Channels of Transnational Democratisation?
Political Remittances, Knowledge Transmittance and Civic and Political Participation of Russian Political Migrants in Europe

Russia has recently faced a considerable wave of emigration for political reasons, associated with the worsening state of democracy, crack down on the civil society (Chawryło, Domańska, 2015) and political opposition, especially after the protests on Bolotnaya square and protests against the Crimea annexation and war with Ukraine (Sergeeva, 2015). The paper focuses on the analysis of civic participation and political activism of Russian political refugees in Poland as part of a broader pan-European study, the ensuing transnational political remittances as well as the factors that shape these activities. Political remittances can be understood as the transnational exchange of knowledge, ideas, values, norms, patterns of behaviours and identities (Levitt, 1989). The study analyses how the activities of political migrants increase the knowledge and understanding about the situation in Russia among the Polish public, shape the public and political debate on the policy towards Russia and Russians, on the one hand. On the other, it examines how Russian refugees’ political activism in the host country contributes to the democratisation process in Russia as well as affects the situation of dissidents remaining in Russia. The analysis is mainly focused on, but not limited to the activities of civil society organisations set up by Russian refugees in Warsaw and relies on a series of in-depth qualitative interviews with representatives of the organisation and members of their networks in Poland and selected EU states as well as in Russia, including civil society actors, journalists and policy-makers.

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