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## **Labour Migration from Ukraine to Poland: Current State and Further Perspectives**

### **Abstract**

Throughout its history, Ukraine has been both a country of origin and transit or destination for migrants. Ukraine has always been actively involved in the migration processes of Europe and the world. Poland has always attracted Ukrainians because of its territorial proximity, minor language barrier and higher salaries. After 2014, Poland became the most popular destination among Ukrainian workers. The significant increase in the number of migrants from Ukraine is due not only to economic reasons but also to the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine which had an impact on the geography of migration flows, gender composition etc. At the same time, Poland experienced a shortage of workers amid successful economic development and record low unemployment. The situation connected with the spread of the virus, the pandemic, and the closure of borders have significantly affected the economic situation in the world, migration flows, migration policy etc. However, it is difficult to predict migration flows after the end of quarantine, but it is clear that the EU member states will primarily need seasonal workers from Eastern European countries (including Ukraine). As Poland will also need additional labour forces, it can be argued that it will consolidate its position as the leading destination for Ukrainian labour migrants.

**Keywords:** Labour, Migration, Ukrainians, Migration Policy, Ukraine, Poland, Pandemic

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Immigration is not an exclusively Ukrainian problem, but a global trend. The development of transport links and means of communication, increasing openness of borders and other phenomena of globalization, which makes travel less risky, and being outside the homeland less burdensome created favourable conditions for migration. Nowadays migrants have much more opportunities to maintain their ties with relatives than they had centuries ago. The driving forces of migration remain the same: people are leaving their homes in search of security and livelihoods. In other words, global migration flows go to the countries with more developed economies which are the destination of the two thirds of all migrants in the world.

The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine estimates that 3.2 million of citizens of Ukraine work abroad on a permanent basis and from 7 to 9 million people work abroad on a temporary basis.<sup>1</sup> The Ukrainian Institute of Demography and Social Research estimates the number of migrants from Ukraine between 1.5 and 5.0 million people.<sup>2</sup> According to the UN, there were 5.9 million migrants from Ukraine in the world in 2017.<sup>3</sup> A significant number of migrants chose Russia. The visa-free regime, the absence of a language barrier and the economic dominance of the former metropolis contributed to such situation. However, in recent years, due to the war in Donbas and the European integration, Ukrainians have increasingly chosen the European Union. According to Eurostat, 236 thousand Ukrainians were issued a residence permit in the EU for the first time in 2013, approximately 493 thousand in 2015 and 589 thousand, which was about 18% of the total number of issued permits in 2016. For comparison, Syrians had only 348 thousand permits in 2016.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the vast majority of permits (87%) were issued in Poland in 2015. Almost

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<sup>1</sup> *Мінсоцполітики: понад 3 млн українців працює за кордоном на постійній основі (Misocpolityky: ponad 3 mln ukrajinciv pracuje za kortdonom na postijnij osnovi) (Ministry of Social Policy: more than 3 million Ukrainians work abroad on a permanent basis)*, Radio Svoboda, 1.08.2019, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-trudovi-mihranty-z-ukrainy/30087119.html> (access 25.03.2020).

<sup>2</sup> *Українське суспільство: міграційний вимір: нац. доповідь (Ukrajinske suspilstvo: migracijnyj vumir: nacionalna dopovid) (Ukrainian society: the migration dimension: a national report)*, M.V. Ptuha Institute of Demography and Social Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, K. 2018, p. 396.

<sup>3</sup> *International Migration Report 2017, United Nations*, New York 2017, p. 31, [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017\\_Highlights.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017_Highlights.pdf) (access 25.03.2020).

<sup>4</sup> *М. Vihrov, Як впливає на Україну трудова міграція (Як впливає на Україну трудова міграція) (How does labor migration affect Ukraine?)*, Tyzhden, 3.01.2018, <https://tyzhden.ua/Society/206352> (access 26.03.2020).

all of them were short-term ones (3–12 months) for seasonal work.<sup>5</sup> Labour activity was the main purpose of the arrival of Ukrainian citizens in the European Union.

It is evident that the reorientation of Ukrainian migrants to the EU will continue. This will apply to both workers and those who leave for permanent residence.

We can say that the main reasons for migration among the economically active population of Ukraine are:

- prolonged political crisis in society, dissatisfaction with the economic situation in the country;
- failure of the country to provide conditions for the realization of the opportunities of its economically active citizens;
- significantly higher salaries in the countries of immigration;
- military / political reasons.

Statistics show that in recent years there has been an increase in democratic freedoms, especially freedom of movement, as cross-border mobility of Ukrainians continues to grow rapidly. This is directly related to crossing the Western border of Ukraine and obtaining visa-free regime in 2017.

Undoubtedly, the current migration of Ukrainians differs from the migration in the 2000s. Let's consider its features in more details and the place of Poland in migration processes in Ukraine today.

## **Changing Countries of Destination of Ukrainian Migrants**

The “new wave” of migration from Ukraine to Poland has not come unexpectedly. It is the result of a long-term trend of reorientation of the migration flow from Ukraine from the East (to Russia) to the West (to the EU). At the same time, the current rapid growth of the migration flow is due to the events of recent years, primarily aggression of Russia, the growth of the salary gap, which is now much higher in Poland than in Ukraine.

The growth in the number of labour migrants from Ukraine coincided with the positive situation on the Polish labour market in the conditions of a good growth rate of the Polish economy in recent years. The market absorbed Ukrainian workers well. The best evidence of this was the gradual decline in unemployment in Poland, which in February 2020

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<sup>5</sup> *Міграція в Україні: факти і цифри. Представництво МОМ в Україні (Migration in Ukraine: facts and figures. IOM Representation in Ukraine)*, МОМ, Київ 2016, p. 12, [http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/ff\\_ukr\\_21\\_10\\_press.pdf](http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/ff_ukr_21_10_press.pdf) (access 30.03.2020).

fell to 5.5% and was one of the lowest in recent history. That means that Ukrainians did not take the place of work from the Poles, everyone had their own niches.<sup>6</sup>

Analyzing the number of border crossings by Ukrainians in 2004–2016, which is shown in Figure 1, we observe that until 2007 the number of crossings was at the same level. However, since 2008 there has been a clear tendency to increase crossings of the Polish border. This increase was due to the signing of an agreement with the EU on small border traffic, due to the intensity of cross-border mobility in this direction. According to this agreement, the Ukrainian population living in the border area got the opportunity to enter territory of Poland not further than 30 km without visa.

Another reason for the increase in travel was visa liberalization with the EU. After all, during 2013–2016, this figure increased significantly (from 7 million to almost 9.9 million per year).<sup>7</sup> The large number of crossings on the Russian border is due to the fact that there is a large labour market, no visa regime, relatively low cost of travel, friends and relatives. However, during 2013–2016, there was a tendency to reduce the number of crossings of Ukrainian-Russian state border, which was a consequence of the aggravation of relations between the countries and changes in migration legislation in Ukraine. Since 2014, in order to become a holder of a temporary residence permit and have legal employment in Russia, one must successfully pass an exam in Russian language, history and basics of law. And only passing the appropriate test makes it possible to obtain and apply for a work patent. That is why in 2014 the number of migrant workers decreased more than three times compared to 2013.

Thus, the main countries of “import” of Ukrainian labour forces are: Poland (38.9%), the Russian Federation (26.3%), Italy (11.3%), Czech Republic (9.4%), and recently – Lithuania.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to economic factors there are also political ones, including Ukraine’s path towards the European Union and the possibility for Ukrainians to travel visa-free within the EU, which contribute to the

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<sup>6</sup> Y. Banakhevych, *Епідемія в Польщі. Українські заробітчани в режимі очікування* (*Epidemia v Polshchi. Ukrajiniski zarobitchany v rezumi ochukivanniz*) (*The epidemic in Poland. Ukrainian workers are on standby*), Ukrinform, 27.03.2020, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-economy/2906633-epidemia-v-polsi-ukrainiski-zarobitcani-v-rezimi-ochukivanna.html> (access 27.03.2020).

<sup>7</sup> *Міграція в Україні: факти і цифри 2016* (*Migracija v Ukrajinі: fakty i cyfry 2016*) (*Migration in Ukraine: facts and figures 2016*), International Organization for Migration (IOM). Representation in Ukraine. – 2016, publication date: 27.12.2017, [http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/ff\\_ukr\\_21\\_10\\_press.pdf](http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/ff_ukr_21_10_press.pdf) (access 30.03.2020).

<sup>8</sup> *Українське суспільство: міграційний...*, op. cit., p. 396.

intensification of Ukrainian migration to Poland that significantly simplified the process of finding the work and reduced the cost of study abroad. On the other hand, the Polish government's policy and the interest of business determine constant expansion of legal employment opportunities for Ukrainians in Poland. Thus, the holders of biometric passports who entered Poland without visa were granted the right to work temporarily without a work permit, but only after the application of an employer to local authorities and registered by them. Since 2008, such an application has been the basis for obtaining working visa for a period of 6 months during a calendar year for the citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia. However, today Ukrainians can search and apply for work on their own after arriving in Poland without intermediaries and bypassing visa procedures. If they plan to stay longer than 90-day visa-free regime, they should contact the Office for Foreigners for an extension of their stay. In January 2018, amendments to the Polish employment law came into force, according to which an employment permit for seasonal work is introduced for 9 month and its registration is simpler than a usual one. According to it the citizens of six countries of the Eastern Partnership, primarily Ukrainians, have advantages.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, there are many cases when obtaining Polish working visa, which gives the right to move freely within the Shengen area for up to 90 days, some Ukrainians went to other EU countries, where salaries are higher than in Poland, including Sweden, Germany and others.

After the start of Russia's military aggression, the number of Ukrainian citizens seeking asylum in Poland also increased. Of course, most asylum seekers come from the Russian-occupied territories, as well as from the Crimea. However, it should be noted that the number of positive decisions of Polish government on these petitions was insignificant.

## **Changes of Structure and Scope of Migration of Ukrainians**

Modern labour migration of Ukrainians to Poland has been changed. Firstly, the vast majority of migrant workers previously were recruited among the residents of the Western Ukraine. The representatives of the Eastern Regions were slightly more than 6%. The share of residents of the East and

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<sup>9</sup> O. Babakova, *Робота за безвізом та інші несподіванки: як Польща змінює ринок праці для українців (Robota za bezvizom ta inshi nespodivanky: jak Polshcha zminiuje rynek praci dlia ukrajinciv) (Visa-free work and other surprises: how Poland is changing the labor market for Ukrainians)*, <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2017/06/30/7067876/> (access 30.03.2020).

the South of Ukraine reached 28.4% among those who came to Poland for the first time after 2014.<sup>10</sup> As a result, migrants, who do not know Polish language and are not familiar with Polish realities, come to Poland more often now. Quite often Poland is the first EU member state they come to.

The head of the Consular Department of the Embassy of Ukraine in Poland Svitlana Krysa said in the interview to *Ukrinform* that the number of labour migrants from Ukraine to Poland has increased as much as five times since 2014. Before 2014 their number was estimated at about 320 thousand, now, according to unofficial data, it is 1,5 million people.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the inflow of workers from Ukraine contributes to the growth of Poland's GDP 0.3–0.9% annually.<sup>12</sup>

It is noted that the increase in the number of Ukrainians in Poland is confirmed by the sharp increase in the number of consular actions carried out by the Consular Department in Warsaw. In particular, in 2014, consuls in Warsaw carried out almost 3.5 thousand consular actions, and in 2018 this number rose sharply to almost 18 thousand consular actions.<sup>13</sup> According to the Consul, an increase in the number of actions is also observed in other Ukrainian Consulates in Krakow, Gdansk and Lublin.

The gender composition of migrants has also been changed. The share of men has increased significantly, accounting for 32.9% of those who first arrived in Poland before 2014 and 57.9% of those who first arrived in Poland after 2014. New migrants are significantly younger than experienced migrants, with an average age of 33 years. The reasons for their arrival are still mainly socio-economic (low salaries, unemployment), but 12.5% of new migrants had political motives against 3.5% of those who first came to Poland before 2014.<sup>14</sup>

The citizens of Ukraine usually perform simple manual work that does not require qualifications (70.7% of Ukrainians), namely work at construction, repair, transport, agriculture, services, plants and factories.

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<sup>10</sup> I. Chmielewska, G. Dobroczyk, J. Puzynkiewicz, *A new wave of Ukrainian migration to Poland*, <https://www.obserwatorfinansowy.pl/in-english/new-trends/a-new-wave-of-ukrainian-migration-to-poland/> (access 31.03.2020).

<sup>11</sup> Yu. Banachevych, *Українська міграція до Польщі з 2014 року зростає у п'ять разів (Ukrainian migration to Poland has increased fivefold since 2014)*, *Ukrinform* 4.07.2019, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2019/07/4/7220016/> (access 31.01.2020).

<sup>12</sup> M. Pielach, *Українці змінили польський ринок праці і збільшили PKB (Ukrainian changed the Polish labour market and increased GDP)*, <https://www.obserwatorfinansowy.pl/tematyka/makroekonomia/wskazniki-ekonomiczne/ukraincy-zmienili-polski-rynek-pracy-i-zwiekszyli-pkb/> (access 31.03.2020).

<sup>13</sup> Yu. Banachevych, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> I. Chmielewska, G. Dobroczyk, J. Puzynkiewicz, *op. cit.*

The second largest group of labour migrants from Ukraine (23.8%) are skilled workers – car operators, bricklayer, hairdressers or nurses. There is also a small percentage of Ukrainian citizens (5.5%) who works in the field of IT technologies, in higher education institutions, in the field of health care. In general, probably, there is no such industry in Poland, where Ukrainians would not work now.

The expansion of the usage of Ukrainian labour force due to its involvement in various sectors of the Polish economy confirms the diversification of the geography of placement of migrants. 56% of them were concentrated in the capital region in 2013. Now they are working practically all over Poland.

It is worth noting that educational migration, which is used by hundreds of young and talented people, is becoming more widespread in Ukraine. According to UNESCO, the number of Ukrainian students studying abroad is growing rapidly – from 5.2 thousand in 1999/2000 academic year to 66.7 thousand in 2015/2016 academic year.

This is due, in particular, to the policy of neighbouring countries (mainly Poland) to attract Ukrainian youth to their own education system. Many young people leave Ukraine to study abroad in order to gain access to the EU labour market. Today, Poland is the country with the largest number of Ukrainian students. It is caused by the territorial proximity, absence of language barrier, low cost of education and accommodation, availability of discounted and free programs. The main reasons for this increase are simplified rules and procedures for admission to higher education institutions in Poland and the opportunity for foreign graduates of Polish educational institutions to stay in the country for a year to look for work according to the legislation that came into force in 2014.

The transformation of educational migration into permanent migration is a major threat to Ukraine. There are no reliable data on the intentions of Ukrainian students to return home, but according to some studies only between 2% and 16% of Ukrainian students in Poland (depending on the region of study) plan to return to Ukraine.<sup>15</sup>

### **Ukrainian Migration to Poland in 2020: A Period of Pandemic**

At the beginning of 2020 the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy of Poland was actively working on the new principles of migration policy of the Republic of Poland, which were to be introduced in six

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<sup>15</sup> *Українське суспільство: міграційний...*, op. cit., p. 396.

months. At the end of February, Polish former presidents Alexander Kwasniewski and Bronislaw Komorowski in a joint appeal called the government to approve a long-term migration policy as soon as possible, and to simplify bureaucratic mechanisms for obtaining documents for residence and work of Ukrainians in Poland.<sup>16</sup> At the beginning of 2020 the markets of other Western European countries were considered as the biggest threat to the outflow of Ukrainians from Poland. It was not yet known that the pandemic would change that state of affairs. Now the situation has changed dramatically, and, obviously, the development of a new migration policy in Poland will again be postponed for some time.

The situation that happened in Northern Italy has forced European governments to break one of the main pillars on which the EU is based – freedom of movement – and close their borders. Poland was one of the first countries in the EU to impose restrictions both on its citizens and foreigners without delay to prevent the spread of the COVID-19: on March 12, 2020 educational and cultural institutions were closed for quarantine, and on March 15, the government closed state borders to foreigners, suspending international railway, bus and air services. Quarantine measures forced many factories, catering establishments to stop for an indefinite period. It was estimated that about half of all labour migrants from Ukraine who were in Poland could be unemployed at the same time. As most of them worked for a short period of time (up to 3 months on a biometric passport, 6–9 months on a visa), the prospect of being left without a job and without money for an indefinite period became unattractive.

Some Ukrainians, especially those whose biometric passport or visa expired, tried to leave for Ukraine in the first days, before the closure of the Polish-Ukrainian borders (from March 17). Since March 15, when Poland has closed its border to foreigners, about 175 thousand of Ukrainians left in two waves according to the Ukrainian Embassy in Warsaw. These were mainly migrants whose legal stay in Poland expired. According to data of Analytical Department “Gremi Personal” it was 12% of all Ukrainians working in Poland.<sup>17</sup> The third expected wave of mass departures of Ukrainians because of Orthodox Easter and public holidays at the beginning of May did not take place.

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<sup>16</sup> Yu. Vanakhevych, *Епідемія в Польщі. Українські...*, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> T. Bogdevych, *В очікуванні українців: як пандемія змінила польський ринок праці (V ochikuvanni ukrajinciv: jak pandemija zminyla polskyj rynek proci) (In anticipation of Ukrainians: how the pandemic changed the Polish labour market)*, Yevropejska Pravda, 24.04.2020, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2020/04/24/7109122/> (access 24.04.2020).

The situation with the pandemic has once again shown how dependent the Polish market is on foreign workers, including workers from Ukraine. Despite the fact that Polish experts already estimate that the growth of the Polish economy may be zero (at the beginning of the year it was forecasted about 4% of GDP growth), and unemployment may jump from more than 5% to 10% or more. It means that the number of unemployed people with Polish passports will increase on the labour market, and Polish business has “sounded the alarm” about labour migrants from Ukraine.

It is difficult to start seasonal works in Poland this year without labour migrants from Eastern Europe. Polish farmers fear that the harvest may remain on the fields. Now Polish agriculture needs several thousand of workers, in June – tens of thousands. The situation is not the best in the construction industry, which accounts for 8% of Poland’s GDP, as every fifth Ukrainian builder has left the country.

And if the border remains locked until the beginning of summer, the labour shortage in Poland may be felt by the automotive, furniture, metal and woodworking industries. These are industries that have already begun to resume their activity. Under conditions of major economic downturn, unprecedented drought, rising of unemployment in the country, Poland is unlikely to be able to meet labour needs.

That is, the niche occupied by a labour migrant from Ukraine will be quite difficult to fill with Polish workers, even among the newly unemployed. As a rule, Ukrainians work in Poland doing hard physical work, which, moreover, is not particularly high-paid. The average Pole may not agree to such conditions, especially since the government in the “Anti-Crisis Shield” offers a broad social package for workers whose companies are temporarily not working. In particular, this compensation for the period of forced downtime of the enterprise or organization will be approximately 80% of salaries for those who work under contracts. However, most Ukrainians work in Poland on sub-contracting or agency contract. The Government of the Republic of Poland tries to take care of this category of workers in the “Anti-Crisis Shield”, in particular by paying them 80% of the gross minimum salary for the period of pandemic.<sup>18</sup>

The shortage of staff due to the departure of Ukrainians has forced Polish authorities to listen to the requests of employers, make legislative concessions and extend the period of legal stay in Poland for foreigners. As a part of the program to save Polish economy, on April 17, 2020 “Anti-Crisis Shield” introduced a new Law (*Ustawa o szczególnych instrumentach wsparcia w związku z rozprzestrzenieniem się wirusa SARS-CoV-2*).

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<sup>18</sup> Yu. Banakhevych, *Епідемія в Польщі. Українські...*, op. cit.

According to this Law, foreigners whose visas and residence cards expire in Poland during the pandemic are allowed to stay legally in Poland for the entire period of the epidemic and for 30 days thereafter. This applies to those citizens of Ukraine who are in Poland on the basis of Polish national and Schengen visas, temporary residence cards and visa-free regime. At the same time it is not necessary to put new visas or other marks in the foreign passport. These provisions apply to those citizens of Ukraine whose residence and work permits expire after March 14, 2020 (the date of the declaration of the epidemic in the country). In addition, work permits, seasonal work, as well as employment opportunities based on the employer's application are automatically extended for this period.

It should be emphasized that Ukrainians do not need to take any additional action in order to stay in Poland. This provision was modified at the request of local businesses, as the previous version of the "Anti-Crisis Shield" provided that foreigners had to apply to the Voivodeship departments for foreigners at their place of work to continue their stay in Poland. This bureaucratic component has been removed.<sup>19</sup>

However, Ukrainians who will remain in Poland under this procedure must remember that it will only work for them if migrant workers do not leave the country. If someone wants to go to Ukraine for a while, it will be impossible to return to Poland on the basis of the anti-crisis instrument to continue their stay in Poland.

In the conditions of closing the borders, only foreigners who are married to Polish citizens or are their children, those who have a Polish card, a temporary or permanent residence permit in Poland, the right to work in Poland, diplomats, truck drivers can now enter the Republic of Poland. In other words, this list does not actually include a whole range of migrant workers who usually come to Poland with visas or on the basis of visa-free regime for seasonal work, in particular in the agricultural sector. Those who managed to prepare a package of documents to get the permit to stay and work in Poland until March 16, 2020 can now enter Poland.

Instead, it is currently impossible to obtain a Polish visa in Ukraine, as Polish consulates and visa centres are not temporarily accepting documents under quarantine measures in Ukraine since mid-March. According to some forecasts, under the current conditions, they will be able to resume full-time work in Ukraine not earlier than May, and possibly in June 2020.

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<sup>19</sup> Yu. Banakhevych, *У Польщі думають як повернути трудових мігрантів з України (U Polshchi dumajut jak povernuty trudovuh migrantiv z Ukrainy) (Poland is thinking how to return labour migrants from Ukraine)*, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/3010104-u-polsi-dumaut-ak-povernuti-trudovih-migrantiv-z-ukraini.html> (access 24.04.2020).

As Jacek Piechota, the Head of the Polish-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce, who also appealed to the government to support Ukrainians, told *Ukrinform*: “It is good that Polish authorities have met the expectations of employers and migrant workers”.<sup>20</sup> Piechota also gives optimistic and pessimistic scenarios. An optimistic one is that the state of the pandemic in Poland will end in 2–3 months, after which the country’s economy again will need the work of Ukrainians on the same scale as in the pre-crisis period. According to pessimistic one, if the pandemic lasts for an indefinite period, the economy will fall into recession and there will really not be enough work for everyone.

In recent days, several hundred people on average have left Poland for Ukraine, which means that Polish authorities have managed to prevent a negative scenario for the outflow of Ukrainian workers. It is obvious that the period of chaos and uncertainty caused by the lack of complete information under conditions of rapid change of the situation, and thus the desire to run home, has partially passed. The evidence of that is the change of questions that Ukrainian workers address to the Embassy of Ukraine. According to Svitlana Krysa, Head of the Consular Section of the Embassy of Ukraine in Poland, if before the beginning of April Ukrainian employees were more interested in information on how to leave for Ukraine, now they ask how to return to Poland and how to extend the visa-free stay in Poland.<sup>21</sup>

At present the economic situation in Ukraine is not optimistic. In just one month of quarantine, the number of unemployed in Ukraine increased by 1–1.3 million. While in Poland, such a number of unemployed is expected to be only by the end of the year.<sup>22</sup>

One third of Ukrainians who left Poland already want to return. This is evidenced by the data collected by the Analytical Department based on the results of appeals to the “hot line” of the social program to help Ukrainians “We are together”.<sup>23</sup> Among those calling there are a lot of people who have never been to Poland before the pandemic. Thus, the number of Ukrainians who plan to come to work to Poland will increase.

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<sup>20</sup> Yu. Banakhevych, *Епідемія в Польщі. Українські...*, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> *Українці починають замислюватися над поверненням до Польщі. Польсько-українська господарча палата (Ukrajinci pochynajut zamysliuvatisia nad povrnenням do Polshcha. Polsko-ukrajinska gospodarcha palata) (Ukrainians are beginning to think about returning to Poland. Polish-Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce), Polsko-Ukraińska Izba Gospodarcza, 23.04.2020, <https://www.pol-ukr.com/uk/ukra%D1%97nczi-pochinayut-zamislyuvatisya-nad-povrnennyam-do-polshhi/> (access 24.04.2020).*

<sup>22</sup> T. Bogdevych, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

Ukrainian labour migrants, including those in Poland, are now in a very difficult situation. In all respects, they are more vulnerable than the citizens of the host country. In this situation, according to Andrzej Korkus, Director of the Company for employment of foreigners in Poland *EastWestLink*, local businesses should do everything possible to guarantee them uninterrupted work, stable earnings, help them solve various formalities with documents. In other words, it is about expanding their comfort zone during a period of general turbulence. According to him, Polish authorities and Polish business should take care of Ukrainians, who during 2014–2018 made efforts to increase Poland's GDP by about 11%.<sup>24</sup> If Poland turns away from Ukrainians now, the crisis of confidence will lead to their outflow to the markets of other countries, primarily Germany and Czech Republic, where quarantine measures could be completed sooner than in Poland.

If the competition for seasonal workers from Eastern Europe on the Polish market is not very noticeable yet, it has already started among the EU member states. The European Commission has called to make seasonal workers equal with the workers of critical spheres, such as doctors or pilots, and simplify border crossing procedures for them during epidemics.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry reports that several foreign ministers from the EU have sent a request that they are ready to send planes to pick up Ukrainians for seasonal work. In particular, Finland has approved the arrival of 1,500 Ukrainian seasonal workers work this year, according to *Yevropeiska Pravda*. So far, only about 200 of them have arrived in the country. The arrival of Ukrainian labour migrants to the UK was also agreed. However, in an interview with *RBK-Ukraine*, the Prime Minister of Ukraine Denys Shmygal said that workers are skilled, trained in Europe and could be useful for economic development in Ukraine, so they “need to be preserved.” At the same time, in his interview with *Ukrainian Radio* on May 5, 2020 and published on its website, Denys Shmygal undertook a commitment to provide at least 500 thousand Ukrainians with workplaces after quarantine.<sup>25</sup>

This situation may complicate negotiations between the Ukrainian government and the governments of the EU member states on the further movement of labour forces among the countries for seasonal work. At the meeting in Kyiv with the EU Ambassador Matti Maasikas, Ukraine's Prime Minister promised that the borders would be open to Ukrainians only if the European partners provide them with legal employment for

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<sup>24</sup> Yu. Vanakhevych, *У Польщі думають як...*, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> *Українське радіо (Ukrainske radio) (Ukrainian radio)*, <http://www.nrcu.gov.ua/news.html?newsID=93287> (access 25.04.2020).

three months in compliance with all social guarantees and working conditions.<sup>26</sup>

In general, it should be noted that the pandemic has led to the return of a significant number of Ukrainian migrants, but the expected economic downturn may contribute to the prospect of their migration in search of better work and living conditions. Poland is still attractive and comfortable for labour migrants from Ukraine.

Apart from the government's efforts to stabilize the situation, it should be understood that today's wave of migration from Ukraine is the result of citizens' dissatisfaction with level of salaries, delay in the payment of salaries, low levels of social protection, a large gap between the number of university graduates and the availability of jobs. They are the reasons for every year increase in the number of migrants, and, unfortunately, more and more skilled workers go abroad in search of work and a better life. The flow of migrants also leads to significant losses of labour potential in Ukraine. Ukraine is losing hundreds of talented people who could contribute to the economic development of Ukraine. The problem is that Ukraine does not keep statistics on the actual number of Ukrainian citizens working abroad. This distorts the picture of emigration processes in Ukraine and makes it impossible to effectively regulate them. In addition, it should be understood that the issue of labour migration requires the government to pay more attention to this problem. Only the economic growth and the resolution of the military conflict in the East of Ukraine are the factors that can encourage workers not to leave their homeland in future.

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<sup>26</sup> Україна штучно намагається стримати трудову міграцію (*Ukraina shtuchno namagajetsia strymaty trudovu migraciju) (Ukraine is artificially trying to reduce labour migration)*, <https://www.dw.com/uk/komentar-ukraina-shtuchno-namahajetsia-strymaty-trudovu-mihratsiiu/a-53301475> (access 28.04.2020).

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