем трудової міграції в Узбекистані з урахуванням їх соціально-економічних наслідків, а також вивчення обсягів трудової міграції, основних напрямків та мотивації мігрантів, визначення впливу цього явища на економіку, ринок праці, соціальну сферу та інші аспекти суспільного життя в Узбекистані. *Об'єктом дослідження* є схеми трудової міграції та їх соціально-економічні наслідки в контексті Узбекистану. *Методологічною основою та інформаційною базою дослідження* є актуальні наукові та прикладні дослідження, статистична інформація. У статті використано низку методів, зокрема аналізу, синтезу, порівняння та узагальнення. *Основною гіпотезою дослідження* полягає в тому, що аналіз схем трудової міграції та їх наслідків дозволить виявити ключові фактори, які впливають на цей процес і його вплив на економіку, ринок праці, соціальну сферу та інші аспекти суспільного життя в Узбекистані. Припускаємо, що такий аналіз дозволить розробити ефективні стратегії та політики для оптимізації трудової міграції з метою забезпечення сталого соціально-економічного розвитку країни. *Виклад основного матеріалу.* У дослідженні використовується змішаний підхід, який поєднує кількісний аналіз даних трудової міграції та якісні інтерв'ю з мігрантами та відповідними зацікавленими сторонами. Розуміючи рушії та наслідки трудової міграції, це дослідження дає цінну інформацію для розробників політики для розробки ефективних стратегій, які максимізують переваги та мінімізують проблеми, пов'язані з мобільністю робочої сили. *Оригінальність та практична значущість дослідження* полягає в комплексному підході до аналізу схем трудової міграції та її соціально-економічних наслідків в контексті Узбекистану, нові уявлення щодо взаємозв'язку між трудовою міграцією та розвитком країни, розкривши особливості цього явища в узбекському контексті. Практичне значення даної статті полягає в тому, що вона може слугувати основою для розробки ефективних стратегій та політик управління трудовою міграцією в Узбекистані. Результати дослідження можуть бути корисними для урядових і недержавних організацій, які займаються питаннями міграції та соціально-економічного розвитку. *Висновки дослідження* вказують на необхідність розробки комплексних програм підтримки мігрантів, а також на необхідність реформування системи управління трудовою міграцією в Узбекистані з метою забезпечення сталого розвитку країни та покращення якості життя мігрантів та їх родин.

Ключові слова:

трудова міграція, вища кваліфікація, населення, оплачувана робота, робоча сила.

Formulation of the problem. In 2017, a change in government leadership brought about significant economic reforms and a shift in national strategy in Uzbekistan. Notable changes included the unification of official and unofficial currency exchange rates, efforts to eliminate forced labor in agriculture, reduction of trade restrictions, and relaxation of strict visa requirements. As part of this reform effort, the government reevaluated its approach to international migration.

About 1.6 million foreign migrants were sponsored in Uzbekistan in 2020, according to data from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). This represents almost 3.5 percent of the country's total population. With 871,047 migrants, the Russian Federation was the leading country of origin, followed by Ukraine (123,658), Belarus (26,330), Azerbaijan (20,201), and Kazakhstan (13,092). At the same time, the estimate showed that more than two million Uzbek nationals—or 6.1 percent of the country's total population—were living overseas as international migrants. The United States of America (63,496),

Turkmenistan (67,003), Kazakhstan (296,511), Ukraine (223,491), and the Russian Federation (1.1 million) were the countries that received the greatest number of Uzbek migrants (UN DESA, 2021).

While historically sending a significant number of labor migrants to nations such as the Republic of Korea, Turkey, and the Russian Federation, the previous administration dissuaded foreign migration using official regulations and disingenuous propaganda. The establishment of a system for exit visas and intricate registration processes posed administrative challenges for prospective migrants. There were serious consequences associated with not following these rules, including the potential loss of citizenship. Moreover, high-ranking government officials frequently denigrated migrants in public remarks.

However, in line with the broader reform agenda initiated by the new President in 2017, a decree was issued, stating that migrants would no longer need government permission to travel abroad, starting on January 1, 2019.



Subsequently, negotiations with the Russian Federation were initiated to establish a joint migration processing center in Uzbekistan. Several other notable reforms were also introduced, such as empowering a new Agency for External Labor Migration, granting rights to private organizations to employ Uzbekistan citizens abroad, providing preferential fees and subsidized loans for travel tickets for temporary labor migration, establishing a fund to support and protect the rights of citizens working abroad, and introducing a voluntary registration system in place of work permits for overseas employment.

These reforms have the potential to expand migration opportunities, presenting an important opportunity for Uzbekistan as it adopts market-oriented reforms and aims for robust economic growth. Migration plays a crucial role in balancing labor demand and supply, leading to improved economic outcomes in both sending and receiving regions. The gains from migration primarily manifest through enhanced labor market efficiency, which, in turn, impacts measures of poverty and subjective well-being, ultimately contributing to people's overall welfare.

When significant barriers impede people's movement, it can lead to divergent developments in local labor markets, resulting in costly and detrimental imbalances. For example, in a local market where there is intense competition for a limited number of workers possessing specific qualifications, combined with restrictive entry policies, wages tend to rise, and the cost of doing business escalates. If left unchecked, this situation could potentially hinder economic growth.

On the other hand, in areas with an abundance of workers possessing similar skills, coupled with low labor demand and obstacles to workforce mobility, wages may stagnate or even decline when set at competitive levels. Consequently, local rates of unemployment have the potential to rise significantly. This issue becomes particularly critical during economic downturns, as the pace of recovery can vary across regions and sectors. A labor force that is more adaptable to geographic changes can expedite the recovery process and mitigate the adverse effects of unemployment spells.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The foundation of both the classical and neoclassical theories of migration is the idea that movement is a personal decision.

The new economics of migration, however, contests this viewpoint and views labor movement as a decision made by the household. The new economics of migration's proponents, including, contend that there are other factors at play when it comes to migration outside income maximization. To lower financial risks, households also try to diversify their sources of income. Furthermore, because of non-labor market variables, migrants could explore opportunities that aren't available in their home country.

The assumption that income incentives influence migration decisions is supported by empirical research, however migration can still happen even in the absence of wage differentials. Research on migration from the US to Mexico was done, who discovered data in support of their relative deprivation theory. According to this theory, households' perceptions of deprivation within their reference group have an impact on their decisions to send migrants overseas. Even when the predicted income increase was the same, workers who were in a favorable position in the Mexican labor market were less inclined to migrate to the United States. This indicates that households with varied baseline income distributions may respond differently to similar income opportunities.

The new economics of migration has significant political implications. Changes in income distribution can alter incentives for migration. Therefore, policies aimed at influencing migration patterns should not only focus on labor market dynamics but also consider capital and other factors that impact household income and wellbeing. Understanding migration as a household decision provides a more nuanced approach to addressing migration challenges and designing effective policies that consider the complexities of household dynamics and aspirations.

All of the previously stated ideas are examples of micro-level decision models. The creator of the dual labor market concept, Piore [2], proposed that the economic structure of industrialized countries drives demand-based international labor mobility. This concept was applied to the American labor market by Doeringer and Piore [4], who separated it into the primary and secondary sectors. While the secondary sector consists of workplaces with lower returns and little to no internal promotion possibilities and short-term employment

relationships, the primary sector offers secure jobs with greater compensation and advancement opportunities.

Piore [2] asserts that pull factors-the industrialized countries' constant need for foreign labor for their secondary sectors-are the main drivers of migration. According to native workers prefer to look for employment in the primary sector, which is more stable and lucrative, rather than in these areas. Piore [2] goes on to say that when migrants make decisions about where to migrate, they consider the complete social, economic, and political framework of modern civilizations [2 p. 527]. Pay disparities by themselves, however, do not usually drive migration. Wage growth in the primary sector is often impeded by secondary sector employers by maintaining low pay. This is because of institutional and societal forces that make wages insensitive to shifts in the supply and demand for labor.

Regarding political implications, the dual labor market model suggests that government intervention through changes in wage rates or employment is ineffective in influencing migration. Instead, significant transformations in economic organization are necessary. However, Ashton and Maguire [3] questioned the practical utility of this model based on their research in three local markets in Britain. They found that clear separation of labor markets into two distinct sectors was challenging to establish, as relatively few organizations exclusively belonged to one or the other segment.

In conclusion, the dual labor market model proposed by Piore offers valuable insights into the dynamics of international labor migration, highlighting the role of pull factors in developed countries. Nevertheless, practical application and clear segmentation of labor markets have been subject to scrutiny, suggesting the need for further examination and contextual

considerations in understanding migration patterns.

The purpose of the study is article is to analyze and evaluate the schemes of labor migration in Uzbekistan, taking into account their socio-economic consequences, as well as studying the volume of labor migration, the main directions and motivations of migrants, determining the impact of this phenomenon on the economy, the labor market, the social sphere and other aspects of public life in Uzbekistan.

Presentation of the main research material. The number of foreign migrants entering Uzbekistan in 2022 was 2,300, a reduction of 20.7% from 2018. Of these, 48% were men and 52% were women [4].

Regarding the country's geographical distribution, Uzbekistan is presently seeing a significant amount of internal migration from its rural to urban areas. The majority of newcomers, both domestic and foreign, lived in urban areas (76%, 164,300 thousand), with the remaining 24% (50.5 thousand) residing in rural regions [4]. Uzbekistan and neighboring Central Asia (CA) states are among the countries most prone to environmental calamities. Uzbekistan's population is projected to grow to 39 million by 2030.

2,277 permanent residence permits were granted to foreign nationals by Uzbekistan in 2022: 36% went to migrants from the Russian Federation, 31% to migrants from Kazakhstan, 19% to migrants from other nations excluding those covered by the CA, 7% went to Tajikistan, 5% went to Kyrgyzstan, and 2% went to Turkmenistan. The county's capital city of Tashkent issued 59% of all permanent residency cards for foreign nationals [4].

Table 1 – **Distribution of permanent residence permits by nationality, 2022 (absolute values and %)**

Nationality	Number of permanent residence permits	Percentage
Russian Federation	813	35.7%
Kazakhstan	716	31.4%
Other countries	443	19.5%
Tajikistan	156	6.9%
Kyrgyzstan	111	4.9%
Turkmenistan	38	1.7%
Total	2,277	

Source: UzStat, 2023

Source: [4]





The migratory patterns to and from Uzbekistan have been considerably impacted by the existence and accessibility of migrant corridors. Connections based on language, culture, and history are essential for defining and guiding movement along these corridors. The legislative foundations for labor and mobility created by bilateral and regional agreements also influence the dynamics of migration.

These legal agreements encompass provisions such as faster procedures in the Russian Federation for migrants from Central Asia and the facilitation of free labor movement among member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) [6]. Beyond these formal agreements, cases of informal employment without official permissions and individuals going for work

under alternative visa schemes, notably to the Russian Federation, have been witnessed and documented [5].

According to UN DESA (2021), the Russian Federation (1.1 million) was the top destination for migrants from Uzbekistan, with 296 thousand going to Kazakhstan, 223 thousand going to Ukraine, 67 thousand going to Turkmenistan, and 63 thousand going to the United States of America.

However in 2022, Kazakhstan ranked first among the countries of destination for Uzbek immigrants seeking permanent residence abroad (79.5%), followed by the Russian Federation (16.4%), other countries outside of the CA (2.7%), Kyrgyzstan (0.7%), Tajikistan (0.5%), and Turkmenistan (0.3%). [4].

Table 2 – Permanent residence permits for uzbeks by country of destination, 2022 (absolute values)

Country	Number of permanent residence permits	Percentage
Kazakhstan	6,985	79.5%
Russian Federation	1,441	16.4%
Other destinations outside CA	236	2.7%
Kyrgyzstan	63	0.7%
Tajikistan	41	0.5%
Turkmenistan	24	0.3%
Total	8,790	

Source: [4]

As of April 6, 2023, the Population and Migration Management (PMM) reports that Uzbek citizens constitute the second-largest group holding permits for family reasons, totaling 9,749 individuals. Additionally, they rank as the fifth-largest nationality holding short-term permits, with a total of 38,763 individuals in the host country.

It's worth noting that the count of residence permits also includes work permits. According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security's data from 2021, there were 168,1035 foreigners with work permits in the Republic of Türkiye, with Uzbek citizens representing only 0.23 percent of this total.

However, when examining the historical trend over the last decade, there has been a substantial increase in the number of work permits granted to Uzbek citizens. The

figures show a remarkable growth of 1,068 percent, rising from 229 permits in 2011 to 3,912 in 2021, as reported by Turkstat in 2023 (Figure 1).

The COVID-19 epidemic caused Uzbek residents' international migrant flows to cut in half, from 50,110 thousand in 2019 to 21,842 migrants in 2020, according to KOSIS (Korean Statistical Information Service). This resulted in a negative net migration value of - 5,818 persons. Despite the fact that there are only about ten thousand net migrants from Uzbekistan to the Republic of Korea, in 2022 there were approximately 34.5 thousand of them. Thirty-two women and sixty-eight percent of the 34,406 Uzbek migrants were female (KOSIS, 2023) (Figure 2).

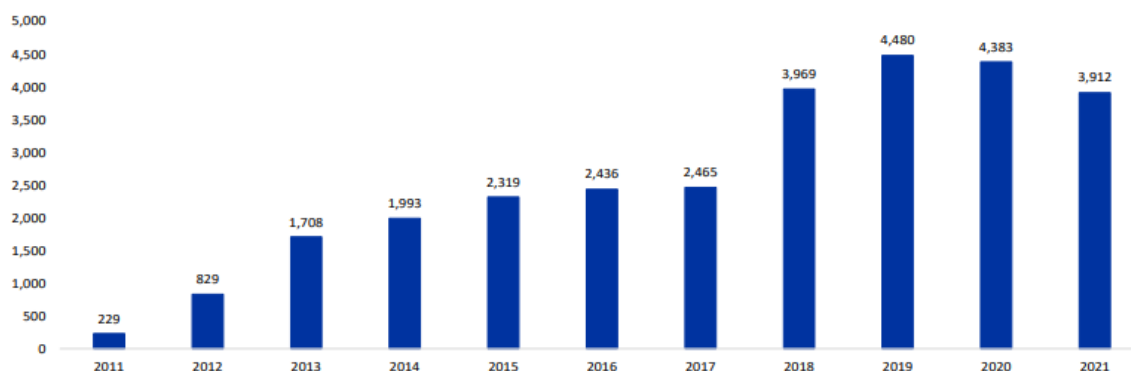


Figure 1 – Number of work permits given to uzbek citizens in the republic of türkiye, 2011-2021 (absolute values)

Source: developed by the authors

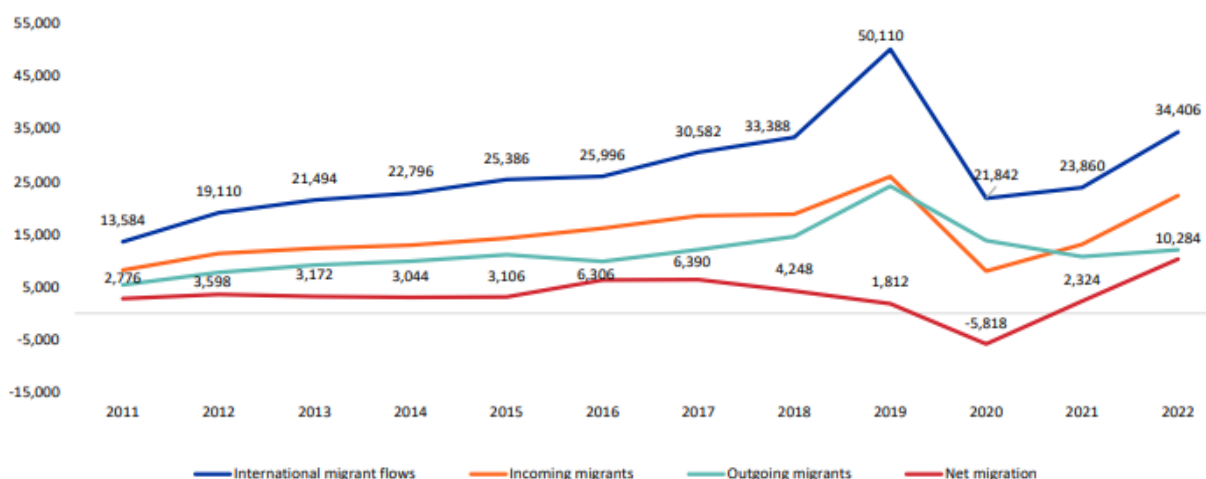


Figure 2 – International migrant flows (incoming, outgoing and net) of uzbek citizens in the republic of korea, 2011- 2022 (absolute values)

Source: developed by the authors

The two nations' bilateral ties are thriving in a variety of areas, including trade, economics, politics, culture, humanitarianism, transportation, and communication (Dadabaev and Soipov, 2020). In particular, the continued economic growth automotive and technology sectors in the Republic of Korea have met the demand of a new key commercial partner for Uzbekistan, after the Soviet Union disintegration [7].

The Central Bank of RU has reported a consistent increase in cross-border transfers in recent years. Specifically, the amounts in billions of US dollars were 4.8 in 2017, 5.1 in 2018, 6.0 in 2019, and 6.0 in 2020. Notably, approximately 85% of these remittances originated from EAEU countries.

One potential solution to address labor migration challenges for Uzbekistan is to establish closer ties with the EAEU. By

becoming a member of the union, Uzbek citizens would gain access to the benefits and opportunities offered by the common labor market within the EAEU. Moreover, if they secure an employment contract, they would be allowed to reside in Russia indefinitely.

In 2020 December, Uzbekistan was granted observer status in the EAEU, making it crucial to examine the current state and future prospects of labor migration within the association. Embracing the EAEU could present a viable avenue to alleviate pressure on Uzbekistan's labor market and create better prospects for its citizens seeking opportunities abroad.

The EAEU holds significant importance for labor migration processes in Uzbekistan, as a large portion of Uzbek citizens seek employment in EAEU member states. In 2019, approximately 1.6 million Uzbek citizens were





reported to be working in the Russian Federation, while over 300 thousand were employed in Kazakhstan, according to the Agency for Labor Migration.

Data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation reveals that between 2017 and 2019, citizens of Uzbekistan made around 13 million visits to Russia. Almost all of them (99 percent) obtained registration at their place of residence, with only about 1 percent receiving a permit for temporary residence [8].

The primary reasons for Uzbek citizens visiting Russia were work-related, accounting for over 80% of the visits, with more than half being first-time visitors. Other purposes included personal visits (13%), educational pursuits (2%), tourism (1%), and other reasons.

In terms of employment sectors, Uzbek labor migrants in Russia are mainly engaged in construction, housing and communal services, transport and logistics, retail and wholesale trade, and public catering. In Kazakhstan, the majority work in construction and agriculture.

The average monthly wages for these industries range from \$300 to \$700, depending on factors such as geographic location, technical skills, and other considerations. For instance, in Russia, the construction sector offers wages between \$485 and \$625, while the housing sector pays around \$485 to \$555. In the textile sector, wages typically start at \$485 [9].

In Kazakhstan, the average monthly salary in the construction industry starts from \$500, while in agriculture, it begins at \$270. It should be noted that these figures can fluctuate based on specific job locations and skill levels.

Additionally, approximately 20% of Uzbek labor migrants work in industries requiring higher qualifications. These sectors include economics, banking, and finance (7%), education (5%), medicine (3%), engineering and technology (3%), law, and other fields (2%) [9].

Based on information provided by the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, a social survey conducted in 108 cities and regions of the country during January to September 2021 revealed that the unemployment rate stood at 9.4 percent. This figure represents a decrease

of 1.7 percent compared to the same period in the previous year [9]. The total number of labor resources in the first nine months of 2021 was 19.3 million people, showing an increase of 1.1 percent (equivalent to 201.4 thousand more individuals) compared to the same period in the previous year. Of this total, 6.1 million people were officially employed, indicating a growth rate of 7.9 percent (corresponding to 450.5 thousand people) compared to 2020. Additionally, 5.9 million workers were informally employed, marking a decrease of 4.1 percent (or 254 thousand people) compared to the previous year. The survey also highlighted that 1.4 million people are seeking employment. Among the economically active segment of the population (4.3 million people, 9.4 percent), the unemployment rate was 14.9 percent for individuals aged 16 to 30 and 12.8 percent among women

Conclusions and prospects for further research. In conclusion, this report's data and analysis highlight the important significance that labor migration plays in Uzbekistan, especially when considering the member nations of the EAEU. The importance of this economic relationship is demonstrated by the steady rise in cross-border transfers, with 85% of remittances coming from EAEU nations.

Uzbekistan could potentially become a member of the EAEU and forge stronger connections with the organization in order to handle labor migration issues. This would enable Uzbek citizens access to the benefits and possibilities offered by the common labor market within the EAEU, and those with job contracts would be allowed to live in Russia indefinitely.

Given that Uzbekistan was awarded observer status in the EAEU in December 2020, this presents an opportunity to assess the state of labor migration within the association both now and in the future. Adopting the EAEU can improve prospects for Uzbek nationals looking for work overseas and relieve pressure on the country's labor market.

The substantial influx of Uzbek labor migrants into EAEU members like Kazakhstan and Russia highlights the region's relevance for job prospects. Gaining knowledge about the industries in which Uzbek labor migrants work and the average salary in those sectors will help one better understand how labor migration affects the economy.

The need for a strong legal framework and intergovernmental agreements to safeguard the rights and interests of labor migrants remains, notwithstanding the progress made in addressing labor migration challenges. Uzbekistan has demonstrated its commitment to safeguarding and assisting its migrant laborers and their families through the formation of the Agency of External Labor Migration and its regional divisions.

The importance of generating new jobs and making sure the populace has enough work possibilities is highlighted by the social survey on unemployment and labor resources in Uzbekistan. Encouraging a friendly and well-organized labor migration system is essential, as around 1.5 million Uzbek citizens are involved in labor migration and work abroad.

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