

# EXODUS OF RUSSIANS TO GERMANY: 1917 – 1924 VS. 2022

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The emigration from Russia to Germany of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries has many similarities and even more differences.



In 2022, Russian emigrants are echoing the journey of those who were forced to leave Russia after the Bolsheviks came to power. Just like a century ago, they are heading to Germany to live and work freely.



The future of Russian emigrants in Germany is unstable and unpredictable; the present is full of difficulties too.

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## EXODUS OF RUSSIANS TO GERMANY: 1922 – 1924 VS. 2022

RUSSIAN EMIGRATION TO GERMANY:  
1917 – 1924 VS. 2022

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## PAST

*“BERLIN WISTFULNESS IS AS BITTER  
AS THE DUST OF CARBIDE”<sup>1</sup>*

Victor Shklovsky, 1923

The history of the Russian state has its perks, as it becomes exposed after centuries as “l’histoire se reperait” in new forms and shapes. After 100 years, new Russian emigrants create a “different Russia”<sup>2</sup>, their own “little Russia”<sup>3</sup>, flooding “Moscow in Spree”<sup>4</sup> as the “stepmother of [all] Russian people”<sup>5</sup> and seeking a “new Mecca and new Babylon”<sup>6</sup> on the streets of European cities.

In an assessment by the Red Cross, between 1920-1937, Germany<sup>7</sup> had received several thousand Russian migrants: 1920 – 560,000 persons lived in the country with “Russian” passports; 1923 – 600,000; 1924 – 5,000,000; 1928 – 150,000; 1932 – 60,000;

1937 – 45,000<sup>8</sup>. Due to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, Russian emigrants again seek shelter in Germany. In 2022, some 290,615 Russian citizens entered the territory of Germany (+22,055 persons vs. 2021)<sup>9</sup>.

*THE MAJORITY OF NEW RUSSIAN MIGRANTS SETTLED IN BERLIN AND OTHER LARGE GERMAN CITIES. THE GERMAN CAPITAL'S POPULATION GREW BY 6,404 NEW RESIDENTS WITH RUSSIAN PASSPORTS IN 2022, AND THE MAJORITY RESIDE IN THE BERLIN DISTRICTS OF MARTZAN - HELLERSDORFF, LICHTENBERG, SPANAU, CHARLOTTENBURG – WILMERSDORF AND MITTE<sup>10</sup>.*

Just like 100 years ago, some emigrants of the 21st century rented apartments in bourgeois and hipster districts of German cities, while others were forced to knock around at friends’ and acquaintances’ homes.

Berlin suffered a drastic deficit of free apartments – according to a public Catholic organization in 1929 – some families of Russian migrants had to rent apartments collectively... and the destiny of those who were forced to live in (Nansen) barracks for refugees, was even worse<sup>11</sup>.

In Berlin in 2022-2023, the situation with apartments for rent is no better; it is rather difficult for an arrived emigrant to find and rent an apartment and it is a quest with multiple unknowns.

1 Шкловский, Виктор. Зоо или Письма о не любви. Письмо тридцатое. Frankfurt am Main. 1. Aufgabe. 1923.

2 Raeff Mark. Russia Abroad. A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939. Oxford University Press. 1990.

3 Ilya Ehrenburg, El Lissitzky. My Paris. Moi Parizh. Göttingen: Steidl. 2005.

4 Grigoriev, Maxim. (2023). Schlaflosigkeit der Emigranten. <https://www.goethe.de/ins/se/de/kul/mag/20848408.html>. Accessed on 15.2.2023.

5 Schlögel, Karl. Berlin. „Stiefmutter unter den russischen Städten“. In: ders. (Hrsg.): Der große Exodus. Die russische Emigration und ihre Zentren 1917 bis 1941. München 1994

6 Johnston, R.H. New Mecca, new Babylon. Paris and Russian Exiled 1920/1945. Kingston - Montreal. 1988.

7 For comparison: Finland hosted in 1921 around 8 000 Russian soldiers and civilians, who fled for Finland, former Tsar colony of the Russian empire. S. 177, in 1917-1929, the USA registered 101 661 Russian migrants. S. 358-359; In 1930s France received approximately 50 000 Russians; 1946-1951 – the country harboured approximately 35 00 persons of the Russian origin, S. 260-278. For more details see: Leinonen, Marja. Helsinki: die russische Emigration nach Finnland; Beyer Jr. Thomas. New York. Russen in der Neuen Welt; Robert H. Johnston: Paris. Die Hauptstadt der russischen Diaspora, in: Karl Schlögel (Hrsg.): Der große Exodus. Die russische Emigration und ihre Zentren 1917 bis 1941. München 1994.

8 Dodenhoeft, Bettina Lasst mich nach Russland heim. Russische Emigranten in Deutschland von 1918 bis 1945. Band 5. Peter Land.1993. S. 10.

9 Destatis. Ausländische Bevölkerung nach ausgewählten Staatsangehörigkeiten von 2016 bis 2022. <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Tabellen/rohdaten-auslaendische-bevoelkerung-zeitreihe.html>

10 Einwohnerbestand in Berlin – Grunddaten.31.12.2022. <https://www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de/a-i-5-hj>

11 Cited from: Dodenhoeft, Bettina. Lasst mich nach Russland heim. Russische Emigranten in Deutschland von 1918 bis 1945. Band 5. Peter Land.1993. S. 13-14.

Emigration from Russia in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have a lot in common and even more differences. Firstly, Russian emigrants, as a century ago, still aim for Germany, to freely live and work. Those “old” and these “new” emigrants were and still are in opposition to the ruling party of Russia. Secondly, German cities – then and now – become places of meetings where “emigrants recently exiled from Russia, meet other [Russian] migrants”<sup>12</sup>.

*GERMANY TODAY, AS A CENTURY AGO, STILL PROVIDES RELATIVE SAFETY FOR THE BEST RUSSIAN INTELLECTUALS LIKE AUTHORS, ARTISTS, STUDENTS, PAINTERS, POLITICIANS AS WELL AS OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, ALLOWING THEM TO BE BEYOND THE REACH OF RUSSIAN SPECIAL SERVICES AND STATE MACHINERY CONTROL.*

Russian migrants of the 20<sup>th</sup> century provisionally and traditionally are divided into groups: political migrants; military elite and soldiers of the czar army; civilian migrants, i.e., those, who left Russia for economic reasons<sup>13</sup> and Russian citizens of German origin<sup>14</sup>. First - ... businessmen and business owners, ...[who] stopped presenting Russian author, Liev Luntz, who arrived in Berlin in 1923 wrote: ... Russian migrants in Germany may be divided into three groups. or associating themselves with Russia; second – political migrants [for whom] the road back to Russia is closed, even though they might be wanting to return to Russia; and the third group – intellectuals, classical Russian intellectuals [who] miss Russia and deny everything German – starting with the language and ending with the cuisine<sup>15</sup>.

*“I PREFER TO THINK OF ME AS ON TEMPORARY BUSINESS MISSION”*

Respondent, 2022, 44 y.o.

*TODAY’S RUSSIAN MIGRANTS MAY BE DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL GROUPS, NAMELY: STAFF OF ORGANIZATIONS AND INITIATIVES FROM THE “THIRD SECTOR”; REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LGBTIQ COMMUNITY, LABOUR AND BUSINESS MIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS.*

Russian asylum seekers in Germany and beneficiaries of humanitarian permits in the light of §22.2 of the German Law on Emigration – are the two smallest groups among the migrants from Russia in the 21st century. As of 28.02.2023, in Berlin – 34 Russian citizens were granted the right of humanitarian stay in accordance with §22.2 of the German Law on Emigration<sup>16</sup>. In 2022 Russians filed 3,862 applications for asylum in Germany. Under the principle of refugees’ distribution throughout the country, Russian citizens were distributed (mostly) to the following federal lands of Northern Rhein – Westphalia (544), Berlin (487) and Bavaria (411). The rate of successful applications, especially of men in the age group 18-45, was minimal: only 55 out of

Figure 1.

**Distribution of Russian asylum seekers within Germany in 2022**

Federal lands	Russian citizens
<b>Baden-Württemberg</b>	282
<b>Bavaria</b>	411
<b>Berlin</b>	487
<b>Brandenburg</b>	253
<b>Bremen</b>	67
<b>Hamburg</b>	166
<b>Hesse</b>	298
<b>Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania</b>	120
<b>Lower Saxony</b>	278
<b>North Rhine-Westphalia</b>	544
<b>Rhineland</b>	185
<b>Saarland</b>	3
<b>Saxony</b>	315
<b>Saxony-Anhalt</b>	155
<b>Schleswig-Holstein</b>	191
<b>Thuringia</b>	107

Sources: BAMF, Antwort auf eine Nachfrage, 02.Mai 2023

12 Williams, Robert C. “Changing Landmarks’ in Russian Berlin, 1922-1924.” Slavic Review 27, no. 4 (1968): 582. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2494440>.

13 Volkmann Hans-Erich. Die russische Emigration in Deutschland 1919–1929, Würzburg.1966.

14 After the October Revolution of 1917, some 50 000 Russian citizens of the German origin left new Russia and moved to Germany or other Western territories. For more details see: Dahlman, Dittmar. Eine eigene Welt in der Fremde. Die russische Emigration in Berlin in 1917/1923, Essen. 2007. S. 11.

15 Quoted from Schlögel, Karl. „Russische Emigration in Deutschland 1918 bis 1941: Leben im europäischen Bürgerkrieg”. De Gruyter Akademie Forschung Verlag, 1995

16 Antwort des Bundesministeriums des Innern und für Heimat. 02. Mai 2023.

2,485 asylum applications of Russian citizens were accepted<sup>17</sup>.

There is a big difference between the emigration of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. During the emigration of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most migrants belonged to a specific social cast and political formation, who refused to accept the new order of Soviet Russia. During the emigration of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, migrants belong to various social, religious, and political groups of Russia.

*RUSSIAN MIGRANTS TO GERMANY WERE MAINLY MALE IN THE 20TH CENTURY<sup>18</sup>, WHEREAS THE NEW MIGRANTS ARE MAINLY FEMALE.*

The reasons and motives for people leaving Russia, 100 years ago and today, differ. After the October Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War of 1917-1922, Russians left for the reason of a “changed course of history”, whereas today, as rightly noted by Dimitry Bykov, they leave “because of the agony of the state [that] has no future”<sup>19</sup>.

There is one more important difference. Migration of the 20<sup>th</sup> century united and centered outside of Russia around institutions of the Orthodox Christian Church overseas<sup>20</sup>. Due to the position of the Church, which approved of the war in Ukraine<sup>21</sup>, emigrants of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century distance themselves from the Church as they do not view it as something they can rely on.

*EMIGRANTS OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AND THEIR PUBLIC AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, PUBLICATIONS AND THOUGHTS BECAME “A LABORATORY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY AND OPPOSITION THINKING”<sup>22</sup> OF RUSSIA.*

Russian emigrants of the 20<sup>th</sup> century discussed a lot their responsibility and obligations of those who left “before the Patria and fellow men”<sup>23</sup> for the “creation of the future ideology of Russia” built on “passionate defense of freedom”<sup>24</sup>; the necessity of writing and publishing memoirs to form and support the collective identity of Russian migrants<sup>25</sup> and to “not allow for receding into the unknown of the entire epoch”<sup>26</sup>.

Following the tasks, between 1921 and 1927, the academia of Russian origin in emigration published more than 500 papers on history and events in Russia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> In 1917, Russian political migrants were already publishing 287 papers and magazines in Europe, of which 109 were published in Geneva, 95 in Paris, 42 in London and 17 in Berlin<sup>28</sup>. From 1925-1940, the journal “Путь” (Path) was published in Paris – the key document of the epoch and views of migrants of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; in all the years of the journal’s existence, only 6 out of 606 published articles were in French<sup>29</sup>. Some 87 Russian publishing houses functioned in Berlin in the 1920s; they published more than 150 journals and almanacs<sup>30</sup>.

*THE PUBLIC AND POLITICAL, AS WELL AS PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES, OF MIGRANTS OF THE 21ST CENTURY, ARE RATHER DIVERSE: CONFERENCES ARE BEING HELD, A DECLARATION OF RUSSIAN DEMOCRATIC FORCES IS BEING SIGNED (IN EMIGRATION)<sup>31</sup>, VARIOUS PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES FOR SUPPORT AND RELOCATION OF NEW MIGRANTS ARE BEING FORMED IN EUROPE.*

17 RND.de. Seit Beginn des Krieges: Deutschland gewährt nur 55 russischen Deserteuren Asyl. 24.05.2023 <https://www.rnd.de/politik/asyl-fuer-kriegsdienstverweigerer-aus-russland-deutschland-gewaehrt-nur-55-maennern-schutz-KKF4SQJP35EATE5UYS3FDBCXUE.html>

18 Budnitsky Oleg. Different Russia. Studies of the Russian emigration. НЛО. 2021; Raev Mark. About first Russian emigration. Review. 1985. №16. С. 29-33. A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939 неженатые...им предстояло заново выстроить свое существование. Уровень деторождения среди этой группы эмигрантов был очень низок

19 Дмитрий БЫКОВ: Дудь, Певчих, самая Северная Корея, письма Яшина и ошибка Явлинского [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_4xSughJaUo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4xSughJaUo) 9:43

20 Metternich-Wassiltchikow, Tatiana. Mein ungewöhnliches Leben. München: Langen & Müller Verlag. 1991.

21 Malyutin, Church of the Iron Cross. January 6, 2023; <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/01/06/tserkov-zheleznogo-kresta/>

22 Budnitsky Oleg, ibid

23 Sazonov, Sergej. Sechs schwere Jahre. Berlin. Verlag für Kulturpolitik. 1927. Einführung des Autors.

24 Stepun Fedor, Tasks of emigration, Noviy Grad, 1932, # 2 [http://www.odinblago.ru/noviy\\_grad/2/2](http://www.odinblago.ru/noviy_grad/2/2)

25 Weiss, Claudia. Das Russland zwischen den Zeilen: die russische Emigrantenpresse im Frankreich der 1920er Jahre und ihre Bedeutung für die Genese der „Zarubeznaja Rossija“. Hamburg. Doelling und Galitz. S. 15-16.

26 Коковцов, Владимир. Из моего прошлого. Воспоминания. 1903-1919гг. <https://bookchain.ai/read/kokovcov-vn/iz-moego-proshlogo-t-2/1071963>

27 Ant. Florovsky. “The Work of Russian Émigrés in History (1921-27).” The Slavonic and East European Review 7, no. 19 (1928): 216–19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4202257>.

28 Будницкий Олег. Другая Россия. Исследования по истории русской эмиграцию. НЛО. 2021.

29 Arjakovsky, A.; Ryan, J. The Way: Religious Thinkers of the Russian Emigration in Paris and Their Journal.

30 Marten-Finnis, Susanne. (2009). „Outsourcing Culture: Soviet and Émigré Publishing in Berlin, and A. E. Kogan’s Illustrated Magazine ‚Zhar-ptitsa‘, 1921–1926“. In: Presse und Stadt. Zusammenhänge – Diskurse – Thesen. Hgg. Marten-Finnis, Susanne und Winkler, Markus. Bremen: Édition lumière: 61-86

31 Declaration of Russia’s Democratic Forces. Quoted from: Meduza. Russian opposition convenes in Berlin, signs joint declaration of political goals. Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation abstains. 1. May 2023. <https://meduza.io/en/news/2023/05/01/russian-opposition-convenes-in-berlin-signs-joint-declaration-of-political-goals-navalny-s-anti-corruption-foundation-abstains>

However, it is still yet to be seen whether the new migration will become a center of spiritual and cultural customs as well as the public and political order of the future of Russia.

## PRESENT

*“...I LOST EVERYTHING I EARNED OR BUILT DURING MY LIFE AND WORK IN RUSSIA, AND NOW I LIVE OVERSEAS ON ACCOUNT OF ... PAID PUBLICATIONS”*

Ivan Bunin <sup>32</sup>

To get an impression on demographic indicators, valuable parameters, and life situations of migrants of the 21st century, in the spring of 2023, an online poll was created to survey those who left Russia, and by forces of destiny, settled in Germany. The results of that survey, as well as of other internet polls, contain representative data with certain deviations in assessments of the respondents. A relatively large coverage of respondents allowed for control of the data collection process and quick access to results, which defined this methodology of the given publication.

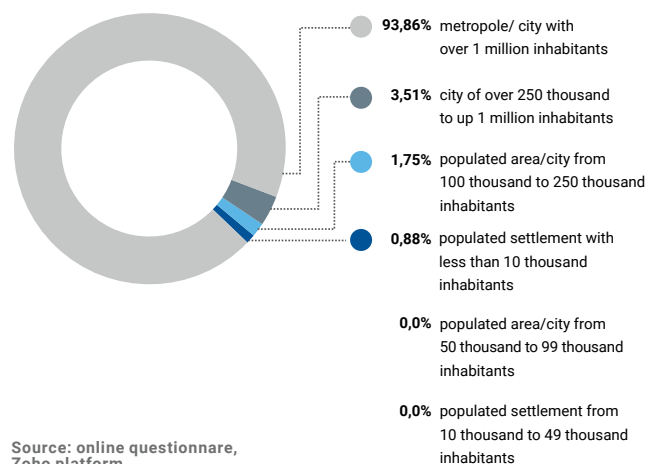
Out of 131 online poll respondents, 65 persons (49.6%) were females, 64 (48.85 %) were males; 2 (1.53%) – selected other. Not all respondents answered all questions, this is why the variability of the answers varies. The absolute majority of the survey participants – 125 (97.6%) possess a sufficient level of English for communication, reading and writing; 27 (21%) speak German. Among other languages, respondents mentioned French (7%), Spanish (6.2%), Mandarin (1.5%) and Tatar languages.

Most respondents indicated that they lived in large cities in Russia (107 – 93.8% of respondents). It is interesting to note that every other respondent (67.5%) moved to the EU/Germany directly from the Russian Federation through third countries like Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Uzbekistan, etc. They used those countries for transit purposes and stayed there for approxima-

<sup>32</sup> In 33 years of migration, Russian author Ivan Bunin became a Nobel Prize winner and published more than 50 books, of which 36 were published in Russian in Europe and the USA, and 15 more – in Russian publishing houses of emigrants overseas. For more details see: Abolina Margarita - Аболина, Маргарита. И.А. Бунин и издательская деятельность русской эмиграции (1920–1955 гг.). Литературный факт. 2019. № 1(11). С. 234–253.

Figure 2.

**Prior to immigration, your place of residence on the territory of Russia was**



tely 30 days. The geography of today's Russian emigration to Germany is rather broad: Potsdam, Karlsruhe, Furth and other German cities, and, as 100 years ago, Berlin (with 68.8% of the respondents).

*THREE DOMINATING REASONS FOR MIGRATION WERE THE START OF WAR IN UKRAINE (86.8%); STRINGENT CRIMINAL LAW AND/OR THREAT OF PERSECUTION OF THE RESPONDENT AND/OR FAMILY MEMBERS (58.7%), REDUCED LEVEL OF LIFE AND/OR LACK OF PERSPECTIVES (55.3%).*

*“I AM YET NOT SURE THAT IT IS EMIGRATION. I DO NOT WANT TO ADMIT IT. I STILL DO NOT HAVE ANY CLEAR VISION OF FUTURE”*

Respondent, 2022, 40 y.o.

Among other reasons mentioned were the impossibility of living and working in Russia due to imposed sanctions, partial mobilization, job offers in Germany, high level of anxiety, unwillingness to pay taxes (to the Russian state) and being a coparticipant of war, etc.

*ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION ON THE NATURE OF EMIGRATION SEEM TO BE QUITE INTERESTING: A RELATIVELY EQUAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS (51 VS 52) STATED THAT THEIR MIGRATION WAS SPONTANEOUS (45.6%) AND PLANNED FOR SOME FARAWAY FUTURE, ALTHOUGH IT HAPPENED UNEXPECTEDLY (44.7%).*

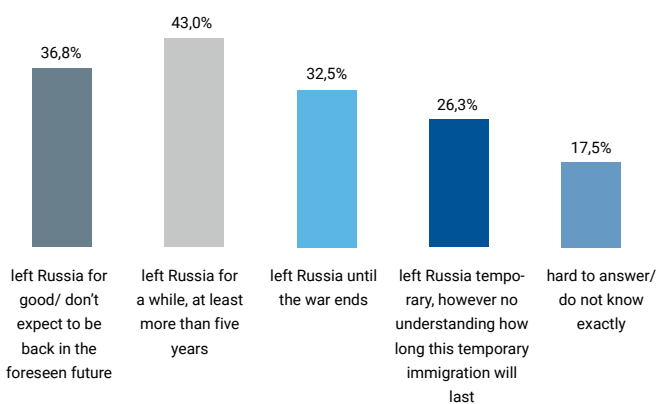
*"...[IT IS] A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE, MAYBE [I SHOULD HAVE] STAYED IN RUSSIA, EVEN IN THE FACE OF MOBILIZATION"*

Respondent, 2022, speaks English, seeks a job, 28 y.o.

Only 14 respondents stated that they had the possibility of thoroughly planning their departure from the Russian Federation.

As a result, more than half of respondents (58.6%) note that their lifestyle in emigration has worsened; 17% of respondents managed to keep their usual lifestyle/consumption/accommodation, and another 8% (9 persons) managed to improve it further. A small number of respondents had difficulty answering the question, and they noted in comments that financially it is harder to live in Germany, although the "food is better, the air is cleaner, and the living is more peaceful".

Figure 3. **According to your today's feeling and understanding, please finalize the following statement „I left Russia for..“** (multiple answers are allowed)



Source: online questionnaire, Zoho platform

Every 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent (36.8%) believes that left Russia for good; every 2<sup>nd</sup> respondent (42.5%) is sure that left Russia for a long time; every 4<sup>th</sup> respondent (26.3%) believes that leaving Russia is temporary and almost every 5<sup>th</sup> person had a difficulty defining the duration of their migration and they defined it as "WPA" – while Putin is alive".

Emigration from today's Russia, just like 100 years ago, will hardly lead to a no-return or successful migration<sup>33</sup>.

33 In 1921-1931 some 181 thousand Russian migrants returned to Russia after leaving it in post October Revolution period. The peak of returns was recorded in 1921, when some 121 843 former migrants returned to Russian. Their majority, as per emigration publications, was repressed.

*TODAY'S MIGRANTS JUST LIKE THOSE "FLEEING RUSSIA FROM BOLSHEVISM, HOPE THAT THEIR STAY OVERSEAS WILL END ONE DAY, AND THEY WILL RETURN TO THEIR HOMETLAND. FOR THE MAJORITY, THIS WILL LAST DECADES AND WILL TURN INTO EMIGRATION"*<sup>34</sup>.

*"... WHAT I TRIED TO ACHIEVE FOR 6 YEARS, IS LOST AND THERE IS A THIN CHANCE [THAT] IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE IT IN THE FUTURE"*

Respondent, 2022

Sentiments of current emigrants in Germany vary: some are happy for "a second chance in life" and they set a goal "of becoming happy here, in Germany", some are not sure they will stay [in Germany] for more than a year. Others severely suffer because of their lost social status and financial welfare. Assessing their psycho-emotional condition at the moment of the survey, 35% of respondents stated that "it is hard on them, but they manage"; 33% spoke about "friends and family support"; 15% turned to regular psychologists and the help of other professionals.

*THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN THE LIFE OF RUSSIAN MIGRANTS OF THE 21ST CENTURY ARE THEIR PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL CONDITION AND SETTLING DOWN IN A NEW COUNTRY.*

*"... NEVER IN MY LIFE HAVE I RECEIVED SO MANY [PAPER] LETTERS [IN GERMAN] AS IN MY 1ST YEAR [IN GERMANY] ... THIS IS A HUGE FACTOR OF MY DAILY STRESS"*

Respondent, 2022, 36 y.o.

65 respondents have difficulties with the German language in their daily lives; 40 respondents require a new permanent job for generating income. Every second person lacks communication with family, relatives in Russia (49%) and/or friends and/or kindred spirits (44%). Only 17% stated that they experience no difficulties in emigration. Another question was about access to medical services. Even though about 70% of respondents feel rather healthy, every 8<sup>th</sup> person (17%)

34 Dahlman, Dittmar. Eine eigene Welt in der Fremde. Die russische Emigration in Berlin in 1917/1923, in: XXXX. Essen. 2007. S. 64.

requires regular medical check-ups and medical assistance, and every 5<sup>th</sup> (21%) needs prescriptions.

Every 5<sup>th</sup> respondent (21.6%) depends on financial assistance and family and/or friends' support; every 4<sup>th</sup> (24.3%) received a stipend, allowances, irregular remittances/honoraria from third persons. Only 65/7% of respondents (73 individuals) managed to keep a regular work income. Big part of the respondents (52 persons) were on the territory of Germany with the visa D at the time of the survey; 11 respondents already had a residence permit – Aufenthaltstitel – produced by the German/European employer; 7 respondents had a Schengen visa C; another 7 people received a residence permit Aufenthaltstitel based on the § 21 of the Law on Emigration as entrepreneurs and/or self-employed persons; 9 respondents had humanitarian basis for stay (§ 22, Law n Emigration). At the same time, every 3<sup>rd</sup> respondent (32.35%) stated that obtaining a legal right to stay turned out to be simpler and easier than they imagined. In the case of 18% of respondents, obtaining documents to stay required a lot of time and/or money, and for 15% - the process was rather difficult.

*OUR CONTEMPORARIES, WHO FLED RUSSIA AFTER FEBRUARY 2022, SIMILARLY TO EMIGRANTS OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, FACE DIFFICULTIES IN TERMS OF LEGALIZING THEIR STAY OVERSEAS AND LIVING OUTSIDE RUSSIA.*

*"... COMPASSION AND EMPATHY OF EUROPEANS ARE RESERVED FOR UKRAINIANS, [THIS] IS REASONABLE AND UNDERSTANDABLE... BUT... WHAT ABOUT US?"*

Respondent, 2022, 36 y.o.

Firstly, there are few programmes and assistance for Russians fleeing the country. There are separate initiatives<sup>35</sup>, but their coverage and possibilities are minuscule and, as a rule, strictly defined. Current Russian migrants in Germany face several difficulties; however, they acknowledge that it is "an accompanying side effect" caused by the invasion of Russia of Ukraine.

Secondly, every Russian emigrant has to resolve a large number of complex tasks daily, which

leads to stress. Migrants set goals of learning German in the first year (68%); finding a permanent paying job (42%); making friends with like-minded people (38%); renting an apartment/accommodation (24%); studying and/or taking up professional development or vocational courses (16%); reuniting with the family/partner (11%). Among other challenges are obtaining legal status in Germany; replacing the Schengen

*"... IN ONE OF THE INSTITUTIONS I WAS YELLED AT BECAUSE I COULDN'T EXPLAIN THE CASE IN GERMAN. I AM THANKFUL TO GERMANY FOR A HUMANITARIAN VISA, ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES IT'S VERY HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHAT AND HOW TO DO, WHERE [AND] WHAT PAPERS [ARE REQUIRED], HOW NOT TO VIOLATE THIS OR THAT LAW – BECAUSE OF THAT THERE IS NO FEELING OF FULL SAFETY"*

Respondent, 2022. Speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese; stays in Germany based on §22.2 of the Law on Emigration "Humanitarian reasoning", 37 y.o.

Visa C with the German Residence Permit; enrolling children in schools, re-registering documents, obtaining a driving license, etc. And every 5<sup>th</sup> respondent (19%) expressed that they simply want to survive.

The feelings, thoughts and hesitations of emigrants are always similar. In his book "In the Empire of Shadows Berlin 1921-1923", Andrey Bely writes about personal emigration reasons from Soviet Russia, describing a catastrophic situation with food provisions, broken contacts with Europe and the necessity of proper conditions for work<sup>36</sup>. In "a grey [and] hellish Berlin"<sup>37</sup> Andrey was able to work a lot and productively, he wrote and published 16 books. Ho-

*"FAMILY, RELATIVES, FRIENDS REMAIN IN RUSSIA. [HERE] IT IS HARD AS ONE NEEDS TO START EVERYTHING FROM ZERO"*

Respondent, 2022, self-employed, §21 of the Law on Emigration, 35 y.o.

<sup>35</sup> The Netherlands Helsinki Committee. Grants for Exiled Russian CSOs Working on the Protection of Human Rights. May 2023. <https://www.nhc.nl/grants-for-exiled-russian-csos-working-on-the-protection-of-human-rights/>

<sup>36</sup> Belyj, Andrey. Im Reich der Schatten. Berlin 1921 - 1923. Mit einem Essay von Karl Schlögel. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1987

<sup>37</sup> O, entsetzlichste, graue, erlöschende Stadt. Belyj, Andrey. Ibid



wever, in 1923, he left Berlin and returned to Soviet Russia. This story of emigrants returning to Soviet Russia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was repeated many times by Sergey Prokofiev, Maxim Gorky, Alexander Kuprin and many others.

*THERE IS A SLIM CHANCE THAT GERMANY WILL BECOME THE FINAL DESTINATION OF EMIGRATION FOR THE MAJORITY OF RUSSIANS WHO FLED THE COUNTRY AFTER FEBRUARY 24, 2022. RUSSIAN EMIGRANTS OF THE 21ST CENTURY, AS THEIR PREDECESSORS, WILL LIKELY BE RETURNING TO RUSSIA FOR PERSONAL REASONS, DIFFICULTIES OF MIGRANT LIFE, A LACK OF GERMAN LANGUAGE AND/OR FINANCIAL AND TEMPORARY RESOURCES TO STUDY IT, AS WELL AS FOR A SMALL NUMBER OF PROGRAMMES AIMED AT ASSISTING RUSSIAN MIGRANTS OUTSIDE RUSSIA.*

*“... I DON'T WANT TO LOSE RUSSIAN CITIZENSHIP, IF GERMANY WILL NOT ADOPT [DUAL CITIZENSHIP], THEN WILL DEFINITELY LEAVE.... [THERE ARE] MANY COUNTRIES WITH DUAL CITIZENSHIP; I CAN'T ABANDON MY RELATIVES AND [ALL] MY POSSESSIONS”*

Respondent, 2022

## FUTURE

The future of Russian migrants of the 21st century in Germany is not simple and it depends on them. Those who manage to resolve goals in emigration, like finding an interesting job; studying or changing professions; learning German, finding a partner and making friends with like-minded people, most probably will stay in Germany. Those who fail to do so will leave Germany, and most probably, return to Russia.

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**Olga Gulina** is an independent consultant and an expert in migration management and its law enforcement practice in European and European countries. She holds PhD in Migration Studies from University of Potsdam (2010) and PhD in Law from Bashkir State University (2002).

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## ABSTRACTS



In the present day, much like a century ago, Germany continues to provide a relative haven for some of Russia's brightest minds – writers, painters, artists, students, political figures, as well as opposition activists and journalists. It affords them a refuge beyond the grasp of Russian intelligence agencies and the state apparatus. It is unlikely that Germany will serve as the final destination for the majority of today's emigrants. Many among them will find themselves compelled to return to Russia for personal reasons, whether due to the challenges of life in exile, a limited command of the German language, or the scarcity of support programs for Russian emigrants abroad.



Based on the results of an online survey, over half of the respondents noted a decline in their quality of life while living abroad. Only every second respondent managed to maintain their previous level of consumption, and a small number reported an improvement in their overall quality of life and consumption. The most significant challenges for today's Russian emigrants are their psychological and emotional well-being and their adjustment to life in a new country. Some find joy in the „second chance at life“ they've been given, while others remain uncertain about staying in Germany for more than a year. There are also individuals grappling with the difficulty of losing their social status and financial stability.



The future of Russian emigrants in 21st-century Germany is complex and largely determined by their own choices. Those who succeed in accomplishing their goals in emigration, such as finding fulfilling employment, pursuing further education or career changes, mastering the German language, forming partnerships, and building a social circle of friends and like-minded individuals, are likely to remain in Germany. Conversely, those who do not achieve these objectives may leave Germany, possibly returning to Russia or disappearing into obscurity.