UKRAINE IN THE MIGRATION SYSTEM OF EUROPE: TRANSFORMATIONS IN A TIME OF INDEPENDENCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the process of Ukraine's inclusion in the EU migration system, in light of the country's further integration with Europe. The study highlights changes in the behaviour of migrants, brought about by the fresh opportunities that have opened up for Ukrainians in Western countries. The development of EU-oriented Ukrainian labour emigration has occurred in several stages and has been influenced both by the internal situation in Ukraine and by the position of European countries of destination, their interest in the Ukrainian labour force and their partnership with Ukraine. Labour migration flows from Ukraine are gradually being reoriented from Russia to the West. Important factors in this reorientation have been Russia's annexation of Crimea, the conflict in Donbass in 2014 and especially the full-scale invasion of Russian troops in 2022. This has all undoubtedly affected the characteristics of migration, and the integration and future behaviour of migrants from Ukraine.

Keywords: Ukraine, migration, negative consequences of migration

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INTRODUCTION

This article deals with the process of Ukraine's inclusion in the migration system of the European Union, which has become a crucial element in the country's pro-European orientation. The change in the overall direction of Ukrainian migration away from the post-Soviet space (primarily Russia) and towards the European Union has occurred in several stages and has been influenced by both the internal situation in Ukraine and the shifts in its international position and ties. The process has been both a reflection and a consequence of the democratic transformations within the country, its market reforms, the orientation of the Ukrainian state towards the EU and NATO, the deepening of economic and political ties with European countries, and the interest shown by the European labour market in the Ukrainian labour force. An important element in the development of migration has undoubtedly been the fact that Ukraine lags behind the EU in terms of its living standards and wages, and also of its public and personal security. At the same time, taking those same indicators, any comparison between Europe and Russia is unfavourable to the latter. An important factor in further reducing the attractiveness of Russia as a destination country for migrants was that country's annexation of Crimea and its aggression in Donbass in 2014. A major step in channelling the main migration flow towards the EU was the introduction of a visa-free regime between the EU countries and Ukraine. This created the opportunity for more open and closer contact between them, as the neighbouring EU countries also liberalized their labour markets for Ukrainians. All of this supported the growth in labour migration from Ukraine to the EU. Ukrainians have found a niche in the European labour market: this opens up fresh opportunities for the development of the country and its citizens, but it also creates new risks.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the problems it caused slowed the migration, but could not stop it. Moreover, lockdown/quarantine convincingly demonstrated the need that European countries have for migrants: the demand for workers in many key areas, such as health care, logistics, food processing and agriculture, has clearly revealed the opportunities available to Ukrainian migrants. But then Russia's attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022 turned the dominant labour migration flow into forced migration. The mass internal displacement caused by the war was accompanied by an unprecedented exodus of asylum seekers abroad. For all that there was a major change in migration movements, it was the migration of earlier times and the established migration networks that influenced the geography of the current routes favoured by asylum seekers. Along

with the policy of support for Ukraine being pursued by countries around the world, this is one of the reasons why people displaced from Ukraine have been seeking asylum in the European countries. It is not surprising, then, that by 19 October 2022 more than 4.4 million people had sought temporary protection in Europe following the aggression (UNHCR, 2022).

This paper is devoted to highlighting the factors that have determined and influenced the gradual inclusion of Ukraine in the EU migration system since the collapse of the USSR. It discusses the development of this process and its driving forces in different periods. The main patterns in the way the migration behaviour of Ukrainians changed once the country opened up are highlighted, as are the new opportunities to work abroad.

Particular attention will be paid to the direction of the flows and to the changes in the migration policy of both the country itself and the EU, as well as their interaction with each other under the influence of various factors. The paper includes a section on the theoretical background, before moving on to a consideration of the gradual transformations of migration policy in Ukraine in the context of the type, direction and size of migration flows. Analysis of the development of Ukrainian population migration and of the policy responses of both Ukraine and Europe to the challenges posed by this migration can contribute to an understanding of the transformation in Europe's migration system.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This paper is based on the theory of migration systems, which generalizes views on international migration in accordance with neoclassical economic theory, the new migration economy, the theory of the dual labour market, the theories of social capital and the cumulative causal relationship (DeWaard et al., 2009). The attractiveness of this theory is that it allows us to combine analysis of the situation in the countries of origin and destination, to identify the transformation of migration patterns over time, and to find a balance between individual migration decisions and procedural restrictions on its implementation (Massey et al., 1998: 61). The groundwork for this theory was laid by Mabogunje (1970) and later developed for international migration by Fawcett and Arnold (1987), Portes and Böröcz (1989), Kritz (1992) and other scholars.

DeWaard et al. (2009: 4) quote Zlotnik's statement about the existence of migration systems determined by a specific 'threshold beyond which migration is considered to create a "strong" link between nation states … [A]ny submatrix whose entries remained above the threshold during five or ten years would indicate the potential existence of the system' (Zlotnik, 1992: 20). The existence of 'the different hierarchies that may be operating within the system' (Zlotnik, 1992: 39) was also mentioned as a prerequisite, as were common 'community' origin-destination pair factors, as evidenced by the literature on gravitational approaches to bilateral migratory flows (van Tubergen et al., 2004: 705). In this context, the approach taken by Mabogunje to the discussion of subsystems, which includes the actions of policy makers, legislators, bureaucrats and other 'international migration industry' actors, supports the existence of a migration system or subsystem (Prothero, 1990). It is not only an exchange of people, but also a parallel flow of goods, capital, ideas and information across space and time. Different levels and types of networks support the subsystems that maintain informal and formal control. Discussing the European migration system, Zlotnik argues that the countries of Western Europe make up the core of a single system, with: (1) congruence within their immigration policies; (2) their close economic and political ties; (3) their comparable level of economic development; (4) their similar cultural backgrounds; (5) their geographical proximity; and (6) a common shift away from emigration to immigration within recent memory. In this context, one can argue that nowadays the EU migration system has no great geographical, cultural or economic similarity, and has become more and more diverse. Migration policy has also come to vary greatly from country to country. But the countries are bound by certain legal treaties on the movement of capital and goods, on the development of infrastructure, the free movement of people and labour, border regulations and visa policy. Close economic ties are supported by governments, international companies and EU funds. While the needs of the countries are frequently complementary, their political ties are often problematic. According to Baldwin-Edwards (1991), the European migration system has several semi-peripheral subsystems, formed by differences in policy regimes – for example, the Mediterranean, the Scandinavian and the UK–Ireland subsystems. But the majority are united by the Treaty of Rome and a common economic and political order (Massey et al., 1998: 109–110).

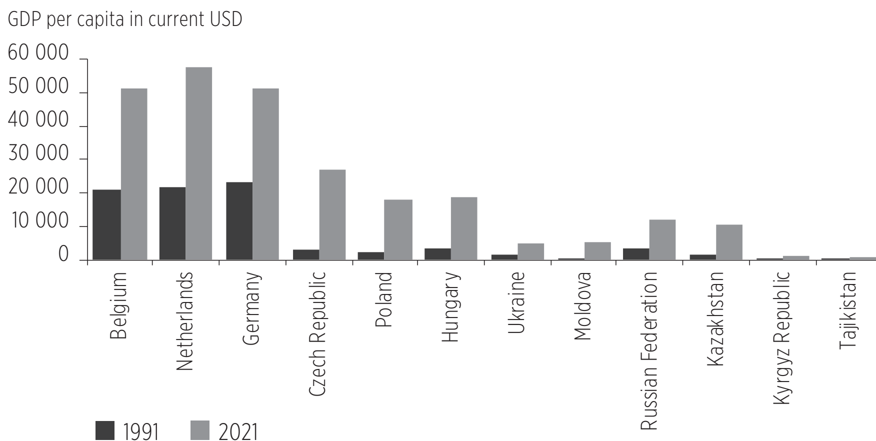
Until the 1990s, the Iron Curtain meant that the USSR's migration system was beyond the scope of Western researchers. In the Soviet period, Ukraine – like the USSR's other constituent republics – was fenced off from the outside world by this Iron Curtain, and migration was possible only within the USSR. The

migration system operated by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) – the successor to the USSR – was described by Ivakhnyuk (2008), but in the three decades since the dissolution of the USSR and the formation of the CIS, that system has undergone extensive change. After gaining independence, Ukraine exploited the consequences of the demolition of the Iron Curtain to intensify its migration network with the West and to seek out new directions for development and the forging of fresh ties. The geographical location of Ukraine offers migrants a choice between Russia and the EU (Ryazantsev et al., 2022: 117).

We argue that, with the opening of borders, the situation has altered. Because of the changes in the political order, border regimes and economic relations, the former Soviet system has become a subsystem of the general European system. In Ukraine, this move has proceeded in tandem with support for its Western vector of development, which for about thirty years now has played a crucial role in the change in the migration flows within the migration system and has promoted the formation of new, close networks through political, economic and personal relations.

Ukraine's efforts over three decades to be included in the EU model of development have undermined its formerly strong migration ties with Russia. Once Ukraine gained its independence, the flow gradually changed from the traditional easterly direction (i.e. towards Russia) to the West (i.e. to European countries), so that the process of the country's inclusion in the migration space of the European Union is under way.

Figure 1: Profile of European and Eurasian migration system, 1991 and 2021



Source: World Bank, 2021.

In the context of developmental hierarchies (Melegh et al., 2016), *Figure 1*, which shows the GDP profiles of selected countries in the European and Eurasian migration system for 1991 and 2021, clearly illustrates the lag in the development of the former Soviet states in comparison to EU member states in 2021. In 1991, the levels of development in Russia and selected Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries were similar – indeed Russia actually had a higher level than Poland or the Czech Republic. This supported labour migration to Russia in the years immediately following the fall of the Iron Curtain, when it was more economically profitable.

After the enlargement of the EU, the development of several of the CEE countries speeded up. This was accompanied by certain democratic transformations, an improvement in living standards, greater opportunity for decent jobs and a less corrupt environment than in Russia.

The EU's eastward enlargement also set some goals of creating a friendly eastern neighbourhood as a security buffer, and this drew countries of the former Soviet Union into the new zone of EU influence. That, as we will see, turned into competition between the EU and Russia for those states that had once been within Russia's zone of influence and had formed the focal point of the CIS migration system. In 2004, the EU launched its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) to promote economic cooperation with the republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, which were included in the ENP in order to reduce any potential problems following EU enlargement (EEAS, 2020). The EU's role in developing migration policy in these post-Soviet states has increased dramatically (Makaryan and Chobanyan, 2015). The action plan for these countries has included the promotion of legal migration; the prevention of illegal migration; the introduction of a system of readmission agreements; and special management of asylum policies. The promised benefit was the liberalization of visa agreements and some labour market opportunities. The prospect was held out for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine that, if they harmonized various spheres of activity, there could be greater movement towards the EU; those countries are now trying to align their legislation with the requirements of the EU.

A Neighbourhood Policy Development Plan for the Republic of Georgia was initiated by the EU, and in 2010 an agreement on the readmission of persons residing without authorization (readmission agreement) came into force between the Republic of Georgia and the EU. In 2013, Georgia adopted a migration policy (Government of Georgia, 2013). Similar migration policies have

been developed for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova (European Commission, 2020); and in 2007, Ukraine and the EU signed an agreement on visa facilitation and a readmission agreement.

Finally, EU association agreements were signed with the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in 2014, and the visa-free travel came into force for Moldova on 20 April 2016, for Georgia on 28 March 2017, and for Ukraine on 11 June 2017 (Madatali and Jansen, 2022). These allowed the citizens of those countries to enter the EU without a visa, which significantly increased the opportunities for migration – but also the number of irregular migrants from those countries in the EU (Molodikova, 2020).

At that time, those three countries were faced with internal military conflict, emergent quasi-states and territorial disputes with the Russian Federation, all of which damaged relations with Russia and adversely affected the geopolitical situation in Europe. On the other hand, the partial liberalization of access to the EU labour market (especially for short-term seasonal workers), the introduction of 'ethnic cards' and 'ethnic passports', and subsequently Ukraine's accession to the visa-free regime, plus the trade association agreement, all attracted the population of Ukraine and encouraged migration flows towards the EU.

From 2014, Russia's use of its military against Ukraine alienated most of the Ukrainian population. And ultimately the full-scale invasion by Russian troops in 2022, the breaking-off of diplomatic relations and Ukraine's introduction of visas for travel to Russia closed off and reduced migrations flows through a migration corridor that, from the 1990s to the 2010s, had been among the top five in the world. In 2022, after the commencement of Russian aggression, Ukraine was included on the list of EU candidate member states.

In discussing the formation and development of migration systems, there is one question that inevitably emerges: when a country moves from one migration system to another, how much time is needed to forge new links that can handle all the migration flows without creating significant problems either for the country itself or for its neighbours? The short answer is that some time is required even before evaluation of the process can commence. Nevertheless, an analysis of the evolution of migration flows in the 'region of overlap' between the migration subsystems can help us with future theoretical and practical analysis. *Table 1* suggests some steps for an analysis of the evolution of Ukraine's place between the two migration subsystems.

Table 1: The evolution of migration flows in the 'region of overlap' between the migration subsystems

Migration period (stage)	Major migration flows from/to Ukraine	Main features of Ukraine's migration policy	Main features of the EU's migration policy toward Ukraine
I Early post-Soviet period (1991–2000)	– Return migration of Ukrainians – Ethnic emigration to the West (Germany, Israel, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria) – Shuttle migration of vendors in border regions of CEE – Development of labour migration to Russia and the West (mainly undocumented)	– Visa-free migration regime with CIS countries – Development of migration laws, including those on citizenship – Displaced persons' acceptance as Crimean Tatars – Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between Ukraine and the EU (1998)	– Visa-free short-term tourist trips to CEE countries – Visa-free shuttle travel for vendors in the border regions of CEE – Ethnic migrant repatriation programmes by some countries – Intergovernmental agreements on employing labour migrants and including them in national social safety nets – Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between Ukraine and the EU (1998)
II Eastward en-largement of the EU and Western choice of Ukraine (2002–2009)	– Labour migration to Russia and growing labour migration to the West, increase in migration geography – Student migration to Russia and the West	– Ukraine's inclusion in European Neighbourhood Policy (2003–2004) – Euromaidan colour revolution (2004) – Readmission agreement with EU (2008) – Offer by Ukraine of a Free Trade Agreement with the EU (2007) – Application to NATO and the EU (2008) – Member of the Eastern Partnership Initiative (2009)	– Enlargement of the EU and lifting of visa requirements for CEE – Simplification of employment in the new neighbour EU member states – Open local border traffic regime; introduction of the 'ethnic card' and 'ethnic passport' by some CEE countries – ENP and readmission agreements – European Parliament resolution on intentions to converge with Ukraine on membership (2005)

Table 1: The evolution of migration flows in the 'region of overlap' between the migration subsystems (continued)

Migration period (stage)	Major migration flows from/to Ukraine	Main features of Ukraine's migration policy	Main features of the EU's migration policy toward Ukraine
III Competition for Ukraine between the EU and Russia: growing tension between Ukraine and Russia (2010–2019)	– Rise of labour and education migration to the West (often short duration) – Emigration to the West – Forced internal displacement from Crimea and Donbass region occupied by Russia – Migration from Ukraine to Russia (by some Donbass region population)	– Maidan revolution (2014) – EU–Ukraine Association Agreement signed (2014) – Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (2017) came into force with free visa regime (2017) – Constitution of Ukraine amended to enshrine the norms on the strategic course of Ukraine for membership in the European Union and NATO (2019) – Termination of public transport services to and from Russian Federation from Ukraine (since 2015 for flights and since 2019 for trains)	– Easier access to the labour market of CEE countries (primarily Poland) for Ukraine – Association agreements signed with Moldova (2013) and Ukraine (2017) allowing visa-free non-business travel – Further development of Eastern European states' return migration policy (Poland, Hungary)
IV The pandemic period and the beginning of the war (2020–early 2022)	– Reduction in labour migration – Return migration and forced migration (refugees and IDP)	– Ukraine: Law Amending the Constitution on the Course of Accession to the EU and NATO enters into force (2020) – Russian military invasion of Ukraine (24 February 2022) – According to the Ukrainian martial law, men aged 18–60 are forbidden to leave the country – Introduction of visa regime with Russia (July 2022)	– Borders closed for citizens not vaccinated with an approved vaccine – More relaxed rules for the employment of migrants with in-demand skills (seasonal workers in agriculture; service and construction workers, healthcare specialists) – Temporary Protection EU Directive comes into force (3 March 2022) – European Parliament resolution calling for the immediate granting of EU candidate status to Ukraine (23 June 2022) – European Council grants Ukraine EU candidate status (23 June 2022)

Source: authors' compilation.

STAGE I: UKRAINE AFTER THE SOVIET ERA, THE DISMANTLING OF THE IRON CURTAIN AND NEW CONDITIONS FOR MIGRATION TO THE WEST IN THE 1990S

Ukraine is a European state; however, unfavourable historical circumstances mean that it has long been on the periphery of the main processes of European development and migration trends. For almost the entire Soviet period, the population of Ukraine – in common with people in the other Soviet republics – had very limited opportunity to travel abroad, and movement within the country was strictly controlled (sometimes taking the form of forced resettlement).[1] According to the last Soviet census (1989), 15.4% of ethnic Ukrainians lived outside Ukraine, in the other Soviet republics. The migration policy of the Soviet Union was aimed both at fostering the economic development of remote regions and at mixing ethnic groups to form a new supranational community of 'Soviet people'.

Migration to Europe often occurred during or after the world wars and was forced[2] and sometimes violent.[3] Private travel and tourism abroad were generally only available to the elite. The possibility of emigration existed only if someone had close relatives abroad, and some ethnic minorities (such as Germans or Jews) were able to take advantage of this.

Ukrainians gained access to free movement to Western Europe following the collapse of the USSR and the declaration of independence by Ukraine. But this freedom of movement was accompanied by rising property inequality, increased unemployment and changing labour market demand as a result of the market reforms. Completely new models of migration behaviour appeared among Ukrainians.

In Soviet times, to travel abroad a citizen had to get permission from the authorities. In Ukraine, this requirement was abolished by government decree in January 1993. In 1994, a Law on Departure from Ukraine and Entry into Ukraine of Citizens of Ukraine was passed (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1994). At the same time, a ten-year, renewable passport allowing travel abroad was introduced.

[1] In the period of collectivization (1929–1931), more than a million peasants were forcibly resettled and evicted from Ukraine to Siberia. As a result of the 'Sovietization' of Western Ukraine in 1939–1940, after its incorporation into the USSR, about a million inhabitants were also subjected to forced resettlement. In addition, after the Second World War (WWII) more than 200,000 people accused of involvement with the national liberation underground were resettled. Also, in 1941, about 450,000 Germans were deported; and in 1944, about 200,000 Crimean Tatars, Armenians, Bulgarians and Greeks were deported from Crimea.

[2] After the defeat of the national liberation revolution of 1918–1921, approximately 300,000 participants and their families emigrated to the West. After WWII, another 260,000 people preferred political emigration from Ukraine, mainly those who had fought with the anti-Soviet rebel army.

[3] During WWII, according to estimates, more than 2 million Ukrainians were taken as forced labour to Germany.

Despite the formation of the CIS union, with its visa-free regime, migration from Ukraine to Europe gained momentum thanks to visa-free regulations governing travel to neighbouring European countries (such as Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania) even before they joined the EU. Moreover, the residents of Ukrainian border regions could visit neighbouring countries even on their internal passports, with special cards issued by the local authority. In fact, a zone allowing the free movement of people was created in the very centre of Europe.

The relaxation of border controls, however, did not lead to a significant outflow of the population from Ukraine at that time. European fears of a mass influx of immigrants from the post-Soviet space proved baseless. Indeed, the balance of migration was actually positive in the first years of Ukraine's independence (1991–1993), as 1.5 million people returned to the country from the other former Soviet republics.

This stream of returnees to Ukraine included victims of totalitarianism: they were granted the right to return to wherever they had resided before their deportation. The ethnic conflicts that broke out in several newly independent states after the collapse of the USSR served as an additional impetus to repatriation.

As a result of the return migration, the population of Ukraine continued to grow (despite the natural decline) and reached 52.2 million in 1993. The country's ethnic composition has continued to change: according to the first all-Ukrainian population census of 2001 (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2003), compared to Soviet times the proportion of ethnic Ukrainians had increased by 5.1 percentage points, to reach 77.8% of the population. Meanwhile, the number of Crimean Tatars had increased by 5.3 times to reach 12.1% of the total population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

In the early 1990s, moving away from Ukraine was also mainly an ethnic thing: national minorities whose home states supported their repatriation were given the opportunity to leave the country. In the 1990s, it was mainly Jews, Germans and Greeks who migrated from Ukraine, moving to the corresponding countries of Europe and Israel, as well as further afield.

Between the last Soviet census in 1989 and the first all-Ukrainian population census in 2001, the number of Jews in Ukraine declined by 80%. About 15,000 Ukrainian Greeks took up the repatriation programme introduced by the Greek government (Kaurinkovski, 2008). Meanwhile, German emigration proceeded in fits and starts: some Germans deported from Ukraine in the early 1940s returned to Ukraine, but many of them later decided to go back to Germany.

The period of rapid repatriation following the collapse of the USSR was short. Gradually, the outflow of Ukrainian citizens to the West lost its ethnic colour. Though other European countries took in Ukrainians, it was Germany that proved a magnet, annually resettling about 6,000–8,000 Ukrainian citizens. The largest number of departures to other countries (not including to other former Soviet republics) was recorded in 1991 – 73,600; thereafter during the 1990s it slowly decreased to about 50,000 a year. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the annual figure was down to 15,000–20,000; and in the second decade to 7,000–8,000.

The changes in the volume and ethnic composition of the emigrants are associated with two factors of equal importance. *First*, the democratization of public life ensured the opening of borders and the possibility of free movement; but it also led to the removal of the political, ethnic and religious reasons for emigration (as well as removal of the grounds for granting Ukrainian immigrants refugee status in the West).

The *second* element is the economic factor, which is equally important for all ethnic groups. During the transition period of the 1990s, citizens tried to weather the profound systemic crisis – accompanied as it was by high unemployment, low wages and consistent delays in the payment of wages – by going abroad. The visa-free border regime made it possible for people to achieve the main goal of migration – that is, to improve their well-being and quality of life – not by moving abroad *permanently*, but by undertaking temporary, circular migration to generate income.

Initially, short-term circular migration to Europe was a way of earning money through so-called ‘shuttle’ ‘penny-trade’ trips: shuttle-traders (*chelnoki*) transported small quantities of cheap, locally produced goods abroad for sale in the neighbouring countries. The money earned was used to buy goods that were in short supply in Ukraine – both for personal consumption and for resale. This ‘ant trade’, as it was known, became a strategy allowing the survival of hundreds of thousands of people, primarily the residents of border regions. It gave Ukrainians the experience of travelling abroad, reduced their fear of unknown places and allowed them to build up experience of communicating with the citizens of other countries. Migrants learned new languages and rules for doing business, and established personal and business ties and networks. In the early 1990s, about 5 million people crossed the state border annually; by the late 1990s, that figure had reached about 16 million.[4]

[4] According to data from the Ukrainian border guard service.

Gradually, this 'incomplete migration', as Polish migration expert Marek Okólski termed such 'shuttle' trips, transmogrified into labour migration (Okólski, 2001). The development of international trade, the transformation of customs regulations and the increase in transport costs have all reduced the attractiveness of penny-trade travel: it has remained profitable only for the residents of border areas. Actually working abroad offers higher and more stable incomes, but it requires a much longer stay abroad.

After the collapse of the USSR, most labour migrants went to Russia (Molodikova, 2018). This flow was a result of the inertia of the migration processes and the experience of labour migration in the Soviet era, when the only way to earn money was to migrate to the oil fields of Siberia or to agricultural work in the European part of the Russian Federation. Many reasons lay behind the choice of Russia as a destination country for labour migrants, but the main ones included numerous personal and family ties, visa-free travel and the absence of language barriers. Over time, however, the influence of these factors weakened.

Officially, the course toward European integration was charted in the 1990s. In 1998, the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between Ukraine and the EU came into force, and obliged EU states not to discriminate against any Ukrainian citizens legally working on their territory. It called on member states to provide social security for Ukrainian workers, including pension insurance, medical care and the transfer of pensions from one country to another. In the 1990s and early 2000s, bilateral agreements on the employment and social security of migrants were concluded by Ukraine and certain EU member states, such as Poland, Latvia, Spain, Portugal, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

STAGE II: DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY WITH EASTERN BORDER COUNTRIES AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR UKRAINIAN LABOUR MIGRATION

Ukrainian labour migrants worked in Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Southern European countries. Departure was often based on short-duration tourist visas, and employment was undertaken without a proper residence permit or employment contract – which was in fact illegal. That is why some migrants found themselves in awkward situations. The extent of the illegal employment of Ukrainians abroad in the 1990s is illustrated by Portugal's 2001

migration amnesty: before legalization, only 196 Ukrainians were officially registered in the country, whereas afterwards the figure soared to 65,200 (Sefstat, 2022).

The violation of migrants' rights abroad and the abuse of migrants by employment intermediaries were a matter of public concern. In 2003, the Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights prepared a special report on Ukrainian citizens abroad. For the first time, the official estimate of the number of Ukrainian labour migrants abroad topped 4 million (Karpachova, 2003). Parliament forced the government to improve its monitoring of the mediation of employment abroad and to intensify its negotiations with the host countries to protect the rights of migrant workers.

The State Statistics Service of Ukraine conducted large-scale population surveys in 2008, 2012 and 2017 to assess the number and composition of labour migrants abroad. More than 20,000 households across the country were surveyed, drawing on a sample used for national surveys of population economic activity and household living conditions (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2009, 2017; ILO, 2013). The results of these surveys showed a slight decrease in the number of migrants since the start of the 2000s. In 2008, the number of labour migrants was 1.5 million (5.1% of the working-age population); in 2012, it was 1.2 million (3.4% of the working-age population); and in 2017 it was 1.3 million (4.5%). However, it should be noted that the surveys of the State Statistics Service did not cover migrants who had not returned to Ukraine in the 2.5 years prior to the study or 'shuttle' migrants. It also omitted any complete households that had left the country. Information on missing migrants was provided by those household members who remained at home (which is why the survey could not take account of whole families that already lived abroad). Thus, the data obtained characterized only temporary labour migrants and those who had worked abroad for a long time, but who maintained a family and a house in Ukraine and periodically returned home.

In the light of these caveats, the best estimate of labour migrants from Ukraine is probably approximately 3 million (National Academy of Science of Ukraine, 2019). But even that figure is not wholly accurate: labour migration is a very dynamic, seasonal phenomenon, which depends on migration policies and on the economic situation in the countries of origin and destination. For example, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when Ukraine's economy had recovered from the crisis and was developing quite successfully, labour outflows decreased. Some migrants were able to find decent work at home or undertake self-employment by opening enterprises using the money earned abroad.

In 2007, Ukraine and the EU signed an agreement on the simplification of the visa regime and an agreement on the readmission of persons residing without authorization (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2008). Although a visa regime was preserved, several agreements were signed on so-called 'small border traffic', i.e. allowing visa-free movement for Ukrainian residents of the border area with neighbouring EU states. Such agreements were signed with Hungary in 2007, Poland and Slovakia in 2008, and Romania in 2014.

The global financial and economic crisis of 2008–2009 had an extremely adverse impact on the country's economy (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2022). The recession coincided with the start of a rebound in the European economies, where demand for labour grew. This combination led to a rise in labour migration abroad.

At the Ukraine–EU summit of November 2010, an Action Plan for the liberalization of the visa regime was proposed (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2010). It included modernization of the border system and the improvement of migration management. During implementation of the plan, significant changes were made to Ukraine's migration legislation. For example, the Concept for State Migration Policy (President of Ukraine, 2011) was developed; laws on the legal status of foreigners and refugees were revised; and a legislative framework was created for the issuing of biometric passports.

In fact, Ukraine did not really recover from the global crisis and found itself faced with an even more acute crisis following aggression by the Russian Federation in 2014. In 2015, the country's GDP fell by almost 10%, unemployment rose and poverty increased. Moreover, political reasons for migration swelled the economic arguments, and the cohort of labour migrants was replenished with internally displaced persons who left those territories that were temporarily occupied. According to Polish data, whereas up until 2014 the majority of migrants to Poland originated in Western Ukraine (with people from the east of the country accounting for only about 6%), after 2014 people from the eastern regions accounted for almost a third of migrants arriving in Poland (Chmielewska et al., 2017).

Ukraine had to adapt to life in a military conflict, but the political and economic situation gradually returned to normal. Unfortunately, COVID-19 and the quarantine measures, as well as the economic problems created by the pandemic both in Ukraine and in the destination countries, seriously restricted transnational mobility, which affected migration intent and its conditions.

Labour migration remains the dominant flow from Ukraine. The main reasons for people going abroad include the lack of decent jobs and low salaries

compared to European countries. For example, the average salary in Ukraine is a quarter of the average in Poland and just a tenth of the figure in Germany (Ministry of Finance of Ukraine, 2021). Uncertainty about the country's political stability and its economic prospects also plays an important role in migration abroad.

According to the annual sociological monitoring exercise conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences (a sample of 1,800 respondents is representative of the country's population), 29.7% of Ukrainians (or members of their family) have personal experience of working abroad (*Figure 2*). The demand for Ukrainian labour abroad is a very important factor in mitigating population ageing in the destination countries and in tackling the decline in active working-age populations there.

Figure 2: Answers to sociological monitoring questions about the intention of going to work abroad within the next year and about experience of labour migration, both personal and family members (% of positive answers), 2012–2020

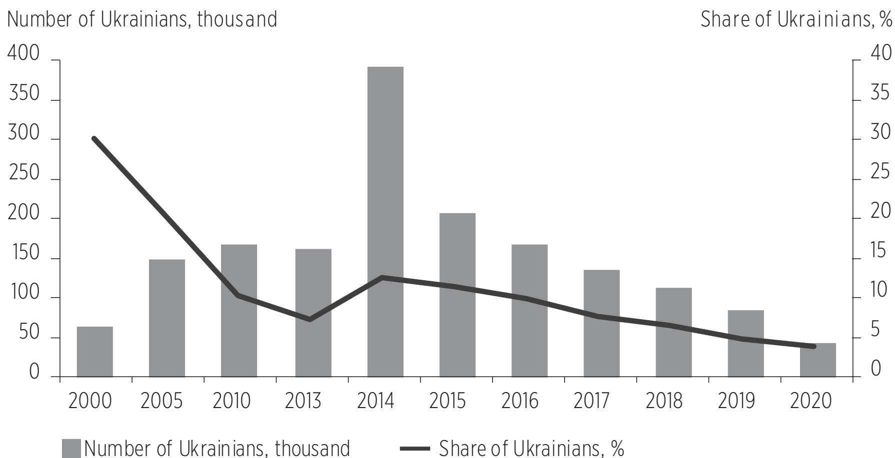
Source: Institute of Sociology, 2020.

STAGE III: REORIENTATION TO THE WEST AND THE GRADUAL ALIENATION FROM RUSSIA AS THE MAIN DESTINATION COUNTRY FOR LABOUR MIGRANTS

Although it is socio-economic conditions that often spark the migration process, political factors also have a significant impact on its development. Thus, Russia's aggressive policy, its annexation of Crimea and its military actions in eastern Ukraine all directly influenced migration flows and reduced Ukrainian labour migration to Russia via the traditional Ukraine–Russia migration corridor.

The largest number of Ukrainian citizens working in Russia was recorded in 2014, when there were 392,100 people – 12.5% of all foreigners working in Russia (Federal Statistics Service of the Russian Federation, 2019). Thereafter, the number declined rapidly (*Figure 3*).

Figure 3: The number of citizens of Ukraine who had a permit to work in the Russian Federation (thousand persons), and their share in the total number of foreign workers in Russia (%), 2000–2020



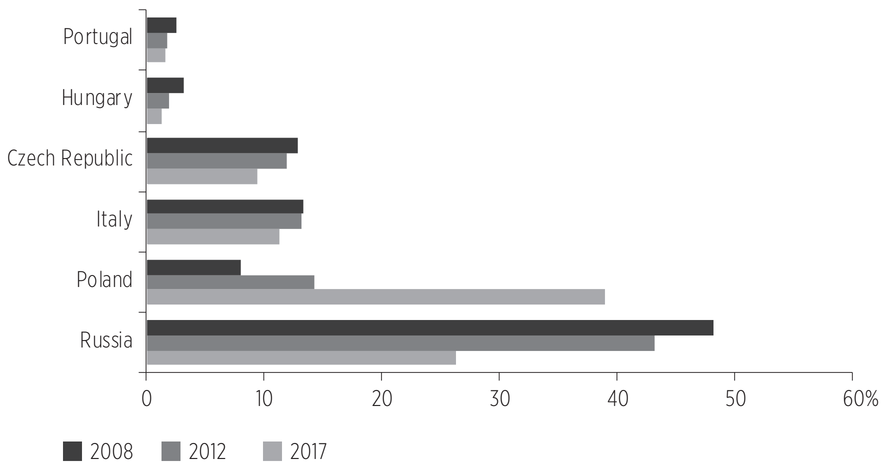
Source: Federal Statistics Service of the Russian Federation, 2021.

But Russia's decline as the main country of destination for Ukrainians could be observed even before that: the number of Ukrainians crossing the border with Poland exceeded for the first time the number of those crossing the border with Russia way back in 2013, before the Russian aggression occurred. This was due partly to Poland's active labour policy towards Ukrainians, but partly also

to the economic crisis in Russia, caused by the sanctions imposed by the West in the wake of the annexation of Crimea and the subsequent devaluation of the rouble. Thus the direction of Ukrainian labour migration turned toward the EU: the number of Ukrainian labour migrants decreased in Russia and increased in the European Union.

The above-mentioned surveys of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine reflected this rising trend for Ukrainian workers to head to Western countries, especially Poland (*Figure 4*), and the corresponding decline in the flow to Russia. As a destination country, Russia became attractive mainly to relatively elderly and poorly educated labour migrants from the Russia–Ukraine border regions.

Figure 4: Main destinations for Ukrainian labour migrants (%), 2008, 2012 and 2017



Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2009, 2017; ILO, 2013.

Russia's loss of its position as the main destination country for Ukrainian migrants was a result of the disruption of good-neighbourly relations between the two countries and the expansion in the geography of Ukrainian migration, thanks to the country's decision to pursue the goal of European integration and development. Although not all the influential political actors in the country agree, the choice of the European Union and NATO has found growing public support: according to opinion polls, public support for EU accession today exceeds 90% (Radio Svoboda, 2022). As for NATO, in 2002, less than a third of Ukrainians supported joining the bloc. However, following Russia's aggression in Donbass, by 2015 the share of NATO supporters had increased to 48%, and by 2021 there

was already a majority of 54% (Ukrainian National Informational Agency, 2022). In the wake of the full-scale Russian aggression of 2022, the figure stood at about 70% (Besarab, 2022).

In addition to the security problems – which are of paramount importance to a country suffering aggression – the attractiveness of Euro-Atlantic integration for Ukrainians is associated with the benefits of free movement to the West. According to one sociological survey (2015), 39% of Ukrainians saw the main advantage of integration with Europe in the possibility of free movement within Europe; the same proportion of respondents indicated the opportunity to study at European universities (Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiative Foundation, 2016).

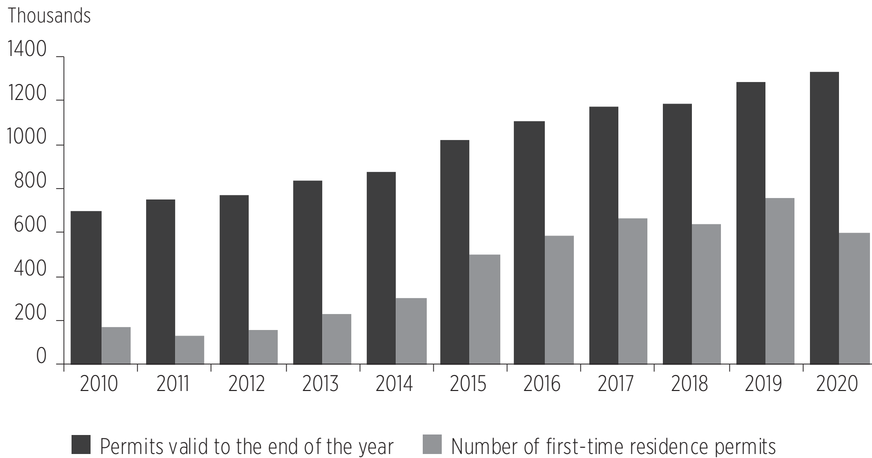
The last tranche of documents necessary to secure a visa-free travel regime was adopted in 2015. This included the law 'On foreign labour migration' (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2015), which specified the rights of migrants and the obligations of the Ukrainian state to protect those rights. Since June 2017, Ukrainians have been able to travel to EU countries using biometric passports without visas. In the first months of the visa-free regime, the number of trips to European destinations increased by 10% over the corresponding period of the previous year (CENSOR, 2022). According to a sociological survey, following the abolition of visas, the proportion of those who wished to visit European countries increased by 50%. The most common reason given for travelling was tourism; however, 17% of respondents went abroad to work (Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, 2017). Although the abolition of visas does not allow Ukrainians free access to the EU's labour market and the possibility of permanent residence, it has improved the conditions for migration and has boosted the opportunities for people to work or train abroad. And that could contribute to an upsurge in migration.

STAGE IV: UKRAINIAN MIGRANTS IN EUROPE: INTENSITY, MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMPOSITION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The number of Ukrainians with a residence permit in the EU is growing. Over the past ten years, the figure has doubled, to reach 1.3 million in 2020 (*Figure 5*). The largest numbers of Ukrainians with such permits in 2020 were to be found in Poland (499,500), Italy (223,000), the Czech Republic (165,600) and Spain (94,000). The number of permits issued for the first time increased even faster: by seven times from 2008 to 2019. Due to the pandemic, the number fell

somewhat, but still remained significant. It was Poland that issued most new permits in 2020 – almost 500,000. Of these, 88% were short-term permits, valid for 3–11 months; and of those, 93% were issued for work-related reasons.

Figure 5: Number of first-time residence permits issued and valid at the end of the year for citizens of Ukraine in the EU (thousands), 2010–2020



Source: Eurostat, 2022b.

Both the structure of work permits and the findings of various surveys show circular labour migration to be the dominant model of Ukrainian migration, albeit in the form of short-term work abroad. A large-scale population survey on labour migration conducted by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine in 2017 showed that almost half (48.5%) of labour migrants stayed abroad for less than a year. Most trips (57%) did not exceed three months. At the same time, 46.1% of migrants went abroad several times a year; 5.9% went abroad to work several times a month; and 4.4% went every week (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2017).

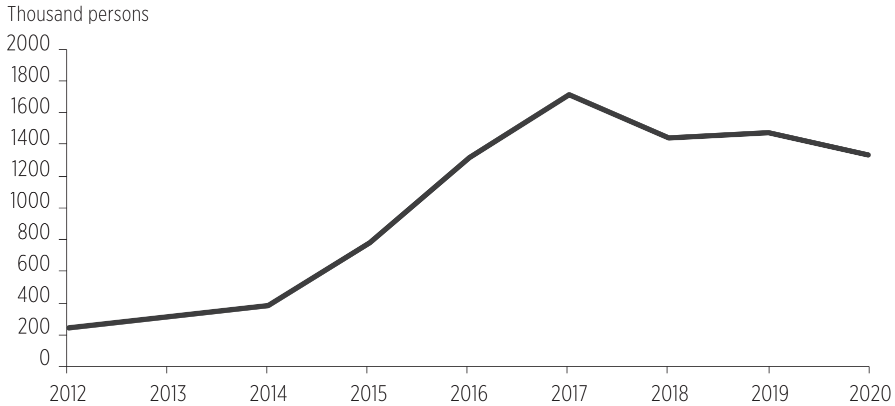
Labour migration is not uniform across the country. The first to begin migrating abroad were obviously residents of the Western border regions. According to the State Statistics Service survey, in 2017, 69.4% of those international migrants who had already worked abroad were from the Western region. Their share, however, was slightly down from the previous survey in 2012, when it stood at 72.4%.

This was due to the rise in the number of migrants from central Ukraine: whereas in 2012, migrants from central Ukraine accounted for just 3%, by 2017 that figure had risen to 9.2%. In 2017, 8.6% of international migrants were from southern Ukraine, 6.8% were from the east of the country, and 6% were from the north. Gradually, migration is coming to involve more and more people from all over Ukraine. Employment is the main goal of those Ukrainians who go to Europe – but it is not the only goal: growth can also be observed in educational migration. In the early 2000s, a little over 10,000 Ukrainian schoolchildren and students were studying in the EU. But according to UNESCO, in 2019 some 77,600 Ukrainian students were pursuing their studies in other European countries (26,900 in Poland, 6,300 in Germany, 3,200 in Czechia and 2,900 in Slovakia) (UNESCO, 2022).

The rise in the number of Ukrainian students abroad is partly a result of the labour migration of their parents to find work abroad. However, the geography of labour migration and of education migration coincides, since education abroad is often considered by young people as a stepping-stone into the European labour market. Thus, an online survey of Ukrainian students abroad, conducted by the CEDOS analytical centre, showed that *the first* main goal of going to study abroad is a desire to get a European diploma (51%) for employment in the EU; *the second* important reason is the chance of 'obtaining knowledge that helps to find work in the EU' (48%); and *the third* reason is dissatisfaction with the living conditions in Ukraine (47%). Only 6% of respondents planned to return to Ukraine upon graduation (CEDOS, 2022).

Poland is the main destination country for both labour and educational migrants from Ukraine. In addition to the advantages of geographical, cultural and linguistic proximity, and a developed transport system, this migration has been facilitated since 2008 by Polish legislation. Under it, citizens of Ukraine (as well as of five other countries of the Eastern Partnership) can work in Poland for six months of the year without a work permit (the employer just has to register the fact). Since the abolition of visa regulations, Ukrainians who enter Poland on a biometric passport, without a visa, can simply reach agreement with an employer. For this reason, the number of Ukrainian workers in Poland significantly exceeds the number of residence and work permits issued. The number of applications by Polish employers for the temporary employment of Ukrainians increased sharply after 2014, owing to the worsening economic situation in Ukraine and the refusal of most migrants to move to Russia (*Figure 6*).

Figure 6: Number of applications from Polish employers to temporarily hire Ukrainian citizens (thousand persons), 2012–2020



Source: Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Poland, 2021.

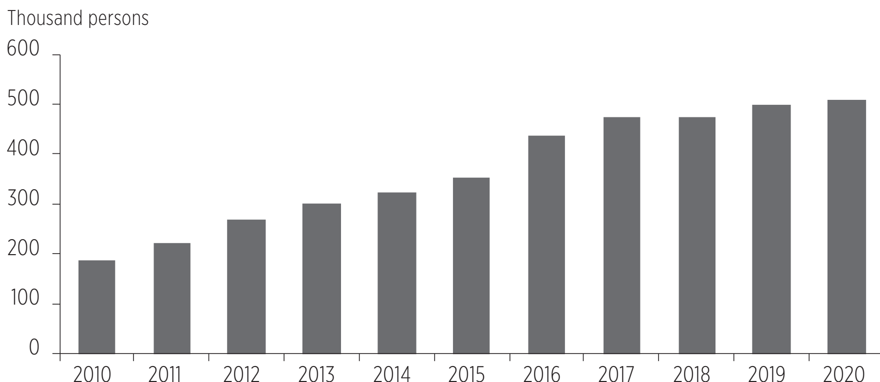
Until 2014, the number of applications from employers amounted to 200,000–300,000 a year; in 2017, this figure topped 1.7 million. The relative stabilization of the Ukrainian economy has led to a certain decline in the number of migrants who work in Poland – a trend that was reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on cross-border movement. However, the labour migration of Ukrainians remained strong and decreased only slightly (European Commission, 2021). In spring 2020, according to some estimates, some 300,000–400,000 Ukrainian migrants returned home from abroad, especially the 10–12% who were working in Poland. Once home, they faced severe difficulties on the labour market and sought to return to the host country as soon as possible. According to a survey of Ukrainians who had returned from abroad (conducted in July 2020 by the personnel agency OTTO Work Force), of those who had worked in Poland before lockdown, a third could not find a job at home; 15% had not even sought work; and 70% said they wanted to return to work abroad soon (All-Ukrainian Association of International Employment Companies, 2020).

It was mainly Poland, the main destination country for Ukrainian labour migrants, that allowed this desire to come to fruition: despite the return of many Poles from abroad and the increased competition on the labour market, there is still a shortage of workers in Poland in the food industry, logistics, woodworking, construction and agriculture (Buturlim, 2020). A study by the Centre for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw showed that about 40% of foreigners in Poland were forced to change jobs due to the pandemic; 32.3%

changed their activity; and about 30% had to move to another locality. Overall, however, 92% of those who stayed in the country during the pandemic, and 89% of those who arrived during the lockdown, were satisfied with their work and life in Poland (Ukrainian National Informational Agency, 2021).

From the data of the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU) there is evidence that the number of Ukrainians working abroad did alter slightly during the pandemic. Although in the spring of 2020 the NBU forecast a reduction in remittances of 20%, by the end of the year they had fallen by only 0.3% compared to 2019. Although the extent of labour migration remains significant (despite restrictions on international movements), its characteristics have changed. First, in the face of quarantines and lockdowns, there has been a slowdown in the trend towards labour migrants 'spreading their wings' in their choice of host country: migrants now prefer neighbouring countries, which are easier and safer to get to. For example, according to the above-mentioned study by the University of Warsaw, prior to the pandemic 31% of labour migrants working in Poland expressed an interest in working in Germany or other EU countries where wages are much higher; in 2020, however, only 19% evinced any such interest (Nasz Vybir, 2020). Secondly, the most common strategy for Ukrainian migrants has involved short-term labour migration (mainly of 3–6 months); but that strategy is gradually losing its dominance. Thus, the number of Ukrainian citizens who have lived in an EU country for more than five years and who have a long-term residence permit has increased tenfold over the past ten years to reach half a million (*Figure 7*).

Figure 7: The number of citizens of Ukraine with a long-term residence permit in the EU (thousand persons), 2010–2020

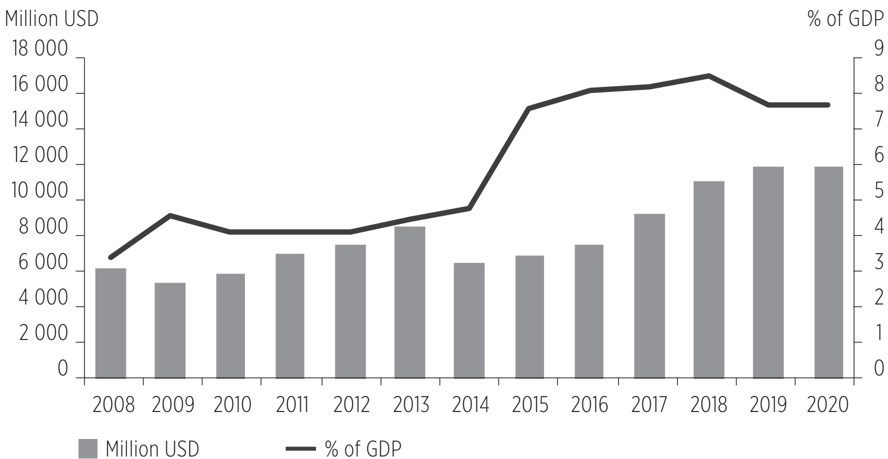


Source: Eurostat, 2022a.

Lockdown/quarantine restrictions turned short-term labour migration into long-term migration. The difficulty of circular movement has meant that more migrants prefer to stay abroad for longer and to seek longer-lasting jobs. This is supported by the data: for example, at the end of 2020, the Polish Social Insurance Agency (ZUS) (Buturlim, 2020) registered about 532,000 Ukrainians, compared to 479,000 the previous year – 11% more. The rise in the number of Ukrainians paying insurance premiums in Poland indicates that more migrants had signed labour agreements and were working abroad permanently. Data from the National Bank of Ukraine on private currency-transfer channels confirm this: although the amount of money transferred did not change in 2020, the share of currency entering the country through informal channels – i.e. brought in by citizens themselves (which is typical of short-term circular migrants) – decreased from 49% in 2019 to 38% – roughly 11 percentage points. Accordingly, the share of official transfers through international payment systems increased. The use of such systems is characteristic of long-standing migrants (National Bank of Ukraine, 2021).

Throughout the post-Soviet period, labour migration has gradually increased, so that the socio-economic significance of the phenomenon is quite high. The private remittances of migrants increase economic activity and support Ukraine's balance of payments (*Figure 8*). Earnings abroad play the role of a powerful social shock absorber: the poverty index grew in Ukraine after 2014, following the Russian aggression and the resulting economic crisis; but in the Western part of the country, where labour migration abroad is high, it has been declining (IOM, 2019).

Figure 8: Private money transfers to Ukraine, 2008–2020



Source: National Bank of Ukraine, 2021.

Migration is an important factor in improving the well-being of migrant families: it provides almost half of the income of families with long-term migrants and 60% of the income of families with short-term migrants, and it contributes to improving the well-being of Ukrainians directly and indirectly (IOM, 2016: 31). However, outflows to foreign countries create labour shortages at home, leading to wage increases (in order to retain workers) and exacerbating negative demographic trends. An analysis of macroeconomic and labour market indicators has shown that after 2015, during a period of gradual economic recovery and labour demand, labour migration abroad contributed to wage growth in Ukraine, mainly in the regions with the most intensive outmigration (Lücke and Saha, 2019).

The outflow of young people and qualified experts is of particular concern, as it may retard economic development in the near future. The negative effects of migration and the challenges it poses are attracting increasing attention from society and the state. Back in 2017, the government approved its 'Migration Policy Strategy of Ukraine for the period up to 2025' (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2017), which contains a definition of the main principles, priorities and specific goals for regulating migration processes. The search for responses to migration-induced challenges intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, when there was a mass return of labour migrants and the traditional seasonal migration of Ukrainians to work abroad was rendered impossible. It is important to emphasize that the Government of Ukraine has formulated its readiness to promote return migration, develop ties with Ukrainians abroad and encourage the diaspora to work together in the interests of Ukraine's development. Mechanisms are being developed to attract remittances for the development of entrepreneurship in Ukraine, in order to ensure the maintenance of labour potential, encourage migrants to return to the country, and promote the development of small and medium-sized businesses and the creation of new jobs.

FORCED MIGRANTS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE UKRAINE

Ukraine's way into the European migration system is far from simple. Its political and economic movement towards the EU has been accompanied by various forms of turbulence, which has created flows of forced migrants in different directions. The final stage of the 'revolution of dignity' (the Maidan revolution) in Ukraine, when President Yanukovych was removed from office, led to the first

heavy loss of territories and people in 2014. Crimea was annexed by the Russian Federation, and Ukraine lost control of parts of Donetsk and Lugansk (Luhansk) regions, which fell within the zone of influence of Russian military forces. This led to floods of forced migrants from those regions to the internal regions of Ukraine (about 1.5 million), to Russia itself (about 1 million people) and to the EU (about 12,000 asylum applications in 2014 and 22,000 in 2015 were submitted by Ukrainian citizens in the EU). According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, a year before the current war there were 1,473,650 internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had left their homes and moved to other areas and regions of Ukraine in search of security (IOM, 2021).

The military attack by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022 radically changed all aspects of life in Ukraine, including the migration behaviour of its citizens. The result was mass forced migration. In the period from 24 February to October 2022, more than 11.5 million people crossed the country's frontiers, most of them the Polish–Ukrainian border. At the same time, about 6.6 million people sought a safer place within Ukraine itself. This migration lacks any dynamism: it is mainly influenced by previous migration and by established migration links. It is no coincidence that millions of Ukrainians fled the war to those countries that in previous years had taken in large numbers of Ukrainian labour migrants (*Table 2*). The respect they have won through their work has proved of great importance to refugees from the fighting in Ukraine in their selection of a host country.

Table 2: Countries with the largest number of forced migrants from Ukraine registered for temporary protection, as of October 2022 (thousand persons)

Country	Number of forced migrants (thousands)
Poland	1,449.0
Germany	815.0
Czech Republic	448.6
Italy	160.6
Spain	148.0
Turkey	145.0
UK	138.0
France	105.0
Slovakia	97.7

Source: UNHCR, 2022.

The UNHCR database puts the number of forced migrants in Russia at between 2.5 and 3 million, although the organization does note that it is unable to verify these data (UNHCR, 2022). It is known that many Ukrainians were forcibly deported from the occupied territories to Russia. In addition, on the eve of war, tens of thousands of people from the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) were organized to leave for Russia. Many of them have been trying to leave Russia for other countries, but without documents and money it is quite difficult. Nevertheless, volunteers in Russia and abroad have been supporting Ukrainians in leaving Russia, mostly bound for the Baltic states and Georgia (Dmitricheva, 2022). The shift in the nature of the human flow from labour migration to forced migration has been accompanied by a radical change in its composition: whereas men used to be dominant among the migrant workers, with women accounting for only about a third, now women and children make up about 90% of migrants. This can be illustrated using data on refugee registration in Poland: as of 22 June 2022, 44.9% were children under the age of 18; 46.1% were women aged 18–65; 5.3% were men aged 18–65; and 3.7% were people over 65 (Government of the Republic of Poland, 2022).

On the one hand, the need to care for young children impedes the employment of refugee women (and in addition, the number of 'female' jobs is limited). But on the other hand, Ukrainian refugees have certain advantages in the labour market, thanks to their high level of education. Previously, most labour migrants came from rural areas and were blue-collar workers. But now, according to one sociological survey conducted on the border, 76% of refugees have higher education, 18% have secondary special technical, and only 6% have just secondary education (Razumkov Centre, 2022). By May 2022, 185,000 Ukrainian refugees in Poland – i.e. 33% of those refugees of working age – had found a job and had begun to work (SchengenVizaUnifo, 2022). It is reasonable to assume that some Ukrainians are working without an official contract (e.g. providing domestic services), and so the real level of employment is almost certainly higher.

Given the devastation caused by the war, the difficult economic situation in Ukraine and the fact that many refugees have lost their homes and property, the money earned abroad will be regarded by people as an important source of support for their families back home and as an argument in support of staying abroad for longer.

At present, according to various surveys, more than 80% of refugees want to return home (and some of those will already have done so – as of mid-October 2022, 6.9 million border crossings *into the country* had been recorded). Yet even

now, surveys show that 10–20% of refugees do not plan to return. Admittedly, while the vast majority of Ukrainians have gone abroad in search of security, some have taken the opportunity to travel to a more developed and wealthier country. According to sociological surveys conducted by the Razumkov Centre, 15% of refugees had planned to go abroad even before the war, with the figure rising to 22% among young people aged 18–35 (Razumkov Centre, 2022). Thus, it is likely that refugees with families abroad, those who have gone to more-distant countries and those with the professional knowledge and skills to find decent work are more likely to stay abroad. Young people who pursue their studies in foreign countries are also unlikely to return home. Women who decide to stay abroad after the end of the war may be joined by their husbands. In addition, it is safe to assume that there will be a new wave of labour migration, since working abroad will become an important strategy for many people in overcoming the aftermath of the war and in raising funds for post-war reconstruction.

As for the direction of labour migration, the vast majority of Ukrainian migrants will head not for the aggressor country, but for the West, to countries that have proved sympathetic to Ukraine. In addition, the geography of the destination countries will expand, as assistance has been provided not only by the traditional destinations of migrant workers, but by other states as well.

CONCLUSION

The migration system of Ukraine and Ukraine's place in the EU and the Eurasian migration systems are determined by many factors, including the geographical position of the country, the formation of various political and economic unions, and the migration policy of the country itself and of its neighbours. Political factors, such as the choice of the development trajectory, have greatly influenced the country's position in both migration systems and have led to both positive and negative consequences for its inclusion in the new (EU) migration system. The realignment of Ukraine's migration flows westward (away from the east) has taken only about 25 years. It has largely been supported politically by the politicians and the people of both the EU and Ukraine, but has encountered hostility from Russia.

Ukraine's geographical and cultural proximity, as well as the positive image Ukrainians enjoy in the European labour market, has fostered a tolerant attitude towards them in the host countries and a readiness on the part of people and politicians in European countries to assist refugees from Ukraine and promote

their integration. Moreover, most European countries need additional labour from abroad and are keen to attract it.

The extent to which the EU's migration system and its policy of bolstering ties with its neighbouring countries have influenced the changing geopolitical situation and the increasing vulnerability of these countries still remains to be studied. When the various association agreements were signed with the EU, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova were in very vulnerable positions: Moldova did not control Transnistria since 1991; Georgia did not control Abkhazia and South Ossetia since about the same time; and Ukraine lost control of Crimea and part of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions in 2014. At the time the association agreements were signed, all those countries had numerous IDPs, displaced from those regions.

So, when a country moves from one migration system to another, how much time is needed to forge new links that can handle all the migration flows without creating significant problems either for the country itself or for its neighbours? Undoubtedly, the military operations on the territory of Ukraine have created new challenges for the EU and for all neighbouring states in the region (and beyond) with regard to forced migration flows – which have an adverse impact on the development of those countries and of the entire region. It is difficult to assess all the consequences of the current military intervention for the development of Ukraine. But the long tradition of labour migration to Europe, the well-developed migration networks and the existence of numerous Ukrainian diasporas in European countries determine the main, westerly direction of today's Ukrainian migration. Granting Ukraine the status of candidate member of the EU will significantly strengthen its ties with Europe, including in the field of migration. Objectively speaking, Ukraine lags behind other European countries in terms of its living standards, which is why labour migration from Ukraine will obviously continue in the foreseeable future.

The immense destruction and forced displacement of millions of people fleeing the Russian invasion is a significant additional factor in the westward migration and the transformation of a proportion of the current refugees into long-term economic migrants. It also contributes to the emergence of a new wave of labour migration abroad to ensure the livelihood of families affected by the war.

That is why the outflow of migrants from Ukraine should be taken into account in the development both of plans and programmes for the rehabilitation and restoration of Ukraine, and of plans for cooperation with the European Union. Measures aimed at minimizing the adverse consequences of forced migration and at maximizing the opportunities for people to work abroad should become an indispensable element of state policy for Ukraine and the EU.

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