

## **Advancing Migrants' Rights in the Digital Era: International Legal Frameworks and Uzbekistan's Case**

**Sukhrob Musurmonovich Norbekov**

**Senior Expert, Constitutional Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan**

### **Abstract**

This article examines the international legal mechanisms for protecting migrants' rights in the digital era, emphasizing the role of digital platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. It analyzes core international treaties and instruments adopted under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and other global bodies, along with comparative experiences from the United States, Germany, South Korea, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. The paper highlights both opportunities and risks of implementing digital solutions, such as enhanced accessibility, data protection, cybersecurity, algorithmic transparency, and cross-border cooperation. Based on comparative analysis, it proposes recommendations for improving legal regulation and developing a robust national digital infrastructure for migrant support.

### **Introduction**

International migration has become one of the defining socio-economic and legal phenomena of the 21st century, influencing labor markets, demographic structures, and social cohesion worldwide [1]. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), by 2023 the global number of international migrants reached more than 281 million, equivalent to approximately 3.6% of the total population [2]. A considerable proportion of these migrants are labor migrants, whose rights and guarantees are often vulnerable due to insufficient legal protection and limited access to reliable information.

The rapid processes of globalization and digital transformation are reshaping the patterns of international migration, offering new tools to protect migrants' rights while simultaneously creating new legal and technical challenges [3]. The COVID-19 pandemic clearly demonstrated the potential of digital technologies in providing remote legal, informational, and social assistance to migrants [4]. For countries with high migration rates, such as Uzbekistan, effective legal support for citizens abroad has become an essential element of social and economic stability.

Digital platforms, when properly designed, have the capacity to integrate legal assistance, labor rights information, access to governmental and international services, and integration programs in host countries [5]. Their effectiveness, however, depends on compliance with international legal standards, adaptation to national contexts, and the protection of personal data.

### International Legal Framework

International legal regulation of migrants' rights is based on a combination of universal and regional instruments, which together establish a broad spectrum of rights and guarantees—from labor rights and social security to access to justice [6]. At the universal level, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990) affirms the principle of equality between migrant workers and nationals in working conditions, remuneration, social protection, and access to legal remedies [7]. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) further enshrines fundamental freedoms, including freedom of movement and protection from discrimination [8].

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018) introduced a comprehensive approach to migration management, explicitly recognizing the role of digital technologies in disseminating information, facilitating access to services, and ensuring safe migration channels [9]. It encourages the establishment of electronic registration systems, online legal assistance services, and integrated information portals for migrants.

The ILO has adopted several binding conventions relevant to migrant protection, notably Convention No. 97 (Migration for Employment, Revised, 1949) and Convention No. 143 (Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment, 1975) [10]. These instruments not only impose obligations on states to protect migrant workers but also acknowledge the potential use of technology for monitoring labor conditions, handling complaints, and promoting transparency in recruitment processes [11].

Regionally, the European Union has developed legal tools such as Directive 2011/98/EU, establishing a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in EU territory [12]. Additionally, Estonia's e-Residency program allows foreigners to register businesses and access public services online, which can also facilitate economic integration for highly skilled migrants [13]. In the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Agreement on Cooperation in

the Field of Labor Migration (2010) includes provisions for mutual recognition of electronic documents and the possibility of remote contract formalization [14].

### **International Best Practices**

Global practice demonstrates that digitalization of migration procedures can significantly enhance efficiency, reduce administrative burdens, and broaden migrants' access to legal protection [16]. In the United States, the USCIS Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) enables electronic submission of immigration applications, real-time tracking of case status, and integration with federal databases [17]. Complementary initiatives, such as Citizenshipworks, provide free or low-cost virtual legal assistance, automated eligibility checks, and step-by-step guidance for naturalization applications [18].

The European Union operates the European Web Site on Integration (EWSI), which consolidates legal information, policy measures, and integration services across member states [19].

Estonia, a global leader in e-governance, has implemented e-Residency, which allows remote business registration and access to state services without physical presence—an approach that can be leveraged by migrants seeking economic integration [20].

South Korea maintains the Hi Korea portal, offering multilingual access to residence registration, visa extensions, work permits, and healthcare enrollment. Integrated with mobile apps, it sends timely reminders about document deadlines [21].

Canada provides an IRCC Secure Account for electronic visa, residency, and citizenship applications, combined with feedback channels and the Welcome to Canada interactive platform for integration courses, labor rights information, healthcare, and taxation [22].

### **Uzbekistan's National Practice**

Over recent years, Uzbekistan has undertaken comprehensive reforms to modernize its migrant protection system, with digital tools as a key driver of improved efficiency and accessibility [24]. The Law “On External Labor Migration” (2020), along with presidential decrees and cabinet resolutions, form the legislative foundation for these efforts [25]. In 2019, the country established overseas offices of the Agency for External Labor Migration in major destination countries—including Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and South Korea—to provide legal consultations, dispute resolution, and assistance with document preparation [26].

Digital innovations include the Migratsiya mobile application, which provides information on host country laws, available jobs, document requirements, and legalization procedures [27]. The Unified Interactive Public Services Portal ([my.gov.uz](http://my.gov.uz)) allows migrants to request official certificates, register legal documents, and access other state services remotely [28]. Since 2022, online consultations have been available via Telegram bots and video conferencing, enabling real-time legal support even for those abroad [29].

### Recommendations

To enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and overall impact of digital migrant services in Uzbekistan, it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive approach that combines technological innovation with legal, social, and educational measures. One of the first priorities is the development of multilingual and accessible digital interfaces. All online platforms, mobile applications, and information resources should be available in multiple languages, including Uzbek, Russian, English, and the languages of major destination countries such as Korean, Turkish, and Arabic. Interfaces must be user-friendly, visually intuitive, and adapted to different levels of digital literacy to ensure inclusivity for all migrant groups.

Equally important is the implementation of nationwide public awareness campaigns to inform migrants and their families about available services. These campaigns should combine online and offline strategies, from targeted social media outreach and instructional videos to community seminars in rural areas. Cooperation with NGOs, local authorities, and diaspora organizations can significantly expand the reach and credibility of such initiatives.

Another strategic step is the facilitation of cross-border digital integration. Establishing secure channels for data exchange between Uzbekistan's migration platform and the systems of key host countries would enable real-time verification of employment contracts, visa statuses, and access to social benefits. This integration would not only reduce bureaucratic delays but also minimize fraud and abuse.

The protection of migrants' personal data must remain a top priority. Uzbekistan's legal framework should be aligned with international standards such as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), ensuring robust encryption, anonymization practices, and strict data storage protocols. Clear accountability mechanisms for data breaches would strengthen public trust in the system.

The active promotion of public-private partnerships (PPPs) can also play a transformative role. Collaboration between the government, technology companies, financial institutions, and civil society organizations can expand the scope and quality

of services offered. This could include developing new tools such as mobile-based employment matching platforms, microfinance solutions, and secure remittance systems tailored to migrants' needs.

Digital platforms should integrate education and skills development modules to improve migrants' competitiveness in foreign labor markets. These could include language courses for host countries, vocational training, and entrepreneurship programs, developed in partnership with educational institutions and employers. Such initiatives would not only boost income potential but also facilitate smoother integration abroad.

An effective system for early warning and reporting of rights violations is essential. This could be achieved through mobile applications or online forms that allow migrants to report unsafe working conditions, discrimination, or fraudulent recruitment practices. A centralized monitoring center should process these reports, enabling rapid intervention and coordination with diplomatic missions.

Support for the families of migrants who remain in Uzbekistan should be embedded in the national digital migration platform. Services could include guidance on accessing social benefits, remote education support for children, and telemedicine consultations. Such measures would strengthen family resilience and reduce the negative social impact of labor migration.

Given the sensitive nature of migration-related data, cybersecurity must be addressed through multi-layered measures, including biometric authentication, two-factor verification, and regular independent security audits. These measures will help prevent cyberattacks, identity theft, and unauthorized access to personal information.

Finally, incorporating AI-based analytical tools into the national digital migration platform could provide valuable insights for policy planning. Artificial intelligence and big data analytics can track migration flows, identify emerging risks, and detect patterns of labor exploitation, enabling evidence-based decision-making and proactive government action.

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