

UKRAINIAN LABOR MIGRATION: MAIN TRENDS AND RISKS

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Abstract

International migration, in particular, labor migration, is one of the defining features of today's globalized world. According to the UN Special Commission on Migration, Ukraine is among the Top 10 largest countries-suppliers of labor migrants to other countries in the world.

The objective of the article is to analyze the current state of external labor migration from Ukraine, to identify its main trends and the risks caused by the escalation and activation of migration processes. An analysis of the available sources, which contain data on contemporary Ukrainian labor migration, provides the following quantitative characteristics: the total number of migrant workers is around 5.9 million; 3.2 million Ukrainians work permanently abroad, 7-9 million work temporarily; from 2002 to 2017, 6.3 million people left Ukraine and did not come back; more than 2/3 of migrants (70.4%) are men; the level of education of migrant workers is mostly secondary (64%). Among the main trends of current labor migration from Ukraine are the following: the rapid increase in the labor migration of Ukrainians to the EU countries caused by the increased opportunities for moving after the introduction of the visa-free regime and the increased loyalty of the governments of the EU Member States to the Ukrainian labor migration; an increase in the number of migrants with higher education, highly qualified specialists, as well as young people, a significant percentage of whom stays for permanent residence; the annual increase in the funds transfers of labor migrants, which makes Ukraine the largest recipient of international transfers in the Europe and Central Asia region.

As a result of the study, we concluded that the impact of labor migration on the development of Ukraine is ambivalent. Moreover, in the short term, it can be characterized as mostly positive, though, the long-term consequences of labor migration carry serious risks for the demographic, socio-economic and socio-cultural development of the country. First of all, there is a risk of loss of skilled labor, including human, scientific and intellectual potential, provided that temporary labor migration leads to emigration and change of permanent residence. In order to minimize the negative effects of migration, it is necessary to build a competitive economy through the implementation of real economic reforms and to formulate an appropriate migration policy, which is based on the maintaining and improving the characteristics of labour potential in the national labor market.

Keywords: labor migration, Ukraine, trends, risks.

INTRODUCTION

International migration is one of the defining features of today's globalized world. Over the past 50 years, the number of international migrants has tripled. In 1970, only 84 million people lived outside their country of birth, at the beginning of the new millennium – 173 million, and by the end of 2017, the number of migrants was already 258 million, or 3.4 percent of the world's population [24]. According to UN experts, the number of international migrants in the world in 2050 will reach 405 million [13].

Labor migration has always been the largest migration stream in the world. 74% of all migrants are persons of working age from 20 to 64 years old, which gives

grounds to estimate the labor migration scope of 190 million people. Although most migrants do not belong to the category of migrant workers according to the law of their countries of residence, however, coming by other channels (family reunification, training, asylum seekers, etc.), they replenish the labor force [10, p. 22]. According to the UN Special Commission on Migration, Ukraine is among the Top 10 largest countries – suppliers of labor migrants to other countries in the world. In 2000 Ukraine was ranked 5th in the world among countries, and in 2017 – it is 8th. At the same time, in absolute terms, the indicator increased from 5.6 million to 5.9 million [22, p. 33].

Along with the rapid increase in the number of migrants, there is an increase in their importance as a powerful transnational force capable of influencing the development of national and global economic, political and social processes. Migration can be an economic good, but it can also become a critical issue for economic policy and political life, so international migration processes require considerable control and regulation by states involved in labor exchange. In this context, the study of current trends and risks associated with the continued growth of labor migration from Ukraine is of particular relevance.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Labor migration and its consequences have become the object of research of many foreign and Ukrainian researchers. An important contribution to the development of the theory of international labor migration, regulatory and legal aspects of the regulation of migration processes was made by such researchers as O. Malynovska, A. Haydutsky, O. Poznyak, O. Pikulyk, O. Sharov, E. Libanova, I. Klyuchkovska, and others. Researchers note both the positive and the negative impact of external migration on the development of host countries as well as countries of origin. Even though a significant number of important aspects of international migration have been reflected in research studies, the current trends of external labor migration from Ukraine require further study.

The objective of the article is to analyze the current state of external labor migration from Ukraine, to identify its main trends and the risks caused by the escalation and activation of migration processes.

In Ukraine, there are no accurate data on the scale, structure, directions of migration movements of the population. The reason for this is the long delay in conducting the demographic census (the last one was conducted in 2001), lack of incentives for proper record keeping, difficulties in organizing data collection on labor migrants, their employment, income, duration of trips, etc. [22, p. 18-19]. An overview of available sources on current Ukrainian labor migration provides the following data:

The total number of migrant workers:

– 5.9 million (Migration Report of the UN Special Commission for 2017) [27].

– 4 million people (16% of the country's population) – data from the Center for Economic Strategy (2017) [21].

The number of Ukrainians working outside the country at once is (among those who pay taxes in Ukraine):

– 3 million people (according to the Institute of Demography and Social Research of NAS of Ukraine [9])

– 2.6-2.7 million people (according to the Center for Economic Strategy [21]).

According to the Ministry of Social Policy (2019), 3.2 million Ukrainians work permanently abroad, and temporarily – 7-9 million [12].

Over 15 years (2002–2017), 6.3 million people left Ukraine and did not come back (3 million left via the Western border and 3.2 million left via the Eastern border) [17].

Regarding the directions of labor migration within the regional context, we can rely on sociological studies that give a fairly accurate picture of the preferences of Ukrainians. At the request of the All-Ukrainian Association of International Employment Companies, in 2016 and 2017, the sociological group "Rating" conducted a series of studies that showed that Ukrainians went to work in Poland (36%), Russia (25%), 5% worked in the Czech Republic and Germany, 3% – in Italy, the rest – in other countries, mainly Western Europe. Almost 30% of respondents refused to answer this question, and it can be assumed that most of them work in Russia, but consider it unethical to talk about.

A key factor for the rapid growth of Ukrainian labor migration to EU countries, which has been well visible recently, is the expanding opportunities to move to work abroad after the introduction of visa-free travel and greater loyalty of governments of new EU member states to Ukrainian labor migration. The latter is reflected, in particular, in the rapid increase in quotas and the number of work permits issued. Poland alone issued 1.3 million job applications to Ukrainians in 2017 [14]. Moreover, under the visa-free regime, the Polish government allowed Ukrainians to work for up to 6 months during the year and also canceled foreign employment testing for most specialties. Similar visa exemptions have also been adopted by Slovakia, the Czech Republic and even Germany, where they reasonably expect to attract by higher wages those Ukrainians who currently work in Poland. According to V. Voskoboynyk, President of the All-Ukrainian Association of International Employment Companies, «Developed countries, especially European ones, are taking different steps to attract migrant workers. They are interested in having a skilled workforce come to work for them, and as well they are trying to assimilate migrant workers. This is due to the demographic problems that developed countries have, as well as the desire to maintain a steady GDP growth rate, which requires the constant creation of new workplaces and close the vacancies with the workers, which are lacking. The struggle for labor resources in the world is not weakening but has intensified during recent years. Therefore, developed countries will continue to do their utmost to actively attract labor resources, including those from Ukraine» [5].

Another worrying trend is that young people go abroad to study. According to the CEDOS Center, the number of Ukrainian students at foreign universities in the 2016-2017 academic year has increased by 56% compared to the 2012-2013 academic year [15]. In general, over the past nine years, the number of students with Ukrainian citizenship who studied at foreign universities has tripled – from 24 104 to 77 424 people. Poland, Russia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Italy, Spain, Canada, and Bulgaria provided the largest increase. It should be noted that special

studies separately in each country of the Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership Program showed, that young people who went to study abroad are more dissatisfied with the living conditions in Ukraine in general than with the state of higher education in particular. Young people view higher education in another country as a bridge to further life after graduation in better conditions outside Ukraine [18].

Four large-scale surveys conducted by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine with the technical assistance of international organizations in 2001, 2008, 2013 and 2017 are important sources for identifying qualitative characteristics of labor migration from Ukraine and comparing their results can show the dynamics of their changes.

According to 2017 data, more than 2/3 of migrants (70.4%) are men, which generally corresponds to the results of previous surveys (2001 – 69.2%, 2008 – 62.3%, 2012 – 65, 6%), however, it indicates a tendency for a slight increase in male migration under the influence of hostilities [10, p. 376].

Labor migration has unevenly spread among the population of the country. 69.4% of those who went to work abroad were recruited from the residents of the western regions. The share of labor migrants in Center Ukraine was 9.2%, the South – 8.6%, the East – 6.8%, the North – 6%.

The level of education of migrant workers is mostly secondary education (64%). However, according to 2017 data, the proportion of persons with full and basic or incomplete higher education has slightly increased compared to 2012 – 33.5% versus 30.5%. Most university graduates are employed in the United States (58.3%), Israel (52.5%), Portugal (35%), Germany (31.4%). In Belarus, Poland, Russia, and the Czech Republic, migrants with secondary education prevailed [10, p. 376].

Research of the factors of migration processes shows that they have great potential. Important motives for migration are: finding better jobs, higher incomes, improved working conditions, higher social security, ways to satisfy the consumer and investment interests of the migrants. According to an annual survey «Barometer of Happiness in Ukraine», conducted by the European Business Association, the majority of Ukrainians (51%) consider their income levels to be inadequate for a normal life [19]. Migrant earnings are the main motive and result of going to work abroad. It averaged US\$ 722, according to a 2017 survey, which more than tripled the average wage in Ukraine at the time of the survey. Migrant women earn slightly less than men – \$ 614 and \$ 766, respectively.

The information on migration attitudes of representatives of the IT professions, published by experts and journalists of the NB channel is also of interest [16]. Even a rather general survey of profile Internet resources made it possible to find out that “among the subscribers of the Ukrainian dou.ua site, 4% are those who have already gone abroad, 9%, are actively preparing to leave, and 43% are thinking about it. Among the countries of destination, there are Poland – 26% of respondents, Germany – 19%, USA – 13%. Only less than 2% returned home after work abroad because they did not like it. In general, most people recognize that they are not going to come back, though they are skilled, young people. It is not the financial capacity that distinguishes representatives of the IT sector from other migrant workers. Outsourcing individuals in Ukraine may receive higher salaries than in Europe or the

US. The main reasons for the experts' moving abroad are not the income, but the quality of the living environment (education, health care), the prospects of the company development, as well as access to another culture, the opportunity to learn about other countries. Almost half of the experts take their family with them immediately. At the same time, representatives of the IT industry point out the conditions of coming back home – a significant improvement in the country (63%), family circumstances (39%), the end of the military conflict, an interesting offer from a professional point of view [22, p. 46].

The most obvious is the impact of labor migration on the economy due to the influx of migrant capital into the country. Estimates of the volume of remittances to Ukraine are even more ambiguous than estimates of the scope of migration. Here, the data may be 100 times different (\$ 0.5 billion to \$ 54 billion per year) [2]. According to clarified data of the National Bank in 2017, money transfers to Ukraine from abroad amounted to approximately \$ 9.3 billion. This amount is more than five times bigger than the amount of foreign direct investment during the same year. National Bank estimated the foreign direct investment at \$ 1.8 billion. In 2015–2017, labor migrants transferred \$ 23.8 billion to Ukraine in total. This is more than all the foreign exchange reserves of the country, which at the beginning of 2018 amounted to \$ 18.8 billion. Private money transfers to the country are growing steadily, and in 2018 they accounted for 8.4% of the country's GDP [6]. According to some Ukrainian researchers, the volume of transfers is much higher than the above official data. For example, according to A. Haydutsky, these transfers amount to approximately \$ 25.6 billion annually (in 2009 it was almost 20% of the country's GDP) [3, p. 139]. The share of official transfers is approximately 23%: \$ 6.0 billion came through the financial and banking systems and \$ 19.6 billion – through the informal channels [2]. The large volumes of money transfers by informal channels make it necessary to find effective ways of formalizing the migration capital market. Therefore, it is necessary to establish appropriate supervisory and regulatory institutions, promote migrants' access to international labor markets, improve information collection methods, reduce the cost of transfer services, sign interstate agreements on the liberalization of migration processes. Regulatory authorities should encourage banks, postal services, microfinance institutions to develop innovative programs for attracting migrant funds through official channels. It is important to create specialized non-governmental organizations and associations of market participants, which will accelerate the development and implementation of measures formalize remittances.

Despite different estimates of remittances related solely to labor migration, according to data provided by the World Bank, Ukraine is the largest recipient of international transfers in the Europe and Central Asia region, receiving a record \$ 14 billion in 2018. The World Bank said that transfers to Ukraine were 19 percent higher than in the previous year, accounting for 11.4 percent of the country's GDP. The increase in funds transferred to Ukraine this year is explained in the World Bank, in particular, by the growing demand for foreign workers in neighboring countries. The lion's share of transfers to Ukraine comes from Poland [7].

As a result, migrants are currently the largest foreign investors for Ukraine. According to some researchers, based on economic and mathematical modeling, without such transfers, the Ukrainian economy could lose 7.1% of its potential. Light and food industries would suffer the most, the decrease in these spheres could reach 17% and 14%, respectively. Consumption would be reduced by 18% and household income by 14-21% [26].

Nevertheless, as noted by a specialist in the field of migration processes and migration policy O. Malynovska, it would be a mistake to believe that transfers automatically contribute to economic development. After all, for every thesis on positive results of transfers no less convincing antithesis can be found. Among the negative effects, the researcher notes the rise in prices, inflation, imports, and trade deficit [11, p. 89-90]. In particular, transfers from abroad have largely led to a rapid and economically unjustified increase in real estate prices in the regions affected by mass migration. Back in 2005, economists warned that transfers were one of the catalysts for the formation of a speculative "bubble" in the real estate market, which in turn threatened the stability of financial institutions and the reliability of citizens' savings [11, p. 30], which was fully confirmed during the financial and economic crisis. Investments from abroad made in housing also have a negative impact, such as the so-called "death" of capital, that is, construction costs in depressed regions where there are no workplaces and the new housing is left unused as a result. Some migrants spend money to buy housing in regional centers or the capital, which accelerates the migration of young people from their native places, with all the negative consequences for the development of the latter.

Transfers also increase the tax base, thereby providing additional funds that can be redistributed to the benefit of the magnates, financing an inefficient state apparatus. According to the researchers, funds, which are unjustly received by the state, can contribute to the deterioration of the government quality, the growth of corruption, the use of power in the interests of enrichment, causing the preservation of the bad economic situation and continued emigration [25, p. 3].

According to the findings presented in the analytical note prepared under the project "Migration from Ukraine after visa waiver agreement with EU" by the Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting, it is inappropriate to consider external labor migration in Ukraine as a tool for accelerating economic development, since the contribution of migration to the GDP growth is small. Given the marginal propensity to consume and propensity to buy imported goods and services, the contribution of remittances to Ukraine's GDP can be estimated at between 2.1% and 4.0%. This estimate does not take into account the impact of remittances on the increase in investment, as well as the effects of the reduction of domestic labor supply, which impact can be estimated as negligible. The main effect of migration is the poverty reduction in Ukraine [8, p. 15].

Labor migration abroad as the largest migration stream has a significant impact on various aspects of the country's life. First of all, migration directly affects demographic development. Thus, as early as 2008, according to a survey by the State Statistics Service, 14% of migrant workers did not plan to come back to their homeland [10, p. 380]. Today, this percentage is likely to be significantly higher.

Most Ukrainians, who work in countries with significantly higher legal income than in Ukraine, and can count on professional and social advancement, permanent resident status, will stay there forever, or at least until the end of their working careers. The spread of external labor migration in Ukraine, their partial transition to a permanent form, leads to a decrease in the number of the permanent population of the country. According to a survey conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers, Ukraine was the first among European countries in terms of projected staff reduction due to the labor migration in 2019 (about 1.4%) [5].

The impact of migration on the labor market is ambiguous. According to estimates by specialists of M.V. Ptykha Institute of Demography and Social Research of NAS of Ukraine, in the absence of labor migration, the unemployment rate in Ukraine would be 1.6 times higher than the actual rate [28]. At the same time, there is already a shortage of medical and pedagogical workers, builders, welders, drivers, and oil production specialists in the regions of mass migration. Labor migration also increases the social burden on those who stay and formally work in the country (taking into account the Ukrainian solidarity pension system).

The most serious problem is the «brain drain», which causes a deterioration of the quality characteristics of the employed. The situation with the outflow of qualified personnel abroad is of considerable concern to representatives of Ukrainian business circles. Participants of the Kyiv International Economic Forum, which took place in October 2017 in Kyiv, already noted the lack of qualified staff for expanding their business [23].

Negative tendencies of «brain drain» are observed in the scientific field. According to official statistics, in the early 1990s, 1,344 organizations were performing scientific research and development in Ukraine, and there were 313,079 researchers. As of 2015, these figures decreased to 978 and 63 864, respectively. Now, we have one of the lowest rates in Europe concerning the number of researchers per 1,000 people. At the same time, the most active creative researchers, including young researchers, have left and continue to leave the scientific field. If this process is not stopped, Ukraine may be threatened with the extinction of entire branches of knowledge [28].

According to a survey in the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2016, 42.2% of young scientists stated their intention to migrate. In 2017, there were 51.2% of them, 15.7% wanted to leave Ukraine permanently, and 35.1% would like to work abroad for some time and come back. The reasons that encourage young scientists from NAS of Ukraine to think about possible emigration can be divided into three categories: low wages and poor financial and economic status of science in Ukraine (about 90%); unfavorable working conditions (60%) and difficulties of professional realization (about 20-30%). Respondents also complained about the lack of "social elevators" and career opportunities. In particular, the procedure for obtaining degrees is still bureaucratic and based on quantitative requirements instead of qualitative ones. Although the share of scientists in total migration flows from Ukraine is relatively small, it is significant for the industry [1].

It should be noted that the problem of lack of skilled workers is related not only to labor migration but also to the natural decline in the population. The UN estimates

that Ukraine is in the top five in terms of population decline. Thus, the UN estimates the population of Ukraine, including the Crimea, in 2017 at 42.2 million people, but by 2050 the country's population will decrease by 18% to 36.4 million. In any case, a significant decline in population in mid-term perspective is a threat to the national security of the country [4].

According to O. Ustenko, the director of the International Bleyzer Foundation, shortly, Ukraine will start to feel the effects of the massive outflow of the working-age population. Besides, recently has increased the movement abroad of educated and talented young people, on which largely depends the future success of our country. In such a demographic and migration situation, it will be extremely difficult for Ukraine to achieve sustainable economic growth in the long term [23].

CONCLUSION

As a result of the study, we concluded that labor migration is not only intensifying, but also acquiring new qualitative features. Analysis of the dynamics and peculiarities of current migration processes gives grounds to argue that the impact of labor migration on the development of Ukraine is ambivalent. Moreover, in the short term, it can be characterized as mostly positive, though, the long-term consequences of labor migration carry serious risks for the demographic, socio-economic and socio-cultural development of the country. First of all, there is a risk of loss of skilled labor, including human, scientific and intellectual potential, provided that temporary labor migration leads to emigration and change of permanent residence. In order to minimize the negative effects of migration, it is necessary to build a competitive economy through the implementation of real economic reforms and to formulate an appropriate migration policy, which is based on the maintaining and improving the characteristics of labor potential in the national labor market, which can improve migration trends, reduce the level of emigration, and facilitate the return of highly qualified staff and young people.

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