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## MIGRATION CHALLENGES AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES IN EU COUNTRIES AND UKRAINE AMID THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

**Background.** This article is part of the project No. 101132435 – SKILLS4JUSTICE Topic: HORIZON-CL2-2023-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-03 and presents a comprehensive analysis of current migration processes in Ukraine and the multifaceted challenges they pose for the European Union. Since 2014, and especially following the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, Ukraine has experienced one of the largest migration waves in Europe since World War II. The study highlights the socio-economic, educational, and political aspects of these migration flows, considering both internal displacement and international migration trends. The research examines the composition, motivations, and regional distribution of Ukrainian migrants in EU member states, emphasizing variations in labor migration, forced displacement, and student mobility. Special attention is given to the gender, age, and professional characteristics of migrants, as well as structural challenges they face, such as access to education, language barriers, labor market integration, and social inclusion.

**Methods.** The study employs a combination of statistical analysis, policy review, and thematic case studies across selected EU countries to provide an evidence-based perspective on migration dynamics and policy responses.

**Results.** The article examines the consequences of migration dynamics for the EU, including demographic pressures, labor shortages in certain sectors, strain on public services, and the need to adapt national and EU-wide migration policies. It analyzes how host countries address the integration of Ukrainian refugees and labor migrants, assessing the preparedness of education systems, labor markets, and social infrastructure to cope with a sustained influx. The paper evaluates the Ukrainian government's strategies for migration management and its cooperation frameworks with European institutions. It discusses potential long-term impacts of migration on Ukraine's human capital, including brain drain and the loss of skilled labor, alongside opportunities for circular migration and diaspora engagement.

**Conclusions.** Based on the findings, the article offers data-driven recommendations aimed at building more coherent, inclusive, and sustainable migration policies. These results are intended to support the formulation of informed policies in both Ukraine and the EU, within the broader context of regional stability, educational development, and socio-economic resilience.

**Keywords:** migration processes, ukrainian migrants, internal displacement, labor migration, integration policies, European Union, socio-economic impact.

### Background

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 triggered one of the most significant forced migration crises in Europe since World War II. Millions of Ukrainians fled the country, while many others became internally displaced, leading to severe humanitarian, educational, and socio-economic challenges. These unprecedented migration flows have not only reshaped Ukraine's demographic landscape but have also had far-reaching implications for the European Union, particularly in the areas of labor markets, education systems, and migration governance. Despite the scale and impact of these displacements, there is still a lack of comprehensive and up-to-date academic analysis addressing both the internal and external dimensions of Ukrainian migration and their complex consequences for the EU.

At the same time, the rapid increase in migration poses long-term political challenges for both Ukraine and its

European partners. While EU countries have provided short-term support through temporary protection mechanisms, the sustainability of these measures remains uncertain. Issues such as brain drain, recognition of educational qualifications, labor market integration, and access to education for displaced children and youth require more strategic and coordinated responses. Therefore, understanding the current state and future trajectory of Ukrainian migration is essential for developing evidence-based migration policies that balance humanitarian needs with socio-economic integration and resilience across borders.

The relevance of this research is driven by the unprecedented scale of migration processes caused by the full-scale war in Ukraine, which has generated new challenges not only for Ukrainian society but also for the European Union. Millions of Ukrainians have become displaced—either abroad or within the country—significantly

affecting the socio-economic situation, labor markets, education systems, and migration policies in both Ukraine and the EU. In this context, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive analysis of current trends, risks, and opportunities related to migration in order to develop effective mechanisms for managing migration flows, ensuring migrant integration, and preserving human capital.

The **aim** of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the current state of migration processes in Ukraine and to identify the key challenges they pose for the European Union in the context of ensuring socio-economic stability, migrant integration, education policy development, and the formation of sustainable migration governance mechanisms during wartime and post-war periods.

**Literature review.** Human migration is an ancient social phenomenon that has accompanied humanity throughout its history. It has occurred for various reasons – from the search for better natural conditions and economic opportunities to escaping conflict, famine, or persecution. In the 21st century, the scale and nature of migration have changed significantly under the influence of contemporary armed conflicts. Wars in Syria, Afghanistan, the Balkans, and, since 2014, in Ukraine have become powerful drivers of forced displacement for millions of people.

Recent studies emphasize that, as of the end of 2023, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide reached a record high of 71.1 million, driven by armed conflicts, violence, and natural disasters. Among the main contributors to this increase are the war in Ukraine, along with other ongoing conflicts and environmental crises (IDMC, 2023).

The phenomenon of migration is analyzed globally, with particular focus on its causes, consequences, and policy challenges. Special attention is given to protracted displacement, the interconnections between climate change, armed conflicts, and urbanization, as well as the need for comprehensive approaches to protecting the rights and supporting the needs of internally displaced persons.

Given that such migration is a key component of global demographic and socio-economic dynamics, it has become the subject of numerous academic studies. In the context of this research, we focus on the analysis of studies specifically dedicated to migration processes in Ukraine and the associated challenges for the European Union.

A number of publications are devoted to general migration trends and the analysis of challenges faced by Ukrainian migrants. The current migration processes in Ukraine are analyzed, with particular attention to their evolution since 2014 and their escalation following the full-scale war in 2022. The main drivers of both internal and external migration are examined. The impact of migration on the labor market, social systems, and demographic dynamics is assessed. Special emphasis is placed on the need to develop an effective state migration policy in the context of the humanitarian crisis and Ukraine's integration into the European space (Kuryliuk, 2022). Numerous publications are devoted to internal migration, with particular focus on assessing the readiness of internally displaced persons for employment (Bilorus, & Firsova, 2023). The analysis focuses on how internal and external migration affect the forecasting of public education expenditures in Ukraine within the context of sustainable development. The methodology proposed by the authors enables the integration of migration trends into the planning of budgetary support for the education sector (Zatonatska et al., 2023). The impact of migration processes on forecasting Ukraine's healthcare budget expenditures is also explored in the

context of the Sustainable Development Goals. The authors develop a forecasting model that accounts for both internal and external migration, emphasizing the need to adapt budgetary policy to ongoing demographic changes (Zatonatska et al., 2022). Refugee flows from Ukraine to Poland and Germany in 2022 are analyzed with a focus on the specific characteristics of female migration, including the challenges faced by women migrants during integration and in accessing employment (Andrews et al., 2023). The socio-economic and labor-related challenges of Ukrainian refugees in Poland are assessed one year after the onset of the war, with particular emphasis on the underutilization of their qualifications and pathways to labor market participation (Berube, & Monras, 2023). The transnational mobility of Ukrainian women refugees is examined in the context of war and forced migration. The analysis focuses on how women adapt to new conditions in EU countries, engage with social institutions, and maintain connections with Ukraine through digital and emotional practices (Guild, & Groenendijk, 2023). The importance of developing long-term migration policies is emphasized both in Ukraine and in the EU member states (Pędziwiatr, & Magdziarz, 2023). The impact of the war in Ukraine on the mental health of displaced persons is examined. The authors analyse initial empirical data on levels of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress among Ukrainian refugees, particularly women and children. The urgent need for systematic psychological support and the development of mental health programs for those who have experienced forced displacement is emphasized (Jurić, 2022). The ICMPD analytical report examines forced migration from Ukraine after 2022, with particular attention to refugee profiles, gender distribution, and levels of education. It highlights that Ukrainian migrants are generally highly educated but face significant challenges in labor market integration due to language barriers, legal restrictions, and uncertain prospects of return (Düvell, 2024).

A number of studies are devoted to analyzing the impact of migration from Ukraine on the socio-economic situation and labor markets of European countries. The social and economic effects of labor migration from Ukraine are examined, focusing on its impact on rural development, employment structure, and households. While migration provides significant remittances, it also contributes to demographic decline and growing social inequality in the regions of origin (Cantor, & Apollo, 2020). The participation of Ukrainian refugees in EU labor markets after the onset of the full-scale war is analyzed, with emphasis on both the speed of their employment and existing barriers, such as language difficulties, non-recognition of qualifications, and unstable legal status. The authors also provide policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the integration of Ukrainians into European economies and ensuring sustainable outcomes for both refugees and host societies. (Desiderio, & Hooper, 2023). The economic impact of the influx of Ukrainian refugees on EU countries is analyzed. The authors examine both short- and long-term effects, emphasizing that, with proper integration, Ukrainians can become a valuable resource for Europe's aging economies (Mykhnenko, Delahaye, & Mehdi, 2022). The forced migration from Ukraine following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 is also analyzed as an integral part of European security. The authors consider not only the humanitarian dimension, but also the political and strategic aspects of the crisis, emphasizing that the scale of population displacement has long-term implications for the EU, particularly in the areas of asylum policy, migration

governance, and regional stability (Maidanik, 2024). The Eurofound (2024) report examines the social impact of the influx of Ukrainian migrants into EU countries, focusing on the challenges related to their reception and integration (Fóti, 2024). The political, social, and legal aspects of refugee reception in the EU are analyzed, with particular attention to the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive and the challenges of integration under conditions of uncertainty. Special focus is placed on how this crisis is reshaping European migration policy and raising new questions for the system of collective security and solidarity (Roskladka et al., 2022). Labor migration from Ukraine is examined as a component of contemporary mobility in Europe, with a focus on the political and economic factors shaping migration flows. The author analyzes how war, disparities in living standards, and labor demand in the EU drive both permanent and seasonal migration of Ukrainians. The study also explores the implications for labor markets, social policy, and the prospects for migrant integration in host countries (Pozniak, 2023). The response of EU countries to the mass forced migration from Ukraine following the outbreak of war in 2022 is analyzed. The authors examine the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive, the divergences in member state policies, and the practical delivery of support to refugees. While the EU has demonstrated unprecedented solidarity, the lack of a coordinated approach and varying resource capacities has resulted in unequal conditions for the reception and integration of Ukrainians across different countries (Weisser, 2023). The EU's political response to the mass influx of Ukrainian refugees after 2022 is examined. The author analyzes how the war in Ukraine has reshaped the EU's approach to migration management. The report also highlights the need to revise the EU migration system in light of emerging geopolitical challenges and the solidarity demonstrated in response to the Ukrainian crisis. The long-term development of Ukrainian migration to Europe is examined, including political approaches, integration practices, and migrants' expectations. The authors analyze how changes in European migration policy affect Ukrainians and emphasize the need to develop sustainable strategies that balance the economic benefits for host countries with the social needs of the migrants themselves (Leontyeva, 2014).

Numerous publications analyze the impact of Ukrainian migrants on the economies of specific countries and regions. The impact of the war in Ukraine on demographic trends and migration processes in the region is analyzed, with a focus on shifts in population structure, economic consequences, and challenges for neighboring countries. The author examines how the armed conflict has triggered mass displacement, particularly of women and children, leading to imbalances in the age and gender structure both in Ukraine and in EU countries. The article also highlights the need for a comprehensive international approach to migration management in the context of a humanitarian crisis (Dumitrescu, & Constantin, 2023). It is emphasized that the Ukrainian presence in Poland is not only a source of labor but also an important part of the country's social and demographic landscape (Levytska, 2022).

The education of migrants from Ukraine is examined, with particular attention to Ukrainian students as a distinct group of migrants affected by the war and forced to continue their studies abroad. The author analyzes the challenges they face within the education systems of EU countries and emphasizes the importance of supporting academic mobility (Libanova, & Pozniak, 2023). The impact of digital technologies on access to education for Ukrainians

displaced by the war is examined, with a focus on the use of remote learning as a tool for adaptation in times of crisis. The authors emphasize that digital education has become a vital means of sustaining the educational process, reducing learning losses, and preserving social connections among displaced individuals (Lapshyna, 2025).

An important aspect of the research is migration statistics. The UNHCR page contains up-to-date data on the situation of Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (UNHCR, 2025). The Migration Data Portal provides key statistical data on mobility within and from Ukraine during 2020–2023, covering internal displacement, international migration, and returns. The report highlights a sharp increase in displacement following the start of the full-scale war, identifies major migration routes, outlines the demographic profile of migrants, and emphasizes the policy challenges arising in the context of the humanitarian crisis (IOM Global Data Institute, 2023). An important UNHCR publication explains how statistics on displaced persons are collected and used, including data on refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons. It clarifies the distinction between "stock data" (the number of individuals at a specific point in time) and "flow data" (the number of new displacements over a given period), and emphasizes the importance of accurate data collection for effective humanitarian response and policy development (UNHCR, 2025).

Summary publications on Ukrainian migration processes highlight several key findings by researchers:

First, the scale and multidimensional nature of Ukrainian migration. Nearly all authors note that the war in 2022 triggered the largest migration crisis in Europe since World War II. Migration flows are mixed in character, including labor, forced, student, family, and transit migration. Researchers also emphasize that Ukrainian migration is not only a challenge but also a potential resource for reshaping EU policy.

Second, the changing profile of migrants. Post-2022 external migration is characterized by a predominance of women with children, young people, students, and individuals with higher education. A significant share of migrants are highly qualified professionals, yet they often face challenges in realizing their potential due to barriers such as diploma recognition, language difficulties, and childcare responsibilities.

Third, the socio-economic impact. For Ukraine, migration results in labor shortages, the risk of human capital loss, demographic aging, reduced domestic demand, and growing regional disparities. Nevertheless, remittances from abroad remain a crucial stabilizing factor for the Ukrainian economy. For the EU, the response has been swift but largely temporary, with an uneven distribution of responsibilities across countries, especially Poland, Germany, and the Czech Republic.

Fourth, institutional adaptation. The EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time, demonstrating solidarity, yet the lack of coordination among member states undermines the effectiveness of long-term integration. Since 2014, Ukraine has also been developing an institutional framework for responding to migration, but it remains fragmented and poorly oriented toward long-term planning.

Fifth, access to education for Ukrainian migrants in the EU. Most Ukrainian children who fled to EU countries gained access to school education, though the adaptation process has been uneven, affected by language barriers, differences in education systems, and psychological trauma. In countries like Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany, special adaptation classes were introduced, but children

often experience social isolation and struggle to fully integrate into regular schooling. Some students continued their studies in Ukrainian online schools from abroad, which ensured continuity but also created a "dual educational space" with limited integration into host systems.

Many students were forced to interrupt their studies or transfer to foreign universities. EU countries, including Poland, Germany, and Lithuania, offered scholarships, adaptation programs, and language support. However, some students faced insufficient recognition of completed coursework, a lack of housing assistance, and the need to restart their studies from the beginning. EU universities implemented the "Erasmus+ for Ukraine" program, which helped maintain academic mobility, although on a limited scale.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Ukraine faced interrupted access to education due to relocation, overcrowding in schools in host communities, lack of housing, or inadequate technical support for online learning. Educational institutions often lacked the resources needed to integrate new students, particularly in rural areas or frontline regions.

The importance of digitalization in education is strongly emphasized as a key adaptation tool. In the context of displacement, online learning became a critical means of ensuring educational continuity and maintaining ties with Ukraine. At the same time, the digital divide, limited access to devices and the internet, and fatigue with remote learning posed additional challenges.

Nonetheless, long-term risks for education are highlighted. War and mass displacement have exacerbated educational inequality among Ukrainian children and youth. There is a growing risk of losing the country's educational potential, a decline in qualification levels, and a disruption of learning trajectories – particularly among vulnerable groups such as children from rural areas, IDPs, and children with disabilities.

Sixth, the psychological and humanitarian consequences. Many researchers underscore high levels of trauma, depression, and PTSD among displaced individuals, especially women and children. The need for long-term mental health support programs and integration through education, culture, and employment is emphasized.

Overall, the studies conclude that migration from Ukraine between 2014 and 2025 is not a temporary phenomenon but a long-term structural process that requires a new paradigm of migration policy. This involves both the strategic modernization of Ukraine's approach and a shift within the EU toward systematic migrant integration management—moving beyond crisis-driven responses. These insights underline the relevance, importance, and timeliness of our research project "Analysis of Migration Processes in Ukraine: Challenges for the EU."

### Methods

The methodological foundation of this study combined analytical, statistical, and sociological approaches to reflect the complexity and dynamism of migration processes in Ukraine during wartime, as well as their impact on the European Union. The research employed the following methods: comprehensive analysis (including SWOT analysis, meta-analysis of academic literature, and review of national and international migration reports); statistical analysis (comparative, descriptive, and time-series analysis using data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, Eurostat, UNHCR, IOM, and other institutions).

Due to the extreme socio-economic transformations triggered by the full-scale invasion in 2022, the analysis distinguished between two key periods: the pre-war period (2014–2021) and the wartime period (2022–2024). This

distinction enabled the identification of both long-term trends and the immediate consequences of forced and voluntary migration. To assess labor migration and migrant qualifications, a sectoral analysis was conducted using updated employment and education indicators, with a focus on shortages and surpluses in key sectors such as healthcare, construction, IT, and logistics.

The study also incorporated scenario analysis to evaluate potential migration trends under different post-war recovery and EU integration scenarios.

Overall, the methodology captured the complexity of migration under crisis conditions and provided a data-driven foundation for developing policy recommendations aimed at improving migration governance, access to education, and labor market integration in both Ukraine and the European Union.

### Results

The period from 2014 to 2025 has been a turning point for Ukraine's migration landscape. Internal migration intensified after 2014, but its scale increased exponentially in 2022–2023. In 2014, the annexation of Crimea and the armed conflict in Donbas, followed by Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, triggered unprecedented levels of both internal and external migration. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees abroad have become a new social reality for millions of Ukrainians.

According to data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, the country experienced a positive migration balance before 2022 (see Fig. 1).

Between 2014 and 2021, Ukraine experienced a large wave of internal displacement, driven by the annexation of Crimea and the armed conflict in the eastern regions of the country (see Table 1).

The first significant surge occurred in 2014–2015, when the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine rose to 1.6–1.8 million. This was the period of active military conflict in Donbas, during which hundreds of thousands of people were forced to flee the conflict zone and seek refuge in other regions of Ukraine. In 2016–2017, IDP numbers remained consistently high—approximately 1.6–1.7 million, with many living in temporary or inadequate conditions, often without prospects of return.

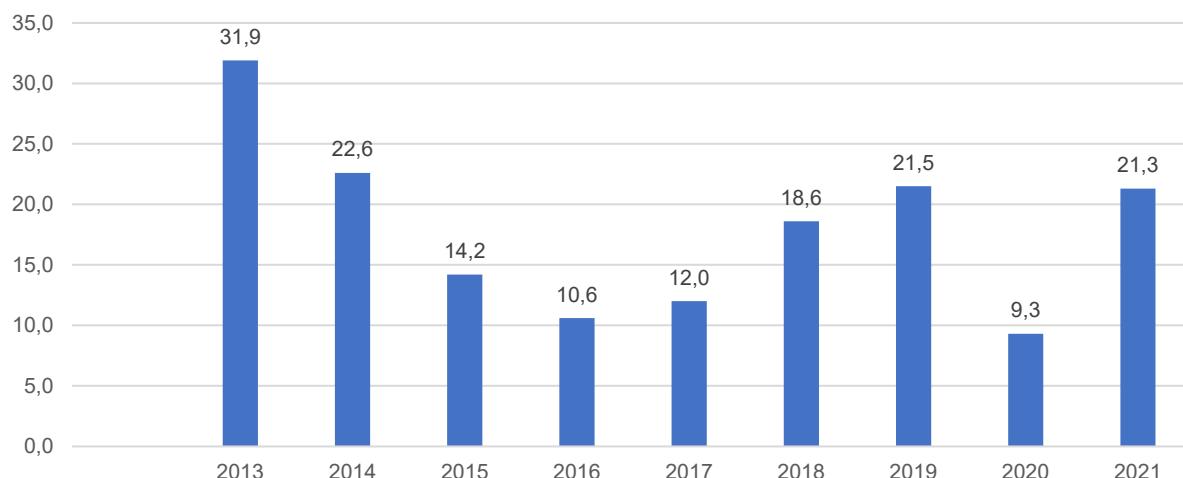
From 2018 onward, there was a gradual decline in the number of registered IDPs, associated both with the partial integration of displaced persons into new host communities and the diminishing relevance of formal registration due to complex or bureaucratic procedures. Between 2019 and 2021, the number of officially registered IDPs ranged from 1.4 to 1.5 million. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 also influenced population mobility and access to social services, potentially reducing the rate of registration updates.

Overall, during 2014–2021, a stable community of internally displaced persons emerged in Ukraine, requiring long-term solutions, particularly regarding housing, employment, access to education, and integration into host communities. Although the situation was not on the scale seen after 2022, this period laid the institutional groundwork, by both the state and international partners for response mechanisms that would later become critical during the full-scale war.

According to the study, the number of IDPs after 2022 reached between 6 and 8 million. The primary regions of displacement included Kyiv, Lviv, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih, and western Ukraine. This placed significant strain on infrastructure, the labor market, the education system, and healthcare services. The government responded with initiatives providing housing subsidies, employment support, retraining, and integration assistance.

External migration expanded even further. Over 6–7 million Ukrainians fled abroad, primarily to EU countries, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The majority were women with children, resulting in the feminization of migration. These migrants actively entered host country labor markets, particularly in care work, services, healthcare, and education. At the same time, they encountered barriers such

as non-recognition of qualifications, difficulties with employment, and challenges in language integration. EU countries implemented programs for temporary protection, employment support, and adaptation to new conditions; however, the long-term financial sustainability of these programs remains uncertain (see Table 2).



**Fig. 1. Population migration between Ukraine and other countries: increase/decrease in population (thousands)**  
Source: compiled by the authors.

**Table 1**

**Dynamics of the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Ukraine (2014–2021)**

Years	Approximate number of IDPs (in millions)	Commentary
2014	0.9–1.2 million	Following the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of hostilities in Donbas
2015	1.6–1.8 million	Peak registration of IDPs during the active phase of armed conflict
2016	~1.7 million	Stabilization of the situation; official registration continues
2017	~1.6 million	Some IDPs remain displaced but no longer update their registration
2018	~1.5 million	Minimal changes; the majority reside in government-controlled regions
2019	~1.5 million	Gradual trend toward integration or secondary migration
2020	~1.4–1.5 million	COVID-19 affected mobility and social assistance programs
2021	~1.4 million	Before the full-scale invasion, moderate decline in registered IDPs

Source: compiled by the authors.

**Table 2**

**Estimated Volumes of Migration from Ukraine (2022–2025)**

Type of Migration	Estimated number of Persons	Main Regions / Destination Countries
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	6–8 million	Kyiv, Lviv, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih
External Migration (Refugees)	6.8–7.5 million	Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy, Spain
Ukrainians under Temporary Protection in the EU	~4.7 million	EU countries (according to UNHCR, 2023–2024)

Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 2 illustrates the significant scale and diversity of migration from Ukraine between 2022 and 2025. It shows that an estimated 6 to 8 million people became internally displaced, primarily relocating to major urban centers such as Kyiv, Lviv, Dnipro, and Kryvyi Rih. At the same time, approximately 6.8 to 7.5 million Ukrainians sought refuge abroad, with the largest numbers settling in Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy, and Spain. Among them, around 4.7 million individuals were granted temporary protection status in EU countries, according to UNHCR data. These figures highlight the unprecedented nature of displacement and the pressing need for coordinated responses in both national and international migration policy.

Migration also had a reverse dimension: between 2023 and 2025, a gradual return of some refugees was recorded. According to surveys, 71% of Ukrainians consider returning

after the end of the war, with key conditions being safety, access to housing, and economic prospects. However, some migrants have already adapted to life abroad, particularly children who have integrated into educational systems, which complicates the return process (Operational Data Portal, 2025).

Quantitative indicators by country are presented in Table 3. According to data from the Statista portal, as of February 2025, more than 6.5 million Ukrainian refugees had been registered across Europe, confirming the enduring scale of the humanitarian crisis triggered by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The majority of refugees have been received by countries in Central and Western Europe, some of which have provided long-term residence, integration programs, and temporary protection for hundreds of thousands of individuals.

Table 3

Number of Registered Ukrainian Refugees in Europe as of February 2025	
Country	Number of Refugees
Germany	1 243 445
Poland	993 795
Czech Republic	389 830
United Kingdom	253 535
Spain	216 975
Romania	177 715
Italy	171 545
Moldova	135 860
Slovakia	132 120
Netherlands	121 645
Ireland	112 680
Belgium	87 365
Austria	85 710
Norway	78 850
Bulgaria	75 260
Finland	69 345
Switzerland	68 000
Portugal	65 245
France	63 865
Hungary	61 470
Lithuania	48 085
Latvia	47 655
Denmark	39 810
Estonia	37 415
Turkey	34 510
Greece	33 105
Georgia	28 640
Croatia	27 560
Sweden	26 800
Montenegro	21 245
North Macedonia	19 325
Cyprus	18 740
Slovenia	12 915
Serbia and Kosovo	10 730
Albania	6 465
Azerbaijan	4 645
Iceland	4 005
Luxembourg	3 875
Malta	2 640
Liechtenstein	705
Armenia	605
Bosnia and Herzegovina	265

Source: <https://www.statista.com/>

The leading host country is Germany, which has accepted 1,243,445 refugees—nearly 20% of all registered Ukrainian refugees in Europe—becoming a key destination due to its developed infrastructure, strong social protections, and robust integration initiatives. Poland, with 993,795 registered refugees, has traditionally served as the primary entry route for Ukrainians, although a significant share of migrants subsequently relocates to other EU countries. The Czech Republic (389,830), the United Kingdom (253,535), and Spain (216,975) also rank among the countries with the most active refugee support policies. Together, these five countries have received over 3 million Ukrainian refugees, accounting for more than half of the total number.

In terms of employment, the number of Ukrainian refugees who have found work in Germany has increased significantly. In September 2024 alone, 8,500 Ukrainians gained employment—more than double the figure from September 2023. This was made possible through the "Job Turbo" initiative aimed at accelerating the labor market integration of refugees. By July 2024, 266,000 working-age Ukrainians were employed in Germany.

From a regional perspective, Central and Eastern Europe—comprising countries such as Poland, the Czech

Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary, served as the first line of humanitarian response, owing to their geographic proximity to Ukraine. Western European countries (Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain) provided more sustained long-term support, including housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Northern Europe (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland) and the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) also participated in refugee reception efforts, albeit on a smaller scale.

An analysis of relative figures highlights the considerable burden placed on smaller countries. Although the absolute number of refugees in countries such as Moldova (135,860), Slovakia (132,120), or Lithuania (48,085) may be lower, the impact on national resources is relatively high due to their smaller populations and limited capacity. Notably, Moldova and Slovakia rank among the most burdened host countries in terms of the number of refugees per 1,000 inhabitants (Kostina, & Prots, 2024).

Ukrainian refugees have also influenced the socio-economic dynamics of these host countries. In Lithuania alone, over the first seven months of 2024, Ukrainian workers contributed €65.2 million in taxes—an increase of

€13 million, or 25%, compared to the same period the previous year. Since the start of the full-scale war, Ukrainian refugees working in Lithuania have paid a total of €205 million in taxes: €45 million in 2022, €95 million in 2023, and €65.2 million in the first part of 2024. According to official data, as of September 1, 33,900 Ukrainians were employed in Lithuania under labor contracts. The Employment Service currently offers them nearly 2,000 job vacancies. Most are employed in the transport and logistics sector (8,900), manufacturing (7,200), construction (6,700), and the hospitality and food service industries (3,000). Nearly 3,000, or 8.4%, work in high-skilled positions, while approximately 6,100, or 18.1%, are employed in low-skilled or unskilled jobs (Enovosty, 2024).

According to a study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), nearly 60% of Ukrainian refugees residing in Moldova were able to find employment in 2024. Of these, 44% secured permanent jobs, 10% were hired as temporary workers, and 4% worked remotely or received passive income. However, there are notable gender disparities: only 35% of women found employment compared to 82% of men. The main barriers to employment included a lack of available opportunities (60%), language barriers (49%), and insufficient access to job market information (Ukrainska Pravda, 2024).

Some countries have hosted the fewest Ukrainian refugees. Fewer than 10,000 refugees have been registered in states such as Serbia and Kosovo (10,730), Albania (6,465), Iceland (4,005), Liechtenstein (705), Armenia (605), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (265). This is attributed both to geographic distance and to these countries' limited involvement in broader European migration policy frameworks.

Overall, the data reflect not only the level of solidarity shown by EU member states and Ukraine's neighbors, but also the uneven distribution of the refugee burden. Amid the prolonged conflict, stable Ukrainian diasporas are forming, integrating into host societies while maintaining ties to their homeland. These trends highlight the need for a long-term strategic approach to integration, employment, education, and the potential return of part of the displaced population to Ukraine in the future.

The study demonstrates that the migration crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine has far-reaching consequences for both Ukraine and the European Union. For Ukraine, it has become one of the most significant demographic and social challenges: between 2022 and 2025 alone, the country lost approximately 6.7 million people, with major effects on the population structure, labor market, and the capacity of social systems. Large-scale external migration, combined with internal displacement of more than 6 to 8 million people, has led to infrastructure overload in certain regions and increased regional disparities in access to education, healthcare, and housing (Duszczak et al., 2023).

For the European Union, this situation has become a catalyst for rethinking migration policy. Despite the successful activation of temporary protection mechanisms, member states have faced uneven burdens, along with challenges related to social integration, language adaptation, and ensuring access to basic services. Border countries such as Poland, Slovakia, and Moldova have borne the greatest pressure, with particularly high ratios of refugees to local population size.

Thus, for both Ukraine and the EU, the Ukrainian migration crisis has become not only a humanitarian emergency but also a structural event requiring a systemic, long-term, and coordinated approach. Ukraine must develop

return and reintegration policies, while the EU must transition from emergency responses to stable integration frameworks. Only under such conditions can migration flows be transformed from a challenge into an opportunity for recovery and cooperation.

In the same time, highly supportive EU policies and measures of integration of the Ukrainian refugees and significant success of this integration evoked some criticism and claims of the 'racism' of the EU refugees' policies, which are much more restrictive in relation to the other groups of refugees starting from the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, or in case of flows of refugees from the African countries to the Southern EU countries via Mediterranean routes (Agier, 2025). Such claims are overly focused on the relevant racial and cultural proximity aspect in acceptance of refugees, but then the ignore or downplay other factors such as geographical proximity between the countries of origin and destination, abruptness and scale of the disruption causing the refugees crisis (Russo-Ukrainian war as the biggest continental war since the WW2), as well a relative smoothness of the integration process due to the previous experience of employment of the Ukrainian migrant workers, especially in Poland, Baltic countries and Romania.

This study has shown that the migration landscape of Ukraine between 2014 and 2025 underwent profound transformations, driven primarily by war, political instability, and socio-economic change. The combined effect of internal displacement and external migration created unprecedented demographic and political challenges for both Ukraine and the wider European region. The findings confirm that forced displacement is not merely a humanitarian issue but a long-term structural factor that necessitates a fundamental rethinking of migration governance at both national and international levels.

Internal migration – especially the mass displacement within Ukraine after 2022 – has placed enormous pressure on local infrastructure, public services, and labor markets in host regions. Despite state efforts to provide temporary housing, social assistance, and employment support, the integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) remains uneven. Sustainable reintegration strategies, including the digitalization of services and regional development, are crucial for stabilizing internal mobility and preventing the marginalization of displaced communities.

On the other hand, external migration continues to affect Ukraine's labor force and human capital potential. While many Ukrainian migrants have found employment and social protection in EU countries under temporary protection schemes, the long-term demographic consequences for Ukraine are substantial. If migration becomes permanent for large segments of the population – particularly highly educated youth and women – the country risks irreversible losses in its innovative capacity, workforce productivity, and regional development.

Return migration presents both a unique opportunity and a significant challenge. A considerable number of displaced Ukrainians express a willingness to return, but this depends on post-war reconstruction, security guarantees, and trust in public institutions. Repatriation policy must be closely linked to broader plans for economic recovery, housing strategies, and reskilling programs that meet the needs of both returnees and local communities.

In conclusion, the current migration crisis requires a comprehensive and forward-looking approach that combines humanitarian aid with long-term development and policy planning. Ukraine must not only address the immediate consequences of displacement but also

formulate inclusive policies that strengthen resilience, protect vulnerable groups, and leverage the potential of its diaspora. Likewise, EU countries must move from temporary aid to structural support, recognizing that the integration of Ukrainian migrants is both a moral obligation and a strategic imperative for regional stability and shared prosperity.

### Discussion and conclusions

The findings of this study confirm that migration processes in Ukraine between 2014 and 2025 have been largely shaped by protracted armed conflict and geopolitical instability. The annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine triggered the initial waves of internal displacement, but the full-scale invasion in 2022 sharply intensified both internal and external migration. This resulted in the largest forced displacement crisis in modern European history, deeply impacting Ukraine's demographic structure and labor market. Internal displacement placed significant pressure on urban infrastructure, while external migration led to labor shortages in critical sectors of the economy.

The research reveals a mismatch between existing migration policy frameworks and the evolving realities of large-scale displacement. While Ukrainian authorities have made progress in coordinating humanitarian assistance, political instruments for managing return migration, supporting displaced professionals, and addressing long-term social integration remain underdeveloped. There is a pressing need to revise migration strategies with a forward-looking perspective, taking into account both national reconstruction goals and regional cooperation with EU partners.

Despite these results, several key issues remain open for deeper investigation. One such issue is the potential for the return of Ukrainian refugees after the active phase of the war ends. Although surveys indicate a high level of intent to return, actual migrant behavior may differ significantly—especially where partial integration abroad has already occurred. The long-term impact of human capital loss on Ukraine's economy, particularly in sectors already experiencing labor shortages, also remains an unresolved concern.

Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of integration policies across different EU countries, particularly with attention to regional and social disparities. A promising direction is the comparison of refugee support models in both large and small host states, as well as the assessment of how these programs influence social cohesion in receiving communities. In addition, the experiences of Ukrainian children and youth within EU educational systems warrant deeper analysis—especially in terms of psychological adjustment, learning loss, and future employment prospects.

Moreover, the role of the Ukrainian diaspora in the country's postwar recovery should be studied further, along with the potential for building transnational social, educational, and economic networks. Central to upcoming policy discussions should be the design of return strategies that are not merely declarative but grounded in real support mechanisms—including access to housing, employment, education, and healthcare in the war-affected regions of Ukraine. Between 2014 and 2025, Ukraine's migration landscape underwent a profound transformation—from a relatively localized conflict in the east to a full-scale humanitarian crisis that affected the entire country and had cross-border implications. This led to large-scale demographic losses, a reduction in the labor force, shifts in the educational structure of the population, and significant pressure on social protection systems.

For Ukraine, the key challenges included the loss of a portion of the active population, particularly in sectors such

as healthcare, education, IT, and industry; overburdened infrastructure in regions hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs); and the urgent need for reintegration policies, including housing, reskilling, and support for small businesses. The Ukrainian state needs to recognize that not all citizens will return—and that mechanisms for circular mobility and engagement with the diaspora must be developed now.

For EU countries, Ukrainian refugees have helped fill labor shortages, particularly in sectors experiencing chronic workforce deficits such as logistics, care services, and agriculture. However, this has also increased pressure on housing, education, and healthcare systems—especially in Poland, Moldova, the Czech Republic, and the Baltic states. Successful examples of adaptation programs underscore the importance of long-term solutions rather than temporary responses.

Based on the conducted analysis, the following recommendations are proposed to improve migration policy and support the socio-economic reintegration of displaced persons:

#### Recommendations for Ukraine:

- Develop a national reintegration strategy for returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), which should include housing support, access to education, psychological assistance, and employment facilitation.
- Invest in infrastructure development and public services in regions that have received a significant number of IDPs, to prevent the overloading of local resources and promote balanced regional development.
- Strengthen employment and professional adaptation programs aimed at aligning migrants' skills with current labor market needs. For returnees, provide opportunities for retraining, entrepreneurship development, and the recognition of informal and foreign-acquired qualifications.
- Expand the use of digital public services and distance learning platforms, which have proven effective in conditions of displacement. This will help maintain access to education, professional development, and public services in mobile and crisis environments.

• Engage the Ukrainian diaspora and migrant communities abroad in the national recovery process by creating mechanisms for their participation in investment, innovation, and knowledge transfer.

• Ensure the collection of statistical data and the continuous monitoring and analysis of migration processes, disaggregated by age, gender, region, and status, to develop flexible and adaptive crisis response policies.

• Promote the development of an inclusive and non-discriminatory public discourse on migration to support social cohesion and prevent tension between host communities and displaced persons.

#### Recommendations for EU countries:

- Transition from short-term humanitarian solutions to long-term integration strategies. Temporary protection should gradually evolve into a systemic policy with clear mechanisms for access to education, the labor market, healthcare, and permanent residence.
- Facilitate the recognition of Ukrainian diplomas and qualifications by accelerating nostrification procedures, expanding retraining programs, and supporting the professional adaptation of migrants in sectors facing labor shortages (especially healthcare, education, care services, and IT).

Strengthen intergovernmental coordination with Ukraine to share migrant data, plan return policies, and involve Ukrainian

migrants in post-war recovery processes through joint educational, economic, and investment programs.

- Ensure adequate funding and support for local communities hosting significant numbers of Ukrainians by providing access to EU funds and creating targeted instruments at the municipal level.

- Incorporate a gender perspective into migration policy, particularly supporting mothers with children by improving access to childcare, schools, and flexible employment opportunities for women.

- Facilitate efforts in labor market integration and training of the refugees with special needs (disabled) by improving and expanding existing integration schemes and mechanisms.

- Develop voluntary and phased return mechanisms aimed at those who have expressed a desire to return to Ukraine, taking into account security, housing, and professional conditions for dignified reintegration.

- Support social dialogue and reduce xenophobic sentiments by informing the public about Ukrainians' contributions to host country economies, promoting cultural exchange, and encouraging civil society participation in integration policies.

- Modernize migration data collection systems to improve monitoring of the dynamics, needs, and profiles of Ukrainian migrants for effective policymaking.

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## МІГРАЦІЙНІ ВИКЛИКИ ТА ДЕРЖАВНА ПОЛІТИКА В КРАЇНАХ ЄС ТА УКРАЇНИ В УМОВАХ РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ

**Вступ.** Ця стаття є частиною проекту № 101132435 – *SKILLS4JUSTICE HORIZON-CL2-2023-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-03* та представляє комплексний аналіз поточних міграційних процесів в Україні та багатогранних викликів, які вони створюють для Європейського Союзу. З 2014 р., і особливо після повномасштабного російського вторгнення 2022 р., Україна пережила одну з найбільших міграційних хвиль у Європі із часів Другої світової війни. Дослідження висвітлює соціально-економічні, освітні та політичні аспекти цих міграційних потоків, враховуючи як внутрішнє переміщення, так і тенденції міжнародної міграції. У дослідженні розглянуто структуру, мотивацію та регіональний розподіл українських мігрантів у державах-членах ЄС, з акцентом на відмінностях у трудовій міграції, вимушенному переміщенні та мобільності студентів. Особливе увагу приділено гендерним, віковим і професійним характеристикам мігрантів, а також структурним викликам, з якими вони стикаються, таким як доступ до освіти, мовні бар'єри, інтеграція на ринку праці та соціальна інклюзія.

**Методи.** У дослідженні використано комбінацію статистичного аналізу, огляду політики та тематичних досліджень випадків у вибраних країнах ЄС, щоб забезпечити науково обґрунтований погляд на динаміку міграції та політичні заходи реагування.

**Результати.** Досліджене наслідки динаміки міграції для ЄС, включаючи демографічний тиск, дефіцит робочої сили в певних секторах, навантаження на державні послуги та необхідність адаптації національної та загальноєвропейської міграційної політики. В ній аналізується, як приймаючі країни реагують на інтеграцію українських біженців і трудових мігрантів, оцінюється готовність систем освіти, ринків праці та соціальної інфраструктури до боротьби зі стійким напливом. У статті оцінено стратегії уряду України щодо управління міграцією та межі співпраці з європейськими інституціями. Тут обговорено потенційні довгострокові наслідки міграції для людського капіталу України, включаючи відтік мізків і втрату кваліфікованої робочої сили, а також можливості для циркулярної міграції та залучення діаспори.

**Висновки.** На основі отриманих результатів запропоновано рекомендації, засновані на даних, спрямованих на побудову більш узгодженої, інклюзивної та стабільної міграційної політики. Ці результати покликані підтримати формування обґрунтованої політики як в Україні, так і в ЄС у ширшому контексті регіональної стабільності, розвитку освіти та соціально-економічної стійкості.

**Ключові слова:** міграційні процеси, українські мігранти, внутрішнє переміщення, трудова міграція, інтеграційна політика, Європейський Союз, соціально-економічний вплив.

Автори заявляють про відсутність конфлікту інтересів. Спонсори не брали участі в розробленні дослідження; у зборі, аналізі чи інтерпретації даних; у написанні рукопису; в рішенні про публікацію результатів.

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