



Electronic Personnel Documents as a Means of Protecting Employee Rights: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT: The article raises the acute problem of the transition to remote registration of labor relations and its legislative formalization and consolidation. The main theoretical approaches to this ambiguous process are considered. Despite the sufficient number of works on this issue, the attitude of ordinary employees to such an innovative way of improving the employer's personnel policy has not been identified yet.

The results of the study of the role of electronic employment record books in improving the process of managing human resources based on the survey of employees of organizations and enterprises of the Moscow region are presented. On the specific factual material, the proposed article demonstrates the need to digitize the labor relation by introducing an electronic signature. The authors concluded this by processing a representative sample of questionnaires distributed among employees in a predominantly managerial sphere. It is more important than ever to identify an employee's attitude to innovations, their willingness to accept them and successfully use the offered electronic resources in their own interests under circumstances where the introduction of fundamentally new technologies for labor relations requires reciprocal, concerted actions of an employee, employer and legislator. The data was collected using a closed survey among representatives of the active working population aged under 45.

The opinion of the survey participants was revealed through a questionnaire, which included such issues as the benefits and feasibility of digital formalization of labor relations, the attitude of various professional groups to the problems of this formalization, especially the perception of this problem by young Russians.

According to the results of the study, fundamental conclusions were formulated on the main issues of introducing digital technologies in the field of formalizing labor relations, and, in particular, digital employment record books as the most familiar means for Russians to assert and consolidate their professional and social status.

Keywords: employment record book, digital economy, labor relations, employee, employer, legal formalization, personnel policy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The most diverse problems of the use of digital technologies in the formalization of labor relations are widely covered both in scientific articles and in journalistic literature. The most interesting issues for employees, employers, specialists and administration are the role and place of the digital economy in Russia, the impact of the development of information and communication technologies on social and labor relations, the degree of readiness of Russia for the digital economy, the program of development of the digital economy in Russia.

The relevance of the topic under discussion is of no doubt, and there is every reason to hope that the Decrees of the President [1] and the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation [2] on this issue, issued in 2017-2018, will help to overcome the existing lag of Russia in the use of digital technologies. Today, the labor market must be supported by the requirements of the digital economy. The electronic versions of various government documents are also constantly being reviewed – for example, the State Duma supported the idea of abolishing paper insurance policies of Compulsory Motor Third Party Liability (CMTPL), and deputies adopted amendments to the CMTPL legislation [3] in the first reading, equalizing the status of paper and electronic policies on October 17,

2018. After the enactment, the electronic policy will be equal to a paper document.

It should be noted that a new standard of personnel workflow is already being successfully formed in Russia, which allows switching from documents regulating labor relations on paper to the online form. Some, mostly large employers, even today are able to organize some aspects of human resource management in electronic form. Their experience can be the basis for the development of techniques that must be further approved by state authorities.

The experience of leading companies has been carefully studied at the Russian State Social University, and a number of ideas have been adopted in the educational process, as well as during the internship by students – future managers and document specialists who are intended to bring labor relations to a new level.

The process state of implementing labor relations in the digital environment is characterized by the following: conversion of personnel documents into electronic form; the "Personnel Online" project of the "Ulmart" company; work in the "cloud" as an example of the transformation of social and labor relations in the digital economy.

As an example, one can mention the signing of the majority of personnel documents by employees of the "Ulmart" company, which is now carried out on the Internet through personal accounts from any device [4]. It should be noted that most of the employees of this

company do not have higher education. The monthly maintenance of the personnel document flow of the "Ulmart" Company was 4,000,000 rubles. Now, the company's expenses for the maintenance of personnel workflow through the implementation of the "Personnel online" project have been reduced by 1 million rubles per month [5].

The main characteristics of the formalization of labor relations in the digital economy for Russia are as follows: a digital signature as the protection of personnel electronic documents; familiarization of employees with personnel documents to be signed in electronic form; voluntary transition to the use of electronic personnel documents.

The problems of formalizing labor relations in the digital economy include the problems of legislative introduction of electronic employment record books, problems of the remote conclusion of employment contracts and problems of long-term storage of electronic documents.

The existing problems of the labor market, which force the solution of the problem in modern conditions, include:

(1) Costs of employers from keeping personnel documents on paper, which are reduced when signing an employment contract by certifying it in corporate systems with an enhanced digital signature; transferring job information from the employment record book to the Pension Fund of Russia; signing and maintaining personnel documents in corporate systems;

(2) The insecurity of certain categories of employees who experience difficulties in concluding paper employment contracts, which especially concerns remote and rotational employees, as well as microenterprise employees. This circumstance is overcome by the creation of an interactive platform for the signing of employment contracts in electronic form.

The need for this interactive platform for remote employees (3–5 million people) is updated by additional costs for sending and processing documents; the risk of the employer violating the initial conditions for the vacancy– for seasonal employees (2.3 million people); inappropriate, unnecessary burden on paperwork – for microenterprise employees (5.6 million people).

The possibility of using a basic electronic signature, the possibility of applying a standard employment contract, minimizing the number of violations and errors, safety and immutability of documents guaranteed by the platform operator, the possibility of detecting violations at the conclusion of an employment contract in real time – all these factors are among the advantages of an interactive platform.

All this confirms the relevance of the formalization of labor relations in the digital economy.

In turn, the development of information and communication technologies affects the transformation of social and labor relations. Information technologies and Internet resources are firmly rooted in modern daily life, in the work of government organizations and in business. The processes of forming a global digital space are an important area of international cooperation.

Modern information and communication technologies have shaped new phenomena that are characteristic only for an innovative economy, such phenomena are "virtual work" and "digital natives" (people with at least five years of experience in Internet activities). It is assumed that they will account for 75% of the global workforce by 2025. At the same time, "modern theory and practice of strategic personnel management have many approaches that require study and further

development with regard to modern business conditions and personnel management features" [6].

"Digital economy" is not just a fashion, it is an objective necessity, which is already influencing and will increasingly affect all areas of human life to a greater or lesser extent. The introduction of electronic personnel documents, the possibility of concluding electronic employment contracts with remote and seasonal employees, as well as with an employer – private individual, other issues of increasing the flexibility of the labor market and ensuring the protection of employees rights in the application of digital technologies are of particular importance for Russia. Today, the labor market must be supported by the requirements of the digital economy.

How can Russia's readiness for the digital economy can be characterized? According to the Global Information Technologies research, initiated by the World Economic Forum, the Russian Federation ranks 41st in readiness for the digital economy, with a large lag behind the top ten leading countries [2]. In terms of economic and innovative results of the use of digital technologies, Russia ranks 38th also with a large lag behind the leading countries. This indicates gaps in the regulatory framework for the digital economy and the low level of application of digital technologies by business structures. Issues of storage of electronic personnel documents for long-term storage have not yet been resolved by law.

Normative regulation of the use of information technologies in personnel management is currently lagging behind other areas of government regulation. However, in spite of the legislative misregulating of digitizing personnel records management, the use of electronic personnel documents is becoming increasingly common in Russia due to the general interest. A number of employers were able to organize the conversion of some elements of personnel workflow to the online form, developing and implementing their own HR-technology.

An obstacle to the introduction of electronic documents regulating labor relations, as well as the creation of personnel documents mainly on paper, are, above all, the features of legal regulation. Thus, a number of documents with which the personnel service works, in accordance with the labor legislation of the Russian Federation, must be drawn up exclusively on paper.

The most acute problems are the legislative introduction of electronic employment record books and the remote conclusion of employment contracts. It should be noted that employment record books as a type of registration of labor relations are not used anywhere in the world, except the Russian Federation and the countries of the former USSR. In the future, employment record books may, in general, be abolished as an atavism, as the media have long since informed the public. However, this idea seems to be impossible to implement in the near future. Employment record books still remain the main document on labor activity and work experience of employees in accordance with Art. 66 of the Labor Code of the Russian Federation, especially for those with significant (more than 20 years) work experience.

Problems of the legislative introduction of electronic employment record books are most acute. The conversion of an employment record book to an electronic form is possible by finalizing state information systems (electronic registries), which contain information about the employee, from which employees and employers are entitled to receive electronic statements signed by the employer's electronic signature. In the meantime, a forced situation, in which personnel

duplicate paper and electronic personnel documents, significantly increases the costs of companies. The situation is similar to the documents submitted to the Federal Labor Inspectorate for verification – these must be paper certified copies.

Clarification of the attitude of employees to the transfer of labor relations to the online mode and, in particular, the introduction of an electronic document management system (EDMS) in the formalization and regulation of labor relations has not the last place in the work of personnel services and company management. According to experts, this is an important stage in the process of conversion from traditional paper workflow to electronic workflow, designed to ensure smooth, quick and effective implementation of innovations.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The systematic, historical, interdisciplinary, process, institutional, civilizational, socio-engineering, cultural and other approaches were used in the work in order to achieve the intended goal and solve the set tasks. The methods included the following: content, logical, comparative and factor analysis, observation, interviewing, questioning, methods of mathematical statistics, etc.

The study was carried out using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the course of the study, a mass questionnaire survey was conducted among employees of various commercial companies in Moscow and the Moscow region on a representative sample representing the main focus groups in the most significant socio-professional strata using are mote questionnaire.

The conducted study on the scale of extrapolation of the achieved results was regional, and from the point of view of the strategy of study formation object – selective, since when compiling the questionnaire, a distributional sample was used, compiled by age and socio-professional features, work experience and place of residence of the respondents. The most active representatives of various age groups – 18-45 years old – permanently residing at the time of the survey in Moscow and the Moscow region, were selected as an empirical object of research. The obtained statistical data were processed by the mathematical method.

The questionnaire clarified the attitude of the interviewees to the following issues: the usefulness of remote digital formalization of labor relations; types of documentation suitable for such formalization; planning of full or partial transition to paperless workflow and workflow technology by specific companies; the expediency of a full transition to electronic document circulation; the number of jobs connected to the system or planned to connect in the future; the method of storing information used in the company of the respondents (paper, local electronic media, cloud storage); the opinion of the respondents on the expediency of transferring the full cycle of personnel documentation to an online format; the effectiveness or inefficiency of remote formalization of labor relations.

III. RESULTS

The survey was attended by representatives of age groups considered the most socially and economically active: 80.7% – aged from 20 to 25; 15.7% – aged from 25 to 35; the last group – 3.6% – employed people aged from 35 to 45. It is worth noting that citizens aged over 45 did not participate in the survey; therefore, the attitude of employees of mature age to this subject remains unexplored (Fig. 1).

The respondents mostly had insignificant work experience: 81.9% had been working from 0 to 5 years; 15.7% – from 5 to 10 years; 2.4% from 10 to 20 years; there was no one who had been working for more than 20 years (Fig. 2).

The status of the respondents was characterized by a relatively high degree of employment since 85.5% of them were currently working; none of the respondents were retired. 14.5% named “other” to describe their occupation as an alternative to the first two socio-economic characteristics (Fig. 3).

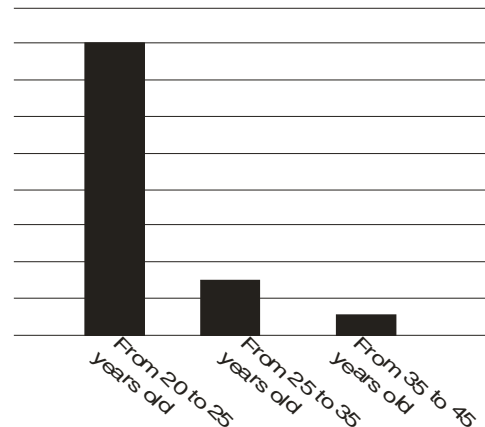


Fig. 1. Age of the respondents.

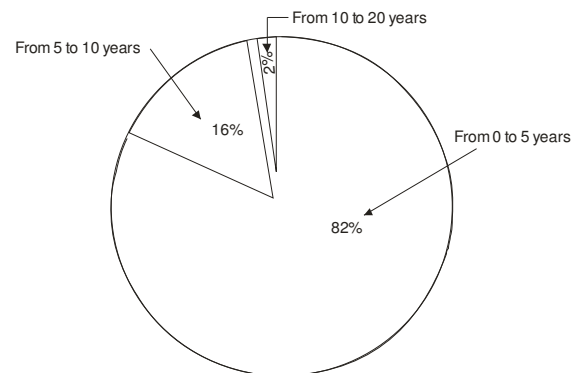


Fig. 2. Work experience of the respondents.

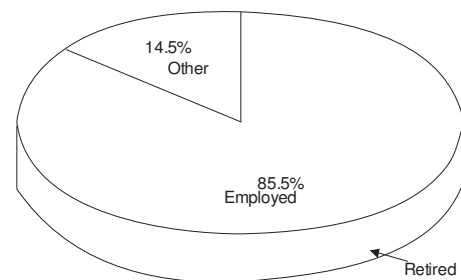


Fig. 3. Work experience of the respondents.

From the answers to the question about the sphere of employment, the following can be stated: 15.7% worked in the trade and repair sphere, 9.6% were equally divided among people employed in education and health care and social services. Very small shares accounted for those employed in the field of transport and communications and construction (1.9% and 3%, respectively). 60.2% (!) indicated “other”, by which one can understand freelancing, business, etc. None of the respondents worked in the manufacturing industry, agriculture and forestry (Fig. 4).

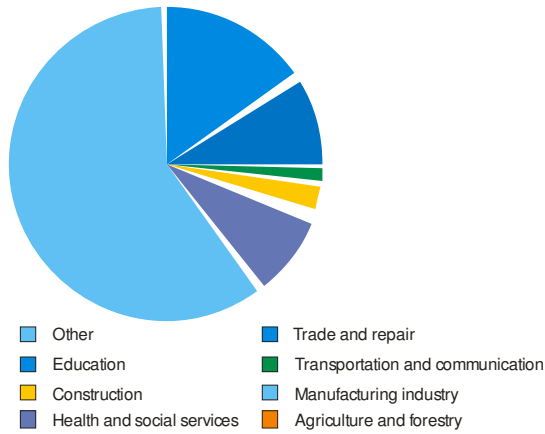


Fig. 4. The employment areas of the respondents.

When asked which documents, in the opinion of the respondents, were best suited for processing in digital format, the documentation for working relationships (orders, protocols, copies of the applicant's documents, acts, etc.) was in first place (63.9%). 14.5% named employment contracts; 10.8% – employment record books; 8% – the supplementary agreements to the employment contracts. The remaining 2.8% named “all documents”, listing separately “employment record book, orders, minutes, copies of applicant's documents, acts, etc.” A very small part of the respondents agreed to a digital formalization stating the condition “maximum - a signature for personal data processing or civil contracts” (Fig. 6).

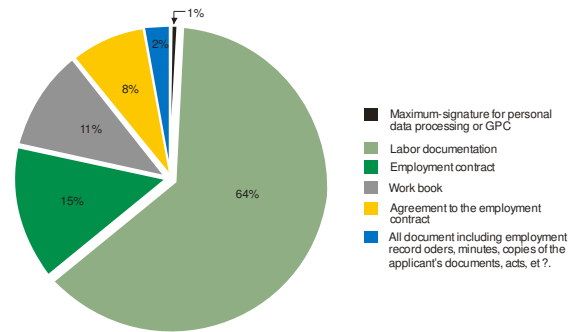


Fig. 6. Distribution of answers to the question “Which documents are best suited for processing in digital format?”

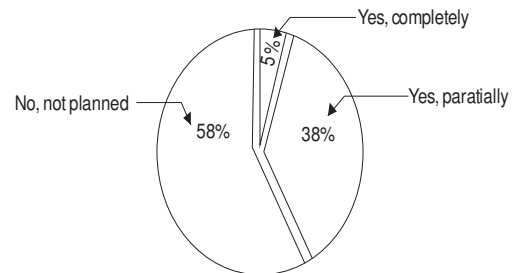


Fig. 7. Distribution of answers to the question on the transition to paperless office workflow technology.

Only about 6% of the respondents reacted negatively to the idea, finding it necessary to clarify that it was better to find out and discuss all the issues personally with the staff of personnel services. Only a few answered that they did not consider this innovation useful or even safe (Fig. 5).

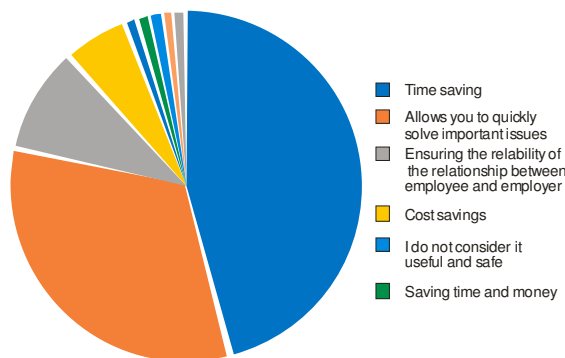


Fig. 5. Distribution of answers to the question “Do you consider remote formalization of labor relations useful, and why?”

According to the interviewees, a full or partial transition to a paperless office workflow in their company was either not planned at all (57.8%) or partially planned (37.3%). However, it is interesting that the full transition to electronic document management was planned in companies where 4.9% of the respondents worked. Never the less, the twentieth part of organizations, enterprises and institutions intended to introduce such feature (Fig. 7). The key question was the one about the benefits of remote formalization of labor relations, and the reasons for this preference.

It was answered in the affirmative by the overwhelming majority – more than 93.9%.

Of these, 45.8% mentioned timesaving as the reason for their choice, 32.5% – the ability to resolve important issues quickly, 9.6% – ensuring the reliability of the employee-employer relationship, and 6% – saving money, the rest – saving both time and money.

When asked how many workplaces at the place of work of the respondents were connected or planned to be connected to the system, the majority (48.2%) answered negatively (i.e. 0 places, and such a connection was not planned at all); 1 place - 6%, 2 places - 8.4%, 3 places – 7.2%; 4 places – 2.4% of the respondents; 5 places- 7.2%. Only 1.2% of the respondents had 6, 7, or 10 places. In the organization where 2.4% of the respondents worked, 15 places were connected to the EDMS, and as many had 20 places; slightly less – 15 places-in 2.4% of the respondents; 50-2.4%; 100 places-3.6%. The insignificant share of the respondents reported (1.2% each) that 150, 200, 300, 500 and 1000 places were connected.

When asked about the kind of information storage used in the companies surveyed, the vast majority (83.1%) named paper carriers. 51.8% of the respondents stored information on local electronic media; 60% – servers; 16.9%-cloud storage. The statement of 1.2% of the respondents- “It is not stored at all” has to be recognized as an “original” one (Fig. 8).

48.2% of the respondents answered negatively to the question about the expediency of transferring a full cycle of personnel document management to the online mode. It's interesting that more than a quarter – 25.5% – wanted to entrust completely the formalization of relationships with the employer to digital HR management. 25.3% found it difficult to answer the question. Consequently, such a transition has good prospects, but, apparently, it requires gradualism, and its completion is a matter of a rather distant future.

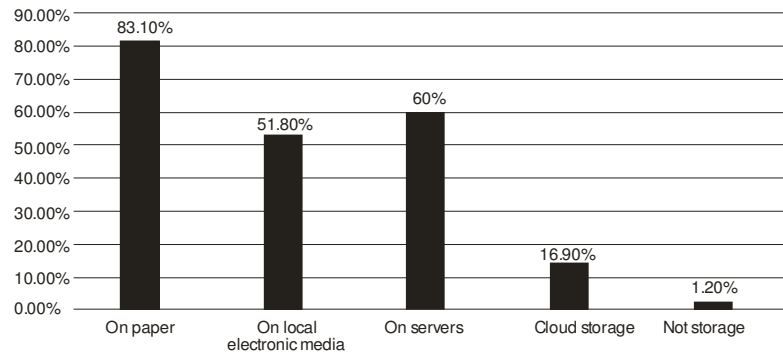


Fig. 8. Distribution of answers to the question about the method of storing information.

When asked “In what cases the remote formalization of labor relations may be, in your opinion, ineffective, and why?”, the overwhelming majority of the respondents (51.8%) answered that this could be the absence of a paper document as the main argument in the event of disputes; a quarter of the respondents (25.3%) indicated the absence of an adequate regulatory framework to regulate this issue. For 18.1%, the main cause of inefficiency was the lack of personal contact with a representative of the employer, which indicates a low degree of confidence in the administration of enterprises. Very few indicated the absence of the necessary skills of the applicant (in modern time almost everyone has the necessary skills), and failures in technology.

IV. DISCUSSION

Since the beginning of the 2010s, numerous survey have been conducted to identify staff attitudes towards the transformation and implementation of the EDMS. Thus, a survey on electronic document circulation conducted by Kukharski *et al.*, was published in the journal “Secretarial work” [7].

While in Russia, EDMS are still often considered as autonomous solutions aimed at fulfilling certain narrow tasks of an enterprise, world-class enterprises consider EDMS, or DMS (Document Management Systems), mainly as the first step towards building global ECM-systems (ECM – Enterprise Content Management), or corporate content management systems. When deciding on the implementation of a content management system, companies consider such systems as part of a single corporate information space of an enterprise and as a long-term platform for storing and working with corporate information. The advantage of large integrated systems (such as, for example, OpenText solutions) is that they serve as a single platform for managing corporate content, on the basis of and within which, various business tasks can be solved and various business processes can be implemented. Such solutions are designed to organize a single corporate space, where one can start small and gradually expand the proposed functionality within a single system [7].

According to experts, although the electronic document management has its drawbacks, it streamlines many processes, saves a lot of resources, including time, and is accustomed to a certain quality, work standard. The introduction of electronic document management in a company allows saving, finding in time, understanding the history of the situation [7].

Parliamentary hearings on the topic “Features of the formalization of labor relations in the digital economy” were devoted specifically to the digital formalization of labor relations, the results of which were reflected in the

library profile, prepared at the request of the State Duma Committee on Economic Policy, Industry, Innovative Development and bibliographic resources of the Office of Library Collections (Parliamentary Library) [8].

It should be noted that results of free survey have posted on the pages of various Internet resources, as well as questions for a survey on electronic document management issues have been proposed. However, they all contained either fragmentary information (the opinions of individuals competent in this matter, arbitrarily chosen by the author) [7]; or interpreted the problem so extensively that they sought to embrace the general problems of document flow in the organization [9], not allowing to focus on more general issues that this work is devoted to.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the above, the following conclusions can be drawn.

It is necessary to conduct interviews with employees when introducing an EDMS. Remote questioning, successfully applied in this case and allowing revealing the opinions of different groups of employees on the most important issues of introducing electronic personnel records management, makes it possible to save on the project.

A detailed acquaintance with the opinions of employees on various aspects of the problem allows managing the innovation processes of digitization of personnel office work more effectively, identifying both technical, professional, moral, and mental readiness to adapt them to changing conditions. The opinion of employees of young age groups, representing the future of the Russian labor market, on these issues is of particular importance.

Managing the process of introducing EDMS is an important aspect of the transition of traditional forms of document management on paper to electronic document management.

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