

Employment opportunities for recent arrivals are almost nil in a setting where even the old work force is being reduced because of a contraction in the Crimean economy. Thus it is almost impossible for highly qualified professionals among the Crimean Tatars to find jobs suited to their background, even when their skills are desperately needed. Economic reforms are essential, but the privatization of state-owned property is taking place at a very slow rate, and control of this process is the subject of intense political battles in Kyiv, Simferopol (the capital of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea), and at the local level. The Crimean Tatars in Veseloe and elsewhere have effectively been locked out of this process.

At the same time, attempts by the Crimean Tatars to set up small businesses, or to sell products they raise on small plots of land, are hampered by administrative restrictions often dating back to the Soviet period. In addition criminal elements, often allied with local government officials, have attempted to eliminate or control all small business activities. This includes demanding "protection money" from women selling vegetables at local markets, and such practices are often ignored by local law enforcement agencies.

Because of the difficult economic circumstances in Crimea funding for health care, education, culture and all forms of social welfare have been cut back. As a result, it has been impossible to establish the cultural and educational infrastructure that the Crimean Tatars in Veseloe need to effectively maintain their language and culture. They have also been denied proper facilities for their religious services, which are currently held in a small room of a noisy recreation facility. All the factors described above have greatly demoralized the recent returnees, and have led to great resentment among the many unemployed young men and women in their midst.

It is important to note that most of the non-Crimean Tatars in the village have also been affected by the economic downturn of recent years, and have suffered a significant decline in their living standards. However, most of them are employed (although they often receive their wages with considerable delays), and the existing social services and educational/cultural infrastructure still satisfy their most basic needs. Thus they are concerned that the return of the Crimean Tatars will put a heavy strain on these services and infrastructure, and will increase competition in the labour market. Last but not least, the non-returnees feel threatened by the high degree of solidarity among the Crimean Tatars, which has helped the returnees maintain the integrity of their community in spite of all the problems noted above.

The Crimean Tatars who returned to Veseloe have managed to co-exist peacefully with the previous inhabitants of the village, and in some cases have even slowly won their respect. However, the stresses and strains described above have led to a highly unstable situation which is duplicated in many other villages and towns in Crimea. Some Crimean politicians have attempted to play on these tensions to maintain their political support base, and the potential for conflict is great. On a number of occasions the leaders of the Crimean Tatar movement have acted quickly to prevent tensions in individual communities