

LABOUR AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

TRANSFORMATIONS OF LABOR MIGRATION FROM UKRAINE TO THE EU DURING THE PANDEMIC

**Kateryna Kulchytska, Pavlo Kravchuk,
Iryna Sushko**

Kateryna Yarmolyuk-Kröck

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Movement restrictions have created barriers to attracting migrant workers to work abroad and to their returning to their countries of origin.



The economic downturn amid harsh anti-epidemic measures has led to changes in the EU labor market.



The consequences of the pandemic carry the risks of stigmatization, discrimination against migrant workers and an increase in unregulated migration.

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ABSTRACT

This publication analyzes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on labor migration from Ukraine to the EU in several dimensions:

- comparison of labor migration to the EU from Ukraine and three other Eastern Partnership countries (Moldova, Georgia, and Belarus)
- economic consequences of anti-pandemic restrictions for countries of destination and countries of origin
- the impact of the pandemic on the situation of migrant workers: changes in labor markets, restrictions on mobility, discrimination
- government policies to counter the pandemic in the context of labor migration, social protection of migrant workers

INTRODUCTION

The issue of labor migration combines several dimensions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: the economic consequences of anti-epidemic restrictions, the migratory dimension of border control and traffic bans, and the human dimension of social and medical protection of foreign workers, anti-discrimination, and more.

The need for swift and radical solutions in a new, little-studied and extreme situation puts governments in need — or temptation — of severe restrictions on basic rights, which can hit particularly vulnerable groups, which often include migrant workers. The pandemic and related anti-epidemic measures have also increased the incidence of racism and xenophobia, including against migrant workers. On the other hand, the coronavirus crisis has highlighted the dependence of some countries on workers from abroad, which has formed a certain layer of political rhetoric and journalism with a positive assessment of the role of migrant workers.

As of November 2020, a sufficient number of facts have been accumulated to judge the nature of the problems the pandemic caused in the field of labor migration and to try

to assess the effectiveness of the response of governments — both of countries of origin and destination for migrant workers. The object of the research is labor migration to the EU countries from Ukraine. Data from three more Eastern Partnership countries were used for comparison. These are Georgia and Moldova, which have signed an Association Agreement with the EU and have particularly close ties with the European Union, as well as Belarus, which has a land border with the EU. The policy of labor migration management in these countries with an emphasis on Ukraine is also at the center of the study.

The purpose of this paper is to answer the question of whether the measures taken by governments to counter the pandemic are effective in the context of regulating labor migration, how they have affected the situation of migrant workers, and what trends in labor migration affect such decisions. Besides, to what extent do the «new pandemic» and «old systemic» problems of labor migration correlate, and do the recent changes mean a completely new page that requires a revision of previous approaches to the phenomenon of labor migration? If so, what should these approaches be?

1

TRENDS IN LABOR MIGRATION TO THE EU UNTIL 2020

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Eastern Partnership countries had different indicators of labor migration. However, migrants from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Belarus were united by common reasons for looking for work abroad — the lack of high-paying jobs at home against the background of economic problems in the countries.

1.1 UKRAINE

The leading place in the level of labor migration among the Eastern Partnership countries is occupied by Ukraine, which is traditionally included in the list of top suppliers of the labor force. The last surge in labor migration of Ukrainians occurred after 2013, due to the economic crisis and the fall of the national currency after the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of Russia's armed aggression.

The exact number of Ukrainian labor migrants abroad is estimated differently by researchers, due to the difficulties in counting circular migrants who regularly go for short-term work and long-term migrants who go to other countries for at least one year. Thus, according to a large-scale survey of the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, in 2015-2017 1.3 million people at least once worked abroad, which is 4.5% of the population of the corresponding age (data without taking into account the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and some regions of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts)¹. This study did not take into account those who went abroad with their families or border pendulum labor migrants, and therefore the actual number of labor migrants was higher. According to the Center for Economic Strategies, the number of migrant workers in 2018 reached 4 million people. At the same time, up to 2.6-2.7 million people² could remain outside the country. Instead, at the end of 2018, the Ministry of Social Policy estimated that “on average, from 7 to 9 million people a year participate in

the mobile migration process, at the same time only 3.2 million migrant workers from Ukraine remain constantly abroad”³.

It should be noted that according to the survey conducted by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine in 2017, almost a quarter of all migrant workers worked abroad without a regulated status. Studies by the International Organization for Migration show that the peak of unregulated work of Ukrainians abroad fell on 2015-2017, while the share of family members who worked abroad without permits, was 41-40%. However, in 2019, after granting Ukraine a visa-free regime with the EU and simplifying employment conditions for Ukrainians in Poland, this figure dropped to 30%⁴ (Diagram 1).

At the end of 2019, the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU) stated that the trend of outflow of labor force abroad is almost stopped through reducing the pay gap in Ukraine and the EU. This is evidenced by the slowdown in private remittances to Ukraine from abroad⁵. In 2019, the volume of remittances amounted to \$ 11.9 billion (Diagram 2), which is 7.8% more than a year earlier (\$ 11.1 billion). But this growth is significantly lower than in 2017-2018 (23% and 20% respectively)⁶.

Poland, Russia, Italy, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Portugal remain the main destinations for Ukrainians over time. Most Ukrainian citizens work in Poland. In particular, in 2019, according to the National Bank of Poland, approximately 1 million Ukrainians, who used visas for work and business activity, Polish cards, permanent, temporary and long-term residence permits in the EU, decla-

¹ External labor migration (according to the results of the modular sample survey). Statistical bulletin. - Kyiv: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2017. - 36 p. http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/publ11_u.htm

² How many Ukrainians went abroad and what should the state do about it. Center for Economic Strategies <https://ces.org.ua/migration/>

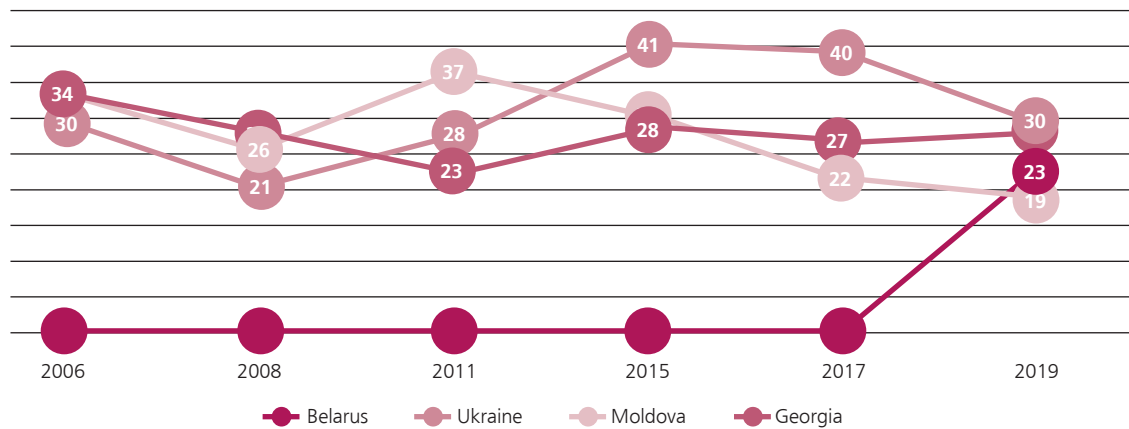
³ A fact for media consideration: the figure of 12 million Ukrainian workers abroad is not true. Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine <https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/16528.html>

⁴ Source: Research on migration and human trafficking. IOM Ukraine, 2019 http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/iom_regional_ct_survey_2019_ukr_print.pdf

⁵ The trend of outflow of labor abroad has almost stopped - Deputy Chairman of the NBU. Interfax-Ukraine <https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/economic/630067.html>

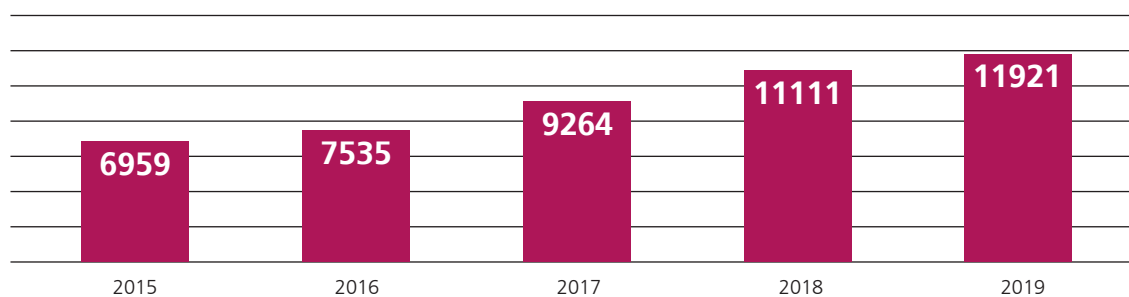
⁶ Poland is out of fashion, and the Czech Republic has moved Russia. Five trends of Ukrainian labor migration. NV Business <https://nv.ua/ukr/biz/economics/roboty-v-yevropi-kudi-jidut-ukrajinci-i-skilki-zaroblyayut-5-vazhlivih-faktiv-novini-ukrajini-50069771.html>

Diagram 1
Share of family members working abroad without regulated status, %



Source: Research on migration and human trafficking. IOM Ukraine, 2019

Diagram 2
Volumes of private remittances to Ukraine through official and unofficial channels of income in 2015-2019, million USD



Source: The National Bank of Ukraine

rations of work assignments to foreigners⁷ worked in this country. The exact number of Ukrainian labor migrants is unknown due to the temporality and circular nature of this migration, as Ukrainians can combine different residence and work permits under the visa-free regime, so one person may appear in the statistics of different institutions⁸.

The leading position of Ukrainians in the labor market of the European Union is demonstrated by the statistics of residence permits. In recent years Ukrainians occupy the first place in terms of the growth of new residence permits for employment in the EU (340.9 thousand)⁹ and the number of all valid residence permits for work at the end of the

year¹⁰ (Table 1). Despite the growing number of long-term migrants, circular migration remains the main model of the migration pattern of Ukrainians.

Partially available Eurostat data for 2019 indicate a continuing upward trend in the number of first-time permits, all valid permits as of 31 December 2019, and, in particular, a significant increase in the number of long-term permits (12 months or more). In 2019, the number of permits issued to Ukrainian citizens for the first time lasting 12 months or more in the Czech Republic increased to 33.1 thousand compared to 9.1 thousand in 2017, in Poland — to 44 thousand (28.1 thousand), in Hungary — to 22.9 thousand (5.3), Slovakia — up to 9.3 thousand (1.6).

Russia has lost its position as a key destination for Ukrainian migrant workers due to the reorientation of workers to Eastern European countries — Poland and the Czech Re-

⁷ Inflation report. March 2020. Narodowy Bank Polski. P.35 https://www.nbp.pl/en/publikacje/raport_inflacja/iraport_march2020.pdf

⁸ Myths and facts about Ukrainian labor migration to the countries of Visegrad group https://europewb.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Mify_trud_migrac.pdf

⁹ Top five countries whose citizens received first residence permits in the EU-28, by reason and by Member State issuing the permit, 2018 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Top_five_countries_whose_citizens_received_first_residence_permits_in_the_EU-28_by_reason_and_by_Member_State_issuing_the_permit_2018.png

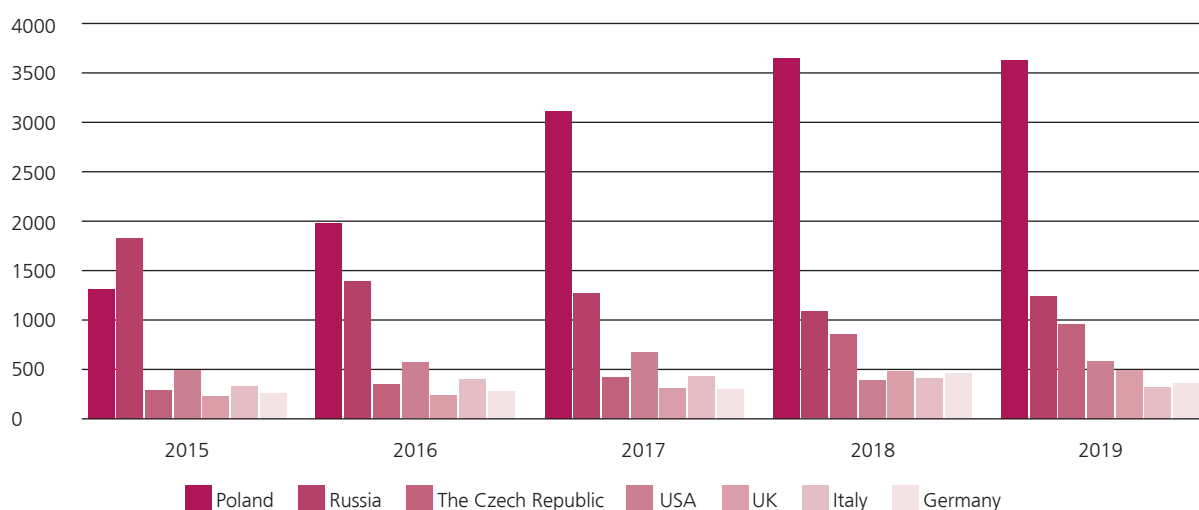
¹⁰ Non-EU countries of citizenship with the largest number of valid residence permits by reason, EU-28, 2013-2018 (million permits) https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/2/2e/Non-EU_countries_of_citizenship_with_the_largest_number_of_valid_residence_permits_by_reason%2C_EU-28%2C_2013-2018_%28million_permits%29_MI2019_II.png

Table 1
All valid residence permits for employment in the EU countries as of December 31, 2018, for citizens of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia

	Ukraine	Belarus	Moldova	Georgia
Total in the EU	500,980	35,981	73,689	19,884
Poland	236,441	17,692	2,802	1,461
Italy	148,372	3,648	66,471	9,859
The Czech Republic	30,699	1,907	1,287	441
Hungary	22,170	75	309	65
Lithuania	13,433	7,703	363	125
Slovakia	12,074	219	110	125
Germany	8,833	1,786	268	1,896
Spain	5,758	223	313	1,442
Latvia	3,432	937	49	89
Estonia	3,096	246	45	35
Portugal	2,181	47	342	47
Finland	1,756	93	32	13
United Kingdom	1,748	437	39	137
Sweden	1,588	309	36	249
the Netherlands.	1,580	316	33	74
Greece	1,545	86	553	3,093
France	1,325	191	174	323
Croatia	889	25	19	3
Bulgaria	776	50	6	14
Cyprus	611	139	169	83
Slovenia	585	33	15	4
Ireland	492	71	37	31
Belgium	455	57	31	65
Austria	434	60	7	111
Malta	418	31	33	74
Luxembourg	203	29	7	10
Romania	86	8	139	15

Source: Eurostat

Diagram 3
Private remittances to Ukraine through official and unofficial channels of income in 2015-2019, million USD



Source: The National Bank of Ukraine

public. This is confirmed by both the results of surveys in 2008-2017 and the statistics of private remittances to Ukraine (Diagram 3). A promising labor market for Ukrainians is also Germany, which from March 1, 2020, has simplified employment conditions for non-EU citizens.

The majority of labor migrants from Ukraine, according to the State Statistics Service, are men who work mainly in construction, agriculture, and industrial facilities. Women from Ukraine are mostly employed in households and to a lesser extent in agriculture, industry, and trade.

1.2 MOLDOVA

If Ukraine is the leader in the number of migrant workers among the Eastern Partnership countries, then Moldova is the leader in the share of migrants. According to the latest estimates of the International Organization for Migration, more than 500,000 Moldovans work abroad, which is almost a fifth of the country's total population (2.6 million people).¹¹ Additional difficulties in the calculation of migrant workers from this country are associated with the widespread phenomenon of acquiring Romanian citizenship, which allows them to find employment in the EU countries on simpler terms. According to the World Bank, Moldova was included in the list of countries of the world with the biggest share of remittances from migrant workers in relation to GDP. The total volume of remittances to Moldova in 2019 amounted to 1.9 billion US dollars — 16% of GDP¹².

IOM studies show a reduction in the number of unregulated migrants from Moldova. If in 2011 the share of family members who worked abroad without a regulated status according to IOM surveys was 37%, in 2019 it was only 19% (Diagram 1)¹³. It is worth noting that compared to the results of similar surveys in Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia, this figure for migrants from Moldova was the lowest.

Labor migration from Moldova is mainly targeted at two regions: countries that were part of the former Soviet Union, including Russia (over 55% of Moldovan migrants in 2014), and Western Europe, including Italy (more than 15% of Moldovan migrants in 2014).¹⁴ It is worth noting that the vast majority of all valid residence permits for employment in the EU at the end of 2018 were issued to Moldovan citizens in Italy: 66,471 permits out of a total of

73,689 (Table 1). Other popular destinations for Moldovans are Spain, France, and Portugal, where migrants work mainly in services, construction, restaurants, and households. Moldovan women are more involved in working in the EU countries than men, their main areas of employment being services and trade.¹⁵

In 2014-2019, the volume of remittances from Russia to Moldova tended to decrease, and from EU countries on the contrary to increase. According to the National Bank of Moldova, in 2019 the volume of remittances from the European Union increased compared to 2018 by 11.2%, and from the CIS countries decreased by 24.7% (Diagram 4)¹⁶. In general, funds were transferred to Moldova from Russia, Israel, Italy, Germany, the USA, Great Britain, France, Ireland, Spain, Romania, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Poland, and other countries of the world¹⁷.

1.3 GEORGIA

Another Eastern Partnership country whose citizens are actively involved in labor migration is Georgia. According to the International Organization for Migration, the number of Georgian migrant workers in 2019 was more than 220 thousand people¹⁸. Their main destinations were Russia, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Germany, the United States, Spain, France, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan. Mostly Georgian men went to work in Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan, while women went to Italy, Greece, and Turkey¹⁹. It should be noted that most of all valid Georgian citizenship residence permits for employment in the EU at the end of 2018 were issued in Italy (Table 1).

After Georgia received a visa-free regime with EU countries in 2017, Poland simplified the legal registration of Georgians and gradually became one of the main destinations for Georgian migrant workers. As of February 2019, the volume of remittances from Poland ranked 10th among remittances to Georgia and amounted to \$ 2.2 million per month. For comparison, in February 2018, 800,000 US dollars were transferred from Poland to Georgia, and in February 2017, before the visa-free regime — 127 thousand

¹¹ Research on migration and human trafficking. IOM Ukraine, 2019 http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/iom_regional_ct_survey_2019_ukr_print.pdf

¹² Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) - Moldova. World Bank <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=MD>

¹³ Research on migration and human trafficking. IOM Ukraine, 2019 http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/iom_regional_ct_survey_2019_ukr_print.pdf

¹⁴ MIGRATION PROFILE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA. IOM Mission in Moldova <https://moldova.iom.int/migration-profile-republic-moldova>

¹⁵ LABOR MIGRATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY: A ROADMAP. MOLDOVA-EU. Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum https://eap-csf.eu/wp-content/uploads/Roadmap_MD_ENG.pdf

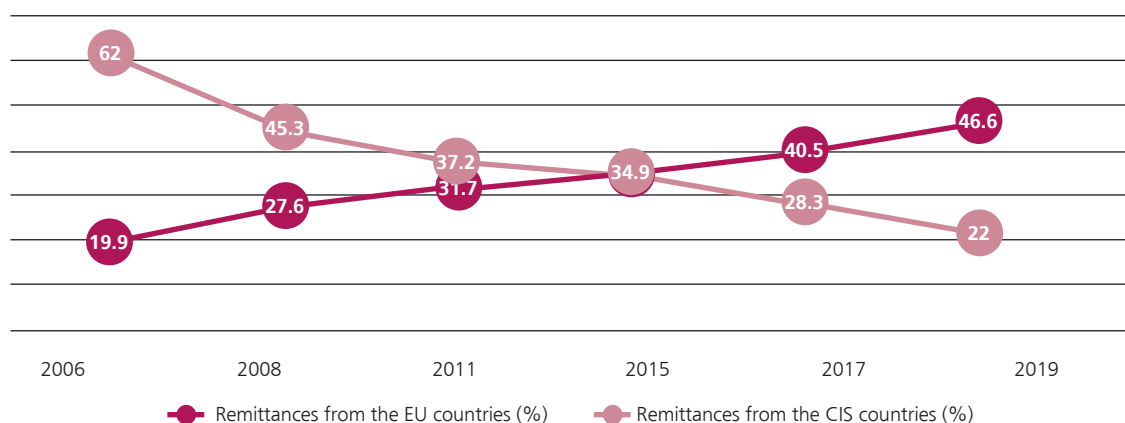
¹⁶ Evoluția transferurilor de mijloace bănești din străinătate efectuate în favoarea persoanelor fizice prin intermediul băncilor din Republica Moldova în anul 2019 (decontări nete). Banca Națională a Moldovei http://bnm.md/ro/content/evolutia-transferurilor-de-mijloace-banesti-din-strainatate-efectuate-favoarea-25?fbclid=IwAR0ssdH1Q0UX0_h_BR_bMUdRctVceyRqS9h8gXv8tG-FXOZvChxJf6Z092g

¹⁷ In 2019, the volume of remittances to Moldova decreased by 3.5% <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/v-2019-godu-obem-denezhnyh-perevodov-v-moldovu-snizilsya-na-3-5/>

¹⁸ Research on migration and human trafficking. IOM Ukraine, 2019 http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/iom_regional_ct_survey_2019_ukr_print.pdf

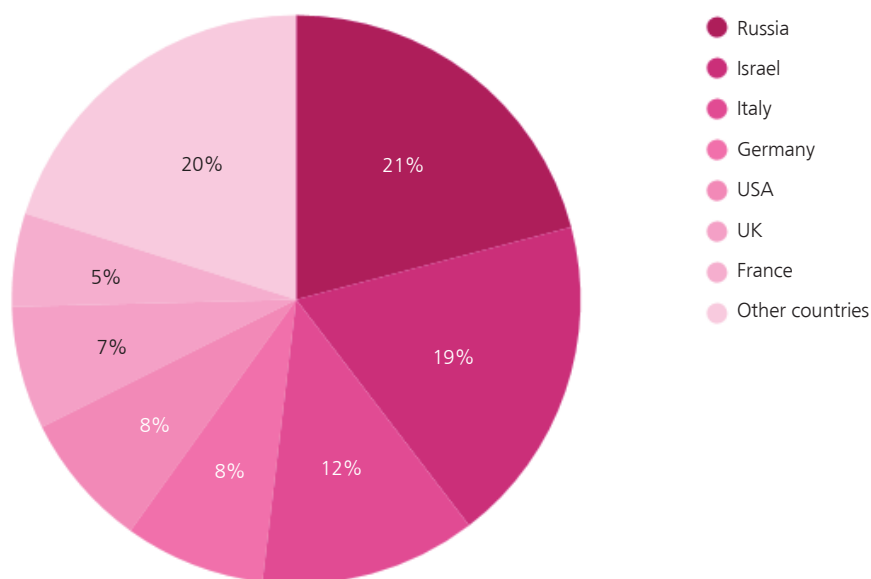
¹⁹ Emigration from Georgia. State Commission on Migration Issues <http://migration.commission.ge/files/emigracia-saqartveloshi-eng.jpg>

Diagram 4
Dynamics of the geographical structure of remittances to Moldova from abroad in favor of individuals (2014 - 2019), %



Source: The National Bank of Moldova

Diagram 5
Private remittances to Moldova by main countries of receipt in 2019, %



Source: The National Bank of Moldova

USD²⁰. The general number of remittances from abroad to the country amounted to 1.9 billion US dollars in 2019, which corresponded to 16% of GDP²¹.

The issue that requires special attention is unregulated migration from Georgia to the EU. According to the IOM survey, the share of family members working abroad without a regulated status in 2019 was 23% (Chart 1)²². However, the EU is increasingly concerned about

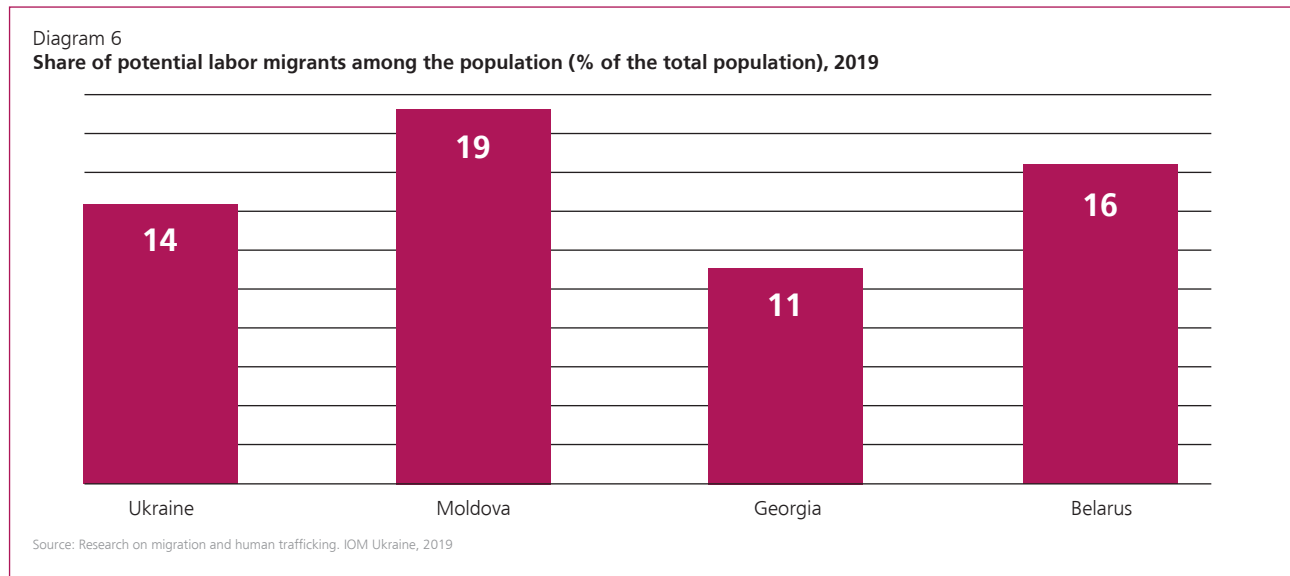
mass baseless applications for asylum by Georgian citizens. The increased number of such applications in 2019 was the reason to consider suspending the visa-free regime with the EU. To combat the illicit use of visa-free travel, Georgia has amended the Criminal Code, which now provides for liability for facilitating the illegal stay of Georgian citizens abroad, as well as for assisting in the provision of falsified information for international protection (such as asylum). The country also adopted amendments to the law, which introduced stricter rules and clearer criteria for whether a convicted person can leave the country²³.

²⁰ Poland is a country where there are jobs for Georgian citizens. JAM news <http://shorturl.at/eqDQS>

²¹ Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) - Moldova. World Bank <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=MD>

²² Research on migration and human trafficking. IOM Ukraine, 2019 http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/iom_regional_ct_survey_2019_ukr_print.pdf

²³ REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL THIRD REPORT UNDER THE VISA SUSPENSION MECHANISM



1.4 BELARUS

The least studied is the issue of labor migration from Belarus, which is complicated by political restrictions within the country. According to experts from the Global Migration Policy Associates (GMPA), about a third of the economically active population of Belarus — 1.5 million people — work abroad, of which about a million work in Russia and up to 500 thousand people in other countries, particularly Poland, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, USA, Norway, Finland²⁴. In 2019, a total of about 100,000 Belarusians worked in Poland, using work visas, Polish cards, permanent, temporary and long-term residence permits in the EU, declarations of work assignments to foreigners²⁵. According to the World Bank, migrants transferred more than 1.4 billion US dollars to Belarus, which corresponds to 2.4% of GDP²⁶. Migrant workers from Belarus are most often employed in construction, agriculture, and services.

1.5 THE POTENTIAL OF LABOR MIGRATION FROM UKRAINE AND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES

On the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 5 million migrant workers from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Belarus worked abroad. Involved in construction, agriculture, services, and industry, they transferred large sums of money home to support the economic well-being of their families. Thanks to loyal legalization rules, Poland has become one of the key destination countries for migrant workers from these countries. At the same time, the job search has

become more popular in Germany and the Czech Republic, which in recent years have facilitated the recruitment of workers from abroad.

Before the pandemic, there were more than 10% of the population in all Eastern Partnership countries who were potential migrant workers, i.e., planned to find work abroad, or have already found it (Diagram 6). According to the IOM survey, in 2019, potential labor migrants from Ukraine sought to find work primarily in Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Meanwhile Moldovan in Germany, Italy, and Russia. Georgian — in Poland, USA, and Italy. Belarusian — in Poland, Germany, and Russia. Among the most desirable areas of work for potential migrants from all four countries were housework (childcare / elderly care, housekeeping) and construction or restoration work²⁷.

²⁴ Belarusian workers: Chasing after easy money. Tyzhden.ua. 01/31/2020 <https://tyzhden.ua/World/239806>

²⁵ Inflation report. March 2020. Narodowy Bank Polski. P.35 https://www.nbp.pl/en/publikacje/raport_inflacja/iraport_march2020.pdf

²⁶ Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) - Belarus. World Bank <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=BY>

²⁷ Research on migration and human trafficking. IOM Ukraine, 2019 http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/iom_regional_ct_survey_2019_ukr_print.pdf

2

RESTRICTIONS ON MOVEMENT AND THEIR EFFECT ON LABOR MIGRATION

The impact of the pandemic on migrant workers and labor migration can be divided into several types. Restrictions on movement between and within countries introduced to combat the disease complicated the access of migrant workers both to labor markets and to return home. Social and economic changes in societies, transformations of labor markets have affected the social and economic security of migrant workers, access to the labor market, and more. The pandemic has also caused some changes in the perception of labor migration and migrant workers, both in the host society and in the countries of origin. Finally, the pandemic directly affected migrant workers who contracted the coronavirus.

2.1 RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT

A notable feature of anti-epidemic (quarantine) restrictions was their sharpness and suddenness. After the outbreak of the epidemic in China, the idea of restricting movement as a means of control was not initially considered. On February 3, the WHO chief stated that there was no need for “unnecessary” restrictions on movement²⁸. After China, the first to be hit by the pandemic were Italy and Spain, two traditional destinations for Ukrainian and Moldovan migrant workers. In Italy, the first two cases of COVID-19 were recorded in two tourists from China on January 30. After this, all flights to China were suspended²⁹.

The next 3 cases in Italy were confirmed only on February 20 in the industrial and urban region of Lombardy. In three days, 11 small municipalities were quarantined, and on March 9, a national quarantine was announced³⁰. At that time, more than 9,000 cases of the disease were recorded in Italy. The epicenter of

the epidemic was Lombardy, where about 1/5 of all Ukrainian migrants live³¹.

In Spain, where the epidemic was also developing rapidly, but a little later, a state of emergency was declared on March 13.

At the same time, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe stopped communicating with the regions of the foci of infection and applied additional restrictions, although the number of cases in these countries was extremely small at that time. The first cases were recorded in Georgia on February 26, in Belarus on February 28, in the Czech Republic on March 1, in Ukraine on the 3rd, in Hungary and Poland on the 4th, and in Moldova on the 7th.

Ukraine announced quarantine on March 11³². On the same day, the WHO announced a worldwide coronavirus pandemic. Poland introduced quarantine on March 10, Hungary on March 11, the Czech Republic on March 12, Moldova on March 17, and Georgia began restrictive measures on March 5. Only Belarus has not imposed restrictions for a long time.

So, for literally two weeks in March, between the 5th and the 20th, much of Europe suddenly restricted traffic, border crossings, and tightened movement controls. With the progress of the pandemic, the rest of the world joined Europe.

According to estimates by the International Organization for Migration³³, as of November 2, 2020, 221 countries and territories have introduced 100,065 restrictions on movement. Among them, the most common were medical requirements (64,460) and bans and restrictions on entry from certain territories and countries (27,830). Radical restrictions on movement were the first regulatory response by most governments, but since June there has been a trend towards

²⁸ WHO chief says widespread travel bans not needed to beat China virus <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-health-who/who-chief-says-widespread-travel-bans-not-needed-to-beat-china-virus-idUSKBN1ZX1H3>

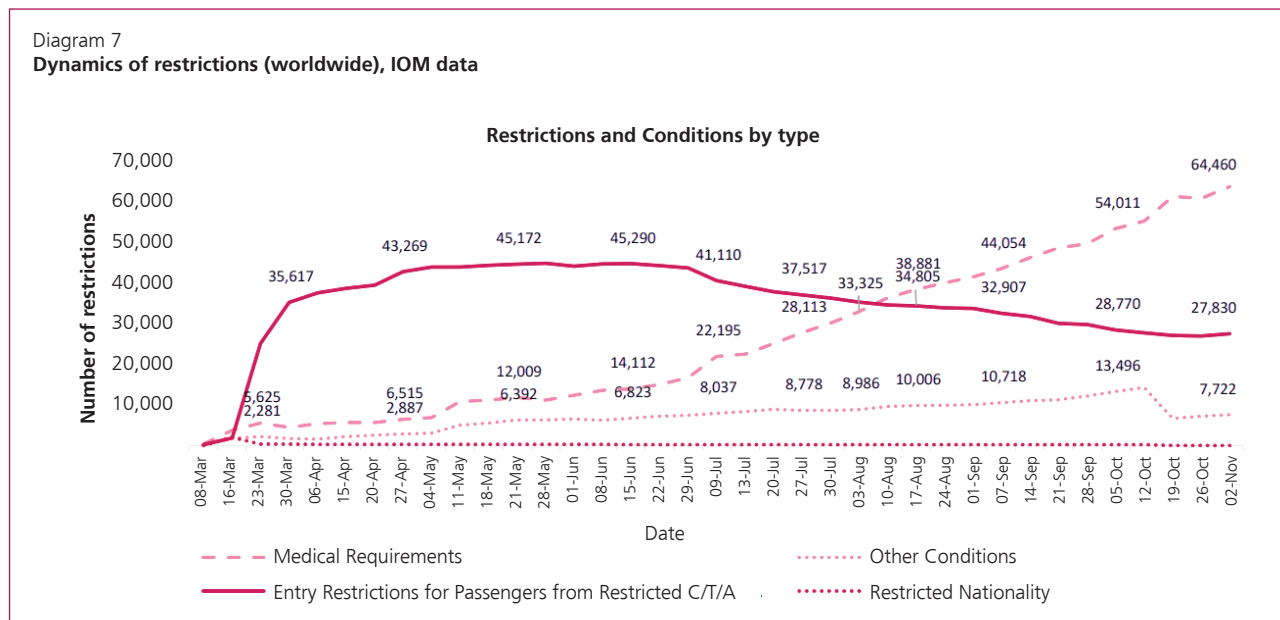
²⁹ Italy suspends all China flights as coronavirus cases confirmed in Rome <https://www.thelocal.it/20200131/italy-suspends-all-china-flights-after-coronavirus-cases-confirmed-in-rome>

³⁰ Timeline: How Italy's coronavirus crisis became the world's deadliest <https://www.axios.com/italy-coronavirus-timeline-lockdown-deaths-cases-2adb0fc7-6ab5-4b7c-9a55-bc6897494dc6.html>

³¹ At the heart of the epidemic: how Ukrainian migrants in Italy are experiencing a corona crisis <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2020/03/27/7108037/>

³² The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Resolution No 211 On prevention of the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19 on the territory of Ukraine <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-zapobigannya-poshim110320rennyu-na-teritoriyi-ukrayini-koronavirusu-covid-19>

³³ COVID-19 Travel Restrictions Output - 2 November 2020 <https://migration.iom.int/reports/covid-19-travel-restrictions-output-%E2%80%94-2-november-2020>



reduction of direct restrictions on movement, and introduction of medical requirements instead (for example, to have a negative test for SARS-CoV-19 virus), which have become the main type of restriction since August. This trend continued in the fall despite an increase in the number of cases.

Also, from the very beginning of the mass restrictions, governments introduced various exceptions. Thus, as of November 2, 96 countries/territories did not apply restrictions to their citizens, 102 countries did not apply restrictions to holders of residence permits. Exceptions often include diplomats, crew members, the military, humanitarian personnel, transit passengers, special permit holders, cross-border workers, and so on.

The sustainability of product chains was recognized as particularly important, so truck drivers mostly also fell into the category of exceptions.

2.2 UKRAINE

The main stages of restricting the movement by the Ukrainian government were the ban on entry of foreigners on March 16, the termination of regular passenger air, bus, and rail services across the border from March 17, the announcement of “complete closure” of the border and almost complete cancellation of charter flights from March 28, across the border, gradual closure of crossing points (as of March 18, 41 crossing points out of almost 200 remained operational, from April 7 — only 19). In addition, bus, rail, and air services within the country were suspended, and public transport in cities, including the subway, was shut down.

In May, restrictions were gradually lifted by opening a number of border crossing points and partially resuming regular passenger services³⁴. After several changes and an

entry ban for foreigners in September, Ukraine came up with a system of restriction of entry from countries where the incidence rate per 100 thousand population was higher than in Ukraine³⁵. Both citizens and foreigners entering from these countries must spend two weeks in isolation or get a negative coronavirus test.

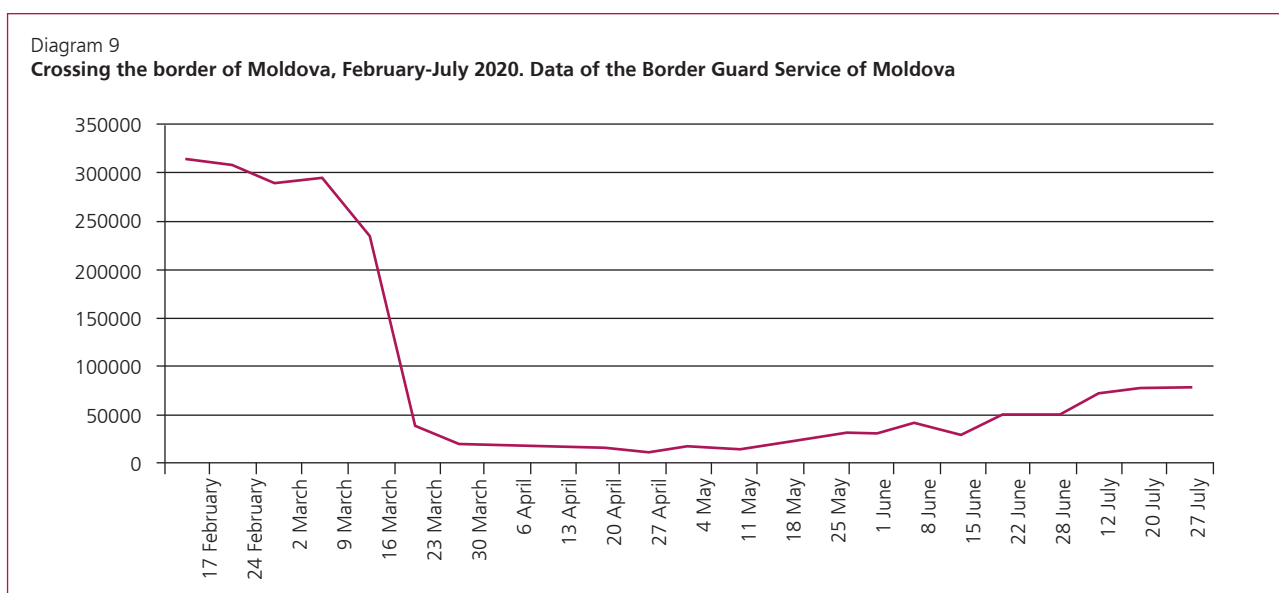
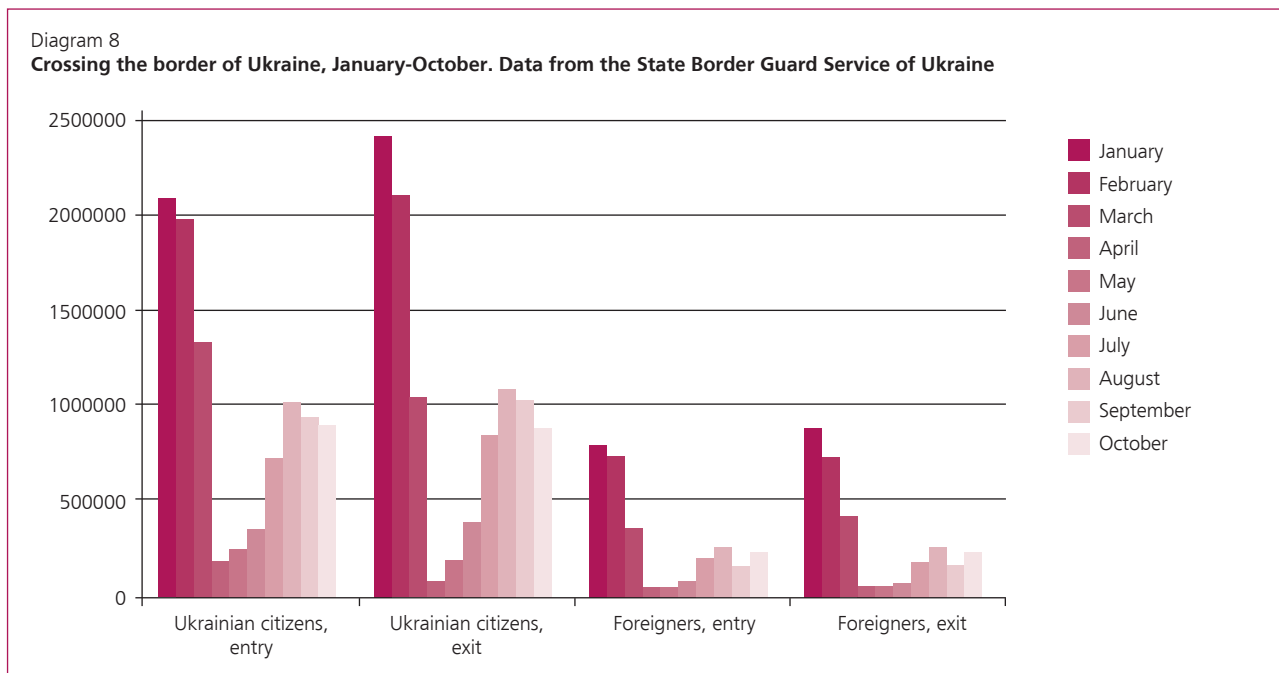
Restrictions have led to significant changes in the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of movement across the border of Ukraine. There was a mass return of Ukrainian citizens from abroad in parallel with the reduction in the number of trips abroad. In March 2020, 300,000 more Ukrainian citizens entered Ukraine than left. The tendency to return persisted in April and May (100 and 50 thousand, respectively). This is not a typical situation, given that Ukraine has had a negative annual balance of entry and exit since the early 2000s. For example, in 2018 the difference between entry and exit amounted to minus 200 thousand people.

In parallel with the return of Ukrainian citizens in March, there was a mass departure of foreigners from the country (60 thousand more left than entered).

Against the background of the restrictions, movement across the Ukrainian border dropped to an all-time low in April, reaching just over 6,000 crossings per day, and began to gradually rise in May, reaching just over 0.5 million crossings in total. Significant growth occurred in the summer with the easing of some restrictions and the beginning of the tourist season. Since August, there has been a slight decrease in the cross-border movement for three consecutive months, which may be due to the end of the tourist season and the tightening of restrictions in the EU due to a new wave of morbidity.

³⁴ Coronavirus and migration: how the government reacted <https://cedos.org.ua/uk/articles/koronavirus-i-mihratsiia-iak-diiav-uradi>

³⁵ Ministry of Health of Ukraine Information on countries with a high prevalence of COVID-19 <https://moz.gov.ua/article/health/informacija-schodo-kilkosti-aktivnih-vipadkiv-covid-19-na-100-tis-naselennja-stanom>



2.3 MOLDOVA

Moldova declared a state of emergency on March 17, 2020. The dynamics of border crossings showed similar dynamics to the Ukrainian one — a sharp drop in the total number of crossings, the predominance of entry over exit in March, the beginning of a gradual reopening of movement in May. A notable feature is an increase in the share of border crossings with Romania from 47 to 61-66% of the total in May-July.

2.4 GEORGIA

Georgia faced the coronavirus a little earlier than other countries in focus. Although a state of emergency was declared only on March 21, the government had previously banned flights to Iran, Italy, and China, and closed land borders. Due to the lack of a land border with the EU and the closure of

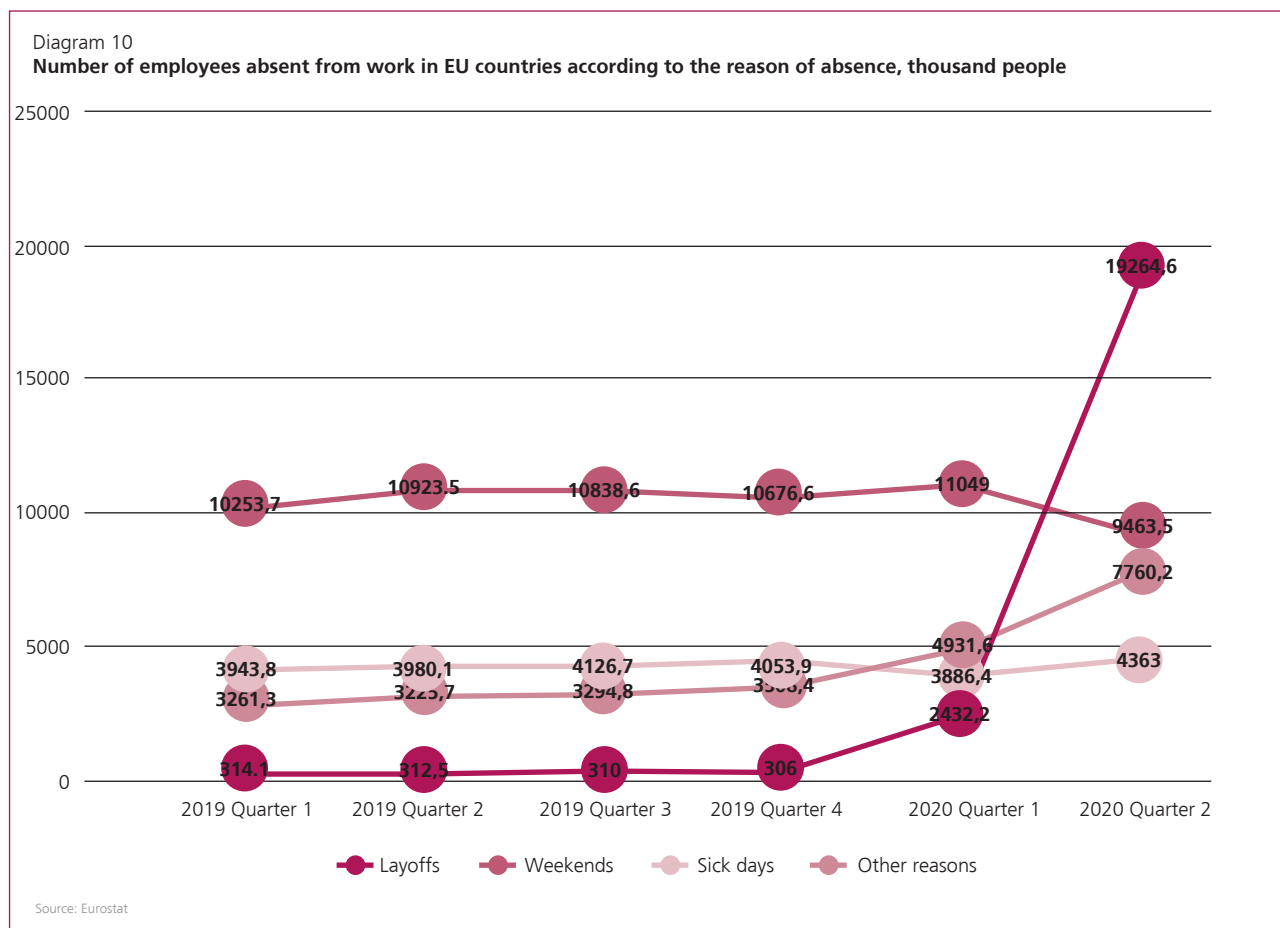
air services, a relatively mass return of migrant workers was observed only from the territory of Turkey.

2.5 BELARUS

Unlike other Eastern Partnership countries, Belarus has long failed to take specific measures to combat the coronavirus, allowing its territory to be used for transit to and from EU countries³⁶.

Belarusian labor migrants from Poland and Russia also lost their jobs and were forced to return home amid a pandemic, but the return process was smooth and did not create as much media coverage as the closure of Ukrainian borders in March.

³⁶ How Belarus rescues Ukrainians who are stuck abroad because of the coronavirus <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-52635323>



However, in the third quarter, labor market indicators in the EU have partially recovered: the number of employed persons increased by 0.9% compared to the previous quarter. This is the sharpest increase since the beginning of the observations⁴⁷.

The pandemic has significantly affected the work process in the EU. In the first quarter of 2020, 22.9 million people were absent from work, which is 4.3 million more than in the fourth quarter of 2019. And in the second quarter of 2020, this figure almost doubled to 40.8 million people. This increase is largely due to a sharp increase in redundancies when workers are guaranteed a return to work for three months or receive at least 50% of their salary from their employer (Diagram 7)⁴⁸. Quarantine restrictions led to a reduction in the working hours. At the same time, in all EU Member States except Cyprus, the proportion of days when workers were temporarily out of work was higher among women than men. The biggest difference was observed in countries with a significant share of labor migrants from the Eastern Partnership countries: Lithuania (17.1% for women and 6.5% for men), Hungary (13.2% for women and 5.5% for men), Poland (12.1% for wom-

en and 5.1% for men) and Latvia (12.0% for women and 5.0% for women men)⁴⁹.

Unlike other industries, agriculture was less affected by quarantine measures, as agricultural work was to continue under all conditions. In the context of the study of labor migration, it should be noted that it is for this area in the EU countries that the involvement of seasonal migrant workers, who have been threatened by restrictions on international mobility during quarantine is relevant. Agricultural sectors in EU countries such as Italy and Spain will not be able to work at full capacity without migrant workers, so it is important for these countries to take swift policy measures to remove barriers to entry for workers from abroad, say researchers from the Joint Research Center, the European Commission's science and knowledge service⁵⁰.

In particular, due to travel restrictions and fears about the virus, there was a shortage of 250,000 seasonal workers in agricultural work in Italy in 2020, as was reported by the country's largest profile association Coldi-

⁴⁷ GDP and employment flash estimates for the third quarter of 2020 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/10662173/2-13112020-AP-EN.pdf/0ac3f053-f601-091d-aa21-db1ecaca7e8c>

⁴⁸ Absence from work by main reason, sex and age group - quarterly data https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSI_ABS_Q__custom_237578/default/table?lang=en

⁴⁹ Temporary absences from work higher for women than men <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20200708-2?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Feurostat%2Fweb%2F covid-19%2F economy>

⁵⁰ Meeting labor demand in agriculture in times of COVID 19 pandemic https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC120800/meeting_labour_demand_in_agriculture_in_times_of_covid_19_pandemic_online.pdf

retti in April 2020⁵¹. One of the decisions aimed at attracting migrant workers to work in Italy was migration amnesty — legalization of migrants whose documents have expired. The government had hoped to legalize at least 300,000 workers, but according to the data of the Italian Interior Ministry, published by Amnesty International, only about 80,000 people had applied for amnesty by July 2020. At the same time, only 12% of applicants worked in agriculture. Instead, 88% of applications were submitted by domestic workers and carers, many of whom are citizens of Ukraine⁵². The main reason for the ineffectiveness of the migration amnesty was its conditions, as only those whose right to legal employment expired after October 31, 2019, could submit their documents. Instead, migrants who have been working in Italian agriculture for years without permits have been unable to legalize their stay⁵³.

3.1 SOCIAL PROTECTION OF WORKERS IN THE EU COUNTRIES DURING A PANDEMIC

The vulnerable state of workers has prompted some EU member states to step up social protection measures. The International Labor Organization has published such a list of policies to address the effects of the crisis:

- support of enterprises in the maintenance of workers during quarantine measures with the help of short-term payments or partial unemployment benefits (Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands);
- facilitating access to unemployment benefits for workers who have lost their jobs and supporting the unemployed in finding a new job (Ireland);
- providing one-time emergency payments to dismissed employees who are not entitled to unemployment insurance benefits (Italy);
- coordination of measures to help the unemployed, facilitating access to employment services, including through online job search counseling (Belgium, Estonia)⁵⁴.

Studying the practices of implementing measures for social protection of workers during the pandemic, we will consider the experience of Poland, which currently employs the largest number of migrant workers from the Eastern Partnership countries. Within the framework of the Polish state program “Anti-crisis shield”, a number of social

benefits were introduced to persons who lost their source of income due to the economic situation caused by the COVID-19 crisis, in particular to foreigners who legally reside and work in the Republic of Poland.

Persons who legally worked under civil law contracts, in case of temporary cessation of work due to the crisis could apply for monthly social assistance from the state — 2,080 zlotys (approximately 13.5 thousand hryvnias) for three months⁵⁵. Solidarity assistance from the state could be received by persons with whom the employer terminated the employment contract after March 15, 2020, or whose employment contract expired after that date. The condition for receiving the benefit, which amounted to 1,400 zlotys per month (approximately 10.3 thousand hryvnias) and was paid from June 1 to August 31, 2020, was also social insurance under an employment contract for a total period of at least 60 days until 2020⁵⁶. Additional care allowance could be provided by persons caring for children under eight years of age⁵⁷ during the closing of kindergartens. In addition, companies whose sales of goods and services declined during the pandemic had the opportunity to apply for a subsidy to cover part of the labor costs and social security contributions.

PLN 30 billion (approximately UAH 222 billion) was allocated for the social protection of workers in Poland, and PLN 74.2 billion (UAH 547 billion) for support of enterprises. For comparison, Ukraine has also introduced partial unemployment benefits for workers due to forced reductions or cessations during the quarantine period, which can be issued by representatives of small and medium-sized businesses, as well as individual entrepreneurs. A budget of UAH 4.3 billion was allocated for this project. Individual entrepreneurs were exempted from paying the Single Social Contribution for about three months (approximately USD 40 per month.)

3.2 IMPACT OF CHANGES IN THE EU LABOR MARKETS ON MIGRANT WORKERS FROM UKRAINE AND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES

Migrant workers from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Belarus have already felt the effects of the economic crisis in the first months of quarantine measures. According to the calculations of the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU), due to reduced income during the first half of 2020, the volume of private remittances to Ukraine decreased by 3.8% and

⁵¹ Italy's coronavirus farmworker shortage fuels debate on illegal migration <https://www.politico.eu/article/italy-seasonal-migrant-farm-workers-coronavirus-covid-19/>

⁵² Amnesty in Italy: 88% of requests came from domestic workers and guardians <https://liveitaly.ru/news/amnistiya-v-italii-88-zaprosov-postupili-ot-domashnih-rabotnikov-i-opekunov>

⁵³ Brutal deaths of exploited migrants shine a spotlight on Italy's farms <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/13/brutal-deaths-of-exploited-migrants-shine-a-spotlight-on-italys-farms>

⁵⁴ Social Protection Spotlight. ILO https://www.ilo.org/secsoc/information-resources/publications-and-tools/Brochures/WCMS_742337/lang-en/index.htm

⁵⁵ What awaits Ukrainian workers in Poland. Ukrinform <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-world/3003119-so-cekae-ukrainskih-zarobitcan-u-polsi.html>

⁵⁶ Dodatek solidarnościowy. Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej <https://www.gov.pl/web/gov/dodatek-solidarnosciowy>

⁵⁷ Skorzystaj z dodatkowego zasiłku opiekuńczego. Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej <https://www.gov.pl/web/gov/skorzystaj-z-dodatku-zasilku-opiekunczego>

amounted to 5,6 billion US dollars⁵⁸. The NBU estimated that due to the pandemic, about 20% of migrant workers would not be able to work abroad in the second quarter of 2020, incomes of migrant workers who remain abroad would decline depending on employment, and the projected number of remittances at the end of the year would decrease by 2, 6 billion dollars (or 20%) compared to the previous forecast - from 12.5 to 10 billion dollars⁵⁹.

However, according to the National Bank, in August-September, the volume of transfers exceeded the same indicators of the previous year for the first time since March (1.028 and 1.098 billion dollars against 1.019 and 1.040 billion in 2019)⁶⁰. In total, in the first nine months of 2020, the volume of private remittances through official and informal channels to Ukraine from abroad amounted to 8.48 billion US dollars. Also, the average amount of one private remittance to Ukraine increased from 364 to 390 US dollars, which is 7% more than for 9 months of 2019⁶¹. The increase in remittances may indicate both a partial recovery of migrant workers' incomes and an increased need for funds from migrant families in Ukraine.

The situation may be more complicated in Moldova, where a significant share of the country's GDP depends on remittances. Researchers from the United Nations and Oxford Economics believe that due to the pandemic and quarantine a lot of Moldovan migrant workers have lost their jobs and 20% of them are ready to return home, and the number of remittances to the country will decrease by 24-27%⁶².

In Georgia, private cash inflows also decreased significantly against the background of the pandemic: in April 2020, the volume of remittances amounted to 79.1 million US dollars, which is 42.3% less than in the same period of 2019. In May 2020, the dynamics of reduction slowed to 9.6% compared to the same period last year⁶³.

Some of the migrant workers who lost their jobs returned home. In March 2020, about 150 thousand migrants ar-

rived in Ukraine from Poland and 20-30 thousand people from the Czech Republic⁶⁴. However, at home, they were faced with a more difficult economic situation, connected with the falling of GDP and rising unemployment^{65,66}.

This has forced many workers to re-plan to travel abroad as soon as possible, despite the risks of the pandemic. This was facilitated by the dependence of EU countries on labor from abroad. Exceptions to work permit holders were available in almost all pandemic entry restrictions. Poland's policy is especially liberal, allowing Ukrainian citizens to enter under a visa-free regime with a declaration of intent to employ a foreigner.

Together, these factors led to the fact that in June the departure of Ukrainian citizens abroad began to resume. In June-July 2020, the number of departures of Ukrainian citizens exceeded the number of entries by 150 thousand⁶⁷.

In summary, the events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on labor market performance in the EU. The service sector, construction, and industry suffered the most, with thousands of businesses suspended due to quarantine measures. Migrant workers, on a par with other workers, were reduced or worked much less than planned. This has led to a decrease in the income of migrant workers and, as a result, a reduction in their remittances. Enhanced social protection measures during quarantine in the EU have somewhat reduced the negative effects, but labor markets are likely to take several years to recover from the crisis. This means that some migrant workers who have lost their jobs will not be able to find legal employment quickly and will need new jobs in their countries of origin or will be more prone to risky job offers.

⁵⁸ Dynamics of private remittances to Ukraine https://bank.gov.ua/files/ES/Perekaz_m.pdf

⁵⁹ Remittances from migrant workers: current situation and assessment of prospects. National Bank of Ukraine https://bank.gov.ua/admin_uploads/article/Transfers_from_migrant_workers_Tokarchuk_2020-06-03.pdf?v=4

⁶⁰ New e-visa, remittances from migrant workers, and COVID - review for October 27 - November 2 https://europewb.org.ua/nova-e-viza-perekazy-trudovih-migrantiv-i-covid-oglyad-za-27-zhovtnya-2-lystopada/?fbclid=IwAR25ffBzC_kKurnGzTggQdTzyNQL9tcVud8nB2IVdxEXRcjKjc2yBp692e4

⁶¹ In 9 months, Ukraine received private transfers of \$ 8.5 billion - the NBU <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-economy/3133648-v-ukrainu-za-9-misaciv-nadijslo-privatnih-perekaziv-na-85-mlrd-nbu.html>

⁶² The reduction of remittances from abroad in connection with COVID-19 has dealt a severe blow to the Moldovan economy. UN News <https://news.un.org/ru/story/2020/06/1379462>

⁶³ The dynamics of remittances is encouraging for the head of the National Bank of Georgia <https://easdaily.com/ru/news/2020/06/17/dinamika-denezhnyh-perevodov-obnadezhivaet-glavu-nacbanka-gruzii>

⁶⁴ Ukrainian workers are indispensable. Quarantine in the European labor market: the first conclusions <https://glavcom.ua/publications/ukrajinski-zarobitchani-nezaminni-karantin-na-jevropeyskomu-rinku-praci-pershi-visnovki-693159.html>

⁶⁵ The Cabinet of Ministers allows Ukraine's GDP to fall to 8% in 2020 - the government's action plan <https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2020/06/15/661794/>

⁶⁶ The World Bank has downgraded its economic growth forecast due to the coronavirus pandemic <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/vsemirnyy-bank-uhudshil-prognoz-rosta-ekonomiki-moldovy-iz-za-pandemii-koronavirusa/>

⁶⁷ SBGS response to the request of the NGO "Europe without Barriers"

4

CHANGES IN ATTITUDES TOWARDS LABOR MIGRANTS FROM UKRAINE

Pandemics are always accompanied by high levels of stress, panic, and outbreaks of racism and xenophobia, says Canadian psychologist Steven Taylor, author of the study “The Psychology of Pandemics”⁶⁸.

In the case of the global COVID-19 pandemic, there are two stages in the development of discrimination⁶⁹. In its early stages, ethnic Chinese, or people mistaken for Chinese, and “others” in general — foreigners, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities, homeless, etc.⁷⁰ — suffered the most from prejudice, verbal, and physical attacks. In particular, Roma were often discriminated against, suffering from systemic discrimination in particular⁷¹.

With the spread of the pandemic, the focus of discrimination shifts towards groups of the population that are associated with a high risk of infection⁷². These include health workers, supermarket staff, people who have come from abroad or from regions with a high incidence rate, diagnosed patients, and so on. For example, in Spain, health workers were asked not to return home by their neighbors⁷³. In Romania, a complaint was filed against a television show for discriminating against compatriots returning from abroad. There were also cases of hate speech against migrant workers returning home to Latvia⁷⁴.

Discrimination against real or imagined Chinese, as well as against coronavirus patients and persons returning from abroad, was recorded in Ukraine. Thus, in Chernivtsi the wife of the first patient confirmed in Ukraine was forced to

move out of her apartment by her neighbors⁷⁵. One of the most high-profile cases of such discrimination was protests against the placement of evacuees from Wuhan in Novi Sanzhary in February 2020, before the first case in Ukraine. To some extent, the group of evacuees combined several signs of othering at once — people who returned from abroad, people at increased risk of infection, and people who were in China. A telling case was when a correspondent of the leading national channel “1 + 1” said live from Novi Sanzhary: “27 foreigners are being brought here, and I want to reassure you: those are not Chinese”⁷⁶.

Migrant workers also faced cases of discrimination. In early April, a report about an incident in Rivne oblast appeared on social networks⁷⁷, where in the yard, where three men who had returned from abroad were in isolation, people pasted a poster with the inscription “Coronavirus”, and when the villagers thought that those men had gone to the store, they called the police. A similar case occurred in April in the Chernihiv oblast⁷⁸.

However, online media and television monitoring data show that publications and statements that incite hostility towards migrant workers, as well as publications on coronavirus in general, accounted for the largest share at the beginning of the pandemic, in February-March, with a gradual decline in the following months. For example, according to IMI, in March 58.5% of Ukrainian online publications covered the pandemic, then at the end of May it was only 27% of the total number of news items⁷⁹.

⁶⁸ What is COVID stress syndrome and who suffers from it. Interview with Canadian psychologist Steven Taylor <https://life.pravda.com.ua/health/2020/08/3/241840/>

⁶⁹ UNESCO COVID-19-related discrimination and stigma: a global phenomenon? <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-related-discrimination-and-stigma-global-phenomenon>

⁷⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights Coronavirus pandemic in the EU - Fundamental Rights Implications - Bulletin 1 <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-april-1>

⁷¹ Amnesty International SLOVAKIA: ROMA MUST NOT BE FURTHER STIGMATISED DURING COVID-19 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur72/2110/2020/en/>

⁷² UNESCO Ibid.

⁷³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ In Chernivtsi, people demanded to isolate the wife of a man who contracted the coronavirus <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2020/03/3/7242416/>

⁷⁶ DEADLY VIRUS» AND THE SILENCE OF THE AUTHORITIES: WHAT REALLY PROVOKED THE EVENTS IN NOVI SANZHARY <https://imi.org.ua/monitorings/smertelnyj-virus-ta-movchanka-vlady-shho-naspravdi-sprovokovalo-podiyi-v-novyh-sanzharah-i31847>

⁷⁷ With a rake and shovels they came to the men who came for self-isolation to the village in the Rivne region http://radiotrek.rv.ua/news/z-grablyamy_i_lopatamy_pryyshly_do_cholovikiv_yaki_pryihaly_na_samoizolyatsiyu_v_selo_na_rivnenshchyni_foto_248044.html

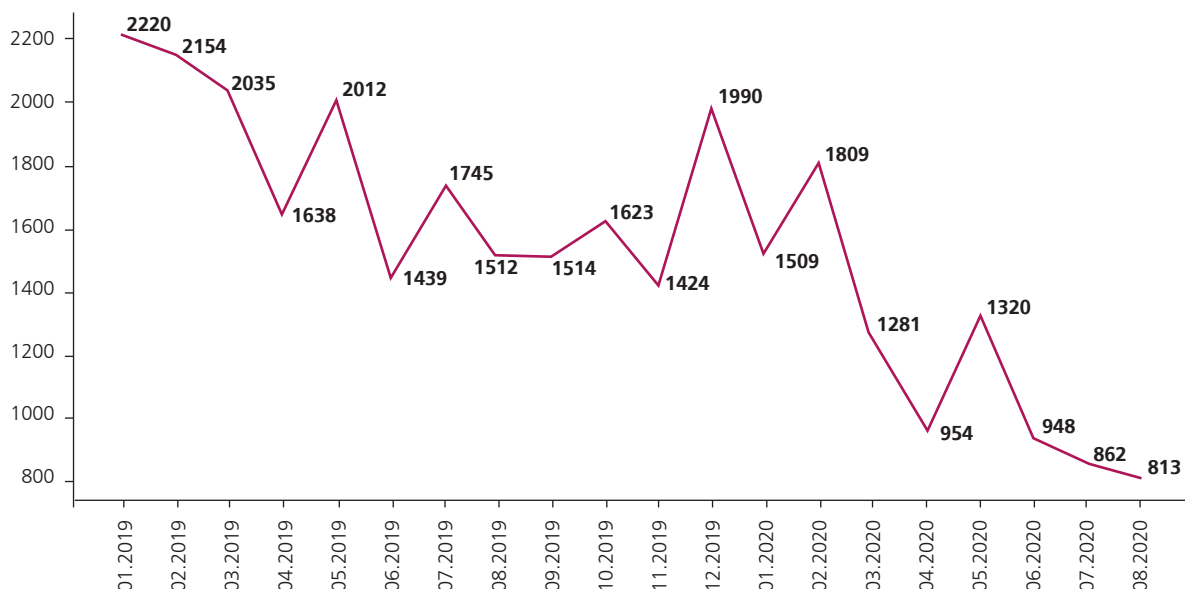
⁷⁸ The man went to the village house for self-isolation, but his neighbors decided to evict him <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcM1ixebXoU>

⁷⁹ COVID-19 TAKES THE BACKSEAT. ONLINE MEDIA MONITORING REPORT <http://imi.org.ua/monitorings/covid-19-vidhodyt-na-drugyj-plan-zvit-z-monitoryngu-onlajn-media-i33275>

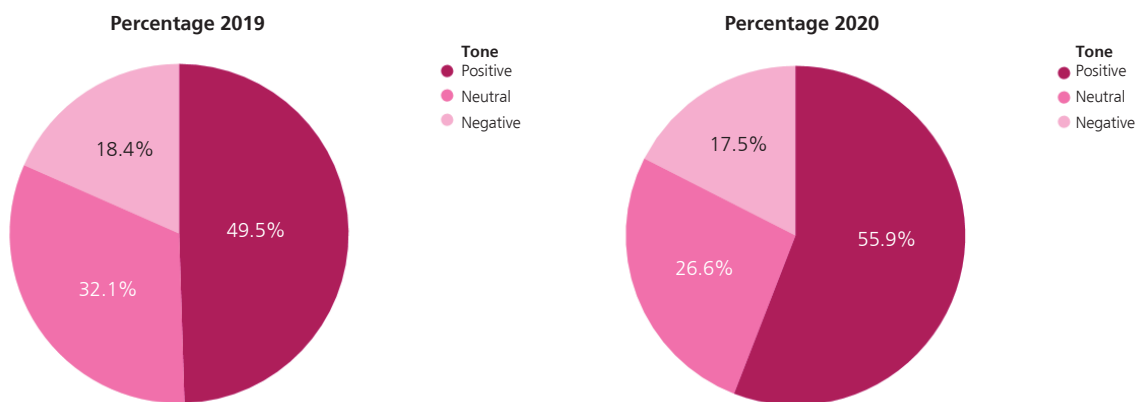
Diagrams 11-13.

Dynamics and tone of mentions of labor migration in online media

Dynamics of mentions of labor migration and labor migrants in online sources, 01/01/2019-1/08/2020



Distribution of the tone of mentions of labor migration and labor migrants in the first half of 2019 (left) and 2020 (right)



At the beginning of the pandemic, a surge of negative statements in publications about Ukrainian labor migrants occurred in the Russian and pro-Russian Ukrainian media, which are popular in Ukraine and have a common agenda. These media cover a significant part of the Ukrainian audience. Thus, in August 2020, 6% of Ukrainians called Russian TV channels the main source of information⁸⁰, and the Inter channel, which consistently promotes the pro-Russian agenda, ranks fourth in terms of audience share⁸¹. Another

study estimates the total share of the actual Russian media (TV + online) at 13%⁸².

Before the pandemic, the issue of labor migration from Ukraine often served in political rhetoric only as a reinforcement of the statement about Ukraine as a failed state⁸³. However, in February-March 2020, the media began to actively portray migrant workers as a source

⁸⁰ How Ukrainians' media preferences and interests have changed since the 2019 elections and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic <https://dif.org.ua/article/yak-zminilysya-upodobannya-ta-interesi-ukraintsv-do-zasobiv-masovoi-informatsii-pislyavivoriv-2019-r-ta-pochatku-pandemii-covid-19>

⁸¹ TV audience ratings in the third quarter of 2019 - Television Industry Committee survey <https://www.nrada.gov.ua/rejtyngy-televizijnoyi-audytoriji-u-iii-kvartali-2019-roku-doslidzhennya-itk/>

⁸² USAID-INTERNEWS SURVEY «Attitudes of the population to the media and consumption of different types of media in 2019.» <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OizEdvI5Srk4hS-D2KoxoKkamCarUX7f/view>

⁸³ Tymoshenko sang the Kremlin's song about «Ukraine's attack on Donbas» <https://ms.detector.media/propaganda-ta-vpliv/post/21707/2018-08-29-tymoshenko-zaspivala-pisnyu-kremlya-pro-napad-ukraini-na-donbas/>

of epidemic danger⁸⁴ the Russian media⁸⁵, as well as Ukrainian⁸⁶ and Russian politicians⁸⁷ linked the danger of a coronavirus pandemic with the return of migrant workers to Ukraine. However, since April, monitoring has stopped recording such messages.

In general, the data of monitoring the Ukrainian online space with the help of the information-analytical system “Semantrum” show a general decrease in interest in the topic of labor migration during the pandemic compared to the previous year.

This is partly due to the fact that according to preliminary data, 2019 was a record-breaking year for the number of Ukrainian citizens who received residence permits in the EU, and the volume of remittances from abroad, and therefore, this topic has attracted a lot of attention.

At the same time, the automated assessment of the tone of the messages even indicates a decrease in the share of mentions in a negative context during a pandemic.

Another surge in interest in labor migration took place in May 2020, which may be related to the issue of migrants leaving the country in April-May and the government’s attempts to stop it, which provoked a sharply negative reaction in society⁸⁸.

4.1 EUROPEAN CONTEXT

The pandemic has highlighted the role of labor migration for EU labor markets. In the spring of 2020, a series of publications appeared in European, in particular, Polish, media⁸⁹, where the contribution of migrant workers to the economy and development of society was positively assessed. At the same time, despite the recommendations of the expert community⁹⁰, this favorable environment was

84 Ukraine is facing a default and a humanitarian catastrophe. Review of the penetration of Russian propaganda into the Ukrainian media space in March 2020 https://detector.media/propahanda_vplyvy/article/176362/2020-04-14-ukrainu-chekayut-defolt-i-gumanitarna-katastrofa-oglyad-proniknennya-rosiiskoi-propagandi-v-ukrainskii-mediaprostir-u-berezni-2020-roku/

85 Quarantine in Ukraine is political in nature <https://rg.ru/2020/03/12/karantin-na-ukraine-imeet-politicheskij-harakter.html>

86 Olena Lukash: Coronavirus infection will start spreading from Western Ukraine <https://luga1news.ru/novosti/18411-lukash-koronavirus-nachnet-raspolzatsya-s-zapadnoy-ukrainy-video.html>

87 Global casualty: the COVID-19 pandemic has caused economic turmoil in Ukraine <https://www.5-tv.ru/news/290001/globalnaa-zertva-pandemia-sovid19-vyzvala-sudorogi-ekonomiki-naukraine/>

88 In standby mode: how the Government discovered labor migration and what happened after that <http://rpr.org.ua/news/v-rezhymi-ochikuvannia-iak-uriad-vidkryv-dlia-sebe-trudovu-mihratsii-i-shcho-z-toho-vyyshlo/>

89 Pracownicy z Ukrainy mogą nie dojechać na zbiory. Zastąpią ich bezrobotni Polacy? <https://wyborcza.pl/7,155287,25854033,pracownicy-z-ukrainy-moga-nie-dojechac-na-zbiory-zastapia-ich.html>

90 In standby mode: how the Government discovered labor migration and what happened after that <http://rpr.org.ua/news/v-rezhymi-ochikuvannia-iak-uriad-vidkryv-dlia-sebe-trudovu-mihratsii-i-shcho-z-toho-vyyshlo/>

not used by the Government of Ukraine to form a positive image of migrant workers.

4.2 RISKS RELATED TO INCREASING MORBIDITY

Due to the growing incidence in Ukraine in August-September 2020, many European countries remain closed to its citizens, and some impose additional restrictions. For example, from October 1, 2020, the Bulgarian government obliged Ukrainian citizens to have a negative RT-PCR test result when crossing the border⁹¹.

It can be assumed that in the event of the rapid development of a new wave of pandemics in Ukraine, the EU countries, or other countries where Ukrainian labor migrants go for work, the level of xenophobia may increase again and accusations of migrant workers in spreading the disease might occur. Cases of mass morbidity among migrant workers living in crowded and cramped conditions⁹² and in industries such as meat factories may also contribute to this⁹³.

In summary, there was an outbreak of negativity towards migrant workers in the Ukrainian information space only at the beginning of the pandemic. Although this wave quickly subsided, the ease of its occurrence indicates the need for systematic information work on the formation of an adequate image of the migrant worker and migration as a phenomenon in the Ukrainian information space.

Also, in general, the topic of labor migration during the pandemic has receded, and the media’s interest in this topic has fallen compared to the period before the pandemic. This carries the risk of under-representing the interests of migrant workers on the agenda of a government that focuses on public opinion reflected in the media.

The visibility of the topic of Ukrainian labor migration in the European Union, on the contrary, has probably increased. However, this interest has not been sufficiently used by the Ukrainian authorities to create a positive image of Ukrainian workers, which would help reduce xenophobia and risks for migrant workers.

91 The decision of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Bulgaria on a temporary ban on entry into the country № RD-01-547 was updated <https://bulgaria.mfa.gov.ua/news/onovleno-rishennya-ministerstva-ohoroni-zdorovya-respubliki-bolgariya-shchodotimchasovoyi-zaboroni-vyizdu-na-teritoriyu-krayini-rd-01-547>

92 A Ukrainian woman complains about inhumane living conditions of workers in Poland <https://visnyk.lutsk.ua/news/ukraine/52820-ukrainka-skarzhytsya-na-nelyudski-umovy-prozhyvannya-zarobitchan-v-polshi/>

93 Germany: Gütersloh slaughterhouse infections spread to community <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-g%C3%BCtersloh-slaughterhouse-infections-spread-to-community/a-53971931>

5

POLICIES TARGETING MIGRANT WORKERS IN THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Migrant workers are often employed in the areas most affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic (e.g., service industry) or in areas where there is an increased risk of infection. Measures taken by governments to support workers and businesses can completely or partially circumvent migrant workers, who also have limited access to social security. In addition, migrant workers often work and live in conditions that increase the risk of falling ill, for example, 4-8 or more people in a small room, sharing a shower and toilet with many other workers⁹⁴. This makes them a particularly vulnerable population in a pandemic, despite their significant role in the functioning of critical areas.

Almost every country in the world has implemented various measures to support the economy, business, and workers during the pandemic. Comprehensive data on this subject are collected in the database of the International Labor Organization⁹⁵. Some of the measures were aimed at counteracting the effects of the pandemic in the context of labor migration - this includes both ensuring the rights of migrant workers and using labor migration as a resource to overcome the effects of the pandemic.

A number of international organizations, including those in the European region, have developed recommendations for governments to ensure the protection of migrant workers and the management of labor migration during a pandemic.

The International Labor Organization in June 2020 recommended⁹⁶ destination countries to include migrant workers in national protection programs, in particular, to provide access to health care, income protection, adequate living and working conditions in the short term, and to develop an inclusive national social protection system in the long-term perspective.

Countries of origin of migrant workers, instead, are encouraged to support and provide social protection for

their citizens abroad and upon return. Often these are migrant workers who have lost their jobs, experienced severe stress, got stuck abroad, or found themselves in another situation. Measures of support and protection in the short term may include:

- Information campaigns on access to health and social protection services in destination countries through diplomatic missions or partner institutions and media in destination countries.
- Return assistance and free quarantine measures upon return
- Promoting access to health services and social protection for returning migrants and their families

As an example of such a policy, the ILO cites the Philippines, where a special fund has been set up to provide one-time cash benefits to returning migrant workers.

In the first months of the pandemic and during the mass return of Ukrainian citizens, diplomatic missions in the EU acted as information hubs. Thus, in March-April, the Embassy of Ukraine in Poland processed more than 50,000 applications concerning the conditions of return to Ukraine, migration status in Poland, etc.⁹⁷. Also, in March-April, Ukraine systematically promoted the return of its citizens in the face of severe restrictions on movement in Europe. At the same time, returning migrant workers were often restricted in accessing social services. For example, one of the labor migration experts interviewed in this study noted that migrant workers could not benefit from regional employment centers, although they were unemployed upon return. As the reason for this, he named “the fact that some of them have long worked in the shadows, semi-legally, and were employed in the informal sector”⁹⁸.

Other interviewed experts also drew attention to the ineffectiveness of informing migrant workers in the face of rapid change. In particular, it was about restrictions on crossing the border, introduced by the Ukrainian authorities. “Constant change of decisions and inadequate information is the main factor that led to the negative reaction

⁹⁴ Interview with a migrant worker 1

⁹⁵ ILO COVID-19 and the world of work Country policy responses <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/regional-country/country-responses/lang--en/index.htm#UN>

⁹⁶ ILO Social protection for migrant workers: A necessary response to the Covid-19 crisis https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_748979.pdf

⁹⁷ Response to the request of «Europe without Barriers»

⁹⁸ Interview with an expert №1

of Ukrainian migrants and society in general to the introduction of forced restrictions”, the expert says⁹⁹.

The creation of funds and direct financial assistance to returned migrant workers in Ukraine was not discussed, except for access to national social protection mechanisms. The government also announced the creation of new jobs with a salary of UAH 6,000 per month, which were to be taken by migrant workers, and tried to unofficially limit travel abroad for seasonal work, but these proposals have caused criticism in society¹⁰⁰.

The government of Georgia has included seasonal workers who have returned from abroad in a self-employed assistance program under which they can receive a lump sum of 300 lari (approximately \$ 100). To do this, you need to register on the website of the Ministry of Health, which will then receive data on crossing the border from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. No additional documents are required¹⁰¹.

Despite this, residents of the border areas with Turkey staged rallies in July demanding the opening of borders. The border with Turkey was opened in early August, but the Georgian authorities allowed them to leave only if they had formal employment for three months.

In Moldova in the spring, returning migrant workers were required to purchase a health insurance policy worth about \$ 230¹⁰². At the same time, the PARE 1 + 1 program has been operating in Moldova since 2010 with the support of the European Union, aimed at assisting migrant workers to start their own businesses at home.

Data on specific government measures aimed at migrant workers in Belarus could not be found.

99 Interview with an expert №3

100 Comment: Ukraine is artificially trying to curb labor migration <https://www.dw.com/uk/komentar-ukraina-shtucho-namahietsia-strymaty-trudovu-mihratsiiu/a-53301475>

101 Seasonal workers abroad will receive compensation in the amount of 300 GEL <https://1tv.ge/ru/news/rabotajushhie-sezonno-za-granicej-poluchat-kompensaciju-300-lari/>

102 Moldova has introduced the mandatory purchase of medical policies at the border. Who is it about <https://newsmaker.md/rus/novosti/v-moldove-vveli-obyzatelnyu-pokupku-meditsinskih-polisov-na-granitse-kogo-eto-kasaetsya/>

6

PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REGULATION OF LABOR MIGRATION FROM UKRAINE AND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES IN THE COUNTRIES OF DESTINATION AND COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF MIGRANT WORKERS

6.1 PARAMETERS OF LABOR MIGRATION

One of the main problems in formulating labor migration policy from the Eastern Partnership countries is the incompleteness of quantitative and qualitative data, as well as the delay of available data. Thus, as of October 2020, all data on the number of residence permits in the EU for 2019 are not available, the last large-scale study of labor migration in Ukraine was conducted in 2017, the quantitative measurement of migration from Belarus to Russia is poorly studied. The lack of relevant data on the impact of the pandemic on the volume and structure of labor migration does not allow the formation of evidence-based policy.

In this regard, countries of destination of migrant workers to the EU should develop a unified approach to the collection and publication of data on the number and characteristics of labor migration, as well as speed up the publication of data, establishing effective data exchange with the Eastern Partnership countries.

The Eastern Partnership countries need to implement timely state census (taking into account anti-epidemic norms). This will not only measure the real population but also estimate the number of migrant workers and persons who do not live at the place of registration or work in other countries without permits.

In Ukraine, where the last census was conducted in 2001, data on the number of inhabitants in settlements and their gender and age structure will allow further more accurate sociological surveys of labor migration.

The countries of the eastern Partnership data must systematically, at least once a year, conduct representative opinion polls on the volume and characteristics of labor migration based on the state census. This will allow timely recording of changes and responding to them through public policy.

The EU and the Eastern Partnership countries should conduct systematic independent monitoring of qualitative changes in labor migration, the impact of the pandemic on its characteristics, and compliance with the rights of migrant workers in both countries of origin and destination. A methodological example of such monitoring can be the “covid” bulletins of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

To respond promptly to the pandemic challenges to labor migration, governments need to establish a constant and effective social dialogue at the national and international levels between the government, migrant workers, business, academia, non-governmental and international organizations. It is advisable to create effective advisory bodies.

6.2 RESTRICTIONS ON MOVEMENT AND ACCESS TO PERMITS

Dramatic changes in the rules of border crossing and transport use in both EU and Eastern Partnership countries have led to serious problems for migrant workers — queues and congestions at the border, additional transport costs, fines, uncertainty about the inability to return home and/or go to work abroad. Complicating legal ways to work abroad is likely to lead to an increase in the number of people choosing illegal detours and risk being trafficked, as well as people in vulnerable situations (poverty, unemployment, uncertainty, increased risk of contracting the coronavirus). The policies of governments of countries of origin should be aimed at providing migrant workers with an acceptable planning horizon for employment abroad.

Both the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries should plan anti-epidemic measures taking into account the needs of the labor market in labor migrants and the needs of labor migrants in work abroad. In particular, it would be

optimal to refrain from completely closing the borders or terminating road, rail, and air services.

Changes in border crossing/transport rules should be implemented by the governments and properly communicated to the target audience with sufficient lead time. This will help avoid crowding, queues, and additional damage from prohibitions and restrictions.

Restrictions at the border mean reduced opportunities for physical transportation of earned cash. EU and Eastern Partnership countries must work together on cheaper and more affordable remittances between countries.

The closure of consulates and other administrative facilities deprives migrant workers of access to the labor market abroad and can lead to a threatening shortage of workers in key sectors of the economy of the destination countries. Maximum transfer of extension services / obtaining permits online will significantly reduce the impact of pandemic restrictions on labor migration. The introduction of opportunities of automatic extension of residence permits will reduce the number of face-to-face appeals to relevant services and border crossings by labor migrants, which in turn will contribute to the epidemic security of both states and labor migrants.

The proliferation of testing as an alternative restriction to traffic bans raises questions about its financial and physical accessibility, as well as the importance of timely border crossing (often requiring a test not older than 24/48 hours). The EU and the Eastern Partnership countries must promote the availability of PCR tests as close as possible to the border crossing point and the ability for migrant workers to cross the border quickly enough.

6.3 LABOR MARKET TRANSFORMATIONS

The pandemic and related restrictions have led to declining industrial production, services provided, construction, rising unemployment, and falling workers' incomes. The EU and the Eastern Partnership countries need a balanced and coordinated approach to the social protection of migrant workers.

Migrant workers in all spheres should be included in social protection programs in destination countries, such as one-time or multiple cash payments, compensation for hours not worked, tax or credit payments exemptions. The EU countries also should promote the ability of migrant workers to change employers in the event of dismissal and provide them with full and unconditional access to health care.

Unregulated migrants are a particularly vulnerable group. Destination countries in a pandemic should facilitate the legalization of unregulated migrant workers in the country through migration amnesty, not limited to the time of exhaustion of permits.

Proper informing of migrant workers about ways and opportunities of legal employment abroad will reduce risks for both migrant workers and destination countries. It is advisable to create and maintain comprehensive information resources with data on verified available vacancies in the EU countries, available in languages of the Eastern Partnership countries (Ukrainian, Belarusian, Moldovan, Georgian).

In addition, countries of origin should provide effective reintegration and social protection for migrant workers who have returned from abroad. It is necessary to introduce a state program for the reintegration of migrant workers who lost their jobs abroad in connection with the pandemic, which can include measures to find a job, support in starting one's own business, getting an education, or retraining. In Ukraine, the basis for this program may be the Law of Ukraine "On External Labor Migration".

Countries of origin and destination also should cooperate for the effective return and reintegration of unregulated migrant workers and those who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

6.4 ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRANT WORKERS

The pandemic and its economic effects carry the risks of stigmatization and discrimination against migrant workers in both country of origin and destination. The EU and Eastern European countries must systematically monitor cases of discrimination and hate speech against migrant workers.

The governments of these countries must also take care of systematic informing of citizens about the positive aspects of labor migration. For EU countries, this may emphasize the role of migrant workers in critical areas such as agriculture, logistics, transport, medicine, and critical services. For the Eastern Partnership countries — informing about the contribution of migrant workers to the country's economy through transfers, the latest methods of work and doing business, etc.

AUTHORS

Kateryna Kulchytska — Expert on Border Management and Migration, Europe Without Barriers Analytical Center, Kyiv

Pavlo Kravchuk — Migration Policy and Media Expert, Europe Without Barriers Analytical Center, Kyiv

Iryna Sushko — Migration Policy Expert, Executive Director of Europe Without Barriers Analytical Center, Kyiv, Member of the Expert Council on Migration Policy of the National Institute for Strategic Studies, Public Council at the State Migration Service of Ukraine

Kateryna Yarmolyuk-Kröck — PhD in Law, project coordinator of Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine

IMPRINT

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung | «Dialogue Eastern Europe»
34, Pushkinska Street, Kyiv 01004 Ukraine

Responsible:
Christopher Forst | Director of the FES Office «Dialogue Eastern Europe»

Tel: +38 (044) 234 1038 | Fax: +38 (044) 234 1039
<http://fes.kiev.ua>

To order a publication, contact us at
mail@fes.kiev.ua

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TRANSFORMATIONS OF LABOR MIGRATION FROM UKRAINE TO THE EU DURING THE PANDEMIC



Restrictions on the movement of persons have created barriers to attracting migrant workers to work abroad and their safe returning to their countries of origin. The planning of anti-epidemic measures should take into account the need of the labor market in migrant workers and the need of migrant workers in working abroad. Changes in border-crossing rules must be considered and communicated in advance.



The economic downturn amid harsh anti-epidemic measures has led to significant changes in the EU labor market, increased layoffs, and reduced incomes of migrant workers. Migrant workers need to be more involved in social protection programs in their countries of destination, have full access to health care and reintegration programs in their countries of origin.



The pandemic and its economic effects carry the risks of stigmatizing and discriminating against migrant workers, increasing unregulated migration and the risks of human trafficking. Systematic monitoring of discrimination and hate speech will help respect the rights of migrant workers. A broad migration amnesty will legalize a vulnerable group of unregulated migrant workers.