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AZ UKRÁN MIGRÁCIÓ HATÁSAI AZ EU TAGORSZÁGOK
GAZDASÁGAIRA
THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION FROM UKRAINE ON THE
ECONOMIES OF EUROPEAN UNION'S COUNTRIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Migration has been a part of human history for as long as humanity has existed. People have been moving from place to place since the beginning for a variety of reasons. Some sought better opportunities for themselves and their families, hoping to improve their standard of living. Others fled conflict or dangerous situations in search of safety and security in new lands. Others were motivated by a desire to travel, discover new horizons, or work in different areas. Throughout history, these movements have shaped civilizations, economies, and cultures, adding to the rich variety of human experience.

Migration is the physical movement of people from one place to another; it may be over long distances, such as moving from one country to another, and can occur as individuals, family units, or large groups (Dastrup, 2019). There are two types of migration: internal and international migration.

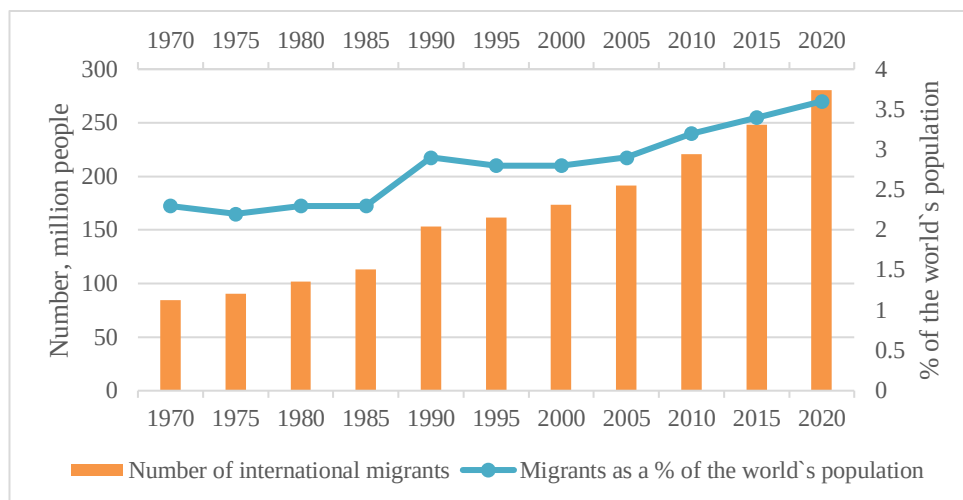
The first type occurs when people travel only a short distance from their original destination and usually within their country, often due to economic factors. If we are talking about moving from one country to another, when it's the second type of migration, international migration.

As noted earlier, there are several reasons why people migrate, and by these reasons we can determine other two types: voluntarily and forced migration. The voluntary migration is based on individual desire and choice. But if an individual has to leave his/her place of origin against his/her wish, then this is the forced migration.

All reasons of migration can be seen under three vectors: economic, cultural and environmental ones. Every vector has its push (events and conditions, which force an individual to move to a particular destination) and pull (events and conditions, which inspire people to move to a new location) factors.

Economic reason is the most popular purpose why people migrate. This is because people are either "pushed" away from where they live due to a lack of job prospects, or they are pulled because somewhere else offers more jobs/higher pay. Cultural push factors usually involve slavery, political instability, ethnic cleansing, famine, and war. Cultural pull factors could include people who want to live in democratic societies, gender equality, or educational or religious opportunities. A number of environmental push and pull factors influence migratory trends. Environmental pull factors can include people's desire to stay in specific environments. Push factors are often linked to the frequency of natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and flash floods that a region might experience.

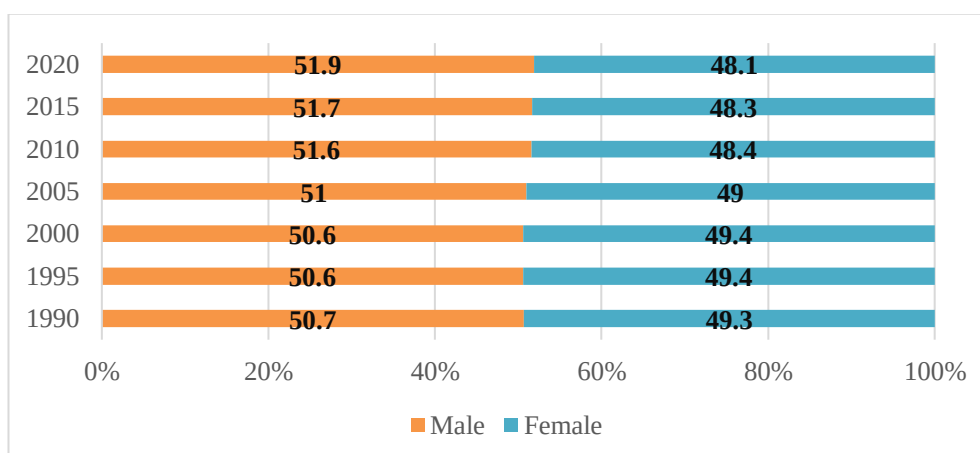
Migration is very dynamic around the world, with peaks in different regions at different times. The number of international migrants has grown significantly, reaching around 281 million in 2020, which is about 3.6% of the global population (IOM, 2024).



1. figure: International migrants since 1970

Source: IOM, 2024a

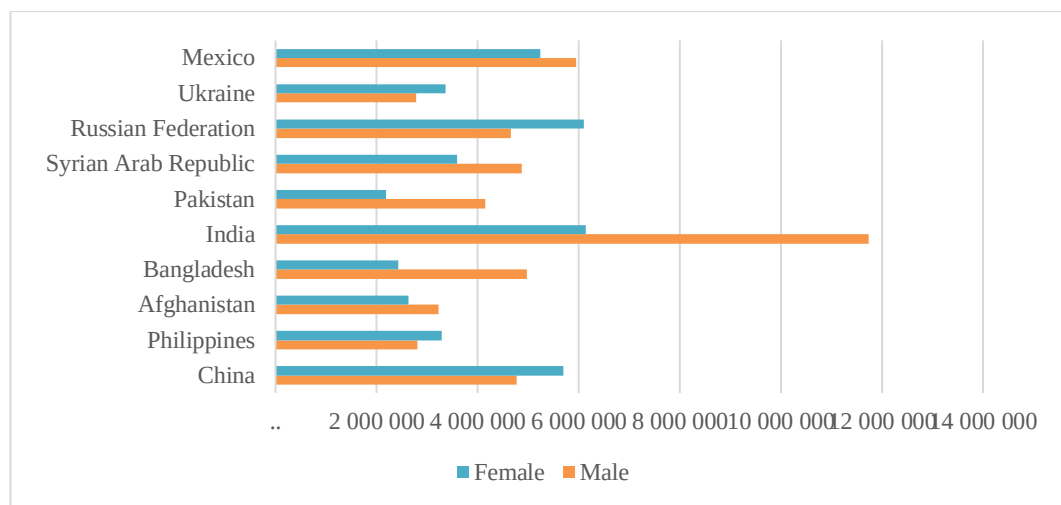
Globally, male foreign migrants dominate females, with the gender gap increasing over the last two decades. In 2000, there were 88 million male migrants and 86 million female migrants, with a gender ratio of 50.6 to 49.4 percent. In 2020, the gap was 51.9 to 48.1%, with 146 million male migrants and 135 million female migrants. Since 2000, female migrants have decreased while male migrants grew by 1.3 percentage points (United nations, 2020). Figure2 provides more sex breakdowns.



2. figure: International migrants, by sex

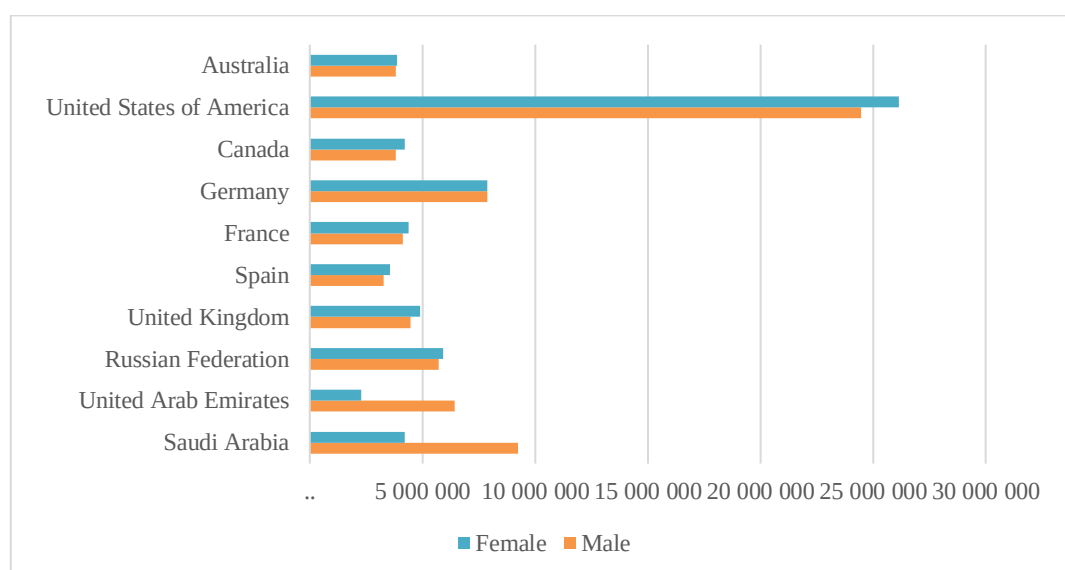
Source: United nations, 2020

Analyzing international migrants by gender in the top 10 destination and origin countries in 2020 (Figure 3-4) (United nations, 2020) reveals totally different tendencies. Destination countries in Europe and Northern America, such as the United States, Canada, France, Spain, attract a greater number of female international migrants than males. In contrast, the majority of Asian countries in the top ten, particularly the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, have far more male international migrants than females, which is related to economic structure (e.g., construction and security sector prevalence) as well as social and human security issues.



3. figure: International migrants, by sex, top 10 original countries

Source: United nations, 2020



4. figure: International migrant, by sex, top 10 destination countries

Source: United nations, 2020

When analyzing persons who leave their homeland countries it is critical to separate migrants and refugees, as they have different situations and legal statuses. Refugees and migrants are sometimes grouped together in discussions on global migration, although they are separate groups with different legal definitions and experiences.

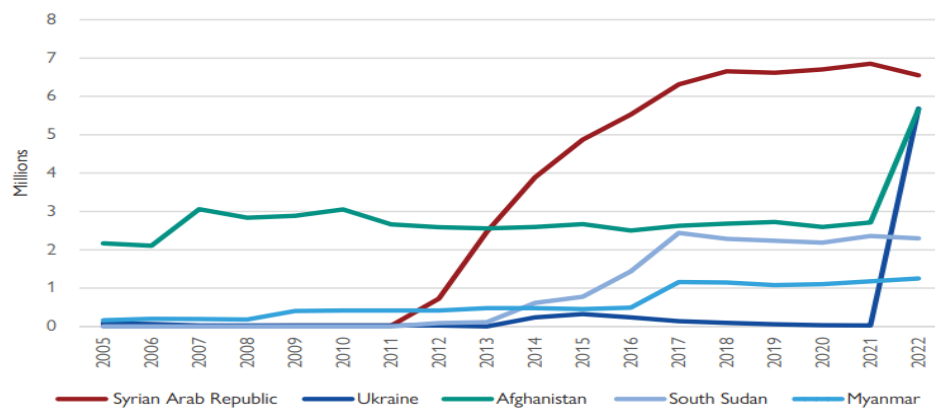
Refugees are people who have been forced to leave their home countries because of persecution, war, violence, or major human rights violations, and thus have reason to be afraid of danger if they return. Refugees are protected by international law, including the right to seek asylum and not be forced to return to unsafe conditions in their native country. Migrants, on the other hand, are people who move, often voluntarily, to another country or region primarily for reasons such as seeking greater financial possibilities, education, or the reunification of families. While migrants may experience challenges, their movements are rarely motivated by an urgent threat to their lives or safety, and they do not have the same legal rights as refugees. Understanding the key differences between the two is critical for providing proper reactions and assistance for their unique requirements.

Refugees are defined and protected under international law. The 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and other legal agreements, such as the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention, still act as the foundation of current refugee protection. The legal ideas they establish are influencing numerous other international, regional, and national laws and practices. The 1951 Convention defines who is a refugee and describes the fundamental rights that nations must provide to refugees. One of the most fundamental foundations of international law is that refugees should not be expelled or returned to conditions that endanger their lives and freedom (UNHCR, 1951).

By the end of 2022, there were 35.3 million refugees worldwide. Out of these, 29.4 million were under the protection of the UNHCR, and 5.9 million were registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the Near East. This number is the highest ever recorded in modern history, not counting older historical data. The increase in refugees from 2021 to 2022 was the largest yearly jump ever seen, mainly because of people fleeing Ukraine due to Russia's full-scale invasion.

At the end of 2022, the majority of refugees under UNHCR's mandate came from just 10 countries, which included the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and Eritrea. Together, these countries made up more than 87% of the global refugee population. Many of these nations, with the exception of Ukraine, have consistently been among the top sources of refugees for several years. The impact of Russia's invasion

of Ukraine is especially clear in these statistics. For instance, in 2021, Ukraine had only around 27 000 refugees, but after the invasion, that number surged dramatically. Figure 5 illustrates the trends in refugee numbers from the top five countries of origin between 2005 and 2022.



5. figure: Number of refugees by top five countries of origin, 2005–2022 (millions)

Source: IOM, 2024a

Before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022, the number of Ukrainian migrants and refugees was relatively low compared to the large influx seen after the conflict began. In 2021, for example, there were just over 27,000 Ukrainian refugees registered globally (Lapshyna, 2022). Most Ukrainian migrants before the war were economic migrants, moving primarily to neighboring countries like Poland, and other parts of Europe in search of better job opportunities. These movements were largely voluntary, with Ukrainians seeking work abroad to improve their living conditions or send remittances back home (Lapshyna, 2022). While Ukraine had internal challenges, including political instability and economic difficulties, the mass displacement seen during the war was unprecedented in recent history.

Before the war in Ukraine, significant migration patterns already existed, driven largely by economic factors. By 2020, there were around 6.1 million Ukrainians living abroad. Poland, the United States, Germany, and Italy were also popular destinations for Ukrainian migrants [5]. Economic hardship and the pursuit of better job opportunities were the main reasons behind this emigration, especially after Ukraine's independence in 1991. Many Ukrainians worked temporarily abroad, particularly in neighboring European countries like Poland, where visa-free travel introduced in 2017 further boosted migration flows.

Ukrainian students also increased their presence abroad, with the number of those studying in foreign countries rising significantly over the years.

Migration trends shifted slightly after the Russian aggression in 2014, when many Ukrainians sought refuge both internally and in neighboring countries, although a majority still migrated for work rather than asylum.

During the war in Ukraine, the number of migrants and refugees increased significantly, with millions of people leaving the country to escape the conflict. By the end of September 2024, more than 6.7 million Ukrainian refugees were reported across Europe (Lapshyna, 2022). Many of them sought safety in nearby countries like Poland, Germany, and the Czech Republic. Poland became a major destination because of its proximity and established migration networks, hosting over 1.8 million refugees. Germany also received around 1 million Ukrainian refugees, and other European countries experienced similar surges in arrivals.

This situation marked a clear shift from the migration patterns before the war, which were primarily driven by economic factors. In fact, in 2022, Ukraine emerged as the largest source of refugees in Europe, a stark contrast to 2021 when only about 27,000 Ukrainians were registered as refugees globally. Many of those fleeing, especially women and children, were able to take advantage of temporary protection schemes that European countries quickly implemented to help address the crisis.

The impact of refugees on Europe's economy has become a hot topic, especially given ongoing conflicts in regions like the Middle East, Africa, and notably, the war in Ukraine. The influx of refugees has created both positive and negative effects on the economies of host countries.

On one hand, refugees can help fill gaps in the labor market, particularly in sectors where there are worker shortages, such as healthcare, construction, and agriculture. As refugees become consumers, they increase demand for various goods and services. This uptick in consumption can stimulate economic growth, leading to the creation of additional jobs. As refugees become consumers, they increase demand for various goods and services. This uptick in consumption can stimulate economic growth, leading to the creation of additional jobs. Many refugees bring unique skills and experiences that can lead to new ideas and businesses (European commission, 2016).

On the other hand, the sudden increase in the number of refugees can put pressure on healthcare, education, and social protection systems. This situation may require govern-

ments to allocate more resources, which can be challenging during times of economic uncertainty. The arrival of refugees can create societal tensions, particularly if local populations are facing their own economic hardships. This dynamic may lead to negative feelings toward refugees, making it harder for them to integrate into new communities (European commission, 2016).

This research focuses on understanding how Ukrainian migration affects the economy of European countries, especially after the increase in refugees caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The main goal is to look at data and figure out the economic consequences, particularly in areas like labor markets, public finances, and welfare systems. The study will try to answer important questions such as: How does Ukrainian migration influence European labor markets? What is their impact on public budgets and welfare programs? And what challenges and benefits come from trying to integrate Ukrainian migrants? By exploring these issues, we aim to propose possible ways to improve the integration of refugees into society.

1.1. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Migration has been widely studied in academia, focusing on its causes, processes, and consequences. It is often discussed in the context of global trends, economic impacts, social integration, and policy measures. This background is essential to understanding specific migration events, like the displacement caused by the conflict in Ukraine.

Migration is a significant global phenomenon that affects demographics and economies worldwide. Dastrup (2019) defines migration as a core concept in human geography, driven by factors like economic opportunities and political instability. Organizations like the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2024a) and the United Nations (2020) provide detailed data on migration, showing how patterns have evolved over time.

When it comes to refugees, the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR, 1951) outlines the responsibilities of countries to protect people fleeing conflict and persecution. This framework is especially relevant today, with the ongoing Ukrainian crisis displacing millions (ODP, 2024a).

Ukraine has a long history of emigration due to both political and economic issues (Kremen - Gavrysh, 2013). However, the conflict that began in 2022 has caused massive displacement, with over 5 million people fleeing to other countries in Europe and beyond (UNHCR, 2024a; Statista, 2024a). Lapshyna (2022) explains that this recent wave of mi-

gration builds on existing trends while introducing new challenges. Refugees now face issues like adapting to host countries' labor markets and accessing services like healthcare and education, as reported by Eurostat (2024a) and Kupets (2013).

One of the main issues for Ukrainian refugees is finding work and integrating into labor markets. Research by the European Commission (2016) and OECD (2023) shows that, although refugees bring valuable skills, they face obstacles such as language barriers and difficulties in getting their qualifications recognized.

In countries like Poland and Germany, many Ukrainian refugees have started working and contributing to the economy, as highlighted by Mishchuk and Vlasenko (2023). However, challenges like unequal access to jobs and resources still exist (Desiderio & Hooper, 2023). The economic impact of refugees is complex. Supporting them initially costs host countries a lot, but in the long term, they often contribute to the economy. For instance, studies have shown that Ukrainian refugees in Poland pay more in taxes and boost economic activity compared to the support they receive (People in Need, 2024). Similarly, Caselli (2024) explained how integrating refugees can benefit host economies over time.

Countries have responded to the Ukrainian refugee crisis in different ways. For example, Poland has introduced programs to help refugees find housing and jobs (UNHCR, 2024b). However, attitudes toward refugees vary widely, and some countries have shown unequal treatment toward different groups (Drewski - Gerhards, 2024). The European Union's Temporary Protection Directive has been a key policy, offering legal status and access to services for displaced Ukrainians (EPRS, 2024). However, there are still gaps in how different groups of refugees are treated across the EU.

1.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the socio-economic impacts of the Ukrainian refugee crisis on European countries. A comprehensive literature review will be conducted, analyzing academic papers, policy reports, and official data from sources like the UNHCR, Eurostat, and the IOM to gain insights into refugee flows, demographic changes, and their economic contributions. Secondary data, including statistics on labor market integration, education levels, unemployment rates, and economic outcomes, will be analyzed to identify patterns and trends across different European countries. The qualitative aspect of the research will in-

involve examining reports, case studies, and interviews with policymakers, refugees, and social workers to explore social, political, and integration challenges faced by refugees. In particular, the study will focus on the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in Poland, Germany and Hungary, exploring both the opportunities and obstacles they encounter in the labor market and their contributions to host economies.

2. MIGRATION FROM UKRAINE TO EUROPE. TRENDS AND CONTEXT

Ukraine is the biggest country in Europe by land area. The population has fluctuated year to year, but the general trend is quite worrying. This was seen especially at the beginning of the conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014, where the population fell drastically by 3 million. Data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine as of January 1, 2022, showed the population at 41 million (Derzhstat, 2022). There are no official 2024 numbers, but many experts would say the current population is now about 31 million (Bilous, 2024) That is a steep drop, due not only to the occupation of territories but also to the outflow of the population.

Ukraine has seen chaotic changes over the past 33 years (for example, the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, the Euromaidan protests in 2013–2014, the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and finally the invasion of Russia in 2022). Many individual stories and migration flows have resulted from this, and they continue to change in response to current political and economic circumstances.

Economic and humanitarian migration will therefore likely be modified by the military campaign that started in 2014 in eastern Ukraine, the separation of the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk, and the massive political and economic reallocation of resources that followed the Maidan protests in 2014. This new edition of the volume is a very useful and timely exercise in linking past and present forms of mobility and helping to put these processes in historical context.

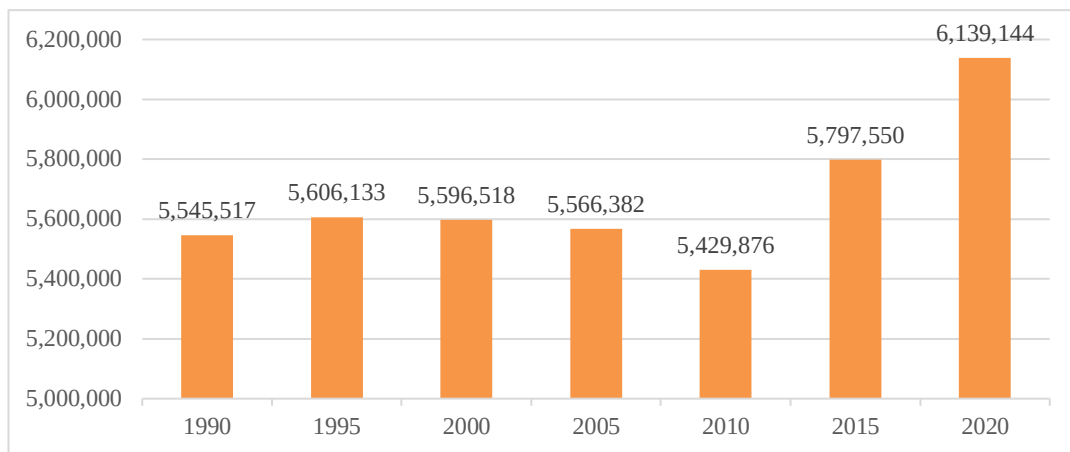
Ukrainian migration did not begin with the appearance of the independent Ukrainian state in 1991. To describe the economically driven migration from post-1991 independent Ukraine, migration researches applied to Ukrainian migration use the term "fourth-wave migration" (Kremen – Gavrysh, 2013) The term, barely familiar to researchers outside Ukraine, plays an important symbolic role not only in placing recent migration in the historical and political context of the last two centuries, but also in the nation-state-building project of independent Ukraine. Table 1 provides detailed classification of all waves.

1. table: Classification of migration waves from Ukraine

Wave name	Period	Source of migration/ character	Host countries	Reasons	Key points
First	Early 1870s – World war I	Surplus of rural illiterate population / labor wave	USA, Brazil, Canada, Siberia, Australia, New Zealand	Poverty, national oppression from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, search for better working conditions	The first Ukrainian settlers, who became the founders of the largest Ukrainian diaspora abroad, showed paths and opportunities for emigration.
Second	Interwar period (1917-1939)	Medium landowners, merchants, officials, clergy, intelligentsia, soldiers / intellectual wave	Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Germany, France, USA, Canada	Collectivization, famines, repression, dissent against Soviet rule	Ukrainians of the second wave differed from their predecessors in that they were educated people. This explained their rapid adaptation to new conditions and active involvement in social life. Re-emigration was a characteristic phenomenon.
Third	World War II – Post-war period	Educated population / political wave	Germany, Canada, USA, UK, Australia, Brazil, Argentina, France	Deportation, unwillingness to live in Soviet society	This wave became the largest in Ukrainian emigration. During the third wave, emigration through marriage to foreigners to facilitate relocation abroad became prevalent.
Fourth	Mid-1990s – Present	Highly skilled, cheap labor / labor migration wave	USA, Russia, European countries	Low standard of living, unemployment, inability to fulfill potential in the homeland	"Brain drain" occurs, with a loss of national consciousness. Significant monetary inflows to Ukraine. Legal vulnerability, with little protection from Ukraine or host countries.

Source: Kremen – Gavrysh, 2013

According to UN data (United nations, 2020), over 6 million people had left Ukraine by 2020. This significant spike in migration was primarily caused by the COVID-19 crisis, during which many people lost their jobs and were forced to seek employment in other countries. The following two charts illustrate the main destinations for Ukrainian migrants.



6. figure: Ukrainian migrants worldwide from 1990 to 2020

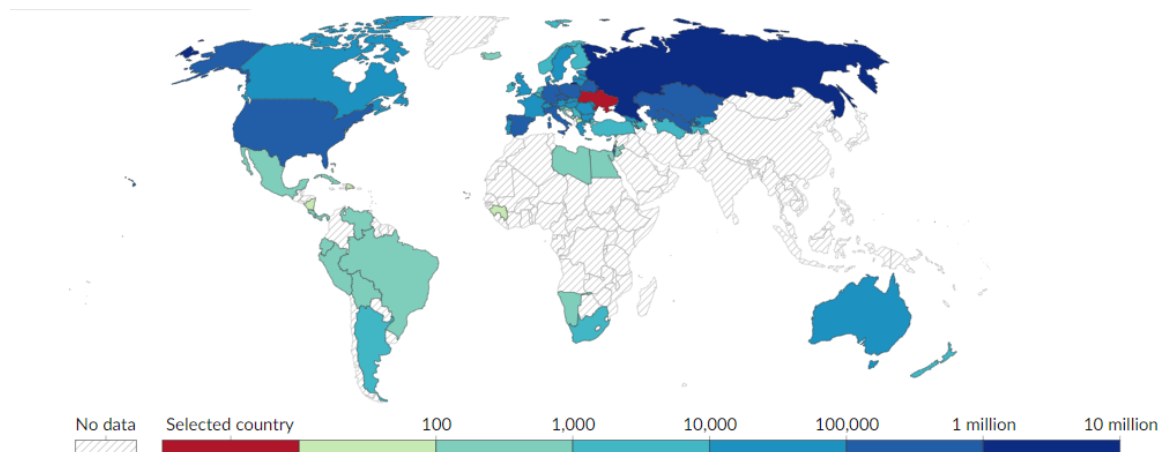
Source: United nations, 2020

There are, as explained earlier, different push and pull factors that cause migration. For instance, the Figure 6 makes it clear when some of the factors became intense. Though this chart doesn't capture the full-scale war, we can still mark three peaks of migration: 1995, 2015 and 2020 years. Each of those was driven by different factors. The peak in 1995 was a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the following instability in most of the state institutions, which marked the beginning of the fourth wave of migration. This next peak came in 2015 and was connected to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia's occupation of eastern Ukraine. We can observe the last peak in 2020, which is connected to the COVID-19 crisis.

Another interesting question is how people decide on their destination country. Research suggests that people aren't guided solely by potential economic benefits; they also consider cultural and social factors. Cultural capital, such as language skills, traditions, and education, and social connections (like friends and family) are key in making decisions about moving abroad. These factors help migrants diversify risks and find housing or jobs more easily.

For example, a study on Ukrainian teachers working in lower-skilled jobs abroad found that the top reasons for choosing specific destinations were connections to relatives or friends, better job prospects, and income opportunities. Language knowledge and the cultural closeness of the destination country also played a big role. Additionally, over 20% of respondents mentioned that visa accessibility and work permits were important factors in their choice of destination (Kupets, 2013).

In terms of return migration, only a small number of Ukrainians who have spent years working in Southern or Western Europe have chosen to come back to Ukraine. Many are hesitant due to uncertainty and instability back home, while strong pull factors abroad, such as higher wages and a better quality of life, continue to influence their decisions to stay.



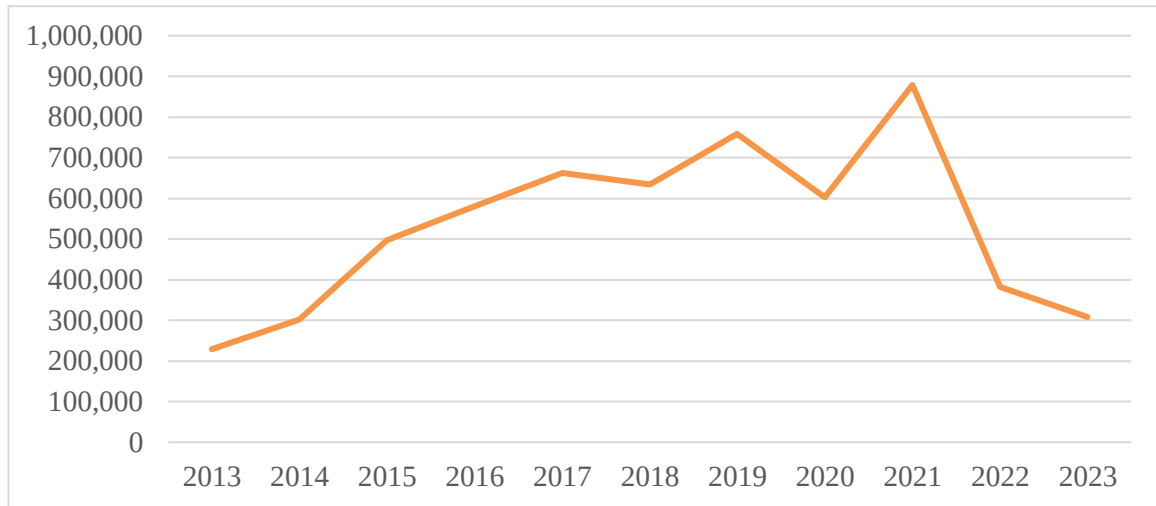
7. figure: Map of migration destination from 1990 to 2020

Source: Spooner - Tuna Acisu-Ritchie - Ortiz-Ospina – Roser – Gerber, 2022

This map clearly shows the main migration destinations for Ukrainians between 1990 and 2020. Though Russia invaded Ukraine, Russia still remained one of the prime destinations for migration. This is basically due to the close proximity that prevails between nations, not only in distance but also in language, culture, and traditions. In addition, many Ukrainians have relatives in Russia, which would enhance integration. The United States, Canada, Australia, and Kazakhstan are also important destinations, all hosting large Ukrainian diasporas. In Europe, the key destinations have been Western European countries such as Germany, Italy, and Spain; among culturally closer Slavic nations, Poland and the Czech Republic have been the most attractive for migration.

Despite the fact that we can clearly observe a growing number of students and young researchers who are drawn to study and work abroad due to better educational and career development opportunities, the employment reasons are still in the first place among the reasons for residence permit.

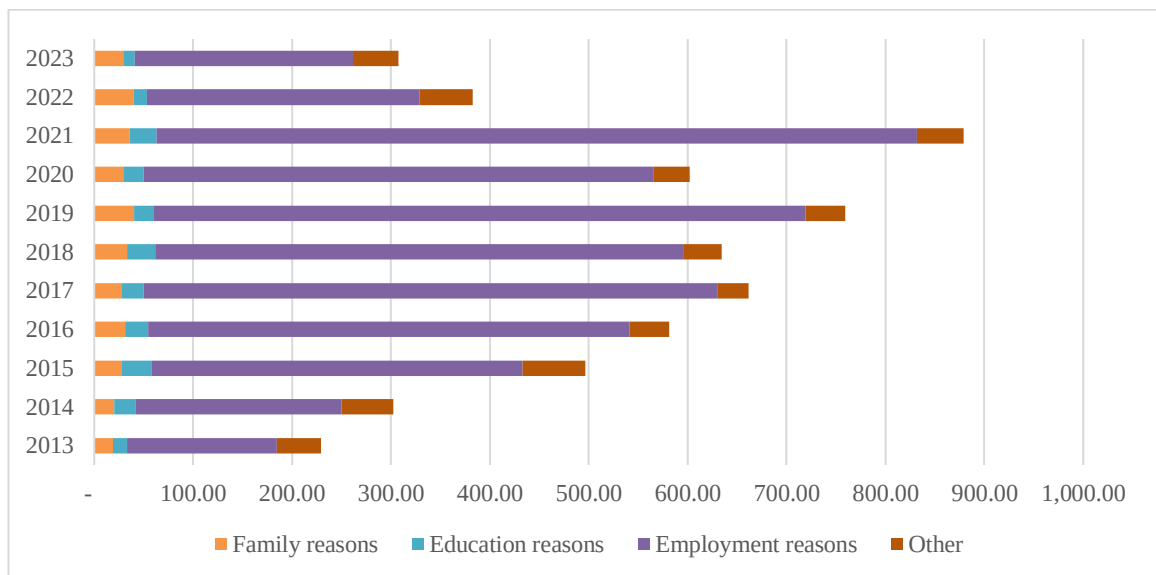
It's important to notice that graphs below contain statistical information only about migrants. So, data about refugees is omitted and these figures concentrate on other migration groups.



8. figure: First residence permit by reason, total, EU

Source: Eurostat, 2024a

The graph for Europe tells the same story as the previous data, only from a European perspective. Unfortunately, Eurostat doesn't provide data on Ukrainian migrants before 2013. But from that date onwards, we can see the same trend observed around the world: the number of migrants started to increase in 2014, with a peak during the COVID-19's crisis.



9. figure: First residence permit by reasons, EU

Source: Eurostat, 2024a

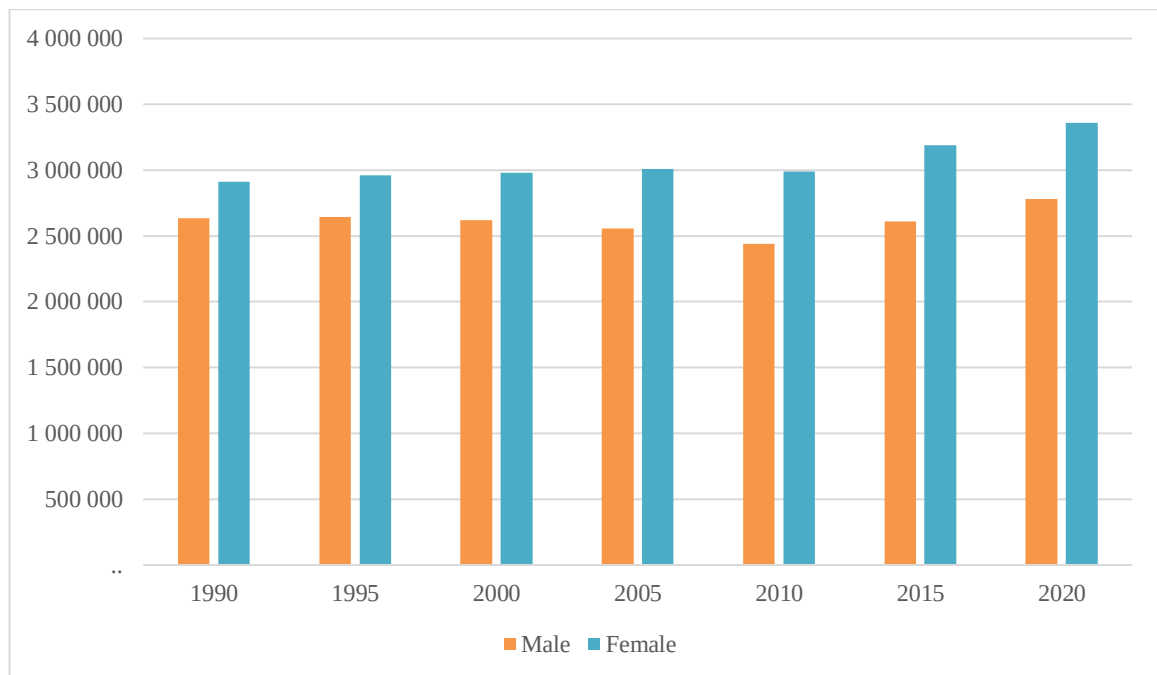
Now, if we look at the same data but focus on the reasons for emigration to the EU countries, then we have the following pattern: job-seeking always takes the first place,

which means that from 2013 to 2020, we can mainly talk about so-called economic migration.

From 1990 to 2022, labor migration patterns from Ukraine have evolved significantly, reflecting changes in demographics, education levels, and job choices. Initially, most migrants were middle-aged men looking for unskilled labor in sectors like construction and agriculture, particularly in countries such as Poland and Russia. However, as time went on, the profile of Ukrainian migrants began to shift, with more young people and women entering the workforce, particularly in areas like caregiving and healthcare in Western Europe (Lutz – Palenga-Möllenberg, 2012; Rovenchak, 2011)

Interestingly, the educational background of migrants has also changed. Earlier waves primarily consisted of individuals with lower educational attainment, but recent data indicates a rise in highly educated migrants, including young professionals and graduates. This shift is largely driven by better working conditions and salaries abroad, as well as established social networks that help newcomers integrate (Rovenchak, 2011)

When it comes to job selection, Ukrainians are increasingly filling roles in sectors experiencing labor shortages, such as IT, engineering, and healthcare. The decision on where to migrate is often influenced by language similarities and cultural ties, with Poland standing out as a favored destination due to its proximity and a shared linguistic heritage.



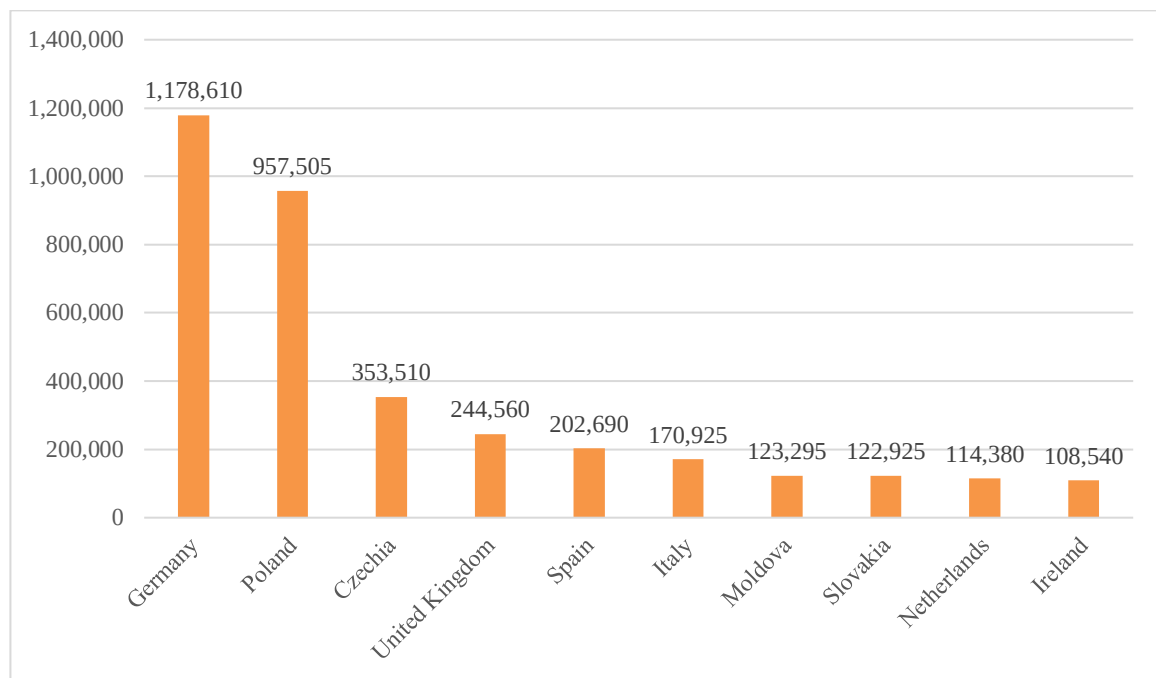
10. figure: Ukrainian migrants worldwide, by gender

Source: United nations, 2020

Looking at migrants in terms of gender, we can clearly trace the trend of increase in female presence among emigrants. This is due to factors highlighted by Molodikova (Molodikova, 2008) outlining that there is a considerable link between the proportion of female migrants and job opportunities for women in Ukraine. Although male and female unemployment rates are relatively close (9.5% for women and 8.9% for men (ILOSTAT, 2024)), it is generally more difficult for women to find work. Women also experience longer spells of unemployment (15 months compared to 13 months for men), and women's wages in 2019 were just 77% of men's wages, according to statistical information (UNDP, 2020).

As of the end of July 2024, over 6.168 million Ukrainian refugees were officially recorded across Europe, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This conflict has led to the most significant population displacement since World War II, with nearly one-third of Ukrainians uprooted from their homes (UNHCR, 2024).

The next chart represents number of refugees from Ukraine recorded in Europe since February 2022 as of July 2024 (Statista, 2024).



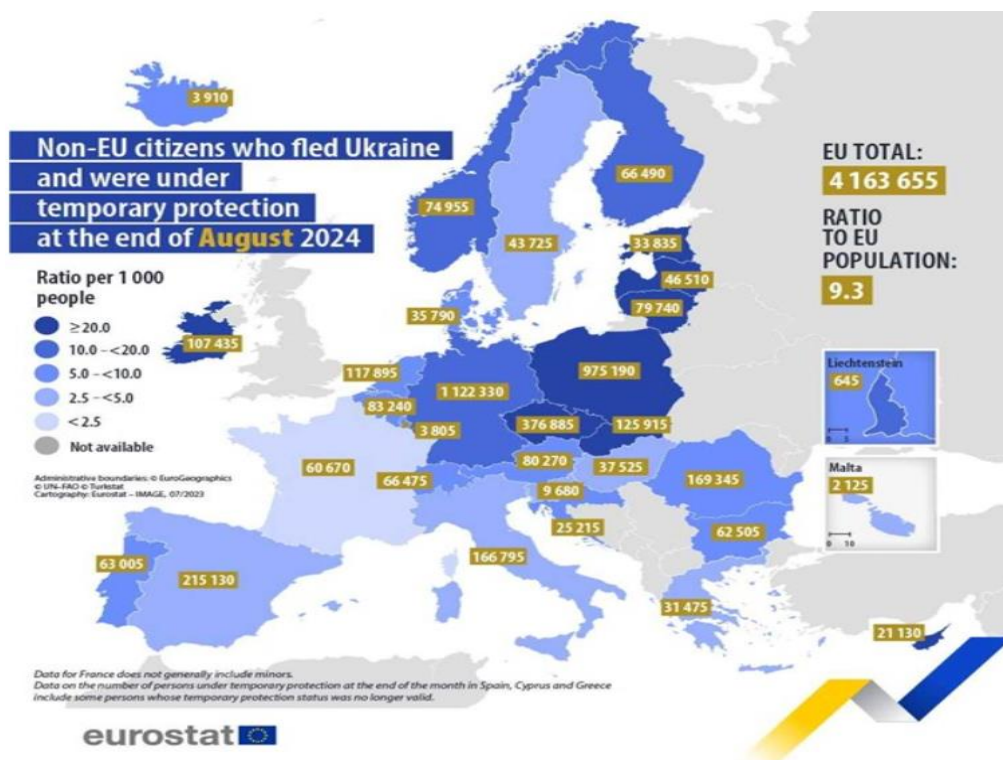
11. figure: Top 10 countries by destination of Ukrainian migrants (2022-2024)

Source: Statista, 2024

Although the migrant type has changed from economic migrants to refugees, we still find patterns for favored host countries that are consistent with those preferred before 2022. For example, Germany and Poland remain very popular choices for Ukrainians in choosing

a host country. The reasons for this will be discussed in the following chapters, but the most frequent factors include government programs, job opportunities, and integration support.

But of course not only those countries have hosted Ukrainian refugees. The EU has granted temporary protection status to Ukrainian refugees, which allows them to live, work, and access essential services. Although this protection is a significant help, the level of support varies by country. For example, Germany and Belgium provide substantial welfare programs, while some Baltic countries offer less support, making them more of a transit point rather than long-term destinations for refugees.

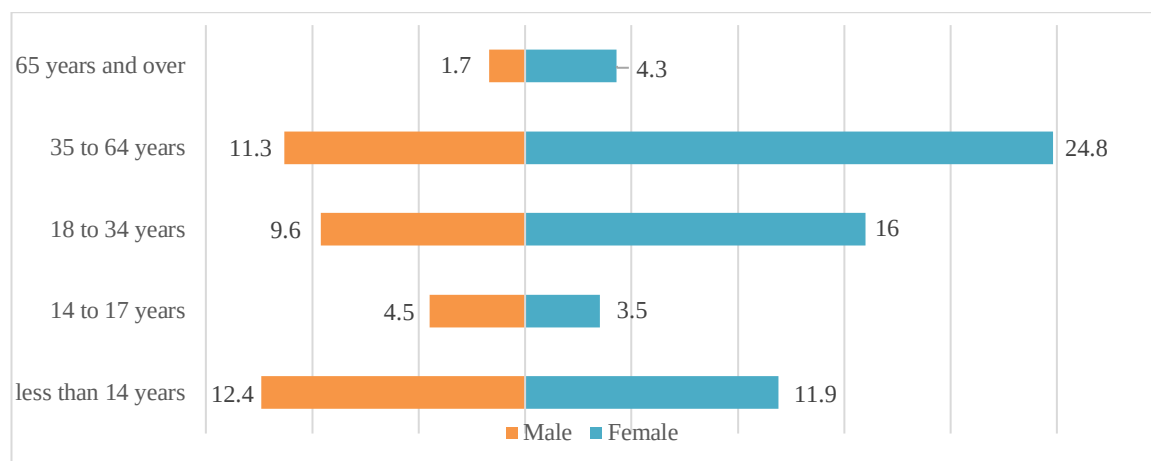


12. figure: Number of refugees who has temporary protection, by country

Source: Eurostat, 2024b

The map above provides more detailed information on temporary protection to Ukrainians in EU countries. Clearly, from the data, every EU country has accepted a given number of Ukrainian refugees. This number is meaningful only relative to the population of the country itself; for example, we cannot compare the absolute number of refugees in Germany and Latvia directly, but we can compare it meaningfully in relation to the population percent of the host country. This is suggestive that a lot of refugees are in countries bordering Ukraine.

Since the start of the war on February 24, 2022, millions of Ukrainians have sought refuge abroad, with most refugees being women, children, and the elderly, as men between 18 and 60 are required to stay under martial law. This group of refugees primarily includes middle-aged women with children and, in some cases, elderly family members.



13. figure: Structure of beneficiaries of temporary protection by age and sex, EU, end of August 2024, %

Source: Eurostat, 2024b

This chart gives a very clear visual idea of the gender division among refugees. We can easily notice that most refugees are women, especially those between 35 and 64 years old. Another large group is children of both sexes. This indicates additional pressure for women who are forced to leave their country with children. A more detailed discussion of this problem will be described in the following chapters.

Initially, most Ukrainians fled to neighboring countries like Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania, given their proximity and cultural similarities. Poland, in particular, has become a major destination for Ukrainian refugees, offering a supportive environment with accessible job markets, schooling for children, and language resources. However, many Ukrainians later moved to countries like Germany, France, and the Czech Republic, where social programs and support systems for education, healthcare, and job integration are more robust.

The UNHCR's Protection Profiling and Monitoring of Ukrainian refugees (UNHCR, 2022), conducted from May to November 2022, found that women made up 85% of respondents. The largest age group among them (47%) was between 35 and 59 years old, while another 25% were aged 18 to 34. Nearly half (47%) had a university degree, and 29%

had vocational training. Before the war, 73% were employed or self-employed, with 15% working in retail, 14% in education, and 9% in healthcare. Other surveys revealed an even higher education level among refugees: a UNHCR intentions survey indicated that 73% had a tertiary education, and in the EUAA and OECD (EUAA, 2022) survey, 71% had completed higher education, including 41% with a Master's degree or more. However, language skills were limited; only 50% reported knowing English, 8% spoke Polish, 5% spoke German, and 3% spoke French.

The unique characteristics of Ukrainian refugees have significant implications for their employment in EU countries. First, the relatively high levels of education and skills among Ukrainian refugees make them valuable to the EU labor market, particularly in sectors like healthcare, where many member states face severe labor shortages. However, many of these refugees, intent on eventually returning to Ukraine, may prioritize short-term, lower-paying jobs that match neither their qualifications nor skill levels, due to barriers in accessing higher-quality employment.

Language limitations also play a role, as many refugees lack local language proficiency or strong English skills. As a result, they may not have the option to delay employment until they gain language fluency and therefore often accept roles below their skill level. Additionally, the high number of women with children among the refugees means that job choices frequently depend on the availability of childcare, and many of these women prefer part-time work to balance family responsibilities.

Another challenge lies in housing, as employment opportunities tend to be concentrated in urban areas where affordable housing is scarce, making it difficult for refugees to settle and find stable jobs. Lastly, many refugees endure psychological trauma, anxiety, and depression due to the conflict, highlighting the need for mental health support to help them participate actively in the workforce.

These factors create a complex employment landscape for Ukrainian refugees in Europe, balancing their skills and qualifications with the realities of temporary resettlement and support limitations.

Children among these refugees face distinct challenges. Many children are balancing both local schooling and online Ukrainian classes, which is stressful and time-consuming. This dual workload can be a heavy burden, especially in environments where children are adapting to new languages and educational expectations (ADC, 2023).

Analyzing Ukrainian migration from 1990 to 2024 highlights how the motivations, profiles, and destinations of Ukrainian migrants have changed over time. The 1990s saw

Ukrainians migrating mainly for economic reasons, largely due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, which led to severe economic hardships. Most migrants during this period were men taking on low-skilled jobs in Eastern Europe, often in sectors like construction and agriculture. These early migrants prioritized jobs that did not require extensive education or language skills.

Then as the EU opened its labor market, more Ukrainians began moving to Western European countries like Italy, Spain, and Germany, with an increasing number of women migrating to work in caregiving, domestic work, and services. This wave was partly supported by EU migration policies that allowed for more temporary work visas, filling labor gaps in certain sectors.

By then, Ukrainian migration was becoming more gender-balanced, with both men and women leaving for a wider range of jobs.

The situation shifted again after 2014 due to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, which intensified both economic and political motivations for migration. More educated and younger Ukrainians left the country, looking for work in fields like healthcare, IT, and engineering. Many moved to countries with growing labor demands, such as Poland and Germany, where legal and seasonal work opportunities became more accessible.

The largest shift occurred after the Russian invasion in February 2022, leading to one of the biggest refugee crises in recent European history. Unlike earlier migration waves, most of these refugees were women, children, and elderly individuals, as martial law restricted men aged 18-60 from leaving Ukraine. Many of these refugees have university degrees and professional experience but often face difficulties finding work in their field because of language barriers and challenges in getting their qualifications recognized. Most have found work in lower-skilled roles, like caregiving and retail, and have largely settled in countries like Poland, Germany, and other EU nations offering temporary protection and access to basic services.

Over the years, the typical Ukrainian migrant profile has evolved from mostly low-skilled laborers to a more educated and diverse group, with shifting needs and challenges based on changing political, economic, and social conditions in both Ukraine and host countries.

3. IMPACT OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES ON EUROPEAN LABOR MARKET

Ukrainian refugees are becoming more and more valued for their economic contribution to host nations as a result of the severe labor shortages that are affecting Europe. The arrival of Ukrainian migrants helped European labor markets at a very critical moment when for quite some time they have been suffering from a lack of workers, mainly in healthcare, agriculture, and construction. Their presence has helped fill critical gaps, stabilizing industries that suffered from disruptions related to the aging of local populations and other factors. European authorities view Ukrainian refugees as a valuable labor market asset because they recognize the social and economic advantages that come from their talents and desire to work in labor-intensive industries (Mishchuk – Vlasenko, 2023)

As we have noticed in previous chapter, we can observe the start of present migration process since Ukraine's independence in 1991. Economic instability compounded by job shortages and low wages spurred an outflow of people seeking better opportunities. Labor migration, particularly seasonal work, has been a longstanding tradition in Ukraine. This trend intensified after independence as economic hardship and relaxed travel restrictions prompted more Ukrainians to work abroad. Over the past two decades, deterioration of economic conditions, currency devaluation, stagnating wages, and rising living costs in Ukraine have driven even more citizens to seek work outside the country, often as a means of economic survival.

Initially, Ukrainian migrants were drawn to nearby countries with shared cultural and linguistic ties, especially Poland, which remains a key destination due to geographic position and historical connections. In recent years, Western European countries, offering higher wages and a better living standard, have also attracted many Ukrainians. The migration patterns reflect a blend of economic necessity and cultural familiarity, with many Ukrainians viewing both neighboring and Western nations as opportunities for stability and improved quality of life.

Also, as we discussed in the first chapter, the labor shortages across various sectors in Europe have supported the rapid integration of skilled and motivated Ukrainian refugees into the workforce. Sectors like construction, agriculture, tourism, hospitality, and public services, including elder care and nursing, have particularly benefited. These fields were open to Ukrainian migrants, who have filled both legal and informal roles to meet the high

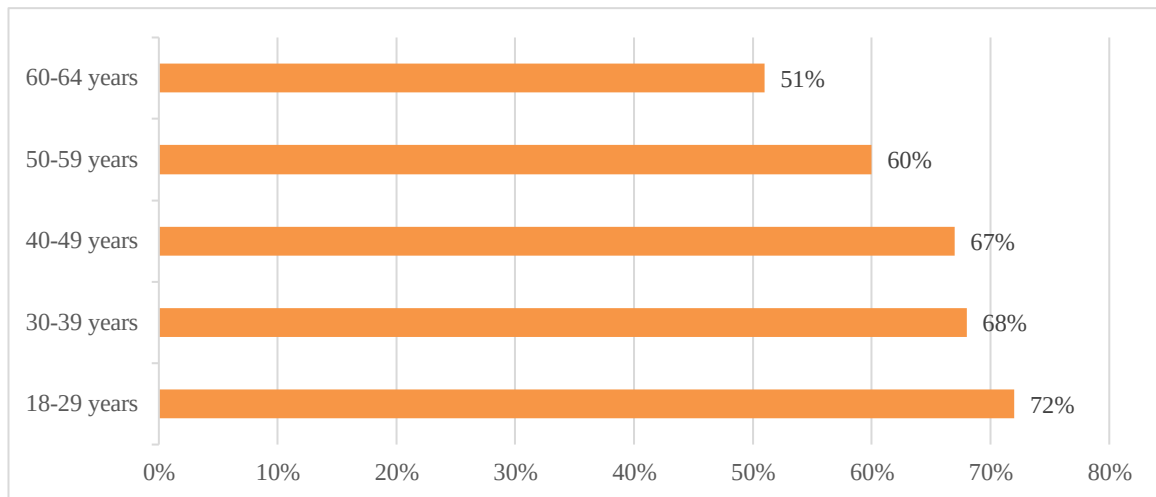
demand in these labor-intensive areas. This influx has helped alleviate workforce gaps, enabling European economies to address critical labor needs even as other factors, such as aging populations, limit available workers (Allinger, 2023).

Ukrainian refugees in Europe tend to work in jobs that are generally low-skilled, especially in the service sector and roles that are often filled by women. Many of refugees find work in the hospitality industry (known as HORECA—hotels, restaurants, and cafes) in countries like Austria, Cyprus, and Spain, particularly in tourist-heavy areas during peak seasons. Retail and cleaning jobs are also common, with many Ukrainians working in retail in countries like Ireland and Latvia, and in cleaning in Austria, Denmark, and Portugal. Some Ukrainian refugees are employed in manufacturing, construction, and logistics in various European countries, often finding these positions through temporary work agencies in places like the Netherlands and Spain.

However, a large number of these refugees are actually highly educated. For example, 70% of Ukrainians working in Germany hold a college degree, and a third of those in Austria have higher education qualifications. In Estonia, the majority of refugees are younger women, with over half having university degrees, while in Hungary, many Ukrainian job-seekers were previously employed in administrative roles back in Ukraine.

This situation highlights a gap between their qualifications and the roles available to them. Improving language support, recognizing foreign qualifications, and matching workers to higher-skill positions could help bridge this gap, benefiting both the refugees and the host economies (Allinger, 2023)

The employment rates of Ukrainian refugees in host countries vary significantly by age group, showing that younger refugees are more likely to be employed than older ones.



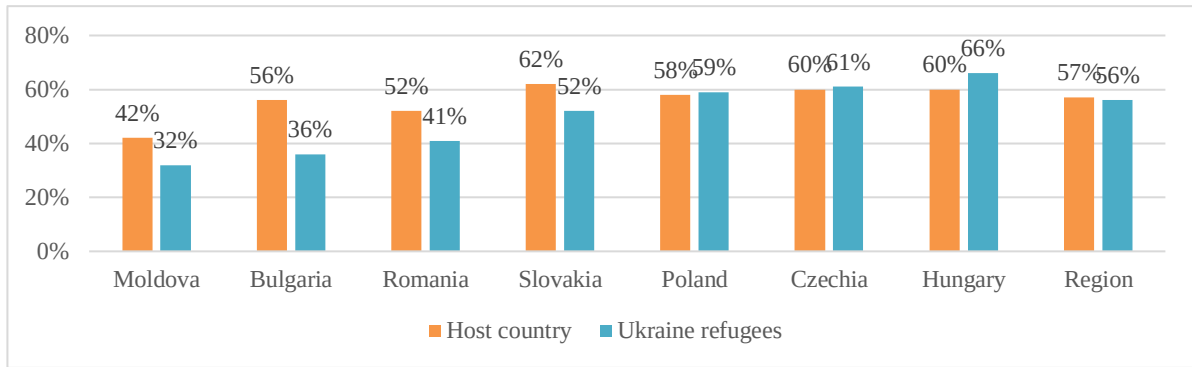
14. figure: Employment rate of refugees from Ukraine by age group in the host countries

Source: IOM, 2024b

These rates show that younger refugees are integrating into the workforce more easily, likely due to factors like flexibility, adaptability, and fewer health-related challenges compared to older age groups. Young adults (18-29 years) have the highest employment rate at 72%, which might also reflect the types of jobs available to refugees, many of which are in sectors such as hospitality, retail, and manual labor that typically demand high energy and adaptability.

As age increases, employment rates gradually decrease, with a notable drop in the 50-59 years and especially the 60-64 age groups. Older refugees may face more barriers to employment, including language proficiency, physical demands of available jobs, and potential discrimination based on age.

The integration of Ukrainian refugees into the labor market has been quicker compare to other refugee groups (OECD, 2023). Ukrainian refugees have reached unusually high employment rates in Europe, with 66 % being employed across the region in 2023 (World bank, 2023).



15. figure: Labor force participation by country (age 15+), %

Source: World bank, 2023

The chart shows that Ukrainian refugees generally have lower labor force participation rates than local populations across Eastern European countries, though the gap varies. Countries like Hungary, Poland, and Czechia show relatively similar participation rates for both groups, indicating better labor market integration for refugees. In contrast, countries like Moldova, Bulgaria, and Romania have a more significant gap, with fewer Ukrainian refugees participating in the workforce compared to locals. Overall, labor force participation among refugees is lower but varies based on each country's conditions and support for integration.

Although migrants can create additional financial challenges for states in the short term, they are likely to have a positive long-term impact on the budgets and economies of recipient countries, especially if they remain for several years and actively participate in the labor market.

Ukraine's geographical and cultural proximity to Europe, along with the presence of a Ukrainian diaspora and temporary protection status, will help increase the participation of displaced persons in the labor force. According to OECD (OECD, 2022), the labor force across all EU countries have grown by 0.5% by the end of 2022, which is double the growth seen during the previous migration wave from 2014 to 2017. The impact was most pronounced in countries like Czechia (2.2%), Poland (2.1%), and Estonia (1.9%), with several other countries seeing a growth of 1%–1.5%, including Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia, Lithuania, and Romania.

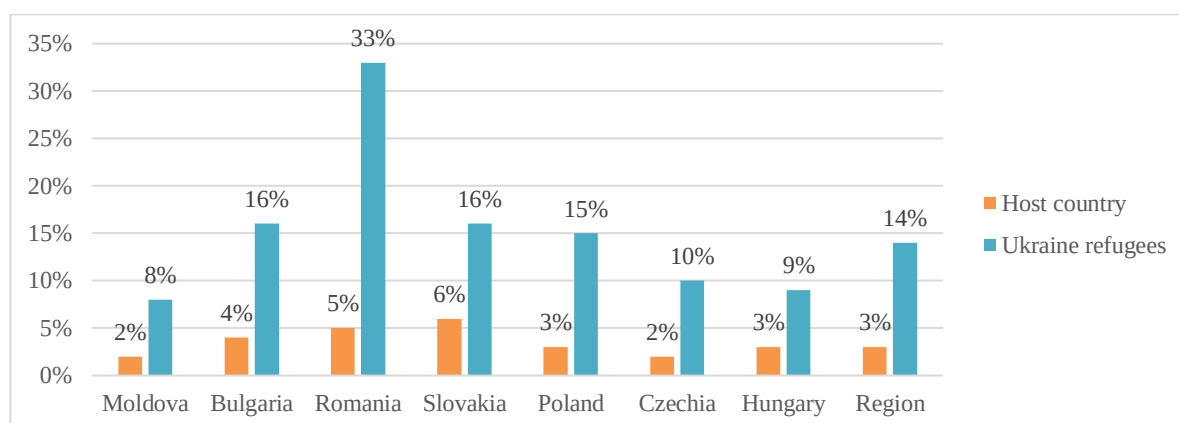
Another question is how immigration affects the employment rate of native workers. The study shows (Edo, 2023) different results for high-educated and low-educated natives in both the short and long runs.

In the short run, the employment rate of highly educated natives doesn't seem to be affected by immigration. This means that when immigrants arrive in a country, they do not immediately harm the job prospects of natives with higher levels of education. This could be because highly skilled jobs are often more specialized, and immigrants may not directly compete with natives for those positions.

However, in the long run, the impact becomes more positive for high-educated natives. Over time, immigration can boost the economy, as immigrants often contribute by starting businesses, increasing demand for goods and services, or filling gaps in industries that require specialized skills. As a result, highly educated natives may find that the demand for their skills increases, leading to higher employment opportunities.

On the other hand, the situation with low-educated natives in the short run is quite different. The employment rate of low-educated natives actually decreases after immigration. This is because immigrants tend to fill jobs in the low-skill sector, where there is a high level of competition. Low-educated natives are likely to face more difficulty finding work in these sectors, as immigrants often take up many of the available positions. As a result, the competition for these jobs increases, leading to higher unemployment among low-educated natives.

In the long run, however, the employment rate of low-educated natives stabilizes and the negative impact disappears. Over time, the labor market adjusts. Immigrants might move into other sectors, or the overall economy may grow and create new opportunities, which help absorb both the immigrant workers and the native workers with lower education levels. Thus, in the long term, the employment situation for low-educated natives becomes neutral again.

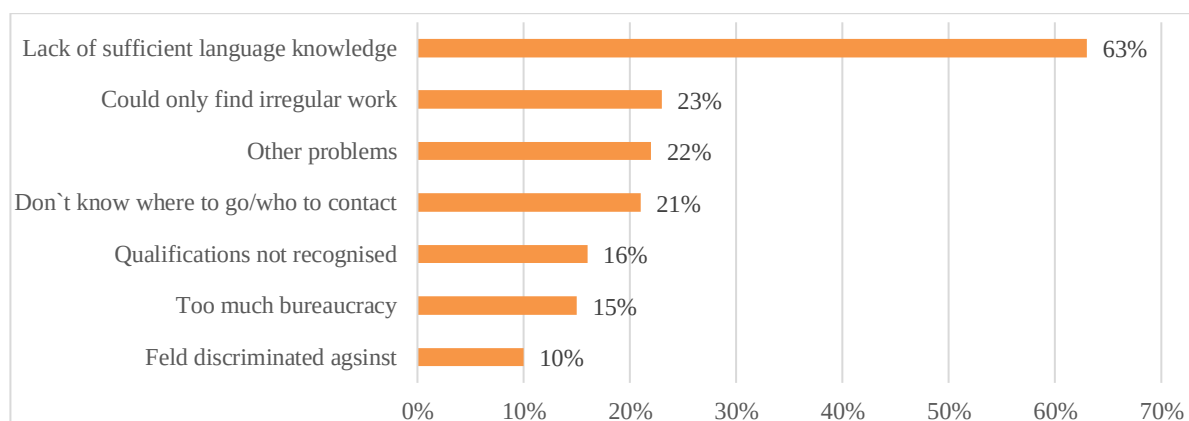


16. figure: Unemployment: refugee population versus host country, %

Source: IOM, 2024b

The data shows that Ukrainian refugees in Eastern Europe are facing much higher unemployment rates compared to the local populations. On average, refugee unemployment is around 14%, while for locals, it's only 3%. The biggest differences are seen in Romania, where 33% of refugees are unemployed compared to just 5% of locals, and in Bulgaria, where the numbers are 16% for refugees and 4% for locals. Other countries, like Poland, Slovakia, and Moldova, also show higher unemployment rates for refugees, but the gaps are not as big. Hungary has one of the smallest differences, with refugee unemployment at 9% and local unemployment at 3%.

This means that refugees are struggling to find work, likely due to challenges like language barriers, difficulty getting their qualifications recognized, and fewer job opportunities. The more detailed explanation about reasons we can see in the chart below. The differences between countries suggest that local economic conditions and the level of support available also play a role in these unemployment rates.



17. figure: Barriers reported by respondents who have looked for a job in a host country (%)

Source: Eurofound, 2023

The biggest challenges Ukrainian refugees face in finding work include a lack of sufficient language skills (63%), which hinders communication and understanding job requirements. Many refugees also end up in irregular jobs (23%) with lower pay and instability. Unrecognized qualifications (16%) prevent them from accessing higher-skilled positions, leading to underemployment. Additionally, many are unaware of job resources (21%) or face bureaucratic obstacles (15%), making it difficult to navigate the job market. Some also encounter discrimination (10%) during their job search, further limiting their opportunities.

Despite the challenges Ukrainian refugees face in the labor market, governments are actively working to support their integration. Various social partner initiatives have been implemented across Europe, offering different forms of assistance to help refugees enter the workforce, rebuild their lives, and contribute to the economies of their host countries.

In Denmark, for example, the "WeStart Ukraine" initiative supports Ukrainian female entrepreneurs by offering a six-week program focused on business creation, mentorship, and networking. This program helps refugees rebuild their lives and possibly contribute to Ukraine's business industry once the war ends. In Luxembourg, the Ukraine-Luxembourg Business Chamber launched a website designed to connect companies with Ukrainian refugees seeking employment or interested in starting businesses in Luxembourg. Similarly, in Poland, Ukrainian workers have been supported through the Polish Investment and Trade Agency, which helps Ukrainian companies operate from Polish territory.

In Italy, a protocol was signed to integrate at least 3,000 refugees into the construction sector through training programs. In Sweden, a new initiative provides incentives for employers to hire refugees by covering part of their salary, with the goal of transitioning them to full-time positions after the establishment phase. This program, which has been active since 2023, aims to support long-term unemployed individuals, including refugees.

Job matching platforms and events have also been widely set up across countries. In Finland, the "Security through work" project was launched in collaboration with temporary work agencies to connect Finnish companies with refugees holding work permits. Spain created an online platform to centralize job offers for Ukrainian refugees, while Denmark hosted job matching events focusing on resume writing and communication skills. In Greece, the HELIOS program offers individualized job counseling, helping refugees identify their skills and find suitable employment opportunities.

Several countries have also introduced labor market policies for Ukrainian refugees. In Belgium, the Matching Talent project provides training and information to improve refugees' chances of finding sustainable employment. Czechia offers subsidies to employers for employee training, while Estonia covers training costs and mentorship for employers hiring Ukrainian refugees. The Malta Chamber Foundation supports refugees in learning English to enhance their job prospects.

In addition to these programs, social partners have been involved in humanitarian aid, including providing material support, fundraising, and offering information on labor markets, pay conditions, and legal rights for refugees. These efforts aim to help Ukrainian

refugees successfully integrate into their new countries and contribute to their economies while fostering solidarity with their home country (OECD, 2022; Allinger, 2023)

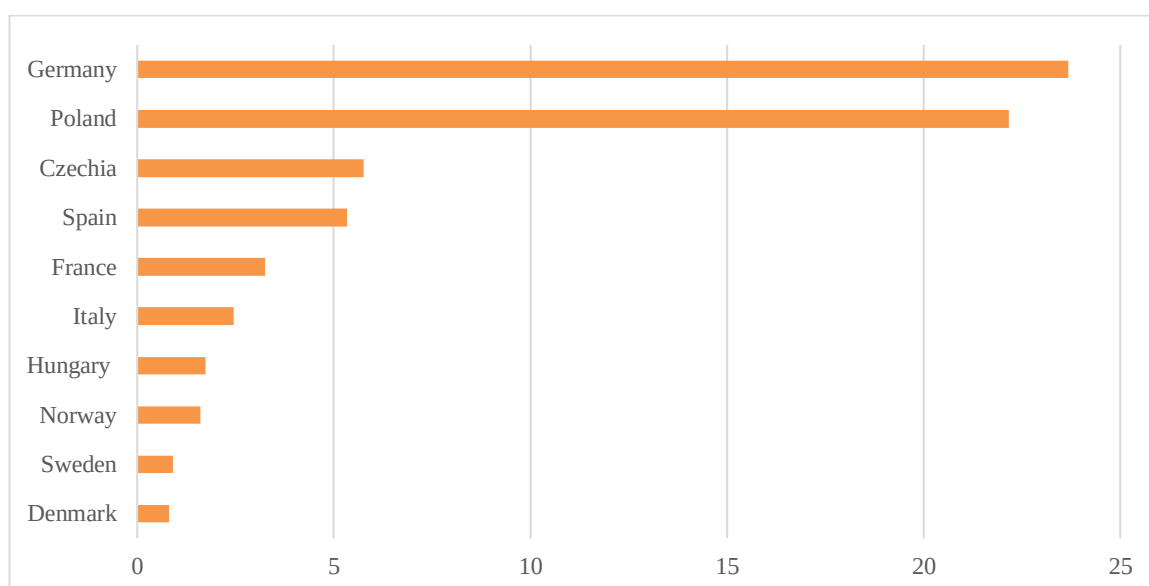
In conclusion, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Europe has been an important source of support for the region, especially during a time when many European countries were facing severe labor shortages in key industries such as healthcare, agriculture, and construction.

However, the integration of refugees into the labor market has not been without difficulties. Despite the fact that many Ukrainian refugees have higher education, they often find themselves in lower-skilled jobs due to barriers like language differences, unrecognized qualifications, and limited opportunities in specialized sectors. That said, younger refugees tend to have higher employment rates than older ones, likely due to their adaptability and the nature of the jobs available in industries like hospitality, retail, and manual labor. To help ease their integration, several European countries have introduced initiatives such as job matching platforms, skills training programs, and financial incentives for employers to hire refugees. These efforts aim to overcome the challenges refugees face and promote their successful integration into the labor market. Overall, while there are challenges in the short term, the long-term economic contributions of Ukrainian refugees are expected to be positive, further strengthening the labor force and fostering stronger connections between host countries and Ukraine.

4. IMPACT ON EUROPEAN COUNTRIES' FINANCES

European nations have been actively supporting Ukrainian refugees ever since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began. Refugees have been providing safe shelter, temporary housing, and social services, as well as financial assistance to help people adjust. Many countries have set up special programs just for Ukrainians, which include fast-tracking visas, giving children access to schools, and offering language classes to help them integrate in the society. Non-governmental organizations and local communities are also pitching in by providing essentials like food and clothing.

The European Union has been providing major financial support to Ukrainian refugees to help member countries meet the increasing needs of displaced Ukrainians. Since the war began, the EU has allocated billions of euros to assist and integrate Ukrainians who had to leave their homes. An emergency fund was set up to support countries hosting refugees, with about 400 million euros going towards urgent needs like temporary housing. On top of that, the EU has set aside around 3.5 billion euros through long-term support programs, which cover things like social services, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. This funding helps improve the living conditions for refugees and aids their integration into European communities, making their transition easier and more stable (DG NEAR, 2022).

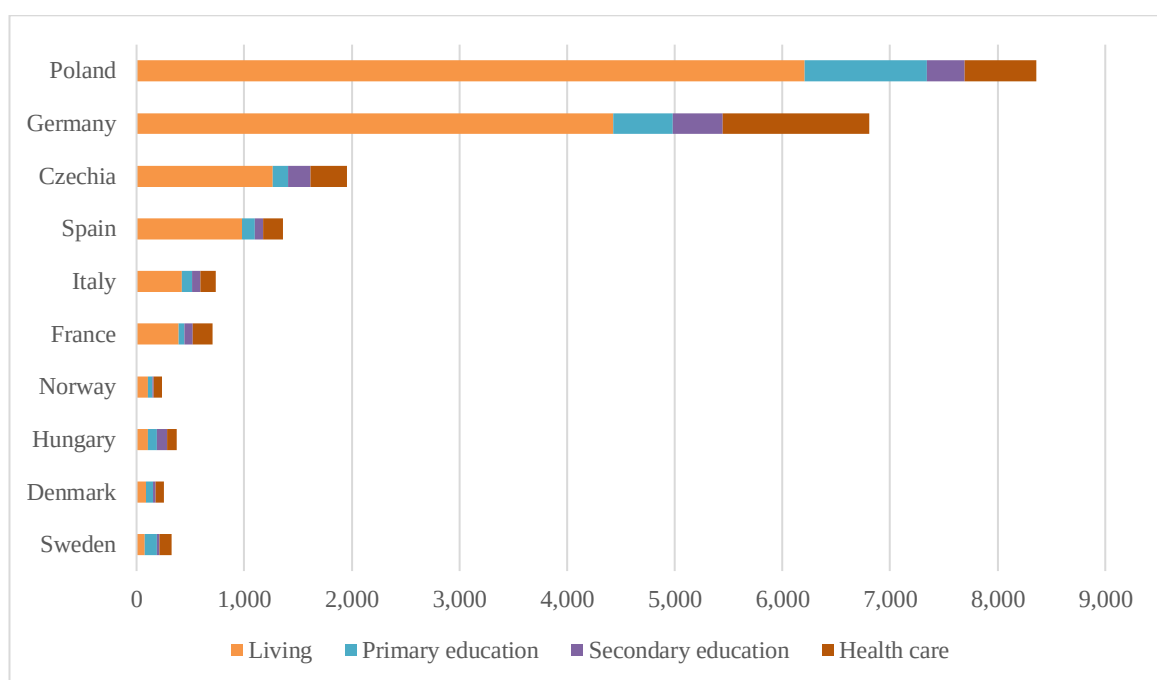


18. figure: Ukrainian refugee costs from March 2022 to February 2024, in billion euros

Source: Statista, 2024b

The chart shows that European countries are supporting refugees at different levels. Germany and Poland are providing the most significant support, likely because Germany has a larger economy and Poland is close to Ukraine, making it a primary destination for many refugees. Czechia and Spain also contribute notably, although not as much as Germany and Poland. Other countries, like France, Italy, Hungary, and Norway, offer moderate support, balancing their aid with available resources. Sweden and Denmark are at the lower end, possibly due to limited capacity or different priorities.

If we want to understand more detailed picture of the cost, we should pay attention to next chart, which provide us such kind of data.



19. figure: Estimated total costs in the European OECD countries, by type

Source: Statista, 2022

The data shows how different European countries provide support to refugees, focusing on areas like living expenses, primary and secondary education, and healthcare. Poland and Germany are the top contributors. Poland leads in living expenses and primary education, while Germany focuses more on healthcare and secondary education. All of the countries provide the greatest amount of support for a living expenses, but it's important how they prioritize other sectors among each other. For example, countries like Czechia and Spain offer moderate support, with Czechia investing more in secondary education and healthcare. Some countries, including Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, and Norway, provide

less support, because they have fewer refugees or face budget constraints. Italy provides balanced support, especially for healthcare and primary education, while France puts more emphasis on healthcare. Overall, the data highlights how countries prioritize refugee support based on factors like their location, economy, and policies, with Poland and Germany playing the biggest roles in meeting refugees' basic needs and education.

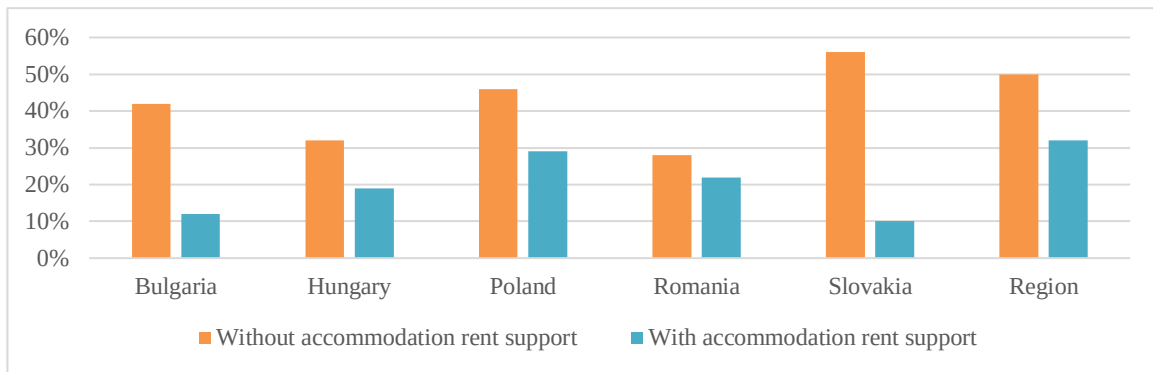
The arrival of Ukrainian refugees in the European Union, especially in countries like Poland, has had a big impact on local economies. Many Ukrainians are quickly joining the workforce, providing essential labor that helps support local industries and services. This has benefits for the host countries, such as increased tax revenue and economic growth, but there are also challenges for the refugees themselves.

Despite the fact that all European countries are providing different kinds of support and integration, a lot of refugees face the poverty problem.

According to the survey data (based on data of 11,496 households (and 26,857 individuals) living in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia; the survey was made by UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Europe and its Inter-Agency partners) (Delogu – Fastovets – Neale – Peleah, 2024) Ukrainian refugee households face significant economic vulnerability. The survey reveals that 50% of individual refugees have an equivalized disposable income (adjusted for household size and composition) below 50% of the median income in their host country. This measure is a widely used poverty threshold, meaning that half of the Ukrainian refugees earn less than half of what the median national household earns. In comparison, only about 9% of the host country's nationals fall into this low-income bracket, highlighting the economic challenges and disparities that Ukrainian refugees face relative to local citizens.

Support with accommodation expenses has a major impact on the economic situation of Ukrainian refugees, effectively reducing their calculated poverty rate. When rental aid or housing subsidies are treated as an indirect income source, the poverty rate among Ukrainian refugees drops from 50% to 32%. This means that housing support allows over a third of low-income refugee households to live above the poverty line, offering substantial relief from economic vulnerability.

In Slovakia, the effect of housing subsidies is particularly significant, where these subsidies enable an additional 46% of the refugee population to rise above the poverty line. This demonstrates how crucial accommodation support is for reducing poverty rates among Ukrainian refugees and improving their overall living conditions.



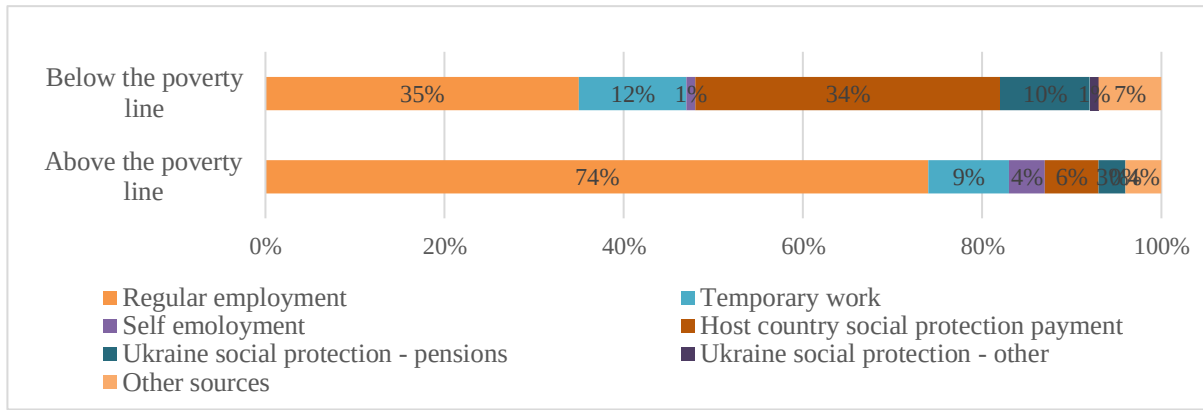
20. figure: Decrease in the refugee poverty rate as a result of accommodation rent support, %

Source: Delogu – Fastovets – Neale – Peleah, 2024

The income sources for Ukrainian refugee households vary significantly depending on whether they are above or below the poverty line. For refugee households with higher incomes, regular employment makes up 74% of total income, whereas it only contributes 35% to the income of lower-earning households. This difference is partially due to higher labor force participation rates in wealthier households (68% compared to 49% in lower-income households).

Household composition also plays a role; wealthier households have a lower age dependency ratio (52%) compared to lower-income households (77%). This means that lower-income households tend to have more dependents relative to working-age adults, which can limit their earning potential. Additionally, individuals in wealthier households are more successful in securing employment, with a 10% unemployment rate (half that of the lower-income group) and fewer people working part-time (14% versus 31% in lower-income households).

Lower-income refugee households, however, rely much more heavily on social protection benefits, which make up nearly half of their total income. About two-thirds of this support comes from the host country, while the remaining portion largely consists of pensions paid by Ukraine. This is partly because 13% of adults in lower-income households are of pension age, compared to only 5% in households above the poverty line.



21. figure: Refugee household income sources above and below the poverty line, %

Source: Delogu – Fastovets – Neale – Peleah, 2024

European countries have been providing various forms of financial support to Ukrainian refugees since the invasion, with the amount and types of aid varying by country. For example, Germany offers monthly payments ranging from 449 euros for individuals to 285 euros for children under five, with additional support for vulnerable groups. France provides monthly benefits based on family size and income, as well as assistance for rent and children’s education. Italy offers a one-time 1,000-euro grant for those completing language or professional training, along with other support for childcare and education. The UK provides a one-off payment of £200 and access to various benefits like universal credit, while the Netherlands gives 260 euros per person for food and personal needs, with extra support for those living in host families. Poland offers one-time payments for basic needs, child benefits, and help for starting businesses, and Austria provides a one-time 500-euro payment per adult and 250 euros for children. These countries collectively aim to ease the financial burdens of Ukrainian refugees through direct payments and additional social assistance programs (Visit Ukraine, 2022). But as we can see from the chart above, this financial support is not enough for covering all the refugee’s needs.

Poland has become one of the main destinations for Ukrainian refugees, and it’s estimated that around 50% of Ukrainian refugees in Poland are now employed. This high employment rate is partly because of new, simplified work regulations for Ukrainians, which allow them to enter the job market quickly. As a result, they’re filling gaps in areas like construction, agriculture, and services, where there is often a need for workers.

The Centre for Migration Studies at the University of Warsaw reports that Ukrainian refugees in Poland paid approximately \$2.4 billion (PLN 10 billion) in taxes. This amount

is actually larger than the amount of direct financial assistance provided to support refugees (PLN 3.5 billion), excluding spending on education and healthcare (UWC, 2022).

In the Czech Republic, last year's support for Ukrainian refugees balanced out between what was spent and what was earned. Both the expenses and the revenue from taxes and other contributions made by Ukrainian refugees came to almost CZK 22 billion. Early in the year, spending was higher than income, but by the second half, income started to outweigh expenses. By the fourth quarter of 2023, there was a CZK 1.9 billion surplus in favor of the state budget, and another CZK 1 billion surplus was added in January 2024 (People in Need, 2024).

According to the OECD (OECD, 2022), the economic contributions of Ukrainian refugees are noticeable in GDP growth in several Central and Eastern European countries:

Refugees in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Estonia have contributed to an estimated 1.2% annual GDP growth. Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia, Lithuania, and Romania have also seen a positive effect, with around 0.8% annual growth.

Looking forward, Oxford Economics has predictions specifically for Poland. If 650,000 Ukrainians stay in Poland after the war, GDP could rise by 1.2%, and with 1 million Ukrainians, the increase could be around 2%. This economic growth is driven by the refugees' contributions as workers and consumers, which helps stabilize Poland's economy (Urban, 2022).

One of the main questions surrounding Ukrainian migration to the EU is understanding the economic impact these migrants have on host countries. We have already covered, to some extent, the financial costs of supporting Ukrainian refugees, such as social benefits, housing, and health services. However, this topic is complex and requires examining both the immediate and long-term economic effects Ukrainian migrants bring to EU labor markets.

Ukrainian refugees, as we've discussed, are integrating into the workforce faster than previous refugee groups, likely because of their relatively higher levels of education and adaptability. This rapid entry into the labor market is promising, as it potentially increases tax revenue for the countries that host them. Many Ukrainian refugees find employment within months, which helps alleviate the financial burden on public welfare programs.

Yet, while these integration rates are encouraging, they often involve low-skilled and low-wage positions, like service and labor jobs. These roles don't fully utilize their skills and education, leading to what is called as the skill downgrading—the phenomenon of workers, especially female migrants being disproportionately employed in occupations that

require lower education levels than the ones they obtained. For example, many Ukrainian refugees might have degrees in fields like engineering, law, or healthcare but end up in jobs unrelated to their expertise, partly due to language barriers and the complex requirements for validating foreign credentials. Moving to higher-level positions is challenging because acquiring host-country language skills and navigating bureaucratic processes for diploma recognition are time-consuming and expensive.

Further complicating the situation, the low wages typical of these entry-level jobs mean many refugees must work long hours just to cover their living expenses, leaving them with little time or energy to invest in language classes or certification programs. This situation creates a cycle where refugees are “trapped” in lower-skilled jobs and have limited upward mobility. As a result, their potential economic contribution remains limited compared to their actual qualifications.

In the broader economic context, this situation has mixed effects. On one hand, the influx of Ukrainian workers helps to fill labor shortages in sectors like agriculture, construction, and personal care services, which are essential but often struggle to find sufficient workers. On the other hand, the lack of full integration into higher-skilled positions limits the potential tax revenue these migrants could generate, as higher-paying jobs would increase both income and consumption taxes.

The long-term effects of this integration pattern are also important to consider. Continued low-wage employment can lead to social stratification, where Ukrainian migrants become part of a “working poor” class with limited opportunities for economic mobility. This situation could eventually create challenges for social cohesion and may necessitate greater investments in targeted support programs, such as affordable language courses and streamlined qualification recognition pathways.

Ultimately, while the rapid integration of Ukrainian refugees into low-skilled jobs provides short-term economic benefits, the EU’s economic policies might need to adjust to help these migrants move into roles that better align with their skills and education. This shift could lead to a more significant long-term economic contribution, benefiting both the migrants and the host economies.

The economic effects of increased migration on the EU's production capacity have become a significant topic of analysis, especially given recent shifts in migration patterns. Understanding these effects requires examining "potential output"—the maximum level of

goods and services that can be produced sustainably within the euro area. As migration bolsters the labor force, it influences potential output, though the extent of this impact depends on how effectively migrants' skills align with available jobs.

Migration can enhance productivity through various channels, such as innovation and the spread of new knowledge, often referred to as increases in "total factor productivity" (TFP). However, for these gains to materialize, migrants' skills must be matched with jobs where they can fully contribute. This skill matching takes time and is complicated by language barriers, recognition of qualifications, and economic integration challenges.

In the short term, a sudden increase in labor supply—without a corresponding rise in capital investments (such as infrastructure and equipment)—can actually decrease productivity per worker. This temporary reduction happens because more people are sharing the same resources, so each worker may not be able to perform at their full capacity.

To understand how migration from 2020 to 2023 might affect potential output by 2030, researchers simulated five scenarios (Caselli – Lin – Toscani – Yao, 2024) varying assumptions about the scale of the working-age population increase, the productivity differential between migrants and natives, and how long migrants are likely to stay. All scenarios assume a temporary fiscal expansion of 0.2% of GDP to accommodate the population increase, reflecting increased government spending tied to this demographic change. The scenarios include:

Scenario 1: Conservative assumptions about the labor force increase, considering only 2022's migrant arrivals. Migrants have an 18% productivity gap compared to natives, and they stay permanently.

Scenario 2: Intermediate assumptions regarding the labor force increase and a permanent productivity gap, with migrants staying permanently.

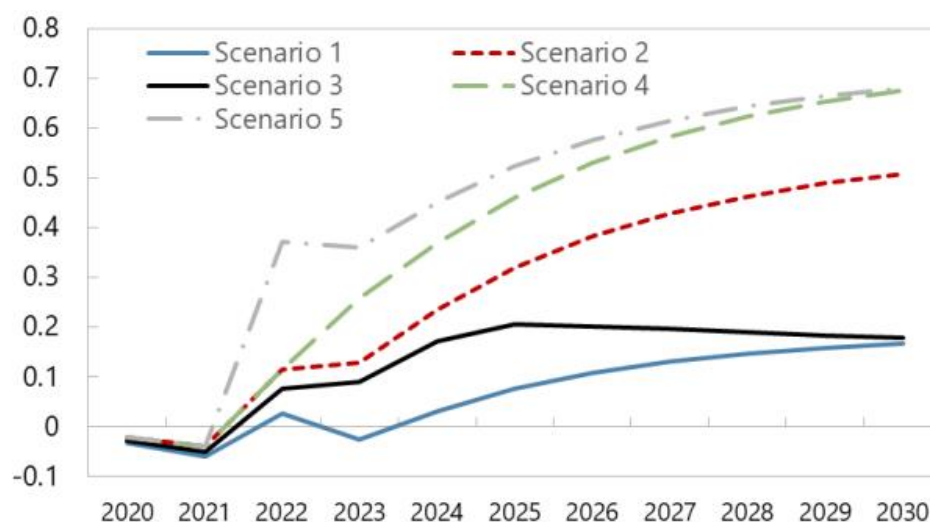
Scenario 3: Similar to Scenario 2, but with only half the migrants remaining in the host country by 2025-28.

Scenario 4: Similar labor force increases as in Scenario 2, but assumes the productivity gap gradually closes by 2030, with migrants staying permanently.

Scenario 5: Largest assumed increase in labor force, with a permanent productivity gap and permanent migrant residency.

The simulations indicate that migration from 2020-2023 could increase the euro area's potential output by 0.2% to 0.7% by 2030. In scenarios where either the productivity gap closes over time (Scenario 4) or the labor force expands significantly (Scenario 5), the positive impact on potential output is most pronounced, achieving a 0.7% increase. The

findings also show that a stronger impact on GDP results when migrants remain longer and when productivity gaps between migrants and native workers diminish. Conversely, if many migrants leave by 2030 (as in Scenario 3), this reduces the potential GDP gain by about 0.3 percentage points.



22. figure: Potential output impact of labor force increases

Source: Delogu – Fastovets – Neale – Peleah, 2024

The results align with previous studies on migration’s economic effects. For instance, research on Venezuelan refugees in Latin America found that a migration increases of 5% could boost GDP by 2.5-4.4% in countries like Chile and Colombia. Similarly, the influx of refugees into the EU during 2015-16 led to a GDP increase of approximately 0.25%—comparable to the effects observed in the euro area simulations.

Migration’s influence on GDP per capita is closely tied to productivity. If a productivity gap between migrants and natives persists, GDP per capita could see a slight decrease. However, as migrants’ skills are increasingly matched to suitable roles and the TFP gap closes, GDP per capita is likely to stabilize or even rise.

In the short term, the labor force shock introduces a modest inflationary effect, estimated at about 0.1%, as demand outpaces the supply capacity. This is a result of increased consumption from newly arrived migrants and government spending. In the long term, effective migrant integration remains essential, particularly as it relates to fiscal costs like social security. Studies emphasize that high levels of labor market integration are key to a positive fiscal impact, underscoring the importance of policies that support migrant workforce participation in line with their skill levels.

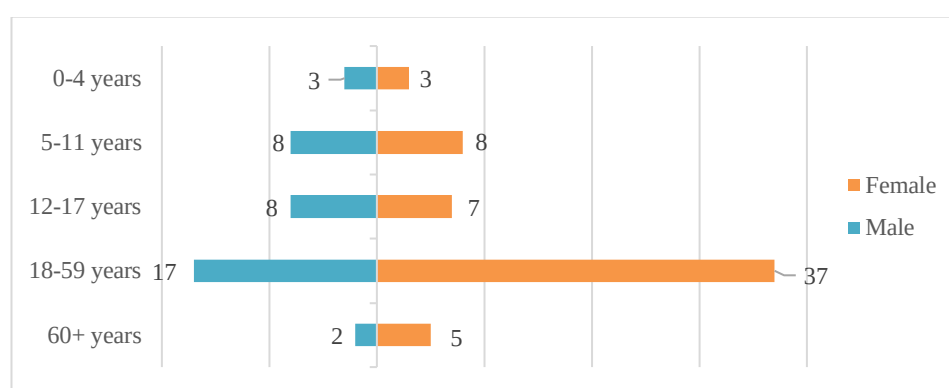
Overall, migration has the potential to bolster the EU's economic output, though the extent of this impact hinges on the successful integration of migrants into roles that match their qualifications. When migrants stay longer, and when productivity gaps diminish, migration leads to more substantial economic benefits. However, the initial impact on labor productivity and inflation underscores the importance of aligning migration policies with broader economic planning to ensure sustainable growth.

5. COUNTRIES` CASE STUDY

5.1. POLAND

A combination of historical, social, and economic factors influenced migration to Poland before the Russian-Ukrainian War. Poland's economy was expanding, especially when the country joined the EU in 2004. This increased need for labor brought in migrants from nearby nations, especially Ukraine. Numerous Ukrainians arrived to work in fields with frequent labor shortages, such as construction, domestic care, and agriculture. Agreements, which made it simpler for Ukrainians to get work permits and temporary visas, streamlined the procedure. The most notable agreement was the 2007 Polish-Ukrainian bilateral labor agreement, which simplified legal procedures for short-term work for Ukrainian nationals. This agreement allowed Ukrainians to work in Poland for up to six months within a year without needing a full work permit, making Poland an accessible destination for labor migration (Kindler - Kordasiewicz – Szulecka, 2016).

The arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Poland after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has brought significant changes to the country's social and economic dynamics. By mid-2024, Poland had hosted near 1 million Ukrainian refugees, with women, children, and the elderly making up the majority (ODP, 2024b). This was largely because men of conscription age stayed in Ukraine due to military obligations. Refugees arrived in two main waves: the first seeking immediate safety and the second looking for longer-term solutions (Zyzik - Baszczak – Rozbicka - Wielechowski, 2023).



23. figure: Structure of Ukrainian refugees in Poland by age and sex, %

Source: ODP, 2024b

The attitude of Polish citizens toward Ukrainian refugees has been largely positive, particularly in the first stages of the war, when solidarity and support were high. Polish

communities and the government rallied together to provide shelter, food, medical assistance, and other forms of aid. In fact, 77% of Poles participated in helping refugees during the early phase of the crisis (NBP, 2023). However, as time has passed, perceptions have shifted. By January 2024, while the majority still viewed Ukrainian refugees positively (around 67%), there was a noticeable decline in positive views compared to previous months, largely due to concerns about refugees' "demanding attitudes" and perceptions that they expected entitlements. This change has coincided with the ongoing challenges of integrating refugees into Polish society and the increasing strain on local resources (UNHCR, 2024b).

Polish attitudes toward Ukrainian refugees are generally more positive than toward refugees from the Middle East, largely due to cultural ties and Poland's security interests. The influx of Ukrainian refugees in 2022 was met with significant solidarity, as Poland shares Slavic heritage and geographical proximity with Ukraine. In contrast, the 2015 migration crisis, with refugees fleeing Syria and Afghanistan, was met with skepticism. Concerns about security, cultural differences, and economic strain led to opposition, as Poland resisted the EU's refugee relocation plan. While both groups face integration challenges, the reception of Ukrainian refugees has been far more empathetic due to the direct nature of the conflict (Du – Kong – Li, 2023).

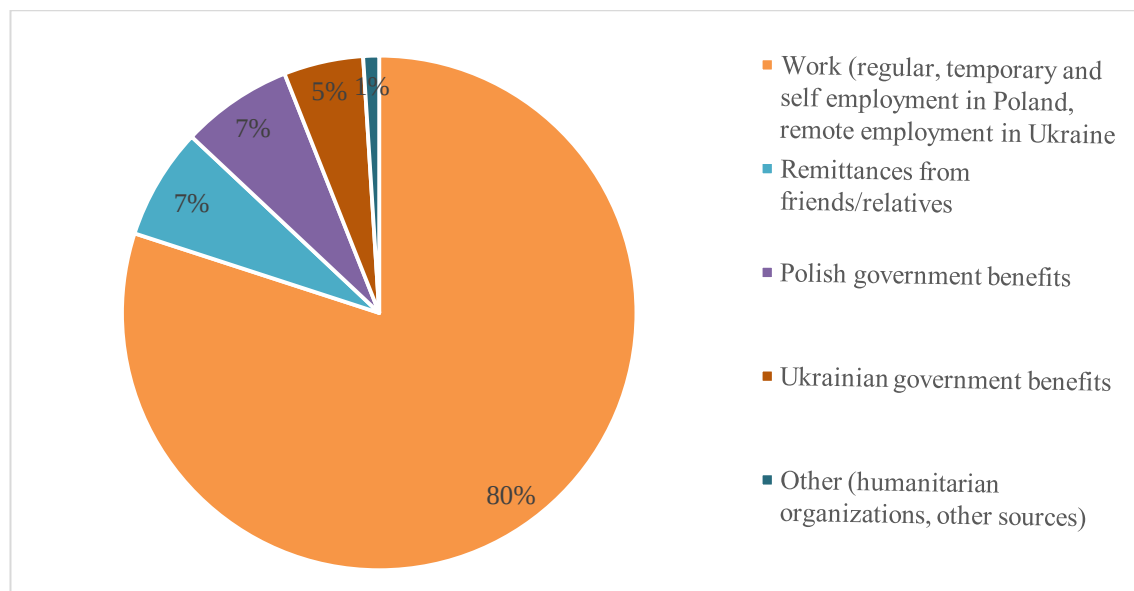
This can be observed not only among the general population but also among politicians across different parties. Many publicly claim that refugees from the Middle East create a danger, primarily due to their religion and gender. The majority of them are men, which contradicts the Polish image of refugees fleeing war—typically women, children, and the elderly—while men stay to defend their homeland. This contrast makes Poles more sympathetic to Ukrainian refugees, as most are women, children, and the elderly. Another important factor is that EU countries are the first destination for Ukrainian refugees fleeing war, unlike other migrants who must travel thousands of kilometers to reach Europe. Additionally, governments tend to be more open to refugees fleeing a rival regime than those escaping an allied regime. This makes the experience of Ukrainian refugees more relatable to Poles, who have historically suffered under Russia. Refugees from the Middle East, on the other hand, are often seen as economic migrants seeking better opportunities rather than genuine asylum seekers (Drewski – Gerhards, 2024).

The most interesting part is that the V4 Group study revealed that only 3.1% of Poles distinguish between Ukrainians and refugees in general. According to the study, 67.8% of Poles are willing to have Ukrainians as part of their family, and 64.7% would accept any

refugee (Mishchuk – Vlasenko, 2023). At first, these findings seem to contradict previous statements. However, Poland's 2020 asylum data shows a low number of applications (2,803) and approvals (392), primarily from neighboring countries like Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine (UNHCR, 2020). This indicates that while Poles may express openness to refugees, their experiences are limited to those from similar cultural backgrounds, which explains their more negative reaction to refugees from the Middle East.

Most Ukrainian refugees and pre-2022 migrants in Poland earn their income through employment. According to the UNHCR MSNA Poland 2023 survey, 80% of refugee income comes from work, with only a small portion coming from other sources. The survey shows varied income levels: 20% of households earn under 3,000 PLN, 41% earn between 3,000 and 6,000 PLN, and 12% earn more than 6,000 PLN, while 27% chose not to disclose their income. For refugees who are unemployed, the median income is significantly lower, around 600 PLN, compared to 2,500 PLN for non-employed prewar migrants.

Refugees face additional challenges in maintaining a standard of living similar to Polish citizens, primarily due to their lack of housing ownership. While 87% of Poles live in owner-occupied housing, most refugees must rent in a competitive market. After the outbreak of the war, rental availability dropped by 60%, creating further difficulties for refugees trying to settle in larger cities (Deloitte, 2024).



24. figure: Income structure of Ukrainian refugee households

Sources: Deloitte, 2024

Since 2021, nearly all major sectors of the Polish economy have experienced growth in the number of workers with Ukrainian citizenship and social insurance, except for the transportation and storage sectors. The most significant increases occurred in manufacturing (nearly 34,000 workers), accommodation and food services (over 18,000), and wholesale and retail trade (also over 18,000). While public data does not specifically differentiate between refugees entering these sectors and pre-2022 Ukrainian workers transitioning to new jobs, these trends align with findings from the MSNA Poland 2023 survey. The survey highlights that the largest share of refugees work in manufacturing (14%), accommodation and food services (12%), and trade and repair (6%) (UNHCR, 2023).

A notable number of Ukrainian refugees working in Poland have ventured into entrepreneurship. The high employment rate among refugees includes both traditional employment and self-employment. Statistics show that around 5% of insured refugees have started businesses or are working as freelancers. This trend is supported by the MSNA Poland 2023 survey, which found that slightly over 5% of refugee households earn income through self-employment. Interestingly, this rate is slightly higher among men (over 6%) compared to women (UNHCR, 2023).



25. figure: Structure by occupational group of all employed persons in Poland and refugees from Ukraine

Source: Deloitte, 2024

Ukrainian refugees in Poland have not yet fully integrate into the labor market, largely due to language barriers. In May 2022, 46% of refugees reported no knowledge of Polish, though this improved to 21% by November 2022 (NBP, 2023). Despite progress, this remains a significant obstacle, as nearly 40% of Ukrainian refugees in mid-2023 were

employed in elementary jobs, compared to only 5% of the general workforce. Language limitations also hinder access to essential services, with 50% of refugees citing this as a challenge (Deloitte, 2024).

Policies at both the EU and national levels have facilitated refugees' inclusion in the workforce. The high education level among Ukrainian refugees has been an advantage, showing that 48–56% have completed higher education, a rate higher than both the Polish and Ukrainian averages. Those with a bachelor's degree or higher also had a 30% higher employment rate compared to less-educated ones, suggesting that education played a key role in their ability to adapt to Poland's labor market (Deloitte, 2024).

The impact of refugee employment on GDP growth is more complicated than it might seem at first. A simple estimate might suggest that a 1.4–2.2% increase in employment leads to the same percentage rise in GDP. However, this assumes that labor is the only factor of production, which isn't accurate. GDP also depends on capital—such as equipment, technology, and facilities—which takes time to adjust when there's an unexpected influx of workers, like refugees.

A more accurate approach looks at the share of GDP generated specifically by labor, which in Poland was around 48% in 2022 and 2023. Using this method, refugee employment is estimated to contribute 0.7–1.0% to GDP growth. Still, this calculation is theoretical and doesn't account for other economic events, like the effects of war or energy crises. For more precise predictions, economists use equilibrium models, which consider various economic factors and simulate how they interact to better estimate the broader impact of refugee employment (Deloitte, 2024).

Refugees contribute significantly to economic growth by boosting labor supply, entrepreneurship, and consumer demand. However, the increase in GDP is not directly proportional to population or employment growth. Factors such as a reduced capital-to-labor ratio, heightened labor market competition, and inflation caused by higher demand in tight markets can limit net benefits. Additionally, increased costs may reduce the price competitiveness of Polish products, moderating the overall positive impact.

Despite these challenges, the economic benefits of refugees are substantial. In 2022, refugees contributed to a 0.5–0.8% increase in real GDP, while in 2023, this cumulative effect raised GDP by 0.7–1.1%, equivalent to 24–36.9 billion PLN. Long-term projections estimate that total potential GDP could grow by 0.9–1.35% due to refugees' contributions (Deloitte, 2024).

5.2. GERMANY

Germany has long been a preferred destination for Ukrainian migrants, because of its robust economy and high need for skilled workers. Before the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Ukrainians contributed greatly to Germany's work force, notably in caring, healthcare, and construction. Many worked in lower-paying areas in unstable jobs, frequently negotiating grey legal issues. A key component of Germany's immigration strategy was to attract highly qualified workers from non-EU nations is the Blue Card program. Introduced in 2012, it offers expedited visa procedures and facilitates family reunification, making entrance and residency easier for highly skilled workers. A university degree and a job offer with a salary threshold—which guarantees equitable pay and integration into high-skilled roles—were normally requirements for eligibility. When they match the requirements, Ukrainians have profited from this scheme just like other non-EU citizens (Desiderio – Hooper, 2023).

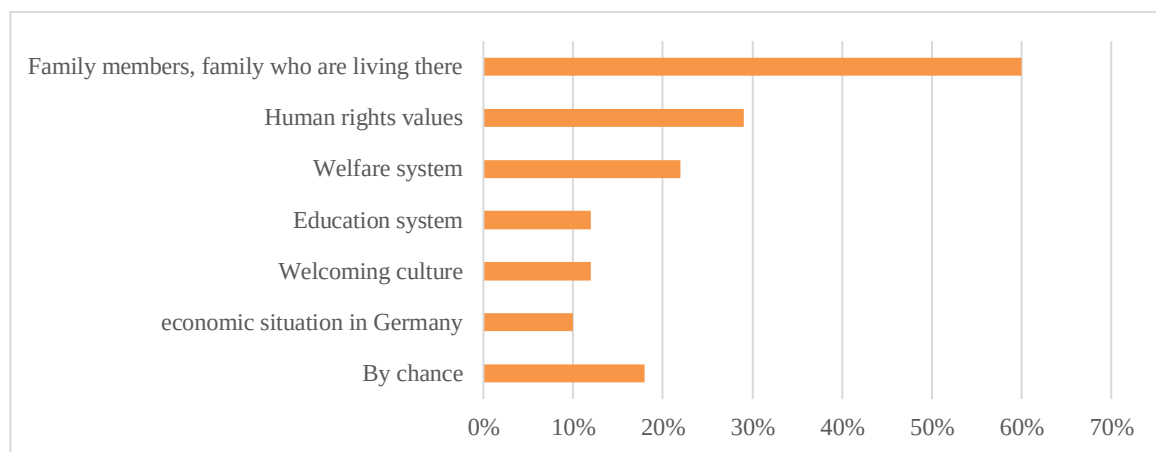
The Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) was introduced in March 2022 by the European Union, including Germany, to provide immediate aid to people displaced by the Russian-Ukrainian war. This law gave Ukrainians collective protection without needing to go through the lengthy asylum process. Protection status was granted automatically upon arrival, enabling them to access rights and services quickly.

Ukrainians could start working immediately and enroll in vocational training programs to help them find jobs matching their skills. Children and young adults were allowed to join Germany's public schools and universities. Additionally, adult refugees were encouraged to join integration and language courses, which supported their adaptation to German society. Healthcare, including mental health services, was made available to those under TPD. Displaced individuals also received welfare benefits, such as financial aid and housing assistance, to help them settle. This approach allowed many Ukrainians to find stability quickly while contributing to Germany's workforce (EPRS, 2024).

Germany has played a major role in hosting refugees during global crises, especially during the Syrian Civil War and the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war. In 2015-2016, Germany welcomed over 1 million refugees, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, as part of Angela Merkel's open-door policy (German History in Documents and Images, 2015). This decision was seen as a humanitarian step but created debates within Germany. Some supported the move as a moral obligation, while others were concerned about the challenges of integrating so many people into the economy and society. The government had to deal

with issues like a lack of housing, overloaded public services, and delays in processing asylum applications. Still, many refugees were given access to education, job training, and language courses to help them settle.

After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Germany again became a key destination for displaced people. By mid-2024, Germany had hosted over 1.2 million Ukrainian refugees, most of whom were women, children, and the elderly, as men stayed behind to serve in the military (Statista, 2024).



26. figure: Factors which make refugees to choose Germany as host country, %

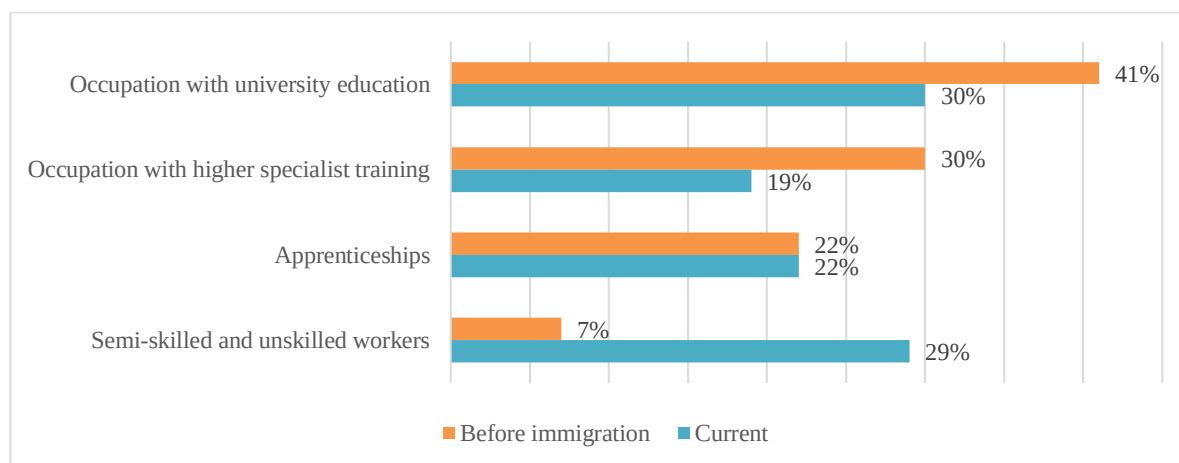
Source: IAB, 2022

The most important factor making decisions to migrate to Germany is the presence of family, friends, or acquaintances already living in the country. This follows from the idea of “chain migration” where migrants follow existing social networks to ease their transition. Germany is perceived to be a human rights-respecting country with legal protection and freedoms. When refugees are fleeing persecution or war, that is one of the major factors in decisions concerning their destination. Germany is considered a country protective of human rights and legally guaranteeing various protections and freedoms. On the other side, for refugees who are persecuted or flee due to war, this factor becomes crucial when deciding where to go. Furthermore, in Germany, there is a strong welfare state that helps to pay for housing, subsidizes health care, and provides financial support, among other things. Benefits within the asylum system include housing allowances, language courses, and access to basic healthcare. Germany has managed to foster an image of being open towards migrants, especially at the height of the Syrian crisis and most recently in relation to the

Ukrainian refugee crisis. Governmental policies and local initiatives on integration contribute to this perception.

According to the Federal Employment Agency (BA, 2023), more than 700,000 Ukrainian refugees were receiving basic jobseeker benefits in Germany. Of those, 501,000 were fit to work, while 217,000 did not fit to work, most of them children. Employment-wise, approximately 185,000 Ukrainian refugees were gainfully employed, and thus paying into Germany's social security system. The integration of Ukrainian refugees into the German labor market is slower compared to other EU countries. In Germany, only 18% of Ukrainian refugees were in employment, while in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Denmark, two-thirds or more of the refugees reported to have secured jobs (Knight, 2024).

German labor statistics indicate that 83% are white-collar workers in leading positions of intellectual work, 8% are blue-collar workers, and the remainder, 8%, are self-employed. Regarding their primary area of business, 88% are mainly employed in the service sector, hence corresponding to their experience described above when working in Ukraine. As for job qualifications, they report that 30% work for jobs needing a university degree, 19% for jobs needing specialized training, and 22% for jobs demanding vocational qualifications. This has still cut the proportion of skilled workers from 93 percent pre-migration to 71 percent today (IAB, 2022).

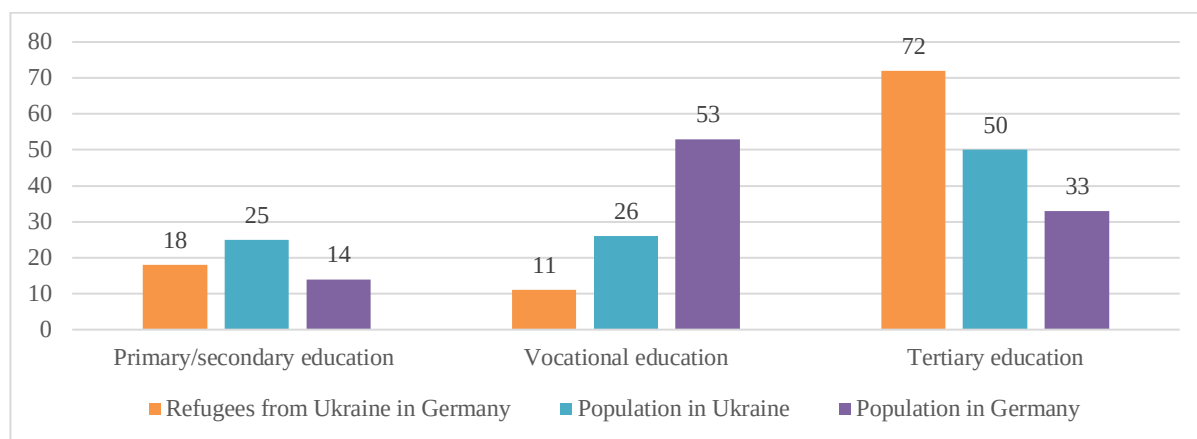


27. figure: Occupational requirements of Ukrainian refugees before and after immigration

Source: IAB, 2022

Both male and female refugees' chances of employment are positively influenced by their level of education, with women benefitting more from having a university degree and

men from vocational qualifications. However, women with young children, especially those without childcare, are less likely to work. In contrast, men's employment is not affected by children in the household. Additionally, factors like prior employment, German language skills, and living in private accommodation improve the likelihood of finding a job. Interestingly, refugees wishing to return to Ukraine tend to have higher employment rates, indicating possible motivations linked to job stability (IAB, 2022).



28. figure: Educational and professional qualifications of refugees from Ukraine in Germany compared to the population of Ukraine and Germany, %
Source: IAB, 2022

Ukrainian refugees in Germany exhibit a notably high average educational level, surpassing both the general population of Ukraine and Germany. Around 72% of these refugees hold tertiary education qualifications, with 52% holding master's degrees, 13% bachelor's degrees, and 4% doctorates. However, only 11% of refugees have completed vocational training, compared to 26% in Ukraine. Additionally, 18% of refugees have only primary or secondary education, slightly lower than Ukraine's 25%. The difference in educational attainment partly reflects the contrasting structures of Ukrainian and German education systems. In Ukraine, certain professional skills taught at universities correspond to vocational training in Germany. This disparity affects how qualifications are recognized and utilized in Germany's labor market. Enhanced credential recognition and bridging programs could better integrate refugees into skilled roles, ensuring their qualifications align with job requirements in Germany.

In many countries of the European Union, main obstacles remain to be resolved in integrating refugees into the labor market and wider society. These obstacles relate to such

issues as language, partial recognition of qualifications, and structural differences in labor markets. Other major obstacles involve cultural integration, availability of childcare, housing stability, and bureaucratic procedures and policy inconsistencies across regions. Overcoming such challenges involves joint efforts at expanding language courses, smoothing the processes of credential recognition, and developing inclusive community programs to facilitate transitions (Honorati – Testaverde – Totino, 2024).

Unfortunately, comprehensive estimates about the possible economic contribution of Ukrainian refugees to the economy of Germany are not available. This is certainly because of problematic labor market integration, language barriers, and high costs resulting from welfare and aid programs. In contrast to Poland, where a large number of Ukrainian refugees compensated for public expenditures through tax payments, we can not find any similar case in Germany.

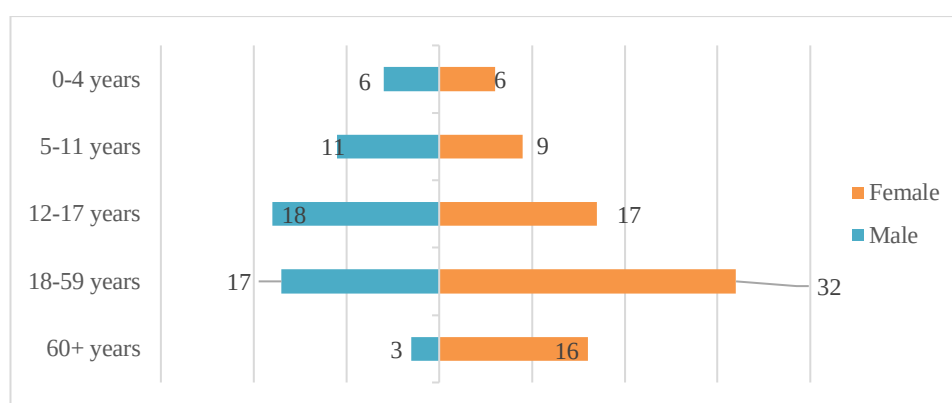
Besides, the slower labor market integration rate of Germany, employing only 18% of the refugees, further limits their economic contributions. These issues would, therefore, involve targeted investments in language education, recognition of qualification, and childcare access, among others. Furthermore, more vocational training opportunities that give them a way into skilled employment will raise their economic impact even further in Germany. In fact, all this will easily help refugees from being dependent on social benefits into active contributors of the economy.

5.3. HUNGARY

With its border to Ukraine, Hungary constitutes a very significant entry point for refugees coming from Ukraine. The arriving displaced persons in great number raise specific difficulties for all economic and social systems of Hungary since none of those systems have been set up or prepared for such a sizeable refugee population. Historically, the Ukrainian community in Hungary was very small, composed above all of seasonal workers employed in agriculture and construction. But the war has changed all this and turned Hungary both into a route and home for refugees.

Hungary and Ukraine have long historical and cultural relations; especially, the Zakarpattia region was a host for substantial minority representatives of ethnic Hungarians – a heritage of its intricate regional history and changing borders. All these bonds influence refugee dynamics: some of the arriving Ukrainians in Hungary have family or cultural connections to ease their transition.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which started in February 2022, Hungary very quickly became one of the main entry points for Ukrainian refugees who had to flee because of the war. Its proximity to Ukraine and the relatively open border policy at the outset of the war meant that thousands of displaced Ukrainians sought refuge within its borders. Consequently, by mid-2024, Hungary had already received close to 500.000 refugees, although many use the country as a transit point toward other EU countries offering them more permanent resettlement options. Thus, only about 47.000 refugees stayed in Hungary (ODP, 2024c).



29. figure: Structure of Ukrainian refugees in Hungary by age and sex, %

Source: ACAPS, 2023

In Hungary, as in many other European countries hosting refugees from Ukraine, the majority of arrivals are women and children. This reflects broader trends across the Europe, where gender and age demographics of refugees tend to be similar. This pattern is consistent with what has been observed in other countries like Poland and Germany, where women and children also make up the largest portion of displaced people.

The significant presence of women and children among refugees brings additional challenges for Hungary's integration systems, particularly in areas like child protection, healthcare, and education. For example, while many refugee children have access to educational programs, there are still gaps in support for language acquisition and integration into the local school system. Additionally, the mental health needs of women and children, many of whom have experienced trauma due to the war, are creating pressure on Hungary's social and medical services (UNHCR, 2024c).

Compared to other V4 countries, the employment process for refugees is simplified but nevertheless includes the obligation of work permit acquisition. One important difference is that these permits are free, whereas in other European Union member states, some sort of fee might be levied. Still, in Hungary, a refugee may be employed only in industries that have obvious shortages of labor. In addition, they can only be employed for at least 20 hours a week, with a one-year contract that can be extended by another year if requested. For employers, the procedure involves one more condition: they have to provide accommodation for the refugee worker, which they finance themselves, but only up to 60 000 HUF (approximately € 150). The costs above this rate shall be shared on an equal basis between the employer and the worker. Even with these conditions, several companies contact the NGOs every week for help in finding employees. The unemployed Ukrainian refugees are entitled to 22 800 HUF/month (approximately 57 euros). Children receive an additional 13,700 HUF (approximately 34 euros). This is usually not enough for the basic cost of living (Mishchuk – Vlasenko, 2023).

Many Ukrainian refugees, despite having temporary protection rights that allow them to work in host countries, face significant obstacles in finding suitable employment. In Hungary only 22% of Ukrainian refugees were employed as of March 2023, a relatively low number compared to other countries. This issue is particularly pronounced among those who are highly educated—60% of refugees from Ukraine hold at least a bachelor’s degree—yet they often struggle to find work that matches their qualifications. As a result, many refugees are forced to take jobs that are below their skill level.

Several barriers contribute to this employment gap. A lack of proficiency in the host country’s language, limited childcare options, and a shortage of job opportunities that align with refugees’ qualifications are key factors. Additionally, more of the adult refugee population are women, and many of these women are mothers who have fled Ukraine with their children. This caregiving responsibility—especially for family members with specific needs, such as those with disabilities, elderly relatives, or unaccompanied children—limits their ability to work full-time or secure stable employment (UNHCR, 2024c).

According to IOM survey (number of response is 618) (IOM, 2024c), less than half (43%) of Ukrainian refugees report that their current job aligns with their educational background and professional experience. This situation is particularly striking when comparing gender differences—men express higher job satisfaction, with 67% of male respondents feeling that their work corresponds to their qualifications, while only 41% of female

respondents share the same sentiment. Among those whose jobs do not match their education or experience, a significant 74% hold tertiary education, 19% have upper secondary education, and just 7% possess post-secondary education. These disparities suggest that while refugees are generally well-educated, many, particularly women, face challenges in finding suitable employment.

Regarding employment sectors, the largest portion of Ukrainian refugees in Hungary (32%) works in the manufacturing sector, followed by other services, including washing, cleaning, hairdressing, and beauty treatments (17%). Additionally, 8% are employed in information and communication, and 6% work in accommodation and construction sectors. When examining these sectors based on the highest level of education, those with a post-graduate diploma tend to work more in human health and social work (50%) or the construction sector (50%). In contrast, individuals with tertiary education are more likely to find employment in manufacturing (26%) or other service sectors (18%). Meanwhile, those with secondary education or lower are more frequently employed in manufacturing (27%) and other service activities (36%). These trends one more time reflect the challenges refugees face in finding jobs that match their qualifications, particularly in sectors where their skills are underutilized.

Hungarian attitudes toward Ukrainian refugees are mixed, shaped by both humanitarian efforts and political considerations. On one hand, many Hungarians have shown support for refugees, particularly women and children fleeing the war, with numerous volunteers offering aid at train stations and border crossings. On the other hand, as the refugee situation persists, there are reports of increasing strain on local resources, and some Hungarians express concern about long-term impacts (Mishchuk – Vlasenko, 2023).

Currently, it's difficult to predict the long-term impact of the refugee crisis on Hungary, much like in other European countries. One reason for this uncertainty is that the number of refugees in Hungary is relatively small, making up only about 0.5% of the population (ACAPS, 2023). This is quite different from other nations like Germany or Poland, which have seen much higher numbers of refugees. The smaller scale makes it harder to predict significant economic effects. In the short term, Hungary has managed to offer support through volunteers and temporary assistance, but there are concerns about the long-term financial burden. Refugees still require public services, including housing and healthcare, which can strain the budget. While Hungary has shown a welcoming attitude, especially to women and children fleeing the war, the overall economic impact is still uncertain.

6. SUMMARY

Refugees are a global issue, with millions of people displaced from their homes due to conflict, persecution, and other crises. There are over 35 million people worldwide who have been forced to flee their countries, the highest number ever recorded (UNHCR, 1951). These refugees often face significant challenges in their host countries, including economic hardship, integration into the labor market, and access to education and healthcare. Many countries, especially in Europe, have opened their borders to refugees, providing shelter, support, and resources to help them rebuild their lives. The situation for Ukrainian refugees, in particular, has drawn significant international attention due to the ongoing war in Ukraine.

The financial impact of the Ukrainian refugee crisis on European countries has been both difficult and beneficial. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many European countries have provided significant support to Ukrainian refugees, including housing, social services, and financial aid. The European Union has hosted more than 6 million refugees (United Nations, 2020). And it has also allocated billions of euros to help countries manage the increasing number of displaced people. Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic have been especially active in offering support, with Germany focusing on healthcare and education, and Poland helping with housing and living expenses. Despite this support, many refugees are still facing financial difficulties. Around half of Ukrainian refugees live below the poverty line, earning less than half the average income in their host countries. Housing support has helped some refugees improve their situation.

Refugees' sources of income vary depending on their financial situation. Higher-income households tend to rely more on jobs, while lower-income households depend on social assistance. Even though many European countries offer financial help, such as monthly payments and educational support, it often doesn't fully cover refugees' needs. However, refugees' participation in the labor market has been beneficial, especially in countries like Poland, where many refugees are working and paying taxes. In fact, Ukrainian refugees in Poland have paid more in taxes than the country has spent on refugee support.

Studies show that Ukrainian refugees have helped boost GDP in countries like Poland, the Czech Republic, by filling labor shortages in sectors such as construction, agriculture, and services. For example, if 650,000 to 1 million Ukrainian refugees remain in Poland long-term, it could increase the country's GDP by up to 2%. These contributions are especially valuable in Central and Eastern Europe, where there is a high demand for workers (UWC, 2022).

However, integrating refugees into the workforce has been challenging. Many refugees work in low-wage, low-skilled jobs that do not match their qualifications, due to language barriers and difficulties in having their foreign qualifications recognized. This results in many refugees being downgraded and stuck in jobs that don't use their full potential. This issue contributes to social inequality, with many refugees remaining in low-income jobs and having limited chances for advancement.

In the long run, the economic benefits of migration will depend on how well refugees are able to find jobs that match their qualifications. While migration helps increase the labor force and economic growth, the benefits are greater when refugees can secure higher-skilled jobs. To achieve this, policies like affordable language courses and easier recognition of qualifications are needed to help refugees contribute more effectively to the economy.

While the costs of supporting refugees have been high, the economic contributions of Ukrainian refugees have been significant, especially in countries with labor shortages. To fully benefit from these contributions, more efforts are needed to help refugees integrate into the labor market and use their skills and education, leading to even greater economic growth.

In Germany and Hungary, the situations with Ukrainian refugees show the challenges and opportunities of hosting displaced people. Germany, a popular destination for migrants due to its strong economy, has hosted over 1.2 million Ukrainian refugees by mid-2024. However, the integration of refugees into the labor market has been slow, with only 18% employed by March 2023 (Knight, 2024). Many refugees are working below their skill level due to language barriers and difficulties in having their qualifications recognized. With more support in education and training, Ukrainian refugees could become active contributors to the economy.

In Hungary, around 45,000 Ukrainian refugees have arrived by mid-2024. Despite a simplified work permit process, many refugees still struggle to find jobs that match their qualifications. Public opinion in Hungary is mixed, with some showing support, but growing concerns about the long-term strain on resources. The relatively small refugee population (about 0.5% of Hungary's population) makes it harder to predict the long-term economic impact, although the financial burden of supporting refugees remains a concern (ODP, 2024c).

The integration of refugees is not only a humanitarian necessity but also an economic one. Well-integrated refugees can help fill labor shortages in key sectors like construction,

agriculture, and services. This will accelerate economic recovery and contribute to a more balanced and resilient social development in host countries.

Improving the integration of Ukrainian refugees in European Union countries requires a coordinated approach across multiple stakeholders. A key first step is to establish a coordination mechanism involving local officials, NGO representatives, refugees, and the diaspora. This will ensure effective collaboration and problem-solving at both national and regional levels. The European Union should continue providing financial support to countries hosting large numbers of refugees, especially when their national budgets are strained. Encouraging voluntary relocation of refugees from overburdened countries to those with higher labor demands is also crucial.

Additionally, EU countries should offer free language and cultural courses to refugees to help them integrate into society and improve their employment prospects. This would help them adapt more quickly and contribute to the economy. Promoting refugee employment through job platforms, job fairs, and employer incentives should be prioritized, while bureaucratic barriers to registration and employment must be removed. Public information campaigns are essential to maintain solidarity and raise awareness of refugees' contributions to the economy and society. These campaigns should target different groups, including the elderly and rural populations, who may be more vulnerable to misinformation.

Ukrainian authorities can play a vital role by developing a communication platform for refugees, providing information on available support, return opportunities, and employment options, while continuing to inform them about the situation in Ukraine and post-war recovery plans.

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