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International Migration from Ukraine: Will Trends Increase or Go into Reverse?

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Ukraine remains today one of the main migrant sending countries in Europe, with thousands of Ukrainians working in Czechia, Italy, Poland and Russia. In this regard, Ukraine shares the previous experience of Central European countries such as the Baltic States, Poland and Slovakia, that in the 1990s and early 2000s registered first temporary, and later permanent, outflows. In more recent years, however, many Central and Eastern European countries started to register increasing numbers of immigrants and some of them have switched from net sending to net receiving migration regimes. The objective of this article is to discuss the possibility of a similar turnaround in Ukraine; to this end, we investigate the main quantitative data on migration from and to Ukraine, and interpret this information in the light of selected theoretical approaches that have been used to explain migration in Central and Eastern Europe. The available data reveal high levels of labour emigration of both temporary and permanent character, the increasing propensity of migrants to settle down in the host countries, and the growing involvement of the youngest cohorts in the emigration. Despite this evidence we argue that the current situation by no means constitutes a premise for reversing the outflow from Ukraine. We conclude that the most recent improvements in general economic indicators will not lead to high levels of immigration without an active labour market policy towards foreigners.

Keywords: Central and Eastern Europe, international migration, migration transition, quantitative data, Ukraine

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Introduction

The communist period in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) was marked by a strict regulation and limitation of people's international or, within the Soviet Union, inter-republic mobility. The disintegration of political regimes in the German Democratic Republic, Poland and the countries that followed the pro-democratic path of changes, the announcement of independence in former Soviet republics, and most importantly, the decay of the hitherto unipolar economic system in which the Soviet Union played the central role, allowed a true explosion of westward and intra-CEE mobility (Fihel, Kaczmarczyk, Okólski 2007). In the turbulent times of the 1990s and 2000s, mobility from and within the CEE region, if any generalisation about the phenomenon of international mobility encompassing all the post-communist countries is possible at all, could be described by three main characteristics (Bruecker *et al.* 2009; Fihel *et al.* 2007; Okólski 2000): 1) large numbers, 2) with predominant labour component, and 3) consisting of a multitude of forms and patterns, both relative to specific countries and the entire CEE region. The international mobility of Ukrainian nationals, as we strive to show in the following sections, constitutes no exception here.

The outflow from Ukraine has been increasing in recent years, fuelled by a prolonged economic and political crisis and warlike events in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. With more than 700 000 first-time residence permits issued to Ukrainian nationals in 2018 (Eurostat 2020), the latter became the largest group of temporary migrants in the European Union (EU). Poland, which three decades ago was itself the main sending country in Europe, became the main destination for Ukrainian migrants including not only temporary workers, but also students and permanent labour migrants. A growing number of the CEE countries being the new EU member states become destinations for increasing numbers of foreign nationals, including Ukrainians: Czechia and Hungary register positive net migration balances since the early 2000s, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia since the 2010s. Is Ukraine following the same path as Poland and other CEE countries, evolving from a country of high emigration to one attracting foreigners and actively enhancing labour immigration? The objective of this article is to discuss the possibility that Ukraine will soon become a net receiving migration country, which would result from a simultaneous reduction in emigration and increase in return migration and/or immigration. In this article, we look for any signs of migration transition (Chesnais 1992, 1986) in Ukraine, that is, a transition from a net sending regime with a negative migration balance, to a net receiving regime with a positive migration balance. These signs would include an increased emigration of permanent character (and decrease in temporary mobility), or greater return migration and inflow of foreign nationals, which is similar to the previous experiences of Western European countries or present experiences in some CEE countries where a massive outflow was replaced by large-scale immigration. To investigate this issue, we examine the main quantitative data on migration from and to Ukraine, in particular administrative sources and the Labour Force Survey, conducted both in Ukraine and the main destination countries in Europe. We review these sources of data in a critical way, providing a reflection on the extent to which these data apply to real mobility to and from Ukraine.

This article is constructed as follows; first, we investigate the economic, social and institutional circumstances relating to the situation in Ukraine in the post-communist period, which can serve as the contextual background for international mobility. Second, we present the main sources of quantitative data on migration of Ukrainian nationals, the usefulness of these data in reflecting international migration to and from Ukraine, and discuss the main tendencies in this migration, in particular labour migration. Finally, we interpret the tendencies in international mobility in the light of previous experiences of other countries in the CEE region and selected theoretical approaches that have been used to explain migration in this part of Europe.

The economic, socio-demographic and institutional background

Ukraine's post-Soviet transition to a democratic institutional system and market economy created unusual circumstances favouring international mobility mostly for economic purposes. The singularity of this transition consists of two incompatible forces: an economic and socio-demographic crisis on the one hand, underlying the increased potential for labour migration, and the lack of institutional settings in the European destination countries facilitating settlement emigration, on the other hand. We will focus here on the most important factors constituting this incompatibility.

As for the former, many authors claim that out of all post-communist countries in the CEE region, Ukraine has experienced one of the least successful transitions from a planned to a market economy (Braithwaite, Grootaert and Milanovic 2016; Guriev 2018). In the early 1990s all European post-Soviet countries registered a similar level of GDP per capita (World Bank 2020b). Ukraine's GDP was declining from 1991 till 1999, which was the longest period among its counterparts. In 2020 Ukraine finds itself in the most unfavourable position as compared to all neighbouring countries including Moldova, with GDP per capita equal to US$3 200 (US$8 600 if adjusted for purchasing power parity). According to the World Bank, in 2018 the productivity of the Ukrainian economy, measured as GDP per persons in employment, was three times lower than in Poland and almost four times lower compared to Turkey. Similarly, salaries in Ukraine are low (Malynovska 2016, 2019); even if adjusted for purchasing power parity, an average wage is from two to four times lower than in neighbouring countries. In particular, in 2020 the average PPP-adjusted wage in Ukraine is less than half that in Poland.

Such unfavourable phenomena as corruption and rent-seeking behaviours of emerging economic elites prevented stable economic growth in Ukraine (Aslund 2009; Gorodnichenko and Grygorenko 2008; Guriev 2018; Sutela 2012). In terms of ease of doing business Ukraine has been poorly ranked: according to the World Bank (2020a), in 2011 the country was at the 145th place and in 2014 at the 112th place out of 189 countries. After the introduction of market-oriented reforms, Ukraine moved to 83rd place in 2015 and 64th place in 2020 which is still far below the highest among the countries of the former Soviet bloc (where Lithuania ranks 11th, Estonia – 18th, Russia – 28th, Poland – 40th, Moldova – 48th and Belarus – 49th). Among positive macroeconomic results achieved recently one should also note a significant reduction in inflation, from 43 per cent in 2015 to 5 per cent in 2018.

Box 1. Brief information about Ukraine

Population: 42 million persons (2019)

GDP: US$ 153.8 billion (2019)

Territory: 603 500 km^2 (the second largest in Europe and the 45th largest worldwide)

Borders: total length – 6 992 km, (including 1 355 km of sea border). Border with the Russian Federation – 2 295.04 km, Moldova – 1 222 km, Belarus – 975.2 km, Romania – 613.8 km, Poland – 542.39 km, Hungary – 136.7 km, Slovakia – 97.9 km.

Ethnic groups: Ukrainians – 77.8%, Russians – 17.3%, Belarusians – 0.6%, Moldovans – 0.5%, Crimean Tatars – 0.5% (according to the 2001 Census)

Languages: the official language is Ukrainian

Human Development Index: 0.750, ranks 88 out of 189 (2019)

Source: authors' elaboration based on World Bank and State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

Since 2014 the Ukrainian economy has been further damaged by the Russian annexation of Crimea and the war with Russian-backed separatists at the eastern border (Drbohlav and Jaroszewicz 2016). According to the State Statistics Committee, in 2013 Crimea (together with Sevastopol) was home to 2.3 million persons and contributed 4 per cent to GDP. The Donetsk and Luhansk regions accounted for 14 per cent of GDP, 25 per cent of total exports and approximately 6.7 million persons. As of July 2020, 1.47 million persons were registered in Ukraine as internally displaced (IDP) (UNHCR 2020) and roughly 500 000 persons moved to Ukraine without registering as IDPs (Vakhitova and Iavorskyi 2020). About 70 per cent of the registered displaced population are children, pensioners and disabled (*ibidem*). Slightly above 400 000 persons were displaced to Russia and up to 100 000 applied for asylum or obtained refugee status in other countries. Overall, Ukraine lost approximately 3.2–3.9 million persons due to this war (Vyshnevskiy n.d.).

These population losses add to the demographic decline that has been taking place in Ukraine since the early 1990s. In the period 1991–2020 the population decreased by about 9.5 million inhabitants (14 per cent) in total. Ukraine registered the unfavourable demographic trends that have also been observed, but to a lower extent, in other European post-communist countries (Fihel and Okólski 2019): low fertility, relatively high mortality and stagnating life expectancy at birth. Since 1986, the total fertility rate has remained below the replacement level, reaching in 2017 the so-called lowest-low level of 1.37 children per woman. Life expectancy at birth in 2018 was as low as 71.5 years (as compared to the EU average of 81 years). Low fertility and high out-migration, as described in the following section, contributed to the population ageing and labour force decline which, even despite a recent rise in wage levels and increased age of retirement, is expected to reach 15 per cent by 2030 as compared to 2015 (IMF 2019).

With social and economic transition towards a liberal economic system stagnating for decades, Ukrainians tend to have a rather low level of trust in formal institutions (Fonseca, Pereira and Esteves 2014; Golovakha and Gorbachyk 2014) and to rely upon family and friends. Ukrainians distrust central authorities and political parties (Golovakha and Gorbachyk 2014; Razumkov Centre 2020). According to the European Social Survey (ESS 2012), Ukrainian nationals have relatively low engagement with local authorities and their trust in the judicial system is among the lowest in Europe, and lower than in countries of the European Union. Ukrainians' trust in parliament in 2011 (the latest year when Ukraine participated in the survey) was 1.99 points on a 10-point scale, trust in the judiciary – 2.26 points, and trust in the police – 2.50 points, reaching in all these domains the last place among 26 European countries. In terms of trust in politicians (1.85 points), Ukraine was ahead of only Greece, and in terms of trust in political parties (1.99 points), it was ahead of only Greece and Croatia and similar to Bulgaria. Ukrainians also demonstrated a relatively low level of life satisfaction and happiness (Guriev 2018).

This deep and long-lasting crisis, embracing the economic (one of the lowest GDP per capita in the region, low wages and corruption), demographic (dramatically low fertility and accelerated population ageing) and social aspects (low trust in state institutions) constitutes an important basis for labour out-migration from Ukraine. Importantly, in 2016 the Ukrainian economy started to recover: in this year an increase in GDP and in the average wage level was registered; two years later the unemployment rate started to decrease. But this recovery is taking place in the context of low demographic dynamics and emigration, which both contributed to reduce the labour supply in the domestic labour market. Consequently, the first signs of labour shortages have been observed in selected economic sectors: construction (Pieńkowski 2020), the food processing industry (OECD 2015), and high-skilled jobs (Czapliński and Dzhaman 2019), such as the IT sector and health care services.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, international mobility remained relatively limited, the reason being the institutional settings in the main destination countries, notably the EU. Consequently, Ukrainian migrants searched for ways of getting around these restrictions in the destination countries. In the case of migration to Poland in the 1990s and the early 2000s, Ukrainians used family ties that facilitated both short-term and permanent migration (Górny, Grzymała-Kazłowska, Kępińska, Fihel and Piekut 2007). As for another flow, to Italy and

Spain, tolerance of informal employment and poorly enforced entry restrictions combined with the wage differential stimulated high irregular migration (Finotelli and Echeverria 2017). At the beginning, in the 1990s, Italy and Spain became particularly popular among migrants from the western regions of Ukraine, close to the border with Romania with the highest share of Romanian speakers (ethnic Romanians and Moldovans) who had acquaintances in Romania and Moldova. So established ties played a crucial role in assisting and maintaining migration flows from the western parts of Ukraine and later on, in the 2000s, from different parts of the country. Eventually, Italian and Spanish governments conducted several regularisation programmes for undocumented immigrants, in order to re-gain control over the situation (Finotelli and Arango 2011).

CEE countries, in particular Poland, Czechia, and Hungary, pursue active migration-promoting policies aimed especially at Ukrainians (Libanova 2018). Hungary explicitly targets Ukrainian citizens of Hungarian origin, generously granting Hungarian citizenship under a simplified procedure and offering favourable educational opportunities. A Polish Card (*Karta Poliaka*), even though it is also said to only confirm Polish origin or strong ties, offers a card holder a very generous preferential status in matters of education, work and business, and also facilitates obtaining settlement status and citizenship in Poland. At the same time, Poland and, to a smaller degree, Czechia mostly focus on short-term labour mobility and students' migration. After accessing the EU in 2004 and joining the Schengen zone in 2007, the booming Polish economy attracted increasing interest from Ukrainian migrants and also experienced a high unsatisfied demand for labour. As early as 2006, Poland introduced special procedures for citizens of the country's eastern neighbours, including Ukraine, willing to work on a temporary basis in agriculture. In 2007 this was expanded to temporary employment in all economic sectors and, in subsequent years, to other eastern countries: Armenia, Georgia and Moldova (Kaczmarczyk 2015). Poland significantly modified its migration policy, aiming to attract legal employees who are likely to easily adapt in Polish society with skills required by the Polish labour market. Among measures facilitating this, Poland has liberalised employment and legalisation procedures, extended the validity of temporary residence permits and signed a bilateral social security agreement with Ukraine. In a few years Poland overtook Italy as the largest EU destination for Ukrainian migration (Malynovska 2019). In 2017 the European Commission applied a visa-free regime within the EU to Ukraine nationals, which constituted another important measure facilitating international mobility, this time for touristic reasons. It is not known to what extent the abolishment of visa requirement encouraged Ukrainian nationals to migrate to the EU with the purpose of undertaking irregular employment, but one can presume that in general, the liberalisation of mobility to EU member states provided a possibility of doing reconnaissance trips, tightening ties with Ukrainian diaspora and establishing contacts with possible employers and transnational intermediary and employment agencies.

Quantitative data on international migration: a critical overview

The quality, comparability and coherence of international migration data is a well-recognised problem both in the research and the social policy practice (Lemaitre 2005; UN 1998). There are several factors behind this situation: some difficulties are purely technical, related to variation in definitions, while other obstacles are caused by problems with data collection or a country's specifics (Chorniy *et al.* 2014). Moreover, while inflows can be to some extent approximated by official records of work and stay permits, immigrants' presence in the population registers, population censuses, asylum-seekers registers etc., emigration is a particularly difficult phenomenon to track. In a sending country, administrative sources are poorly adapted to identify persons who are no longer in the population, whereas register data collected in most important destinations are often not sufficiently coherent and comparable with each other. For the countries of Central and Eastern Europe an additional methodological problem arises from the short-term character of mobility, which hinders establishing a common definition of a migrant and measuring the flows. Sources of quantitative data on migration to and from Ukraine are no exception, and three types of data: derived from administrative sources, social surveys and destination countries' registers, are discussed here.

Population census and administrative sources in Ukraine

The Ukrainian administrative sources include the population census, register of residence changes and the State Border Control data. As for the former, the last population census took place in 2001, and the organisation of the next census has been postponed several times now. The register of residence changes, not to be confused with the usual population registers in other countries, refers to permanent residents and mainly acknowledges changes in registrations from the place of permanent stay (single demographic register administered by the State Migration Service). For many reasons, however, Ukrainians and foreign migrants (except for official expatriates) prefer not to register changes in their actual residential address (Slobodian and Fitisova 2018). This register suggests a very low, albeit positive net migration balance (Figure 1). This result should be treated with caution though as it was acknowledged that in 2018, based on the nationwide survey, as many as 6.8 million residents in Ukraine were not living at their registered domicile (*ibidem*). In turn, the estimates made on the number of border crossings, registered by the State border control separately for Ukrainian nationals and foreigners, suggest that between 2002 and 2018 as many as 6.5 million Ukrainians left and did not return to the country of origin (CES 2018).

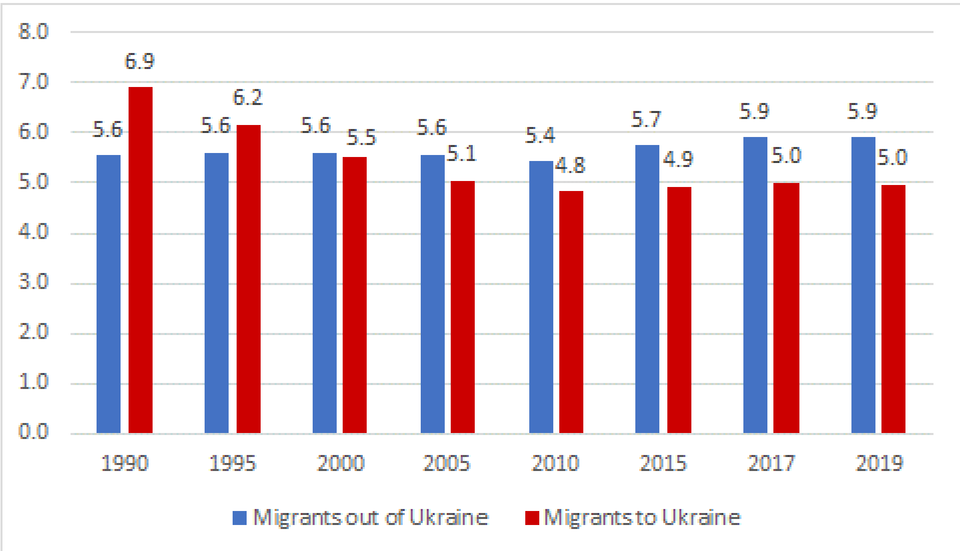
Figure 1. Immigration and emigration based on registration of residence, Ukraine 2002–2019[1]

[1] For 2014–2019, excluding the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol and a part of temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, from April 2016 to September 2017 information on population migration was compiled according to available administrative data received from separate registration bodies.

Source: authors' elaboration based on the State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

The International Organisation for Migration provides up-to-date, internationally comparable estimates of migrant stocks for every country of the world. These data are usually based on population censuses in countries of origin and destination. For several years now Ukraine has been among the top 20 destinations and origins of international migrants, defined as persons residing in a country different than country of birth (foreign-born) (IOM 2020); in 2019, 5.9 million persons born in Ukraine resided outside the country, whereas 5 million foreign-born persons lived in Ukraine (see Figure 2). In the case of Ukraine, however, as in the case of all other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, adopting the criterion of the place of birth in defining a migrant is more than useless. The numbers presented in Figure 2 include mostly internal migrants between the Soviet Union republics who moved before 1991, or persons who repatriated to/from Ukraine in the first years of independence. Three million 'immigrants' living in Ukraine who moved from Russia and another several hundred thousand persons from other former Soviet Union republics, had probably spent long years in Ukraine and had no relevant economic ties with their 'sending' country. In turn, almost 85 per cent of 'emigrants' from Ukraine lived in former USSR countries in the early 1990s. In 27 years, their number decreased from 4.6 to 4.1 million, but the IOM data does not allow to investigate the reasons behind this tendency: while return migration to Ukraine has taken place within this period, gradual extinction of cohorts born long before independence also played an important role.

Figure 2. Stocks of immigrants in Ukraine and emigrants from Ukraine based on the country of birth criterion, in millions



Source: authors' elaboration based on IOM (2020).

Overall, the data on immigration of foreigners is deficient as in the case of data on emigration of Ukrainian nationals. Due to the lack of a recent population census, the only available information concerns the total number and the profiles of legal foreign residents. Annually, Ukraine issues about 20 000 to 25 000 immigration permits to foreigners and stateless persons (DMSU 2019). Thus, in 2019 there were 285 000 foreigners with permanent residence permits (less than 0.7 per cent of the overall population of Ukraine) and approximately 133 000 foreigners with temporary permits (Malynovska 2019). Among them, there were 55 000 students from abroad (in academic year 2018–2019) and 11 000 more completed their education in 2018. In 2018, the number of foreigners officially employed in Ukraine was as low as 16 200 (*ibidem*), and most of them were senior managers or professionals employed in the capital city. These administrative data do not necessarily capture all forms of immigration, such as inflow of temporary character; nonetheless, such a low scale of official immigration is consistent with the estimates of migrants' personal remittances sent from Ukraine, constituting less than 4 per cent of the value of remittances sent to Ukraine: respectively, US$575 million versus US$15.8 billion at current prices, in 2019 (World Bank 2020b). This evidence suggests the marginal scale of regular foreign inflow to Ukraine, which cannot address labour shortages already identified in the domestic labour market (Czapliński and Dzhaman 2019; OECD 2015; Pieńkowski 2020).

Social surveys in Ukraine

Social surveys provide information on labour emigration, which comprises the greater part of overall emigration from Ukraine. Arguably the most reliable data about emigration is collected through the regular editions of the Ukrainian Labour Force Survey (LFS) and special migration modules attached to the LFS every five years since 2008 (UKRSTAT 2019). The survey is based upon interviews with approximately 40 000 respondents from 20 000 households and is representative for households at the national and regional level. The special migration modules define labour migrants as 15–70 years old nationals who, being still registered at a permanent place of residence in Ukraine, were employed abroad or, while being abroad, searched for a job in the two years preceding the survey. The main shortcoming of the LFS is that it addresses Ukrainian households and their members and tracks temporary migration only, and does not capture permanent emigrants who left Ukraine with all their families and border commuting workers.

Table 1. Ukrainian labour emigrants and population by age cohorts, LFS

	Total, thousands	By age categories, %						
		15–24 years	25–29 years	30–34 years	35–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–70 years
2015–2017								
Population 15–70	37 614	13.4	9.8	11.7	10.5	19.1	19.2	16.3
Population 15–60[a]	32 537	16.0	11.8	14.0	12.5	22.8	23.0	
All migrants	1 303.3	12.8	14.4	14.1	12	26.3	18.2	2.2
Migrants to Poland	506.5	17.8	18.1	10.5	14.4	24.6	13.8	0.8
2010–2012								
Population 15–70	40 124	16.8	11.5	10.4	9.8	18.5	19.7	13.3
Population 15–60[a]	35 671	19.4	13.3	12.0	11.3	21.3	22.7	
All migrants	1 181.6	11.0	15.8	18.3	13.0	25.3	14.8	1.4
Migrants to Poland	168.4	15.4	10.0	15.0	23.0	23.1	12.1	1.4
2005–2008								
Population 15–70	41 275	19.8	10.5	9.7	9.3	19.4	18.7	12.5
Population 15–60[a]	36 809	22.7	12.0	11.1	10.6	22.1	21.4	
All migrants[b]	1 476.1	15.3	14.2	15.7	14.6	29.3	10.9	
Migrants to Poland	118.1	11.9	10.7	12.4	13.8	37.3	13.9	

[a] Taking into account that the share of migrant aged 60–70 is very small (2.2% in 2015–2017) while it is sizable in population (16%), the comparison of distribution by age cohorts in subsamples of 15–60 years old is more accurate, in our opinion;

[b] Respondents 60 years old and above were included in the survey only since 2012.

Source: compiled by the authors based on the State Statistics Service of Ukraine Statistical Yearbook 2008, 2012, 2017; LFS 2008, 2012, 2017.

Based upon the LFS carried out between January 2005 and May 2008, 1.5 million inhabitants of Ukraine worked abroad at least once (State Statistics Service of Ukraine Statistical Yearbooks 2009, 2013, 2018, Table 1). During January 2010–June 2012 this number fell to 1.2 million, and between January 2015 and June 2017 it went up again to 1.3 million. Thus, the scale of temporary mobility, that is the flow captured by the LFS, became quickly restored following the financial crisis. As compared to the overall population of Ukraine, there is a slight overrepresentation of persons aged 25–29 and 40–49 among migrants (*ibidem*). Interestingly, the share of younger cohorts, aged 15–24, in temporary migration is rather stable, while it substantially decreased between 2005–2008 and 2015–2017 in the general population (see Table 1). It means that the levels of migration in the young cohort increased, and this change is particularly evident for labour migrants going to Poland, for whom the percentage of individuals below 30 years old increased from 25 per cent in 2010–2012 to 36 per cent in 2015–2017 (Table 1). In addition, young migrants are getting more actively involved in educational migration (Stadnyi 2019). Particularly, in 2016–2017 more than 77 000 Ukrainians studied abroad (3 per cent of the total home students). Relative to 2008–2009 the number has grown by 220 per cent and two thirds of this increase can be attributed to study at Polish universities.

Table 2. Ukrainian labour emigrants by duration of stay

	2005–2008	**2010–2012**	**2015–2017**
Temporary migrants, thousands	**1 476.1**	**1 181.6**	**1 303.3**
By duration, %			
up to 1 month	10.4	12.3	13.2
1–3 months	37.2	31.6	43.5
3–6 months	17.6	23.3	22.4
6–12 months	18.6	15.5	10.8
above 12 months	16.2	17.3	10.1
Permanent emigrants, thousands	**530**	**705**	**1 000**
Share of permanent migrants to all (temporary and permanent), %	26.4	37.4	43.4

Source: Pozniak (2012) and IDSS (2018), compiled by the authors based on LFS 2008, 2012, 2017.

At the same time, the share of the oldest migrants in the LFS, particularly 50–59 years old, is growing and resembles their corresponding share in the population. Temporary work abroad has become a permanent employment strategy for the middle-aged cohort of migrants who, as times goes by, move into the older and older age categories. Mobility captured in the LFS special modules conducted in 2008, 2012 and 2017, is of short-term character: most Ukrainian labour migrants were staying less than six months in their host countries (Table 2). This conclusion, however, refers to temporary mobility only and does not account for an important increase in permanent emigration from Ukraine, as estimated by Pozniak (2012) and IDSS (2018). In order to assess the scale of permanent outflow, Pozniak (2012) assumed that durable visits transform into long-term migration and, eventually, into settlement abroad with all the family members. Based on that assumption, Pozniak (2012) used the LFS 2008 data, the age structure of the population and migration intensity by age to assess the number of labour migrants that stayed abroad beyond 3.5 years and were not captured by this wave of the LFS survey. He further assumed that this category of migrants after working abroad for more than five years are likely to permanently settle down in the destination country with their families and, thus, would drop out of the next survey in 2010–2012. The plausibility of these calculations is argued by comparing the resulted estimates to the numbers reported in destination countries studies. Taking into account the estimated transition parameters similar calculations were performed for LFS 2017 (IDSS 2018). The projected stocks of permanent migrants: approximately 530 thousand persons in 2005–2008, 705 thousand in 2010–2012 and 1 million in 2015–2017, complements the LFS estimates of temporary migrants (Table 2). The total stock estimates for the period of 2015–2017 are as high as 2.7 million migrants of all types: temporary and permanent, of whom 1 million in the last category. The proportion of permanent emigrants visibly increased between 2005–2008 and 2015–2017 and: 37 per cent as compared to 25 per cent.

Longer absence weakens the ties with the home country. In 2017–2018 50 per cent of Ukrainian return migrants from Poland and Italy, interviewed in Ukraine, who had spent at least five years away said that they felt at home in the host countries (Lenoël *et al.* 2019). The demographic profile of Ukrainian migrants varies significantly between destinations, which is to a large extent determined by the main economic sectors of employment. According to the LFS data, the typical Ukrainian labour migrant is a middle-aged, blue-collar worker. These are mostly seasonal migrants performing basic work which does not require any qualification (37 per cent of all migrants) or does not match their qualifications (30 per cent). In Russia, seasonal migrants visiting for 1–3 months comprise the majority and their share has grown from 47 per cent in 2005–2008 to 60 per cent in 2010–2017. Ukrainian migrants going to Italy constitute a completely different group, as 40 per cent of them were staying abroad for over 12 months. These were mostly women (70 per cent) employed in domestic occupations and almost half of them were over 50.

Comparison of Ukrainian LFS with sources in the European destinations

The data derived from the EU member states and reported to Eurostat refer to residence permits, and therefore cover regular migrants, both temporary and permanent, both labour and non-labour. They include persons residing in the destination country at a given point in time that have not acquired the citizenship of the receiving country. They fail to cover irregular migrants as well as individuals with recent migration experience that have returned to Ukraine. As opposed to the Ukrainian data sources, destination countries detect migrants who left Ukraine with all their household members and are no longer captured by the Ukrainian LFS or official statistics of the country of origin. We present here data reported to Eurostat by the EU member states, as well as data published by Rosstat for Russia (Table 3). The main destinations for Ukrainian migrants are Poland and Russia, followed by Italy and Germany. On that basis, the total number of Ukrainian emigrants in all EU member states was estimated at 779 000 in 2012 and 1 177 000 in 2017 (Lücke and Saha 2019). To the latter, Lücke and Saha (*ibidem*) add approximately one third of temporary migrants detected by the Ukrainian LFS and obtain a conservative estimate of 2 million emigrants from Ukraine, that is 7 per cent of the country’s working-age population.

Table 3. Estimating the numbers of migrants by data from different surveys

Selected destinations	LFS		Partner country data	
	2012	2017	2012	2017
Russia	510	343	n.a.	346
Poland	169	507	122	451
Italy	156	147	225	235
Czech Republic	152	123	103	116
Germany	28	10	112	118
Portugal	21	21	44	32

Source: Lücke, Saha (2019) based on LFS 2012, 2017, Eurostat.

Administrative data from destination countries rather suggest the plausibility of LFS estimates concerning the stocks of Ukrainian emigrants. In 2017, the migrant stocks for Russia, Poland and Czechia were similar, but large discrepancies between two destinations could be observed for Germany and Italy. In these two countries, Ukrainian migration was of more long-term character and migrants were more likely to acquire permanent status.

Tendencies derived from the most recent studies concerning Ukrainian migrants in the destination countries confirm the finding of Ukrainian surveys. Particularly, Górny, Madej and Porwit (2020) indicate that the mean duration of stay among Ukrainian workers in Poland is rising. They also show that the motivations of Ukrainian labour migrants evolve: the main reason for migration is no longer lack of work in the country of origin, but rather low wages. In addition to a growing proportion of the youngest adults, this may indicate that migration strategies become more diversified, and that some migrants aim at benefitting from financial opportunities in the destination, rather than at moving back-and-forth between the two countries.

Main conclusions from the quantitative data

Results on the dynamics of the scale and the temporary nature of Ukrainian migration may be summarised as follows. The data based on the Ukrainian administrative register of changes of residence suggest that the inflow to Ukraine exceeds the outflow, but this source of information is not trustworthy in reflecting the overall international mobility to and from Ukraine, as it does not capture the main part of migratory moves, that is, short-term mobility, and does not include mobility that does not involve official change of residence status. Based on the country of birth criterion, IOM (2020) records an increasing stock of emigrants and stagnating stock of immigrants, but this relates in the first place to previous internal mobility within the Soviet Union or repatriation in the first years after 1991. As for temporary migration, three LFS surveys show an intense outflow of both short- and long-term character, a rise in the level of emigration in the last decade, and this matches the statistics of the major receiving countries. Studies in the main countries of destination point at a growing proportion of long-term migrants, which reveals a tendency for settlement strategies, and of young migrants, aged under 30, which refers mostly to students who also tend to settle down in the host countries. At the same time the official inflow of foreigners remains marginal relative to the population of Ukraine. In what follows we try to interpret these conclusions in a broader perspective referring both to theoretical considerations on international mobility and other CEE countries' experiences.

Discussion: Will trends intensify or reverse?

In line with neo-classical economic theory, the economic incentives, especially the expected advantages from labour migration explain the high levels of mobility which for thousands of Ukrainian nationals became a response to the hardships of the post-Soviet transition. They include such economic push factors as large discrepancies in wage levels between Ukraine and the vast majority of other European, including CEE countries, especially when juxtaposed with the growing difficulties in the labour market and the collapse of the welfare state system at home. In the 1990s, with the requirement of a 3-month Schengen visa abolished only in 2001 and only for those CEE countries that became the EU members soon afterwards, institutional barriers maintained by the west European destinations hindered emigration on a permanent basis (Bruecker *et al*. 2009; Okólski 2000). In these circumstances, the pioneers of labour migration from Ukraine made use of previously established, mostly informal international contacts (such as family ties), and headed to Czechia, Poland and former republics of the Soviet Union: Belarus, Russia and the Baltic States. In Ukraine in the late 1990s, temporary labour migration and border commuting for petty trade intensified, giving rise to durable migration networks that have been extending their scope to larger and larger categories of Ukrainian society (Fonseca *et al*. 2014; Hosnedlova and Stanek 2014; Vianello 2016). In a household perspective, temporary migration enhanced by social networks enabled a strategy of diversifying income sources and of reducing the risks related to employment whenever the other, not mobile family members remained professionally active in the country of origin (Kindler 2011).

The policies of main destination countries towards the inflow of labour migrants from Ukraine, including Poland's simplified procedure for short-term labour migrants established in 2006, 'channelled' Ukrainian nationals into temporary mobility (Górny and Kindler 2016). With the gradual abolition of institutional barriers in Poland and in the EU as a whole, mobility from Ukraine intensified to specific regions and economic sectors in the countries of destination (Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2018). In this sense, studies based on the social capital concept explain the spatial directions and economic allocation of the labour outflows from Ukraine, taking place in a particular plexus of strong economic incentives and rather unfavourable institutional circumstances. But what is seldom stressed, Ukrainian migration networks also provided a reservoir of temporary, flexible and, therefore, cheap workforce to the most developed countries, and fuelled the so-called secondary segment of the labour market characterised by low wages, little employment security and difficult working conditions (Leontiyeva 2016; Vianello 2016). The existence of a *quasi*-permanent demand for immigrant labour in the domestic services (Italy and Poland), trade (Czechia and Poland), construction sector (Czechia, Poland and Russia) and agriculture (Poland) perfectly corresponded to the readiness of Ukrainian nationals to undertake short-term mobility.

But with further regulations concerning international mobility and settlement being gradually lifted in several European countries, to quote only several regularisations of irregular foreign workers carried out in Italy, the Eastern Partnership introduced in Czechia, Hungary and Poland, and with labour shortages in other CEE countries, a growing number of Ukrainian migrants started to settle down in their destinations, such as Czechia, Italy and Poland (Leontiyeva 2016). While some migrants maintained the 'back-and-forth' mobility between temporary employment abroad and family life in Ukraine, others efficiently adapted to host societies and labour markets (Grzymała-Kazłowska and Brzozowska 2017). As some surveys in destination countries show, the duration of short-term migration gradually extends.

This increasing share of migrants undertaking long-term emigration raises questions about the possibility of Ukraine's turn in the migration regime, as observed in other CEE countries. According to migration transition theory, as European countries experienced different dynamics during the demographic transition – first, high natural increase and second, negative natural balance and population ageing – the migration balance switches as well from net sending (that is, outflow exceeds inflow) to net receiving (*vice versa*) (Chesnais 1986, 1992). This turning point was observed in the countries of western Europe in the early 1960s or the 1970s, and later in the southern part of the continent (Okólski 2012). In CEE, an increasing number of these countries – Czechia and Hungary in the early 2000s, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia in the 2010s – have become migration destinations for substantial numbers of foreigners, which suggests a radical and most probably persistent change in these countries' migration regimes.

One could pose a question about decisive factors underlying such a switch in migration regimes in CEE countries. According to Chesnais (1986), the migration transition in Western European countries was strictly related to demographic dynamics: a large natural increase resulting from demographic transition prompted mass emigration at the end of the 19th and first half of the 20th century (thus, net sending regime), whereas low or negative natural increase and population ageing have been underlying labour immigration (net receiving regime) since the second half of the 20th century. Other authors pointed at other accompanying factors, mostly growing deficits in the native labour force (Bonifazi 2008; Frey and Mammey 1996; Salt, Singleton and Hogarth 1994), segmentation of labour markets and unsatisfied demand for low-skilled workers (Van Mol and de

Valk 2016). In the CEE region, however, demographic indicators did not correspond accurately to the claims of migration transition theory: large emigration from such countries as the Baltic States, Poland and Romania was observed in a period of low fertility, zero natural increase and acceleration of population ageing. This emigration, replacing the preceding mainly temporary mobility, was related to lifting of migration restrictions, mostly after the EU enlargement eastwards (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009), rather than demographic factors.

Like other countries of the CEE region, the outflow from Ukraine occurs in demographic conditions of low dynamics and an advanced population ageing, reinforced by low fertility and the outflow of young adults. After the decades of intense temporary labour mobility, the permanent form of outflow seems to slowly take over and the softening of the institutional barriers in the destination countries intensifies this transformation. Is the Ukrainian emigration of the last three decades the eventual outflow relieving the disequilibrium in the labour market and constituting grounds for inflow of foreigners? Even despite most recent improvements in GDP and unemployment rate and growing labour shortages, Ukraine's economic situation is still critical and by no means compares to other CEE countries that attract foreign labour including, what is relevant for this study, Ukrainian workers. The labour shortages in Ukraine increase in specific economic sectors, but are not addressed by any active labour market policy of the authorities that could foster immigration. For instance, foreign students have limited opportunities to enter the Ukrainian labour market (Zhurakovska 2019), are not allowed to work legally during their studies, and must return to their home countries after graduation. The State Migration Strategy 2018–2025 (KMU 2017) recognises Ukraine's low attractiveness to immigrants, but intended actions are insufficient to mitigate labour shortages. The Strategy (*ibidem*) and the Implementation Plan (KMU 2018) request various state institutions 'to simplify the employment of foreigners' and 'to synchronise labour market demand and immigration policy' which can be interpreted rather broadly. They also recommended exploring in 2019 'the need to extend foreign students' stay after graduation' – which was not done, which raises doubts about political determination of promoting the settlement of foreign graduates.

As in all European countries, the Covid-19 pandemic has limited the opportunities for foreigners to move to Ukraine. While this last factor should be treated rather as a short-term shock to international mobility overall in Europe, the lack of systematic measures actively enhancing the inflow of foreigners constitutes the most important impediment for Ukraine in the transition to net receiving status. In other CEE countries undergoing such a transition, for instance Czechia and Poland, the recent population ageing and economic development were accompanied by active labour market policies establishing, among other things, simplified employment procedures in sectors with labour shortages. This resulted in a large inflow of foreign labour. Ukraine, undergoing similar demographic changes and starting to register an increase in GDP, still lacks an expansive migration policy that would not only enhance returns or inflow of foreigners, but more importantly, help to reduce labour shortages and promote economic development.

Conflict of interest statement

No conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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