

Policy Brief

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Russian Migration Surge in Serbia

Balancing Economic Opportunities and EU Concerns

The 2022 Russian aggression against Ukraine has triggered the most substantial migration surge across Europe since World War II. Amid the millions of Ukrainians seeking refuge within the European Union's borders from the war, Serbia, as an EU candidate country, is grappling with a significant influx of Russian expatriates, who are escaping political oppression and the looming spectre of conscription in their homeland. Remarkably, as Turkey increasingly began to reject Russian residence permit applications, Serbia rose to prominence among the top three preferences¹ for Russian migrants. Inspired by strong historical ties and memories of a past wave of White emigres seeking refuge after the Russian Empire's downfall², Serbia has warmly embraced its new Russian emigrants, viewing this influx as an opportunity for a youthful, skilled workforce that can boost the economy and bridge demographic gaps. Yet, beneath the surface of this generous front lies a compelling question: What rewards will Serbia reap in exchange for its hospitality beyond the prospect of escalated rent prices? In this analysis, the focus shifts to delving into the intricacies of Serbia's recent arrival of Russian emigrants, scrutinising the potential challenges this dynamic presents for the nation's future.

Russians in Serbia: Portrait Sketch

Much like a century ago, the contemporary surge of Russians to Serbia is rooted in the country's free visa policy, which stems from a 2009 bilateral accord between Russia and Serbia. What makes this arrangement unique is its lack of restrictions on the number of days Russians can stay in Serbia *sans a visa*. As a result, the following trend has emerged – many Russians have found a way to establish permanent residency in Serbia without obtaining an official residence permit, utilising “a visa-run scheme”. In practical terms, Russian citizens have set a pattern: capitalising on their 30-day visa-free stay allowance in Serbia, they regularly cross the border – frequently opting for the nearest entry points shared with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Within a mere quarter-hour span, they seamlessly re-enter Serbia, effectively elongating their authorised duration of stay. This seemingly straightforward yet clever mechanism has turned Serbia into a haven for Russian immigrants.

There are other factors that contribute to the increase of the number of Russians willing to move to Serbia, often alongside their businesses. One of these factors is that even though Serbia has publicly condemned Russia's initiation of war in Ukraine and supported the adoption of UN resolutions denouncing Russia's aggression in Ukraine, Serbia decided to abstain from aligning with Western sanctions imposed on Russia. This unique stance has paved the way for Russian companies to establish themselves in Serbia, affording them access to European markets while retaining a link to their home country. Another notable advantage for Russian entities in Serbia is the unhindered direct air travel connection between Belgrade and Moscow, a stark contrast to other European countries that have banned flights to Russia. Cultural and linguistic affinities between Russians and Serbians, coupled with the welcoming Serbian attitude toward Russians, further differentiate Serbia as an appealing migration destination. The relatively lower cost of living also plays a role, making Serbia a favourable choice for potential migrants. As a result, Serbia has become an obvious choice for Russians leaving or fleeing their home country, particularly as the described accessibility also ensures business operations remain fluid and adaptable to new environments.

1 Beyond Serbia, a notable surge in Russian migration has been observed toward former USSR republics and other nations boasting visa-free agreements with Russia. Among these, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Serbia, and Armenia have risen as the foremost choices for Russians seeking to relocate beyond their homeland.

2 This new wave of Russian migration has triggered a wave of nostalgia in Serbian society and media, reminiscent of an earlier exodus of White emigres who sought sanctuary in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes following the tumultuous events of the 1917 Russian Revolution. The impact of these Russian intellectuals on Serbian culture remains indelible. Prominent architects, scientists, and artists from Russia settled in Serbia, infusing their talents and vigour into the nation's cultural fabric. The majestic edifices comprising Serbia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and the glorious White Palace — a gem within the Karageorgievich dynasty's palatial holdings — stand as enduring testaments to the artistry of Russian architects.

Since the beginning of the war, Russian newcomers have founded an impressive 6,976 companies within Serbian borders. This new generation of Russian migrants comprises enterprising young professionals from the middle and upper-middle classes working remotely in the IT sector worldwide. The tech realm reigns supreme among their endeavours, with programming and consulting dominating their business ventures. Besides this, Russian migrants have also delved into catering, beauty, and retail domains.

However, tracking the exact count of Russians residing in Serbia has proven a formidable challenge, primarily due to the above-mentioned visa-run procedure. Discrepancies between media reports and official figures have further complicated the overall picture. For instance, the European Commission references a specific count of **219,153** Russian citizens who made their way into Serbia from February 2022 to June 2023. However, in contrast to these figures, the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs asserts a notably higher tally, claiming that **370,000** Russians entered the nation from February 2022 to April 2023. This disparity is further amplified by the fact that the ministry has acknowledged the departure of 340,332 Russian citizens within the same time frame. The only accurate statistical indicator is that **30,000** Russians have successfully obtained temporary residence permits. Yet, amidst the numerical chaos, one constant is irrefutable: the Russian language's resonant echoes now permeate the streets of Belgrade more than ever before.

Notably, this influx has brought forth a wave of entrepreneurial energy. Since the beginning of the war, Russian newcomers have founded an impressive **6,976** companies within Serbian borders. This new generation of Russian migrants comprises enterprising young professionals from the middle and upper-middle classes working remotely in the IT sector worldwide. The tech realm reigns supreme among their endeavours, with programming and consulting dominating their business ventures. Besides this, Russian migrants have also delved into catering, beauty, and retail domains. Their impact radiates beyond Belgrade and Novi Sad, reaching the remote regions of Serbia, such as **Subotica and Nis**. This remarkable data seems to serve as compelling evidence supporting Serbian media's **narratives** that the arrival of economically self-sufficient and socially secure foreign residents has substantial potential to bolster Serbia's economy significantly.

As a result, against the backdrop of Serbia's persistent demographic challenges stemming from decades of dwindling population numbers, there exists potential to rapidly address these gaps with the influx of Russians. Since the tumultuous **1990s**, Serbia has grappled with the twin predicaments of declining birth rates and a steady outflow of its workforce seeking opportunities abroad. Theoretically, in this context, an influx of affluent immigrants driven by a thirst for novel experiences and extensive **exploration** across Serbia could play a pivotal role in steadying the demographic landscape and breathing life into the country's rural and most underdeveloped regions. However, despite the positive outlook, lingering questions persist. Is the increase in Russian arrivals a genuine positive development for Serbia, or do hidden complications await revelation?

Russian Entrepreneurship and Ghost Companies

A central narrative in the Serbian media highlights Russian entrepreneurial enthusiasm. An optimistic atmosphere prevails, driven by the belief that the arrival of industrious and ambitious young individuals could positively influence Serbia's economic trajectory. The potential for significant growth in Serbia's IT sector is particularly encouraging, given its current robust and dynamic **development**. Yet, beneath the noteworthy figure of nearly 7,000 businesses founded by Russian emigrants lies a complicated aspect that requires further examination. Although the prospect of permanent, visa-free residency in Serbia is appealing, it has inherent limitations. Achieving practical freedom – the ability to open multi-currency bank accounts, secure visas to European Union nations, access the labour market, or even disengage from Russian military conscription – hinges on obtaining a valid permanent residence permit. However, opportunities to secure such a permit in Serbia are **scarce**. Apart from marrying a Serbian citizen, the avenues to attain documents encompass significant real estate investments or securing employment with a Serbian company. This latter option can be a formidable task for Russians who had not foreseen Serbia as their destination. Consequently, business launching has become a more **feasible** route to permanent residency permits.

Yet, herein lies a potential hitch – even the smallest business is suitable for business residency permits. As a result, a sizeable fraction of those celebrated 7,000 companies might be symbolic of individual entrepreneurial ventures that boast minimal tax burdens.

Although these enterprises facilitate the attainment of the sought-after document, their potential to drive economic growth remains questionable due to their restricted scope, modest workforce capabilities, and the entrepreneurs' lack of enthusiasm for business advancement. At the same time, the urban landscape of Serbia is adorned with lively bars, welcoming restaurants, and active offices, many of which have been recently [initiated](#) by Russian entrepreneurs. Interestingly, it is the Russians themselves who often form the core patrons of these establishments. As newcomers arrive in a new environment, they often experience a deep yearning and nostalgic longing for familiar services, delightful cuisine, enticing beverages, and beloved forms of entertainment from their homeland. This sentiment triggers immediate market dynamics, setting in motion a complex interplay of supply and demand. However, a lingering question arises: Should the Russian migrants eventually leave Serbian borders, what will become of the entrepreneurial endeavors they have established?

A glimpse into job openings within these Russian-run enterprises on platforms like LinkedIn adds another layer of complexity. Despite their activities in Serbia, these businesses continue to lean toward their fellow Russians for recruits, valuing fluency in the native tongue as a noteworthy [asset](#). Thus, the potential of these establishments to facilitate Serbia's unemployment conundrum appears diluted, as these job opportunities remain less accessible to the local Serbian workforce. As a result, a more intricate panorama emerges in unravelling the multifaceted narrative of Russian entrepreneurship in Serbia.

Serbia in Russia's Web of Interests

The impact of Western sanctions on Russia has reverberated across vital sectors, spanning from arms production to everyday household goods. Consequently, Russia finds itself compelled to secure alternative channels for procuring sanctioned products — tracks that skirt restrictions through countries maintaining ties with the West while abstaining from sanctions against Russia, like Armenia, Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan, or Serbia. Positioned as an aspiring EU member, Serbia enjoys streamlined trade privileges with the EU. Simultaneously, Serbia's steadfast

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refusal to enact sanctions against Russia has sustained an unbroken commerce flow between the two nations. Astonishingly, despite supply chain disruptions amid the Ukrainian conflicts, Serbia elevated its trade volume with Russia by a remarkable [53%](#) in 2022. This confluence presents an opportunity for Russian companies within Serbia to aid Russia in circumventing sanctions. The alarming discoveries from recent Balkan Security Network [research](#) underscore apprehensions regarding Russian firms' potential exploitation of Serbia. Journalists successfully uncovered certain Serbian entities with alleged ties to Russian citizens engaged in sanctions evasion and potentially aiding in acquiring components for weapon and military equipment manufacturing. It is expected that this aspect will increasingly be spotted on the EU's radar, and that neglecting to monitor Russian company activities in Serbia could jeopardize EU-Serbia relations and the European integration process.

The operations of certain Serbian companies that have faced EU bans also raise significant doubts — for instance, a pivotal moment occurred on March 2, 2022, when the EU opted to halt the dissemination of Russia-affiliated media platforms *Russia Today* and *Sputnik* across EU member states. However, despite being recognised as potent vehicles for advancing pro-Russian propaganda and having been repeatedly found [guilty](#) of orchestrating disinformation campaigns, including within the Western Balkans, these pro-Kremlin media outlets persist in their broadcasts within Serbia. Moreover, the procurement of a broadcasting license and establishment of *RT Balkans* occurred after the closure of RT offices across Europe. Besides being extensively disseminated within Serbian media, the issue has regional consequences as well. The content produced by *Sputnik* and *RT Balkans* widely [resonates](#) with Serbian communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo. This active cir-

ulation serves to magnify Russian propaganda narratives, promote Eurosceptic views, intensify national tensions, and nurture an environment fraught with potential instability. Amidst the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, the presence of Russian media in Serbia has adeptly **crafted** a perception of the conflict as a “special military operation” and highlighted the familiar concept of “Western betrayal,” which holds significance among the Serbian population. This messaging becomes all the more important, as by the summer of 2022, for the first time in history, the number of Serbs **opposing** EU membership exceeded those in favour of it. Therefore, Serbia emerges as a strategic foothold for Russian propaganda, extending its influence across the wider Western Balkans region.

The presence of Russian tech giant Yandex in Serbia also raises concerns. According to Forbes Russia, Yandex **intends** to transform its hub in Belgrade into its “primary European headquarters.” Meanwhile, the Yandex founder, **Arkady Volozh**, was subjected to EU sanctions as an influential figure deemed crucial to economic sectors that significantly contribute to the Russian government’s coffers. Yandex has not escaped the EU’s scrutiny either. The EU has **accused** the company of amplifying state-sponsored media and narratives through its search results while manipulating content by diminishing or erasing material critical of the Kremlin. Also, at the end of 2022, **Alexey Kudrin**, formerly at the helm of Russia’s Accounting Chamber and presently a name etched on the American Specially Designated Nationals list, emerged as the primary advisor on corporate expansion endeavors for Yandex — all of the above shows Yandex’s confident and strong connection with the Russian government. However, despite these concerns, Yandex is actively expanding its services in Serbia, with its taxi and delivery applications gaining popularity. Data security emerges as a significant issue. Yandex Taxi, operating in numerous countries, relies on data centers located in **Russia**. At the same time, from September 1, 2023, the Russian Federal Security Service will receive round-the-clock remote **access** to information systems and databases of Yandex taxi. Even though Yandex has made public **assurances** that Russian security services will not have access to the data of applications operating outside Russia, there is still no clear answer regarding the location of data storage, which has ignited concerns over user data protection, warranting a comprehensive evaluation.

The EU’s Concerns Over Russian Activity in Serbia

The hidden aspects of Russian engagement within Serbia have sparked keen interest in the EU. Since the onset of Russia’s military aggression in Ukraine, the EU has staunchly insisted on Serbia’s **alignment** with its sanctions framework against Russia. Presently, the members of the European Parliament are expressing **apprehension** regarding the actions of Russian corporate entities and business networks abroad and their potential to assist Russia in evading sanctions, thereby posing a threat to European security. The European Union has identified an atypical **upsurge** in exporting European-manufactured goods to nations on Russia’s periphery or countries that previously had close political ties to the Kremlin. Given this, Serbia is under heightened EU scrutiny. So much so that an investigative mission led by David O’Sullivan, the EU’s Special Envoy for Sanctions, was **dispatched** to delve into Serbia’s trade dynamics. This inquiry gains significance in light of the **11th package** of EU-imposed sanctions against Russia, ratified in late June 2023. This strategic move grants the EU the authority to apply *secondary sanctions* on non-European enterprises that facilitate, intentionally or unintentionally, the circumvention of existing trade embargoes against Russia. Moreover, a novel dimension has emerged for the first time as the EU contemplates measures to **curtail** trade with third countries that serve as conduits for prohibited European goods entering Russia. Within this intricate context, the potential imposition of secondary EU sanctions on Serbia has a heightened sense of relevance.

Although the EU’s disquiet extends to discussions to the matter of a visa-free arrangement with Russia, the Serbian government remains **steadfast** beyond commerce. In one of the most recent directives issued following the war in Ukraine, a pronounced emphasis has been placed on the **disparity** between Serbia’s visa policy and that of the EU concerning third-country nationals.³ The alignment of Serbia’s migration policies with EU benchmarks, a critical facet for aspiring EU members, has perennially been a sticking point in the accession negotiations. The escalation of

³ Moreover, the EU’s concerns also tackle discussions surrounding potential amendments to the Foreigners Act and the Employment of Foreigners Act in Serbia. Serbia’s visa-free agreements with multiple crisis-afflicted developing nations further solidify its role as a critical node in unauthorised migration pathways. A glaring example of this unsettling trend lies in the surge of illegal Tunisian migrants attempting entry into the EU via the Balkan route, escalated from a mere 190 in 2020 to a staggering 6,782 in 2022. Many experts interpreted Serbia’s disregard for illegal migration concerns as a calculated strategy, suggesting that the country might be strategically utilising vulnerabilities in its migration policies and the spectre of unregulated migrant movements as a bargaining chip in its negotiations for EU accession. Over the past year, this matter has escalated to a significant degree, prompting both EU institutions - including the Home Affairs Council and the Home Affairs Commissioner - and individual member states - notably Austria and Hungary - to emphasise the imperative for Serbia to exhibit a more substantial commitment. As tensions heightened and the EU issued warnings of potentially revoking Serbia’s visa-free privileges, the country eventually conceded. Despite their non-recognition of Kosovo, Serbia’s decision to reverse visa agreements with nations like India, Cuba, Tunisia, and Burundi underscored the level of pressure the EU has successfully placed on Serbia to change its course.

Maintaining Serbia's visa-free arrangement with Russia might exacerbate tensions between Serbia and the EU, posing a substantial barrier to Serbia's progress towards European integration. Moreover, this issue not only could strain their relationship but also raise concerns about the stability of previously established agreements, further complicating the path to EU membership for Serbia.

the hostilities in Ukraine has heightened the European Union's concerns in this regard, as reflected in a specific statement emphasising the necessity to align EU and Serbian visa policies in the face of the "ongoing military aggression against Ukraine." Thus, maintaining Serbia's visa-free arrangement with Russia might exacerbate tensions between Serbia and the EU, posing a substantial barrier to Serbia's progress towards European integration. Moreover, this issue not only could strain their relationship but also raise concerns about the stability of previously established agreements, further complicating the path to EU membership for Serbia.

Unsurprisingly, the robust declarations regarding the potential granting of Serbian citizenship to Ukrainians and Russians after just a year of residence stirred discontent within the EU. The formal announcement of this bill by Serbian authorities, which had undergone public hearings, drew strong criticism. The EU's perspective rested on the notion that such a substantial liberalisation of migration laws could threaten European security. Confronted with the EU's disapproval and the looming possibility of the EU revoking the visa-free regime for Serbian citizens if the amendments were approved, Serbia's legislative course underwent a recalibration. Nonetheless, on July 27, 2023, 136 Serbia's National Assembly members rallied behind amendments to *the Foreigners Act* and *the Employment of Foreigners Act*. While the original one-year citizenship plan was abandoned, these law changes still charted a favourable route for newcomers.

The practical application of amendments remains a work in progress since the blueprint of directives and guidelines that underpin their implementation continues to evolve; yet, certain pillars remain steadfast. The duration of the residence permit's validity scales up from one year to a generous three. Additionally, the threshold for obtaining permanent residency has been lowered from five years of residence to a more attainable three, effectively opening the door for immediate Serbian citizenship applications. This new conditions for acquiring Serbian citizenship appear highly advantageous and feasible, particularly for Russian citizens. Serbia's appeal becomes even more pronounced in conjunction with the ongoing protracted war, mounting political pressures in Russia, and the looming possibility of legal consequences for evading mobilisation efforts. This confluence of factors might attract more Russian citizens to Serbia, potentially engendering heightened tensions in future relations with the EU.

Navigating the Challenge of Russian Migration in Serbia: Policy Considerations

The influx of Russian citizens into Serbia, driven by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, presents a multifaceted challenge that demands a strategic response from the country. While Serbia's compassionate approach to these migrants, many of whom seek refuge due to disagreements with Russian policies, resonates with the country's historical experiences of adversity and displacement, a nuanced and balanced approach is essential because this surge in migration has stirred a complex set of dynamics. On the one hand, for decades, Serbia has grappled with the dual challenges of declining population growth and a steady exodus of skilled professionals seeking opportunities abroad. Thus, the Serbian government appears entranced by the prospect that the current presence of energetic, wealthy Russian migrants can catalyze the revival of the national economy. This envisioned resurgence encompasses the development of high-tech sectors like IT and urban infrastructure but also the enhancement of essential service industries.

On the other hand, the current scenario is not fulfilling such optimism. The local population grapples with soaring real estate prices and rents, particularly in major urban centres like Belgrade and Novi Sad. At the same time, Serbia may miss out on enduring advantages from the influx of Russians. Once these individuals secure Serbian citizenship, they could move further in search of better prospects for development. Consequently, Serbia could inadvertently evolve into a conduit for Russian migrants rather than a lasting destination. Meanwhile, Serbia's reluctance to fully embrace the EU's stance on Russia, especially concerning restrictions on Russian citizens, raises concerns about its long-term partnership with the EU. The benefits stemming from its current economic and political ties with the EU

through the Stabilisation and Association Agreement not only **surpass** those from other sources but also profoundly impact shaping the nation's political landscape, extending well beyond immediate financial gains. By continuing its path towards European integration and potential EU membership, Serbia gains access to a prosperous market, attracts foreign investment, and strengthens democratic institutions. These advantages hold the potential to make a lasting impact on the Serbian economy and politics. In contrast, the short-term benefits of welcoming Russian migrants should not overshadow Serbia's broader vital interests. Thus, the urgency lies in formulating strategies that reconcile ethical considerations with practical challenges, ensuring a balanced approach for Serbia's future.

To begin with, **a more robust mechanism for monitoring the influx of Russians into the country is imperative.** Presently, media reports in both Serbia and Russia rely on data from border services, focusing on the count of foreign citizens entering the country. However, this approach should be revised when considering the unique circumstances surrounding Russians' residency in Serbia and their opportunity to do countless visa runs. Consequently, a single individual residing in Serbia without a valid permit but engaging in the practice of leaving and re-entering the country every 30 days may lead to a misrepresentation in the border service statistics, potentially inflating the count of Russian citizens who have entered Serbia within a single calendar year to 12 individuals. Compounding this, the efficacy of enforcing mandatory registration of foreigners remains inadequate and inconsistent, rendering even data on registered foreign citizens in Serbia unreliable. As a result, the reported figure of 200,000 Russians entering Serbia lacks precision and fails to offer an accurate depiction of the actual number of foreigners residing permanently within the country. Enhancing oversight over the registration of foreign citizens holds the potential to provide a more accurate assessment of the Russian population in Serbia and the evolving patterns of their settlement. In turn, it will facilitate a more informed anticipation of the challenges that lie ahead, guiding effective preparatory measures.

Secondly, a parallel focus should be on **expediting the formulation of a comprehensive legal framework for implementing a digital nomad visa program in Serbia.** In recent years, visas and residence permits tailored for digital nomads – specialised professionals engaged in digital industries with remote work capabilities – have steadily gained prominence. Numerous nations worldwide have **embraced** this progressive trend, including EU member states like Greece, Spain, Germany, and Estonia. The strategic introduction of a digital nomad visa category would serve multiple purposes. It would attract highly skilled experts to Serbia, tapping into their talents while generating revenue through established taxes and fees. Importantly, this approach would also ensure a pragmatic balance by avoiding the unintended consequence of encouraging excessive entrepreneurial ventures solely to obtain residency. Notably, the time spent under the auspices of a digital nomad visa often remains **distinct** from the timeline required for obtaining permanent residence or citizenship in a given country. This delineation can help assuage EU apprehensions regarding potential surges in migrant influx into Europe. Thus, Serbia can harness its expertise by facilitating the seamless integration of digital nomads, fostering economic growth and an enriched international professional ecosystem.

Thirdly, for the Serbian government to actively embrace the inflow of skilled migrants, a **concerted effort toward their seamless integration into the local landscape is crucial.** Currently, even individuals securing a three-year residence permit are **not provided** with an integration program encompassing fundamental Serbian laws, the rights, and responsibilities of foreign nationals within Serbia, as well as the essentials of language and culture. At the same time, completing the integration course is compulsory for foreigners in many countries, for example, the **Czech Republic, France or Germany.** At the same time, language and culture courses that are **optional** for foreigners to attend are offered free of charge in a broad spectrum of nations, while even the path to Serbian citizenship does not entail **examinations** on the Serbian language, history, or legal systems for applicants. This lack of integration policy inherently diminishes the incentive for visiting foreigners to engage with and assimilate into Serbian society, potentially relegating them to the confines of a detached national diaspora.

Moreover, **a strategic approach to integrating foreign enterprises into Serbia is viable.** Implementing a specific quota for Serbian employees, a prerequisite for company operations within the country could seamlessly integrate these businesses into the local labour market. This pragmatic initiative could hold substantial promise in bolstering the economy and yielding a positive impact. By embracing these multifaceted strategies, Serbia can amplify the benefits of skilled migration, fostering a harmonious blend of cultures, expertise, and commerce within its borders.

Finally, it is imperative to **accelerate the development of alternative solutions to address Serbia's demographic challenges and labour market imbalances.** While the arrival of new migrants is a part of the equation, it is clear that it alone cannot fully resolve Serbia's complex, long-term issues. The key lies in attracting fresh talent and creating

an environment that encourages the return of specialists who once sought opportunities abroad. *Circular migration* emerges as a forward-looking solution in this context. This system leverages the expertise of Serbia's diaspora and attracts foreign skilled professionals. As a result, it promotes a continuous exchange of knowledge and resources, motivating Serbian nationals to return after seeking better prospects overseas. Furthermore, a well-structured circular migration system can boost economic growth, enrich cultural diversity, and facilitate social integration, offering a comprehensive strategy for addressing Serbia's demographic and developmental challenges. At its core, circular migration involves cyclical movement between one's home country, particularly Serbia, and one or more foreign nations. Beyond addressing labour shortages in specific sectors, it has the potential to enhance overall productivity significantly. By facilitating an ongoing exchange of skills and knowledge, circular migration could play a vital role in strengthening Serbia's workforce and driving economic progress. As Serbia navigates ongoing demographic hurdles and the need for thoughtful immigration strategies, circular migration emerges as an enticing prospect that could pave the way for a promising future for the country.

These highlighted suggestions stand out as a handful of vital actions warranting careful consideration. It is paramount that any policy formulation maintains a clear focus on creating an environment that warmly welcomes individuals seeking to establish roots and reside in Serbia. The emphasis should be on fostering a sense of belonging and commitment to the nation rather than catering solely to those aiming to swiftly acquire the advantages of Serbian citizenship swiftly, only to depart shortly after that. Striking this balance is crucial, ensuring that the policy neither jeopardizes Serbia's interests nor compromises the well-being of its citizens. By prioritising a forward-thinking and comprehensive approach, Serbia can harness the potential of skilled migration while nurturing a harmonious societal fabric.

About European Policy Centre - CEP

European Policy Centre - CEP - is a non-governmental, non-profit, independent think tank, based in Belgrade. It was founded by a group of professionals in the areas of EU law, EU affairs, economics and public administration reform, with a shared vision of changing the policy making environment in Serbia for the better – by rendering it more evidence based, more open and inclusive and more substantially EU accession driven. Profound understanding of EU policies and the accession process, the workings of the Serbian administration, as well as strong social capital combine to create a think tank capable of not only producing high quality research products but also penetrating the decision making arena to create tangible impact. Today, CEP organises its work into four programme areas:

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