

## STRATEGIES FOR UKRAINE'S ADAPTATION TO THE FREE MOVEMENT FOR WORKERS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: ANALYSIS AND PROSPECTS

### СТРАТЕГІЇ АДАПТАЦІЇ УКРАЇНИ ДО ВІЛЬНОГО РУХУ ПРАЦІВНИКІВ В ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКОМУ СОЮЗІ: АНАЛІЗ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ

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**Abstract.** *The article considers the problems related to the access of Ukrainian workers to the labour market in the context of Ukraine's accession to the EU. The authors identify potential risks and issues that may arise during the negotiation process, including concerns about labour market competition, the impact of migration on domestic employment, and the need to harmonize labour laws and standards. It is also emphasized on the importance of addressing these issues in a proactive and strategic manner to ensure that Ukrainian workers can fully enjoy the benefits of EU membership. The paper argues that this can be achieved through measures such as the establishment of transitional measures, the implementation of targeted policies to support labour market integration and the adoption of mutually beneficial agreements on labour mobility.*

**Key words:** *migration policy, free movement for workers, labour market, European integration, accession of Ukraine to the EU, labour mobility.*

**Анотація.** *У статті розглядаються проблеми, пов'язані питанням доступу українських працівників до ринку праці в контексті переговорів України про вступ до ЄС. Авторами визначені потенційні ризики та проблемні питання, які можуть виникнути під час переговорного процесу, включаючи занепокоєння щодо конкуренції на ринку праці, впливу міграції на внутрішню зайнятість, а також необхідності гармонізації трудового законодавства та стандартів. Також наголошується на важливості вирішення цих проблем у проактивний та стратегічний спосіб, щоб гарантувати, що українські працівники зможуть повною мірою скористатися перевагами членства в ЄС. У статті стверджується, що цього можна досягти за допомогою таких заходів, як встановлення перехідних заходів, впровадження цільової політики для підтримки інтеграції ринку праці та прийняття взаємовигідних угод щодо мобільності робочої сили.*

**Ключові слова:** *міграційна політика, вільний рух працівників, ринок праці, європейська інтеграція, вступ України до ЄС, мобільність робочої сили.*

**Introduction.** The issue of Ukrainian workers' access to the labour market in the context of Ukraine's negotiations on joining the EU within the framework of free movement is a complex and multifaceted issue. It is of critical importance to identify and address the risks and challenges that may arise during the negotiation phase. These include concerns about labour competition, the impact of market migration on domestic employment, and the need to harmonise labour laws and standards. It is of the utmost importance to address these issues proactively and strategically in order to ensure that Ukrainian workers are able to fully benefit from EU membership. The potential implementation of transitional measures, the formulation of targeted policies to facilitate labour integration, and the conclusion of mutually beneficial agreements on labour mobility may become pivotal in the context of the market negotiations on Chapter 2 'Free Movement for Workers'.

It is of the utmost importance to undertake a meticulous and methodical approach to ensure that Ukraine is adequately prepared to navigate the intricate and often challenging process of negotiating access to the EU labour market. By proactively addressing potential challenges and complex issues, Ukraine can enhance its relationship with the EU and establish mutually beneficial ties that align with the interests of both parties.

**The purpose of the article.** The objective of this article is to examine the potential strategies that Ukraine could employ to effectively adapt to the free movement for workers within the European Union. This includes an analysis of the current state, identification of challenges and opportunities that emerge from the process, and consideration of prospects for further development. It is important to consider a number of key aspects, including legislative and regulatory aspects, economic and socio-cultural research, opportunities for market integration and civil society development. The objective is to provide the government with specific recommendations to ensure successful adaptation to new conditions, maintain competitiveness and ensure sustainable development of the country.

**Literature review.** In the context of considering Ukraine's adaptation strategies to the free movement for workers in the European Union, a range of aspects of this issue were considered using a variety of sources. The official information on the policy of free movement for workers in the EU was analysed from sources from the European Commission (2020).

Kahanec and Zimmermann (2011) examined the relationship between international migration, ethnic differences, and economic development, which is important for understanding the consequences of migration for Ukraine and other countries. Lavenex and Uçarer (2004) represent a significant contribution to the comprehension of external influences on European integration, including migration processes and their investigation in member and candidate countries, including Ukraine. Finally, OECD (2019) asserts the impact of migration on workers' skills, which is crucial for the development of adaptation strategies for Ukraine in the context of the free movement for workers within the EU.

For greater context, the migration situation in Ukraine was also analysed, as well as the factors that influence the decision of Ukrainian citizens to return from abroad. Predicting the percentage of those who will return, as well as intentions, is quite difficult, as the situation changes almost daily. The structure of refugees also remains an open question. At the same time, recent works by Sologub (2024) and Hrushetskyi (2024), as well as the analysis by Visit Ukraine, are worthy of note.

**Main results of the research.** Prior to the full-scale military invasion of Ukraine by Russia, there were already numerous Ukrainian workers in the European Union. Many Ukrainians migrate to EU countries in search of better economic opportunities, higher wages, and improved living standards. According to various studies, Ukrainian migrants in Europe are often highly skilled and well-educated, and they contribute significantly to the economies of their host countries. The study of Ukrainian labour migration to Europe is an important area of research for understanding the dynamics of migration and its impact on both sending and receiving countries. In 2021, citizens of Ukraine received the highest number of first residence permits (875,782, or 29,7%), ahead of citizens of Morocco (150,100, or 5%) and Belarus (149,000, or 5%). Further detailed information is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**First residence permits issued in 2021**

Country	First residence permits issued	First residence permits issued, by reason of employment (% of total permits issued)	Amount of non-EU citizens in comparing with population of the country, %
<b>Austria</b>	47 892	8,2	0,5
<b>Belgium</b>	63 504	9,8	0,5
<b>Bulgaria</b>	11 784	21,3	0,2
<b>Croatia</b>	33 580	89,5	0,9
<b>Cyprus</b>	22 190	44,2	2,5
<b>Czech Republic</b>	74 395	55,9	0,7
<b>Denmark</b>	28 149	40,4	0,5
<b>Estonia</b>	6 549	35,0	0,5
<b>Finland</b>	57 334	41,2	1,0
<b>France</b>	285 190	13,3	0,4
<b>Germany</b>	185 213	9,9	0,2
<b>Greece</b>	22 905	9,6	0,2
<b>Hungary</b>	58 115	67,0	0,6
<b>Ireland</b>	34 935	22,9	0,7
<b>Italy</b>	274 095	18,5	0,5
<b>Latvia</b>	8 183	45,3	0,4
<b>Lithuania</b>	20 977	76,0	0,7
<b>Luxembourg</b>	7 076	27,1	1,1
<b>Malta</b>	14 358	56,1	2,8
<b>Netherlands</b>	103 580	20,1	0,6
<b>Poland</b>	967 345	81,7	2,6
<b>Portugal</b>	84 805	45,6	0,8
<b>Romania</b>	28 250	63,8	0,1
<b>Slovakia</b>	29 067	75,2	1,4
<b>Slovenia</b>	27 099	66,2	0,5
<b>Spain</b>	371 778	23,7	0,8
<b>Sweden</b>	84 033	24,7	0,8
<b>Total</b>	2 952 336	45 %	0,7 %
<i>in particular</i>	875 782	87,9 %	0,2 %
<i>– Ukrainians</i>			

Source: authors' calculations based on Eurostat (2022, 2023)

Since the commencement of Russia's comprehensive military incursion into Ukraine, Ukraine has been confronted with a profound crisis of internal displacement. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as of April 2023, 8 million Ukrainian citizens had left Ukraine, of whom almost 5 million were currently registered in various protection programmes in Europe. Poland accounts for approximately one-third of Ukrainian citizens registered in such programmes. Conversely, the methodology assumes that the actual numbers may be lower. The data is presented in greater detail in Table 2 below. As evidenced by the data presented in Table 2, the proportion of refugees from Ukraine in relation to the local population is considerable.

**Table 2**

**Data related to refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes**

Country	Data Date	Refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary	Share in total amount of refugees from Ukraine registered for	Share of refugees from Ukraine in population of the country (adjusted for

		<b>Protection or similar national protection schemes</b>	<b>Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes, %</b>	<b>the number of refugees), %</b>
<b>Austria</b>	17.04.2023	95 993	1,9	1,1
<b>Belgium</b>	11.04.2023	70 157	1,4	0,6
<b>Bulgaria</b>	18.04.2023	156 208	3,1	2,2
<b>Croatia</b>	07.04.2023	21 640	0,4	0,6
<b>Cyprus</b>	12.03.2023	21 842	0,4	2,4
<b>Czech Republic</b>	02.04.2023	504 107	10,0	4,6
<b>Denmark</b>	10.04.2023	39 479	0,8	0,7
<b>Estonia</b>	10.04.2023	44 739	0,9	3,3
<b>Finland</b>	10.04.2023	53 318	1,1	1,0
<b>France</b>	31.10.2022	118 994	2,4	0,2
<b>Germany</b>	25.03.2023	922 657	18,3	1,1
<b>Greece</b>	31.03.2023	22 704	0,5	0,2
<b>Hungary</b>	18.04.2023	35 030	0,7	0,4
<b>Ireland</b>	09.04.2023	80 085	1,6	1,6
<b>Italy</b>	17.03.2023	173 213	3,4	0,3
<b>Latvia</b>	11.04.2023	47 080	0,9	2,4
<b>Lithuania</b>	11.04.2023	76 540	1,5	2,7
<b>Luxembourg</b>	25.10.2022	6 756	0,1	1,0
<b>Malta</b>	19.02.2023	1 744	0,0	0,3
<b>Netherlands</b>	10.02.2023	89 730	1,8	0,5
<b>Poland</b>	16.04.2023	1 583 563	31,4	4,0
<b>Portugal</b>	26.02.2023	58 242	1,2	0,6
<b>Romania</b>	16.04.2023	126 711	2,5	0,7
<b>Slovakia</b>	16.04.2023	114 192	2,3	5,1
<b>Slovenia</b>	11.04.2023	9 038	0,2	0,2
<b>Spain</b>	16.04.2023	173 829	3,4	0,4
<b>Sweden</b>	05.04.2023	53 957	1,1	0,5

Source: authors' calculations based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2023), Eurostat (2023), V. Botelho, H. Hägele (2023) (European Central Bank)

Concurrently, the issue of internally displaced persons remains a pressing concern. As of the beginning of March 2023, the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) registered in Ukraine was almost 5 million. Of these, almost 3.5 million were registered after 24 February 2022. Concurrently, the International Organization for Migration has estimated that the actual number of IDPs in Ukraine may reach 7.1 million. The majority of IDPs require assistance with housing, employment, and social protection issues. According to the International Organisation for Migration, as of the end of 2022, the majority of IDPs (approximately 55%) were women. Additionally, one in four IDP families had individuals with disabilities, almost one in five families had children aged one to five, and approximately 70% of IDPs were currently unemployed. The majority of IDPs (57.4%) are aged between 18 and 59. Of these, 32% are women and 25.4% are men.

The issue of forecasting migration processes and their impact on the economy is a highly sensitive one. This pertains to the potential intensification of migration processes following the conclusion of a comprehensive conflict. It is not possible to make a definitive assertion that the outflow of people will be insignificant, given that Ukraine is subjected to a terrorist attack on a daily basis. Even under the most optimistic scenario, whereby the outflow of people is deemed to be insignificant, the active phase of the war will result in a shrinking economy and reduced consumer demand.

The aforementioned factors have collectively resulted in an imbalance between supply and demand in the labour market, as well as significant demographic challenges that had been on the rise even prior to the full-scale invasion. However, the invasion has precipitated a dramatic deterioration in these challenges, with a significant proportion of jobs being physically destroyed because of the destruction or temporary occupation of production facilities. Concurrently, as of April 2023, there has been a partial recovery in the labour market, with the emergence of new vacancies. Nevertheless, this recovery, while giving rise to cautiously optimistic forecasts, does not remove from the agenda the issues of further development of the labour market, its structure, and, in fact, the demographic picture of the population.

It is crucial to acknowledge that at the outset of the full-scale invasion, the EU took a hitherto unprecedented step to address this issue. In its Communication ‘European solidarity with refugees and those fleeing war in Ukraine’ of 8 March 2022, the Commission outlined the substantial support that the EU had made available to assist individuals fleeing Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, as well as the Member States receiving them. This encompasses direct humanitarian assistance, emergency civil protection support, assistance at the border, and a clear legal status that allows those fleeing the war to receive immediate protection within the EU. In its communication, entitled ‘Welcoming those fleeing war in Ukraine’, in its Communication ‘Readying Europe to meet the needs of 23 March 2022’, the Commission outlines measures to assist individuals fleeing Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and to guarantee their effective access to their rights. The measures encompass not only immediate measures to provide shelter, humanitarian aid, and access to healthcare, but also actions to ensure that individuals are smoothly integrated into the host countries and have access to education, housing, and employment.

Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382, which activated the temporary protection mechanism set out in the Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof (hereinafter – Directive 2001/55/EC), provides people fleeing Russia’s invasion of Ukraine with a clear legal status as soon as they arrive in the European Union. The initial period of temporary protection will last for one year, with the possibility of automatic renewal for a further six months on each occasion. Temporary protection encompasses a residence permit, welfare support, healthcare, and access to housing, education, and employment. Article 12 of the Directive 2001/55/EC stipulates that Member States must permit individuals in a state of temporary protection to engage in gainful employment or self-employment, provided that such activities are subject to the relevant professional regulations. Furthermore, the Directive permits individuals in a state of temporary protection to pursue educational opportunities for adults, vocational training, and practical workplace experience.

It is important to highlight that the right to access the labour market is a fundamental aspect of temporary protection. It has been demonstrated that non-EU nationals, and in particular refugees, frequently occupy positions below their level of qualification. The provision of a straightforward and expeditious recognition mechanism plays a pivotal role in ensuring that individuals in receipt of temporary protection are able to engage in employment commensurate with their qualifications. This facilitates their integration and leads to the optimal utilisation of their skills, benefiting both the individual and the host community. Furthermore, it ensures that individuals gain relevant experience and skills during their period of temporary protection, which adds value to their qualifications when they return to their home country. Considering the aforementioned circumstances, the European Commission has adopted Recommendation No 2022/554 of 5 April 2022 on the recognition of qualifications for individuals fleeing the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

Furthermore, the EU introduced the EU Talent Fund pilot project, which has become a widely implemented initiative. Ukraine is profoundly grateful to the partner countries for their support in this regard. This has facilitated the employment of Ukrainians and, to a certain extent, their financial self-sufficiency. A considerable number of Ukrainian nationals have established businesses and are paying taxes in host countries. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that a significant number of businesses have relocated abroad. It is also important to note that partial integration of Ukrainian workers and businesses has already taken place, although it is currently temporary. This is in

accordance with the provisions of Directive 2001/55/EC. It is important to note that this directive is not the sole source of integration of Ukrainians into the EU labour market. For instance, Article 26 of the Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast) requires Member States to permit beneficiaries of international protection to engage in employed or self-employed activities under the same rules that apply to nationals. Furthermore, Member States are obliged to provide educational opportunities, vocational training, practical workplace experience, and counselling services to these individuals on an equivalent basis to that afforded to nationals. Furthermore, the article stipulates that Member States should endeavour to facilitate full access to these activities. Finally, the legislation in force in the Member States regarding remuneration, social security systems, and other employment conditions must be applied to beneficiaries of international protection.

It is important to note that despite the lack of comprehensive data on Ukrainian employment in all EU Member States in 2022, it is clear that a significant proportion of refugees are economically active. A survey of adult respondents conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees between October 2022 and February 2023 revealed that 86% of respondents were women, the majority of whom had children. A total of 20,009 respondents were included in the survey, corresponding to 47,502 household members. Seventy-nine percent of respondents had completed higher education, while sixty percent were employed or self-employed at the time of leaving Ukraine. Currently, thirty-six percent of respondents are employed in the host country or work remotely or are self-employed. A total of 52% of respondents were aged between 18 and 59, with 42% being women and 10% being men. This indicates that most respondents were in the economically active age group.

It is estimated that Ukraine will require approximately 4.5 million additional workers to achieve an annual growth rate of 7% during the post-war reconstruction period. The following assumptions are made for this model: annual productivity growth of 2.7%, annual labour force decline of 1.6%, unemployment rate of approximately 18% in 2022 and 5-8% in 2032; the number of returning refugees is approximately 2 million. Consequently, Ukraine is experiencing a severe shortage of human resources. Considering the potential labour shortage, it can be concluded that Ukraine's domestic resources are insufficient to overcome this challenge. To achieve the GDP growth targets, it is necessary to utilise both domestic and external labour resources. The policy should concentrate on the retention and development of the Ukrainian population, the return of those Ukrainians who have remained abroad, and the attraction of foreign labour. Furthermore, government policy should facilitate the enhancement of the efficiency and productivity of the talent attracted.

It is important to acknowledge that the proportion of Ukrainians who will never return home is contingent upon the duration of the hostilities and the extent to which our refugees perceive the possibility of recovery. Nevertheless, Ukraine's candidacy for membership in the European Union serves as a clear indication to Ukrainians regarding the viability of returning home. Furthermore, the actions of the government in terms of post-war reconstruction, housing, and job creation will also play a significant role in determining the extent to which those who have been displaced choose to return home. The government, in collaboration with other branches of government and international partners, is engaged in a systematic effort to demonstrate a prospective vision to Ukrainians. The government, in collaboration with other branches of government and international partners, is already engaged in efforts to ensure that Ukrainian citizens will have adequate living conditions upon their return to their homeland.

The potential for all Ukrainians to work in the EU without bureaucratic impediments could provide refugees with the assurance that, should they choose to return to Ukraine, they will be able to return to the EU later should they so desire. This will result in refugees who may be reluctant to return to Ukraine due to uncertainty about their prospects in Ukraine and concerns that they will not be able to return after leaving the EU, as well as concerns about losing their status in the EU, being more inclined to return to Ukraine, as they can always return if they do not like life in Ukraine. It should be noted that this return will be within the framework of the free movement for workers, rather than in the context of refugee and temporary protection.

Despite millions of refugees from Ukraine the overall unemployment in the EU (percentage of population in the labour force) decreased from 6.9% in 2021 to 6.0 in 2022 and 5.8 in 2023 according to Eurostat (2024). But since the refugees were unevenly distributed in the Member States, it is necessary to calculate the correlation between the change in unemployment (in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023) and the share of refugees from Ukraine in population of a Member State (as noted in Table 2). The correlation in 2022 was weak positive (0.23), i.e., larger number of refugees was associated with smaller decrease in unemployment. But in 2023 it the correlation became even weaker (0.15). And both correlations are insignificant, therefore we do not find sufficient evidence that Ukrainian refugees negatively affected employment in the EU by substituting local staff. This may be a reason in favour of avoiding imposing transition period before the EU market is opened for the Ukrainian citizen after its potential accession, as it was practiced during the previous accession of less developed new member states.

It is evident that Ukraine is confronted with considerable challenges and tasks on the path to reconstruction and the return of its citizens. The extraordinary assistance provided by our partner countries, international organisations and the measures taken by the Government of Ukraine to support citizens affected by Russia's military aggression have made it possible to support Ukrainian citizens and provide them with all the most necessary things today.

It is the responsibility of the Government of Ukraine to ensure the preservation of these individuals within the context of Ukrainian society and to facilitate their return. This necessitates the implementation of a multifaceted approach, encompassing measures to guarantee security and stimulate economic growth, as well as the reconstruction and further integration of Ukraine into the European Union and other leading global institutions. These efforts are being pursued in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

The negotiation process for Ukraine's accession to the European Union is a complex and multifaceted process that requires careful consideration and planning. The shaping of Ukraine's negotiating position represents a pivotal stage in this process, as it entails the identification of the country's priorities, the establishment of realistic objectives, and the formulation of strategies for their attainment. This section will examine the key factors that must be considered when shaping Ukraine's negotiating position. These include the country's economic, political, and social context, as well as the EU's priorities and expectations. Furthermore, this section will examine the various strategies that Ukraine can adopt to enhance its negotiating leverage and achieve its long-term objectives. By understanding these factors and developing a well-considered negotiating position, Ukraine can enhance its prospects of successful accession to the European Union and achieve mutual benefits.

As previously stated, Ukraine should be aware that there may be some reservations about the opening of labour markets in EU Member States. Nevertheless, Ukraine can present several arguments to demonstrate that opening the labour markets in the context of free movement for workers of EU Member States would be mutually beneficial:

1) The Treaty of Accession of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom (1972), the Treaty of Accession of Greece (1979), the Treaty of Accession of Spain and Portugal (1985), the Treaty of Accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden (1994), the Treaty of Accession of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia (2003) the Treaty of Accession of the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania (2005), the Treaty of Accession of Croatia (2012), and the experience of EU enlargements in the context of freedom of movement for workers, it can be reasonably assumed that the reservations made to a number of countries to which the transition period was applied are not entirely relevant in the case of Ukraine. In previous EU enlargements, several countries were considered to have a high migration potential. However, the effects of European integration have shown that the warnings were in fact in vain, and there was no catastrophe on national labour markets. Instead, after the end of the transition periods, the countries became more closely integrated. The impact of enlargement and increased inflows of workers on destination countries has been overwhelmingly positive for the economy and did not have serious negative side effects on the labour market, according to two reports from the European Commission. The free movement for workers is contributing to the eradication of undeclared work. Empirical studies have demonstrated that east-west intra-EU labour mobility has had a negligible or positive

impact on local workers' wages and employment. However, the global economic crisis that began in 2008 resulted in a reduction in the number of workers from recently acceded countries entering the EU-15 countries. This was due to a decline in labour demand, and even to some return migration. The impact of increased workers' mobility on origin countries is complex. While there has been a reduction in unemployment, there has also been an increased risk of brain drain and skill shortages in specific sectors. Nevertheless, younger migrants may not permanently relocate, but rather temporarily. Upon returning home, they are able to utilise their acquired language skills to pursue more internationally oriented employment opportunities. Furthermore, Ukrainians and their work culture are already well-known to EU Member States, and in some sectors of the EU Member States' economies, labour from Ukraine constitutes a significant factor. The question remains as to what will happen after the Temporary Protection Directive expires, given that a significant proportion of Ukrainian refugees have already been integrated into the labour markets of EU Member States.

2) The second argument for opening the labour markets of EU Member States is based on the observation that the prototype of free movement has partially worked. This has led to the EU Member States attracting Ukrainian workers, integrating them into their societies, and so on. In other words, prior to the expiration of Directive 2001/55/EC, Ukrainians have already begun to participate in the labour markets of EU Member States, which is beneficial for both parties. The EU receives workers, while Ukraine receives support from these workers, who either remit funds to their relatives who remain in Ukraine or donate to the Ukrainian army and post-war reconstruction of Ukraine, or act as Ukraine's soft power. Consequently, as Ukrainians become increasingly familiar with the labour markets of EU Member States, Europeans are also becoming accustomed to Ukrainians. Integration at this level has already occurred to a certain extent due to the large number of Ukrainian refugees in Europe. This is because Ukrainians regularly travelled to EU Member States for employment before the full-scale war.

3) Ukraine has the potential for significant economic growth, and free access to the EU labour market could contribute to the development and increase of employment. This could result in increased production and incomes, which in turn could expand the market for EU products and services.

4) Free access to the EU labour market can facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills among Ukrainians, particularly in the field of technology and innovation. This will serve as an additional resource for Ukraine's post-war recovery. A prosperous Ukraine is beneficial to the EU, and the growth of its potential is therefore a positive development for the EU as well.

5) Opening the labour market to Ukrainians could facilitate cultural exchange between Ukraine and the EU. Such an initiative could facilitate mutual understanding between peoples, encourage intercultural dialogue, and contribute to the construction of a unified European community.

6) The potential for Ukrainian citizens to work in the EU without encountering significant bureaucratic and legal obstacles could provide refugees with the assurance that, should they choose to return to Ukraine, they would be able to re-enter the EU should they so desire. This will result in refugees who may be reluctant to return to Ukraine due to uncertainty about their prospects in Ukraine and concerns that they will not be able to return after leaving the EU, as well as concerns about losing their status in the EU, being more inclined to return to Ukraine, as they can always return if they do not like life in Ukraine. It should be noted that this will be a return within the framework of the free movement for workers, rather than in the context of refugee and temporary protection. Furthermore, the European Union's fundamental principle of a common labour market necessitates that Ukraine's integration into the EU will eventually require the integration of its labour market.

The opening of the EU labour market to Ukrainians has the potential to yield numerous benefits for both parties, including economic growth and enhanced international security. Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance to ensure that Ukrainian workers are adequately trained and that their rights are protected in EU countries. This is necessary to guarantee the success of this process and to conduct appropriate outreach to the societies of EU Member States. Ukraine should be aware that some EU Member States may require transitional periods and other adjustments, but it is prepared for the possibility that some countries, those with robust trade unions, may prefer a gradual opening of their labour markets to prevent social dumping. Concurrently, Ukraine can advocate for the pursuit of non-standard solutions that may extend beyond the standard timeframe, such as the establishment of



circular migration models. The implementation of circular migration models could prove beneficial in the context of Ukraine's efforts to engage its citizens in post-war reconstruction, given the country's current shortage of labour. It is imperative that Ukraine cooperate with its European partners to facilitate the return of its citizens after the war. Should Ukrainian refugees remain abroad, the Ukrainian economy will suffer significant losses. In essence, assisting Ukraine in the repatriation of its citizens who have sought refuge abroad will be a significant boon to the country. While European countries will directly benefit from the economic benefits of Ukrainians remaining abroad, there will be indirect benefits for Europe if they return home. The return of refugees will reinforce Ukraine's economy and permit it to direct more resources towards security and reconstruction.

**Conclusions.** The accession of Ukraine to the EU common labour market may be regarded as a strategic interest, in accordance with the principles of European integration. This will facilitate Ukraine's ability to attract additional labour, which is essential for post-war recovery and economic growth. The establishment of a common labour market will create a favourable business climate for all parties involved, particularly during the post-war recovery period. Furthermore, it will permit investors to attract the labour they require without restriction. The opening of the EU labour market to Ukrainians could have a multitude of positive consequences for both parties, but it is of the utmost importance to ensure that Ukrainian workers' rights are protected in EU countries and that they are adequately trained. Additionally, Ukraine should consider adopting non-traditional solutions, such as circular migration models, to facilitate the return of Ukrainian refugees following the conflict. In conclusion, assisting Ukraine in the repatriation of refugees following the conflict will be a significant benefit to Ukraine and Europe. It will reinforce Ukraine's economy and facilitate greater investment in security and reconstruction.

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