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THE SCOPE AND DRIVERS OF PRE-WAR MIGRATION IN UKRAINE

МАСШТАБИ ТА РУШІЙНІ СИЛИ ДОВОЄННОЇ МІГРАЦІЇ В УКРАЇНІ

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The paper reveals the scope, dynamics, structure and drivers of migration movement in Ukraine before a full-scale Russian invasion. The low level of wages and limited opportunities for employment with satisfactory conditions and wages are considered the main pre-war internal economic reasons forcing part of the economically active population to leave Ukraine primarily for the purpose of employment. Circular migration has become the most widespread type of labor migration movement for Ukrainians that turned Ukraine into the main source of economic migrants to the EU. The humanitarian driver arising from the start of military conflict in 2014 is determined as the important factor of substantial increase of both internal displacement in Ukraine and external migration flows, in particular, from Ukraine to Poland. The spacial analysis showed that Poland took first place among recipient countries of Ukrainian labor force from 2017 to 2021. The research points to the link between the most popular directions of Ukraine's labor migration flows before 2022 and the top recipient countries for Ukrainian forced migrants after the war outbreak. The implications of the research include the design of economic and social policy proposals important for returning Ukrainian forced migrants in the origin country after war.

Keywords: migration, labour migration, internal displacement, remittances, external migration processes.

Ще до гострої міграційної кризи, яку було викликано потоком біженців від війни, Україна була визнана основним джерелом економічних мігрантів до ЄС. Дослідження міграційного руху в Україні до 2022 року відіграє важливу роль у поясненні напрямків руху вимушених мігрантів після початку повномасштабної війни. Стаття розкриває масштаби, динаміку, структуру та рушійні сили міграційного руху в Україні до повномасштабного російського вторгнення. Низький рівень заробітної плати та обмежені можливості працевлаштування із задовільними умовами й оплатою праці вважаються основними довоєнними внутрішньо економічними причинами, які змушували частину економічно активного населення залишити Україну переважно з метою працевлаштування. Серед зовнішніх чинників, які сприяли збільшенню трудової міграції українців, найбільш вагомими визнано зростання попиту на українську робочу силу в низці країн ЄС, насамперед у Польщі, Чехії та Словаччині, через процес демографічного старіння та відтік їхньої робочої сили до більш заможних країн, відповідне спрощення процедур і зміни умов працевлаштування українців. Оцінка масштабів, структури та напрямків зовнішньої трудової міграції українців методологічно є ускладненою через відсутність задокументованих даних, що пояснюється переважно тимчасовим і циркулярним характером трудової міграції українців. Також Важливим чинником суттєвого зростання як внутрішніх переміщень в Україні, так і зовнішніх міграційних потоків, зокрема з України до Польщі, визначено гуманітарний драйвер, що виник у зв'язку з початком військового конфлікту у 2014 році. Просторовий аналіз показав, що Польща посіла перше місце серед країн-реципієнтів української робочої сили у 2017–2021 рр. Дослідження вказує на зв'язок між найпопулярнішими напрямками потоків трудової міграції в Україні до 2022 року та країнами-найбільшими реципієнтами вимушених мігрантів з України після початку війни. Наслідки дослідження включають розробку пропозицій щодо економічної та соціальної політики, важливих для повернення українських вимушених мігрантів у країну походження після війни.

Ключові слова: міграція, трудова міграція, внутрішнє переміщення, грошові перекази, процес зовнішньої міграції.

Statement of the problem. From the early 1990s, Ukrainian migration movement to different countries was rather intensive. According to UN Statistics, the total amount of Ukrainians living abroad in 2020 reached the mark of 6.1 million [1]. This allowed Ukraine to take eight's place in the world ranking of countries of migrants' origin.

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has caused the largest displacement crises in European continent in the 21st century. Its scale has eclipsed the migration waves that Ukraine experienced in previous years, in particular after the outbreak of the military conflict in 2014.

The study of migration movement in Ukraine before 2022 plays an important role in explaining the directions of forced migration flows after the outbreak of a full-scale war.

Analysis of recent publications. The factors and peculiarities of the migration movement in Ukraine before 2022 are studied in the papers of Bezuglyi [2], Górný and van der Zwan [3], Pieńkowski [4], Protsyk and Kara [5], Fedyuk and Kindler [6] etc. These scholars explored the causes, motives and factors of influence on migration movement, highlighted the possible consequences of migration processes in a pre-war period. At the same time, there is a research gap in the issue of establishing a relationship between a pre-war and in-war migration processes from the perspective of predominant direction and drivers of migration flows.

The aim of the paper is to evaluate scope, dynamics, structure and drivers of migration in Ukraine before a full-scale Russian invasion.

Research results. As the UNDESA data shows, during the period of independence since 1991, the directions of Ukrainian migration have changed significantly (Figure 1a, b).

In the first years of independence in 1990s, almost 85% of Ukrainian emigrants lived in the countries of the former USSR (mostly people who were born in the Ukrainian SSR and at a certain period of life moved to live in another republic of the Union). More than three million Ukrainians, which counts 65%, were in Russia. Over the years, the number of Ukrainians in the former USSR countries has decreased from 4.6 in 1990 to 4.1 million in 2017. Simultaneously the number of Ukrainian emigrants in the USA, Canada, Western and Central Europe and Australia increased from 0.7 to 2.5 million, and their share in the total number of Ukrainians who went to live abroad increased from 13% to 38% [7].

Regarding situation with immigration in Ukraine five million international migrants registered in Ukraine as of 2020 including around 3.3 million from the Russian Federation, followed by 250,000 from Belarus and 226,000 from Kazakhstan [1]. Most often, they come to the country to study at universities, for employment and family reunification with citizens of Ukraine.

Since 2014, there has been an increase in the scale of labor migration pushed by the influence of both external and internal economic and socio-political factors.

Among the external factors, the most significant are the growing demand for Ukrainian labor in a number of EU countries, primarily Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia due to the process of demographic aging and the outflow of their labor force to more prosperous countries, the corresponding simplification of procedures and changes in the employment conditions for Ukrainians.

The low (by European standards) level of wages and limited opportunities for employment with satisfactory conditions and wages are internal reasons forcing part of the economically active population to leave Ukraine, primarily for the purpose of employment.

Ukraine is considered one of the most powerful labor force donors in Europe. Among various types of labor migration for modern Ukraine, circular migration is the most widespread type, which means frequent travels between Ukraine and the destination country, including seasonal work.

Currently, it is extremely difficult to assess the scale, structure and direction of Ukrainians' external labour migration. These data are not exactly documented. Each of the version of estimation has its own methodological and other limitations that must be considered when using the data.

According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, in 2019 there were 3.2 million Ukrainian labor migrants abroad. In 2020, according to the head of the National Bank of Ukraine, there were about 3 million labor migrants. During the year, 400-500 thousand people returned to the country, but mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The countries of the European Union were closed for lockdown, people lost their jobs and had to return. That influenced the decrease in the number of Ukrainian labor migrants in 2021 [8].

The start of the Russian war aggression in 2014 in Crimea and Donbass region changed the main destinations of Ukrainian labor migration. In 2012, the Russian Federation held the lead among recipient countries of Ukrainian labor force (43%). In 2017 Poland was the main recipient country of the Ukrainian workforce (39%) following by Russian Federation (26.3%), Italy (11.3%), and the Czech Republic (9.4%) [4]. Thus, almost half of employees who previously worked in Russia reoriented themselves to EU countries.

With the start of a full-scale military conflict in Ukraine, Poland became the main recipient country in Europe for Ukrainian refugees with around 1 million refugees registered for temporary protection as of February 2024. The Czech Republic that hosted 380 thousand forcibly displaced persons also became one of leading refugee destinations for Ukrainians who fled from the Russo-Ukrainian war. The trend of pre-war short-term circular mobility of Ukrainians that has continued over the past

1990

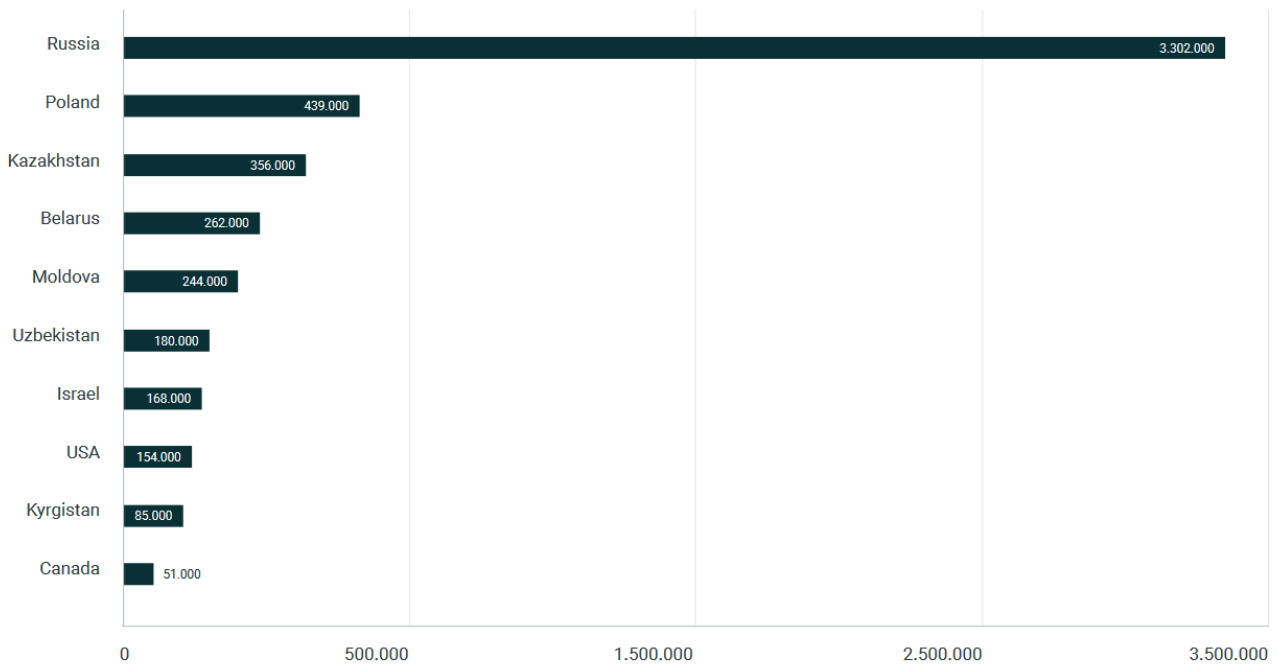


Figure 1a. Top ten countries with the highest number of Ukrainian migrants, thousand people (1990)

2020

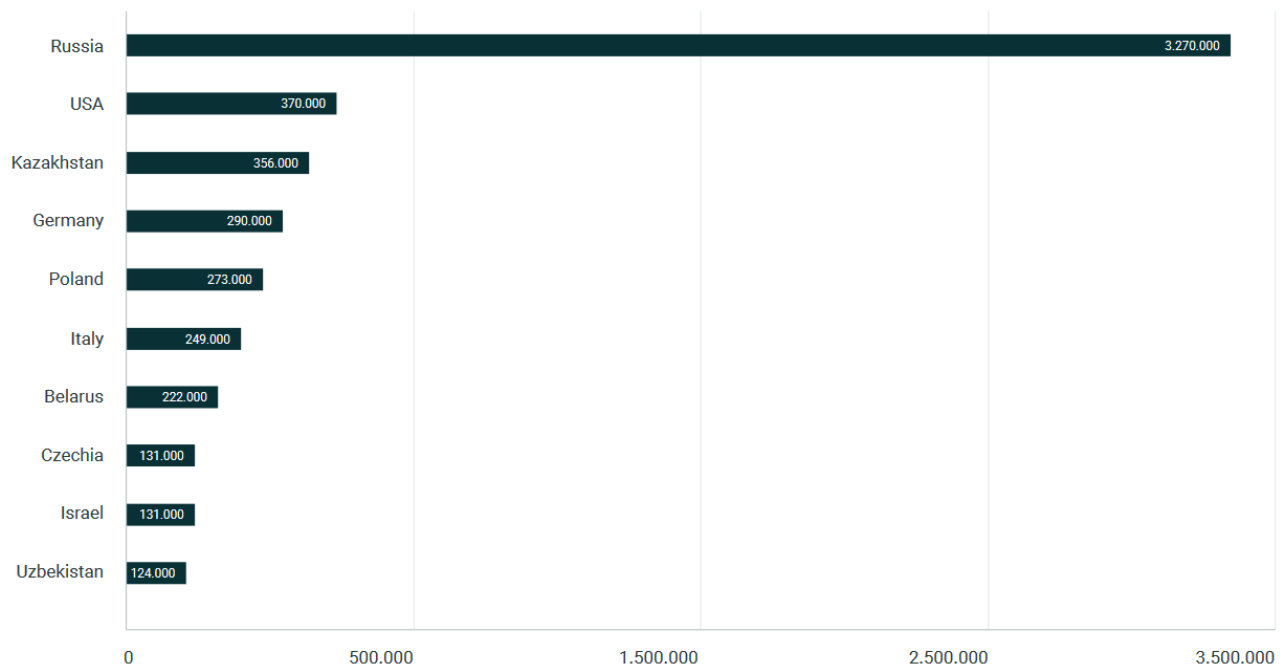


Figure 1b. Top ten countries with the highest number of Ukrainian migrants, thousand people (2020) (UNDESA, 2020) [1]

decade obviously affected the choice of destination countries for forced migration flows from Ukraine.

Ukraine has become the main source of economic migrants to the EU. As there is no statistics in European countries regarding the exact number of labor migrants we can conclude this by the number of residence permits granted for remunerated activities.

According to Eurostat (2022), from 2017 to 2021 citizens of Ukraine received the largest number of residence permits in EU countries (Figure 2).

According to Eurostat, in 2021, 875.8 thousand beneficiaries from Ukraine were granted residence permits in EU countries that is 30% of total amount. 83% of them were issued by Poland predominantly for the reason of employment [9]. The factor of geographical and cultural proximity was dominant when applying for a residence permit in EU. Except Poland Ukrainian citizens sought residence in Czech Republic (4.7%), Hungary (3.1%), Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia.

The employment was the predominant reason for almost 9 out of 10 Ukrainians granted residence permits in the EU in 2021.

Regarding the gender structure women worked more often than men in Poland (42.6% vs 37.3%) and in Italy (27.0% vs 4.7%), while men dominated structurally in Russia (31.0% vs 15.1%). In general, the migration activity of men was higher than that of women (7.0% vs 2.7% at the age of 20–64) [10].

In the age structure of Ukrainian labor migrants two cohorts of 30-40 years and 40-50 years accounting 26% each represent the majority.

The rural population, regardless of age, participated in external labor migration significantly more often than residents of cities (on average, 8.0% of villagers vs. 3.5% of urban residents aged 20–64). Among townspeople, the frequency of employment

abroad gradually decreased with increasing age, while among peasants there were two age peaks of departure abroad (15-24 years and 40-49 years), with a decrease in older age groups.

Contrary to popular beliefs in society, there was no mass exodus of young people with higher education to earn money. The intensity of labor migration of persons with complete higher education did not exceed 4%. People with vocational and technical and complete general secondary education mainly participated in labor migration.

Only 27% of Ukrainian labor migrants abroad had a job according to their qualifications obtained in Ukraine. At the same time, more than a third of employees had jobs that did not require qualifications. At the same time, as a result of migration abroad, Ukrainian representatives of working professions usually maintained or even increased their qualification status, while representatives of professions related mainly to mental work were forced to engage in less qualified jobs [10].

The educational migration to higher and secondary professional educational institutions was also among top reasons for migration of Ukrainians. Poland became the main country of Ukrainian educational migration. In 2020 about 38,5 thousand immigrants from Ukraine studied in Polish universities that was over 45% of all foreign students at the country [10]. The peculiar characteristic that the number of Ukrainian students is growing mostly in the countries that are the main Ukrainian migrant centers and where there are powerful migration networks. Educational migration usually means further employment of young people abroad. The permission provided by the EU legislation for foreigners to stay in the EU for at least 9 months after completing their studies facilitates this time to be successfully used to search for a job. This

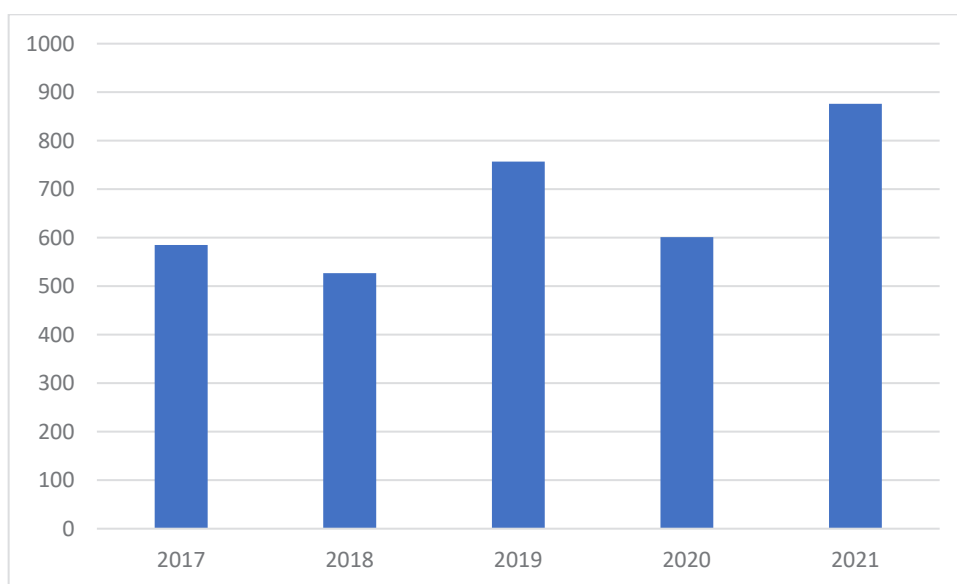


Figure 2. The number of residence permits obtained by Ukrainians in EU countries, thousand [9]

contributes to further integration of educational migrants in the recipient countries.

Ukraine benefits from labor migrants due to the constant inflow of remittances from abroad, which they transfer to relatives and friends in Ukraine.

The inflow of remittances to Ukraine is significant. Since 2014, it has gradually increased and in 2021 reached 15.03 billion US dollars, which is equivalent to 7% of GDP (Figure 3). At the same time, private transfers of \$8.14 billion were made through official channels (in 2020 – 7.41 billion dollars), and through informal channels 6.89 billion dollars (in 2020 – 4.57 billion dollars).

According to World Bank (2022), Ukraine is the tenth largest recipient of remittances in absolute terms among low- and middle-income countries, and the largest recipient in Europe and Central Asia [12]. But in relative terms, as a share of GDP, remittances to Ukraine are significantly lower than to Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Kosovo.

Significant changes in the structure of remittance inflows to Ukraine have happened since 2014 when Russia occupied Crimea and part of Donbass region. Russian Federation lost its leadership among countries-sources of remittance in Ukraine. Its share declined from 26% in 2015 to 6% in 2021. The raise of employment of labor migrants in Poland led to the growth of remittance receipts from this country to 33% in total volume in 2021 [11].

The impact of remittances and emigration on the state finances of Ukraine is ambiguous: the receipt of remittances leads to an increase in revenues from VAT, excise taxes and customs revenues for goods and services paid for by transfers. On the other hand, emigrants do not pay labor taxes and social insurance contributions in Ukraine, while their education was financed by the state. During

recent years, when Ukraine has experienced significant difficulties, it is clear that remittances have made an important countercyclical contribution, especially through their impact on budget income from consumption [4].

Since the outbreak of the military conflict in 2014, internal migration in Ukraine has been associated mainly with the internal displacement of persons in connection with Russia's military aggression in eastern Ukraine and the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula.

Due to the scale of internal displacement, Ukraine experienced the largest displacement crisis in Europe since the Balkan Wars when about 3.5% of the Ukrainian population faced challenges of forced displacement. At the peak of military operations in 2015 1.7 million Ukrainians were forced to leave the temporarily occupied territories of Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk regions [10]. Most of fled Ukrainians settled in non-occupied areas of Eastern Ukraine, central and western Oblasts. The statistics considers only the number of internally displaced persons officially registered in Ukraine. However, because not everyone who changed their place of residence was registered, and some people after the actual displacement immediately changed their official place of registration, the real number of internal migrants was much larger.

Over the next 7 years a part of internally displaced persons integrated into the new destination areas or migrated abroad. Those who didn't manage in integrating to the host communities returned to their original location.

Conclusion. 1. Ukraine is one of the most powerful labor force donors in Europe. Short-term circular migration is the predominant type of labor migration. Inadequate remuneration and limited opportunities for employment with satisfactory

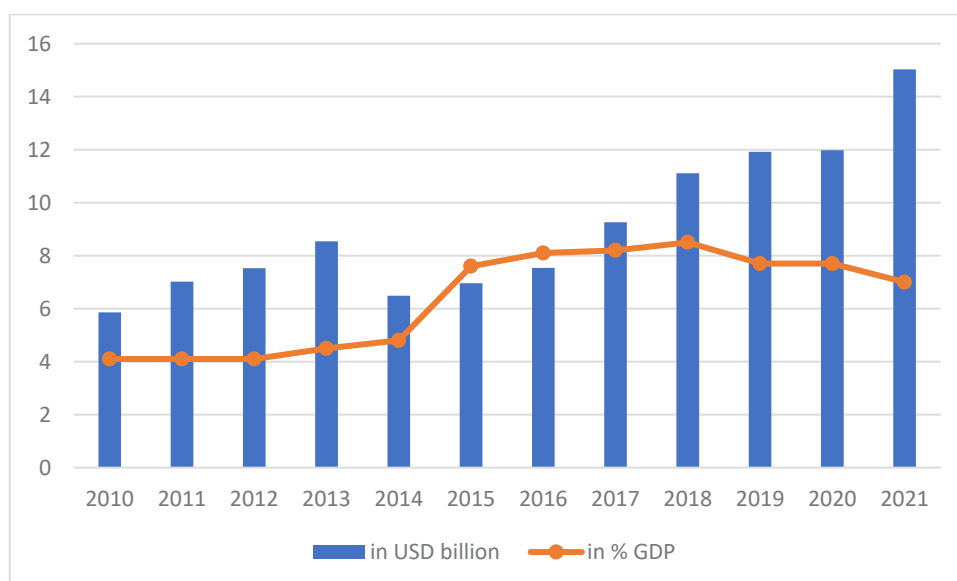


Figure 3. Inflow of personal remittances to Ukraine (National Bank of Ukraine, 2022) [11]

conditions and wages were among top push factors encouraging Ukrainians to emigrate, primarily for the purpose of employment; 2. Regarding demographic structure of labor migrants, Ukrainians with vocational and complete general secondary education mainly participated in labor migration; 3. The spacial analysis showed that since the start of the Russian war aggression in 2014 Poland took first place among recipient countries of Ukrainian

labor force followed by Russia, Italy, and the Czech Republic. The number of residence permits granted for remunerated activities indirectly indicates the number of economic migrants to the EU; 4. The trend of pre-war short-term circular mobility of Ukrainians that has continued over the past decade affected the choice of main destination countries for forced migration flows from Ukraine after 2022.

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