

**THE MAIN FEATURES OF MIGRATION PROCESSES IN UKRAINE AND THEIR
IMPACT ON THE LABOUR MARKET**

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In today's world, labour migration is not only an objective global phenomenon, covering the rapidly increasing proportion of the population of the planet, and a fact which has a significant impact on different levels of national and international economic processes, but a living, constantly evolving social tendency.

Due to the fact that the existence of a well-defined and highly influential subjective attitude of society towards prospective opportunities, risks and challenges of movements in search of suitable conditions for work and self-realization, understanding of the role of labour migration in modern Ukraine cannot be complete and comprehensive solely on the basis of official figures, provisions in legal acts and laws. Obviously, the answer to this question is not a simple one.

The aim of this publication is to analyze the main features of contemporary migration processes in Ukraine and the key implications for changes in the socio-political situation in the country.

At the present stage international labour migration forms a large scale parallel reality to social and political life. Over the past two decades, taking into account the number of specialists who have left the country in search of better employment opportunities, Ukraine has become one of the top ten suppliers of labour force in Europe.

However, over the years that historically coincide with the independence of the Ukrainian state, a large-scale outgoing labour migration has generated a number of new social phenomena that have become a challenge to the stability of the national economy and an inclusive social policy:

- In many parts of the country foreign employment has become one of the most significant markers of social and demographic change, defined in the Ukrainian language as 'zarobitchanstvo' both in its practical and ideological aspects.
- For those permanently involved in labour migration 'zarobitchanstvo' has become not so much the possibility to get temporary jobs, but a way of life, the only possible form of participation in the international labour market, which as an intergenerational model is transferred onto the children of migrants: during this period young people have grown up and they also want to get long-term employment abroad.
- In labour migration most active groups of working population are involved, including not only irreplaceable workforce educated under once highly effective Soviet system of professional and technical education, but also highly qualified professionals, forming the intellectual potential of the country: thousands of people with first and second level PhD degrees left the country, one third of them being under 40 years old. Such 'brain drain', taking into account high public cost of their education, is unacceptable luxury for a country with poorly efficient economy teetering on the brink of default.
- Migrant workers have traditionally been 'dead souls' of political life in the country of origin – in all the years of elections turnout of Ukrainian citizens in the polling stations did not exceed 10% of all voters registered abroad; illegal migrants, who in order to exercise their right to vote need to come back to Ukraine, just ignore the elections, creating a precedent for exclusion of significant group of conscious citizens

with an active lifestyle from the process of decision-making and limiting the prospects for democratic change in Ukraine.

It is well known that over the last twenty years the image of Ukrainian workers, wandering in search of a better life, has become one of the most popular personalized stereotypes of Ukraine in the world. The failure of this symbolic character to return to his homeland may result in the national collapse of Ukraine. On the other hand, over the past two decades, the experience of labour migration for a substantial number of our countrymen has become not only a way to improve their living situation in Ukraine (the volume of remittances sent by migrants to their home country is in fact equal to the amount of foreign direct investments in Ukraine), but also a significant contribution to cultural capital of families, to increased knowledge and acquisition of new professional and life skills.

According to a recent survey conducted by domestic sociological centres, despite the traditionally significant migration outflow from Ukraine, 77% of Ukrainians have never been employed abroad, 36% of them have never travelled outside of their region; only about 5% of the population goes abroad every year for employment purposes.

Objective evaluation of the complex socio-political implications of labour migration, analysis of its potential impact on the labour market and the changing status of the various strata of society are only possible within the framework of a multi-level interdisciplinary monitoring research. The importance of the development and implementation of such a study, with the participation of leading experts and representatives of relevant government agencies in charge of labour migration and employment, is becoming more evident. In this context, sociological analysis of empirical data, i.e. results of sample surveys of the population, in-depth interviews with reference groups, expert interviews and focus groups can potentially provide significant information.

Labour migration from Ukraine is really an effective self-propelling social program, i.e. one of the few effective ways to improve the financial situation of tens of thousands of Ukrainian families as quickly as possible without significant effort on the part of their own state. But discussion about the effectiveness of the state migration policy will only be theoretically unless there is economic, political and ideological transformation aimed at the development of modern national labour market that would take into account the interests of different social and demographic strata, by introducing social guarantees and equal starting conditions for all segments of the population.

Nevertheless, informational and educational activities can be initiated right away in order to increase legal knowledge of potential and actual migrants, to promote objective media coverage both of emigration and immigration, including interactive online resources, TV and radio programs, covering different aspects of life of Ukrainians abroad and of foreigners in Ukraine, ensuring regular monitoring of the labour market in the recipient country, informing about targeted social programs and initiatives aimed at the integration and re-integration of different categories of migrants.

The conclusion is that the modern labour migration is not so much caused by external factors, but is a collective project of individualized majority caused by difficult living conditions of critical 1990s and unstable 2000s. In this sense, labour migration from Ukraine is a complex and multilayer process, and it is a natural form of citizens' spatial self-organization in the conditions of the economic crises and unstable political situation in the country. Low integration potential of the existing system of social and labour relations prevents the successful inclusion into society of returning Ukrainian migrants. Prevention of mass migration outflows from Ukraine due to improved economic, legal and civil environment in the country, promotion of comprehensive monitoring of citizens entering and leaving the country, and their full integration into the internal labour market should be a priority of the national strategy and tactics for the national development of Ukraine.