

Demand for Environmental Engineers Not Translating Into Jobs

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In polluting industries, such as the power generation sector, environmental engineers can earn relatively high salaries. **Vladimir Filonov**

Graduates of Russia's environmental science faculties are struggling to find employment in their sphere despite a global trend toward demand for their expertise, a survey has found.

In a survey of dozens of job seekers in the environmental sector, only 15 percent of qualified graduates were working in the profession, a survey by Superjob.ru found.

The remainder, daunted by low starting salaries and poor career prospects, wind up in white-collar sectors like sales and advertising.

Environmental engineers are responsible for ensuring that businesses comply with relevant legislation and minimizing the ecological impact of commercial activities, a role requiring knowledge of specialist software, environmental law and guidelines for businesses.

Superjob.ru predicted a steady increase in demand for such professionals in the medium term, citing a KPMG report published in February that said the hidden costs to businesses from environmental damage were likely to double over a 14-year period, based on trends over the last decade.

But after surveying job seekers in the sectors that KPMG expects to be hit hardest by the changes, including oil and gas, metals, food and drink and automobile manufacturing, Superjob's researchers found that current pay is so low that new graduates are essentially performing a labor of love, the report writers said.

Entry-level salaries start from 20,000 to 25,000 rubles per month (\$600 to \$757) in Moscow and fall to 9,000 to 12,000 rubles in regional capitals like Kazan and Nizhny Novgorod.

Of those who stay in the trade, poor working conditions and high demand mean many are constantly on the lookout for a new employer. About 69 percent of ecologists looking for jobs in the auto, oil and gas and metals industries that participated in the survey were already employed in the sector, the report writers said.

"That means environmental engineers are in demand — they are not left unemployed — but the conditions on offer are not very attractive, and there are relatively few entry-level jobseekers," said the report writers.

In polluting industries, which face stringent regulation and have the money to pay for expertise, the profession can pay relatively handsomely. An environmental engineer can command an average wage of 41,000 rubles per month in the oil and gas sector, and almost as much in the automotive, power generation and beverage industries. Top performers in large companies can earn up to 100,000 rubles per month, Superjob.ru said.

Sergei Sitnikov, a lawyer at Baker and McKenzie who specializes in environmental consulting, said no client had ever asked for advice on hiring specialized staff to ensure ecological compliance.

"I'd say the environment for such jobs is not that friendly, although there are some separate signs of potential room for growth," he said.

A draft law on environmental auditing currently under consideration in the Duma could boost that demand, he said, but it is unclear when it might be adopted.

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