

Labour Migration of Ukrainians to the Warmia-Masuria Province: Current Trends and Key Challenges¹

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Abstract

The article examines the labour migration of Ukrainians to the Warmia-Masuria province. Such research methods as systematic, comparative, behavioural, statistical data analysis, document analysis, focused interviews and case study helped to identify current trends and key challenges presented by migration flows of Ukrainians to the province. The main factors affecting Ukrainian labour migration to the province are analysed, with particular emphasis placed on quantitative descriptions of the features of Ukrainian employment in the region. It is concluded that there are prospects for further labour migration of Ukrainian workers to Warmia-Masuria.

Keywords

labour migrants, Ukrainian workers, Warmia-Masuria province

1. Introduction

Migration and its consequences have long been high on the international agenda. The complex and cross-sectoral nature of the issue leads to the awareness that the motives that urge the population to resettle abroad are economic, political, social, cultural, or even environmental in nature. However, upon analysing the trends of international migration flows, we can conclude that the economy is the most important motivation for migrants, in particular the search for a better-paid job and better living conditions. This, in turn, is expressed in the development of labour migration, which involves the movement of able-bodied people with the intention of employment.

As of today, Ukraine is an active exporter of labour. Under the influence of transformations in geopolitics and the global economy, the largest share of Ukrainian labour migrants is concentrated in Poland. According to unofficial estimates, 1.5 million labor migrants from Ukraine were in Poland in 2021. Now, in the context of full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, it is difficult to estimate the exact number of Ukrainian labour migrants in Poland, as approximately another 1.4 million Ukrainians migrated to this country after February 24, 2022, mostly as refugees.

The present stage of Polish-Ukrainian relations emphasises the strengthening of close ties and the establishment of international cooperation between Ukraine and the Warmia-Masuria province, which demands renewed scrutiny of labour migration of Ukrainians to this province.

What are the key trends in the labour migration of Ukrainians to Poland? What factors activate the flow of labour migrants from Ukraine to Warmia-Masuria? What peculiarities do Ukrainians face when seeking employer declarations and work permits in Poland? What role does the employment

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centre of the Warmia-Masuria province play in the employment of people from Ukraine? Which agencies mediate the employment of Ukrainians in Poland? What role do Ukrainian labour migrants play in crime increase in Poland? Do Ukrainian labour migrants and their families face discrimination? How did COVID-19 affect the employment and working conditions of Ukrainians in Poland? How did the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine change the migration pattern of Ukrainians in Poland?

The article consists of several parts. The first part provides a brief overview of the research methodology. A general description of the labour migration of Ukrainians to the territory of Poland is given in the second part of the work. An analysis of the reasons for the transfer of a significant share of the Ukrainian working population to the Warmia-Masuria province in Poland is carried out in the third part of the work. The fourth part of the work reveals the procedural and quantitative characteristics of the employment of Ukrainian labour migrants. The current challenges of labour migration from Ukraine to the Warmia-Masuria province are characterised in the fifth part of the paper. The sixth part of the work includes the results of a study of current trends and problems of Ukrainian labour migration to the Warmia-Masuria province.

2. Methodology

The article is based on an analysis of relevant literature, internet resources, and focused interviews. Among the Ukrainian scholars who have studied the labour migration of Ukrainians to Poland, it is worth highlighting such as O. Malynovska, T. Nahorniak, Y. Pachos, A. Zubyk, E. Libanova, A. Karpenko, H. Zasorina, B. Skochynska-Prokopovych, I. Luchakivska, and O. Levytska. These researchers have considered the causes, directions, and consequences of Ukrainian labour migration to Poland, along with its quantitative, qualitative and regional characteristics, modern realities and challenges, Polish migration policy, and migration dynamics.

Among contemporary interpretations of migration processes, the most striking in this context are the works of E. Lee, W. Zelinskyi, A. Lewis, J. Berry, Luis Garnizo, and George J. Borjas. The most appropriate for the assessment of migratory sentiments of society, in our opinion, is Everett Lee's notion of push and pull factors. Migration is interpreted as a function of the relative attractiveness of home and host countries, and the presence of barriers is interpreted as a restriction of migration processes. According to Everett Lee's migration model, a push is a factor that motivates people to leave a place for reasons that may be economic, cultural, or environmental. Within these three groups of factors, there are many conditions that cause push. Among the most notable are 'limited capacity', discrimination, loss of wealth, and war. As with the push factor, the pull factor that motivates people to move to a new place has economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions, which may include employment opportunities, better living conditions, social security, and an attractive climate. According to Everett Lee, all migration factors can be divided into four groups: 1. Factors associated with the area of origin; 2. Factors associated with the destination; 3. Intervening obstacles; 4. Personal factors (Nosek 2018).

Wilbur Zelinsky's concept of mobile transition also takes a prominent place in migration research. This innovative approach takes into account the role of globalisation in changes in international migration and considers migration processes in connection with other dynamic processes, namely economic growth, development of transport, new channels of information transmission, changes in economic opportunities, and growth of population welfare (Synkovets 2016).

Dual labour market theory, developed in 1954 by the British economist Arthur William Lewis, stands out among the economic theories concerning migration processes. The key thesis of the theory is that the main reason for migration is primarily the difference in wages resulting from changes in labour supply and demand in sending and receiving countries, (Jaskułowski and Pawlak 2016).

The neoclassical economic approach focuses on the study of 'human capital' and interprets labour migration as a result of economic development. According to the theory, a difference in wages is the main factor of migration and serves as a key pushing factor in recipient countries and, accordingly, an attractive factor in donor countries. Migration flows are directed from less-developed countries with a surplus of labour and low-wage jobs to more developed countries with limited labour and high wages. Thus, migration flows will exist as long as there is a significant wage gap.

In addition, the institutional approach asserts that the level of support for migration from various governmental and non-governmental organisations, humanitarian organisations, law firms, social services, and mafia structures will directly affect the share of migration (Verbovyi 2011).

For the implementation of our research, interviews with the leader of the Ukrainian minority in Warmia-Masuria and the management of Ukrainian schools in Górowo łąwieckie and Bartoszyce, as well as with representatives of the management of the province and county employment agencies in Olsztyn, were extremely valuable. These interviews revealed interesting facts about the lives of Ukrainian labour migrants in Poland, details about the peculiarities of teaching children of Ukrainian labour migrants, and changes in Ukrainian schools in Poland. An important resource for the study of the problems of adaptation of Ukrainian labour migrants in Poland, specifically the situation in the Warmia-Masuria province, is the information provided by the representatives of the Police and Labour Inspectorate. In addition, visits to Greek Catholic churches in Elbląg, Frombork, and Olsztyn allowed us to talk to priests about the life of Ukrainian labour migrants.

The research methodology is based on the principles of integrity, logical consistency, completeness, and scientific pluralism.

A mixed-method approach was adopted for the study. Labour migration was analysed as a systemic phenomenon, the formation of which is influenced by environmental processes. The comparative method was used to compare the dynamics of the number of work permits, seasonal permits, and employer declarations in Poland and in the Warmia-Masuria province and to differentiate quantitative indicators of the national and gender aspects of the issuance of work permits in the province. Behaviour analysis was carried out to understand that of Ukrainian workers in the Warmian-Masurian province. Statistical data analysis was used to provide information on the issuance of work permits, seasonal work permits, and employer declarations; on the spheres of activity and professions chosen by Ukrainians, the mediation of the Employment Centre and Polish employment agencies, the legality of Ukrainian work in the province, and on offences committed by foreigners in Olsztyn. Documents including the provisions of the Law of May 2, 2020, "On special decisions related to the prevention, counteraction, and combating of COVID-19, other communicable diseases, as well as the crises caused by them" were analysed, as was other relevant Polish legislation.

In addition, to better understand the challenges of labour migration of Ukrainians to Warmia-Masuria, the case study method was applied to analyse the case of the educational problem in Górowo łąwieckie, a measles outbreak, and the inhumane treatment of Ukrainian workers at factories in Nowe Miasto County.

3. Key characteristics of Ukrainian labour migration to Poland

It is well known that Ukrainian labour emigration is growing every year, causing an acute problem for the state and its economy. Ukrainian domestic problems, in particular low wages, are the primary reason for this development. More specifically, factors that prompt Ukrainians to seek work in other countries are high unemployment, the reduction or disappearance of certain industries, economic backwardness in certain regions, the lack of demand for a certain profession, or the impossibility of the full realisation of personal potential within the country (Fenik 2019).

According to Ukrainian political commentator O. Radchuk (2019), the intensification of migration flows from Ukraine is due not only to the level of wages, which is several times lower than wages in neighbouring countries, including Poland, but also an unfavourable investment climate, the difficulty of starting a business, and the lack of competitiveness of the Ukrainian economy. By gaining access to world labour markets, Ukrainians were able to recognise, firstly, the weakness of Ukrainian opportunities to compete with other countries for labour resources, and, secondly, the existence of competition for labour migrants from Ukraine between countries such as Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Germany.

The significant intensification of Ukrainian emigration since 2014 is related to Russia's military operations in Ukraine. Unfavourable social policy in Ukraine also led to an increase in the volume of migration of citizens in 2015–16. The annexation of Crimea and the war in the east of Ukraine led to a complication of the socio-economic situation. In addition, those who were forced to leave their

homes in the Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions began to look for opportunities to improve their living conditions, as they faced the negative consequences of legal uncertainty regarding their status as internally displaced persons, lack of state support, and illegal restrictions on certain rights (Nahorniak, Pachos 2018)

One of the turning points in the migration of Ukrainians to Poland was the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russian troops into Ukraine, which caused a significant wave of Ukrainian refugees abroad, mostly to Poland. The full-scale war in Ukraine changed the portrait of a Ukrainian who migrates abroad for temporary residence and work. According to the sociological study 'Refugees from Ukraine in Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania' conducted by the Migration Platform EWL, the Fund for Migrant Support in the Labor Market and the Center for East European Studies of the University of Warsaw, the majority of refugees from Ukraine were women who left Ukraine due to the presence of minor children. Most of them do not know Polish language, have no close relatives there (Kryzhanivska 2023).

In the context of the above, Poland is an attractive place for Ukrainians, thanks not only to higher wages, but also to the development of migration networks, linguistic and cultural kinship, historical ties, geographical proximity, and a partial level of job security.

Poland has transformed from an emigration state to an immigration state. Immigration in Poland has its own specific features, including the domination of migrants from neighbouring non-EU countries, including, above all, Ukrainians, and a predominance of short-term and seasonal immigration. The greatest motivation for immigrants is economic, which leads to high rates of employment among migrants (Adamczyk et al. 2022).

It should be noted that an important factor in the emigration of Ukrainians to Poland is Poland's favourable migration policy. This policy is based on geographical and cultural proximity, which is explained by the mobility between neighbouring states and the fact that their population usually adapts easily to Polish society. Additionally, Poland prioritises increasing the scale of legal employment of foreigners who possess skills in demand in its labour market. Poland is actively expanding the network of interregional cooperation with Ukraine, opening its own borders to Ukrainians, signing relevant agreements and memoranda, and improving the social and economic security of migrants from Ukraine (Brunarska et al. 2022).

According to the 'Labour Immigration Barometer', geographical proximity is the most frequent reason why Ukrainians go to work in Poland, influencing 53% of migrants. The next factor is money (44%), and in the third place is a low language barrier (34%). It is thanks to such factors that three out of four Ukrainian labour migrants return to Poland (Shataieva 2018).

Statistics provided by Poland's Office for Foreigners show that at the end of 2021, more than 300,000 citizens of Ukraine had a valid residence permit in Poland. The share of Ukrainians among foreigners in Poland is almost 57%. In terms of gender, 54% of Ukrainians with residence permits in Poland are men and 46% are women. About 60% are between the ages of 18 and 40, while people under 18 make up about 12% and people over 40 make up about 28% (Obywatele 2021).

At the All-Ukrainian Forum 'Ukraine 30. Labour Resources', which took place on 20 July 2021, the Ukrainian ambassador to Poland, A. Deshchytsia, made a statement on the labour migration of Ukrainians to Poland. First of all, the ambassador noted the tendency to increase the number of labour migrants – since 2014, for example, the number of labour migrants had increased by a factor of two or three. Emphasising that about 1.5 million Ukrainians at that time have been working in Poland, A. Deshchytsia claimed that 600,000 of them officially pay taxes to the social insurance fund and the rest work legally under employment contracts without paying taxes (Zahorodnia 2021).

It is worth noting that the growth of employment of Ukrainian migrants in spheres beyond construction or cleaning gradually destroys the received wisdom regarding the limited variability of work opportunities for Ukrainians in Poland. Furthermore, the ambassador stressed that Ukrainian migrants now not only come to Poland to work but also consider starting and developing their own businesses, as evidenced by the following statistics: in 2014 there were 680 companies in Poland at least partially owned by Ukrainians, whereas in 2021 there were already 16 thousand such companies (Zahorodnia 2021).

According to EastWestLink, a Polish employment agency for foreigners, as of 2019, the largest number of labour migrants among Ukrainians in Poland were aged 26–35, but there is a trend

towards an increase in the number of 18 to 25-year-olds. Traditionally, men predominate among labour migrants, accounting for approximately 60%, but the number of women is also gradually increasing (Ukrainska 2019).

It is also important to take Social Insurance data into account. Experts note that the information on foreigners collected by this institution is crucial not only for the social insurance system, but for the economy and, in particular, the labour market. According to the organisation's data, in April 2021, a record number of 780,500 foreigners were insured in Poland. This represents an increase over the previous month of 14.5 thousand, among which 10.3 thousand are citizens of Ukraine. In general, Ukrainians make up the largest group among foreigners registered for insurance, about 75%. For comparison, at the end of August 2020, the number of foreigners registered with the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) stood at 689,000, including 507,000 citizens of Ukraine. The number of foreigners applying for insurance was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, a significant increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens arriving in Poland was a consequence of the reopening of the borders after the first lockdown period. At the same time, these data point to a high demand for labour migrants in Poland, and may also suggest that foreigners prefer legal work that provides health insurance and, accordingly, access to health care (The number 2021).

Thus, it can be concluded that the most prominent motive for the labour migration of about 1.5 million Ukrainians to Poland is economic in nature, although geographical and cultural proximity, the possibility of legal employment, and Polish migration policy are also quite important factors.

4. Ukrainian labour migration to the Warmia-Masuria province

First of all, over and above the general positive features of employment in Poland, the Warmia-Masuria province is attractive to labour migrants due to the concentration of a significant part of the Ukrainian diaspora here. According to official data, about 11,000 Ukrainians now live in Warmia-Masuria. However, unofficial estimates number Ukrainians in the Warmia-Masuria province at about 75–85 thousand people (Astramowicz-Leyk and Turchyn 2022).

Close interregional cooperation has been established between certain regions of Ukraine and the Warmia-Masuria province. The provincial government attaches great importance to relations with Poland's eastern neighbour, Ukraine. The presence of a significant and active Ukrainian minority in Warmia-Masuria makes cooperation between Ukraine and the province an important aspect of the international policy of both parties. The cooperation of the province with the Rivne region, initiated on 8 November 1994 with an agreement on friendship and cooperation, is especially well-developed. The regions cooperate across a wide range of fields: utilities, communication systems and transport, construction of infrastructure facilities, economy and trade, small and medium businesses, entrepreneurship, agriculture, regional planning and environment, organisation of events, etc. (Prokop 2019).

The existence of a developed network of cooperation, to some extent, inspires confidence in those who plan labour migration to the province.

The presence of many enterprises and companies that Ukrainians can consider potential employers encourages labour migration to the Warmia-Masuria province. The capital and largest city in Warmia-Masuria, Olsztyn, boasts an expanded network of enterprises involved in the timber industry and the industrial processing of agricultural products. As of today, Olsztyn is the main regional centre of the woodworking and furniture, food (dairy, meat, and breweries), and light industries. The transport industry, production of building materials, and printing products are also developing. Mining also plays a part (Olsztyn 2005).

Projects aimed at supporting foreigners in the province also serve to increase Ukrainian immigration. One example is the project 'Support system for foreigners living in the Warmia-Masuria province in the field of social adaptation and integration', which lasted from January 2018 until September 2020. The main goal of the project was to raise the standard of integration services for foreigners in the Warmia-Masuria province and deepen the integration of foreigners with Polish society (Projekt 2018).

Another noteworthy project was 'Support for the Integration of Migrants in the Warmia-Masuria province', also funded by the national budget and the National Asylum, Migration and Integration

Fund. The project 'Support for the integration of migrants in the Warmia-Masuria province' lasted from May 2020 to May 2021, with the primary goal of providing comprehensive support to at least one thousand foreigners living within the Warmia-Masuria province, facilitating the integration process. The key objectives of the project were: 1. Improving the social and living conditions of migrants in difficult transitional situations; 2. Improving communication skills through the introduction of Polish language courses that include elements of Polish culture and history; 3. Improving the competence of migrants in the fields of civil rights and responsibilities, Polish values, labour law and the labour market, and living conditions; 4. Supporting foreigners in job search, career development, and business relations; 5. Organising intercultural events and establishing a platform for the study of similarities and differences between migrants and wider Polish society; 6. Highlighting the positive features of migration as a process that brings enrichment to local communities, which in turn promotes the integration of foreigners (Pidtrymka 2020).

In our opinion, the implementation of such projects can contribute to the awareness of migrants from Ukraine of their value to the province, as well as to the understanding that they can rely on some support there.

Thus, the main factors influencing Ukrainian labour migration to Warmia-Masuria have been identified as low wages in Ukraine, the low competitiveness of the Ukrainian economy, the development of migration networks, the geographical, linguistic, and cultural proximity of Ukraine to the province, the development of employment opportunities, and the availability of official support for migrants, including projects to promote integration.

5. The peculiarities of Ukrainian migrants' employment in Poland

5.1. Current trends in issuing employment permits to Ukrainians in Poland

The analysis of the employment of Ukrainian labour migrants in Poland should be considered in the context of how such documents as work permits, seasonal work permits, and employer declarations might be obtained.

One of the options for the official employment of foreigners in Poland is a work permit. Work permits in Poland are issued by the local authorities at the place of residence of the employer or the registered office of the company. In Polish practice, work permits for foreigners can be of five types: Type A – a foreigner performs work on the basis of an employment contract with an employer residing or staying in Poland. Type B – a foreigner works for a Polish company and as part of his/her duties stays in Poland for a period of more than 6 months a year. Type C – a foreigner is sent to a branch of a foreign employer in Poland for a period longer than 30 days. Type D – a foreigner works for a foreign employer that performs no organised activities in Poland and is delegated to the territory of Poland for the implementation of certain temporary assignments. Type E – a foreigner works for a foreign employer and is sent to the territory of Poland for a period longer than 30 days in six months, for purposes other than those specified in the other permit types (Mialova 2017).

The introduction of a visa-free regime with the European Union has made it easier for Ukrainians to work in Poland. One can enter Poland with a biometric passport and then apply for a work permit, as Poland is one of the few EU countries that offer a work permit on the basis of a visa-free regime. In fact, EU member states have the right to allow such a possibility internally, because the visa-free agreement itself does not provide for such a procedure (Tokariuk 2019).

It is worth noting that on 4 January 2022, several changes were made to Polish legislation that simplify the conditions for labour migration. For Ukrainian migrants, this means the possibility of obtaining a work permit in Poland for a period of up to 2 years, issued on the basis of a seasonal work permit and the employer's statement of the intention to employ a foreigner (Yakovlieva 2022).

Until 2020, a dynamic increase in the number of issued permits was observed (see Fig. 1). It should be understood that the intensification of obtaining work permits in Poland by Ukrainians was to a large extent connected with the beginning of Russian armed aggression against Ukraine. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a decline in the issuance of permits. The largest number of permits within the analysed period was issued in 2019 – 330,495 permits.

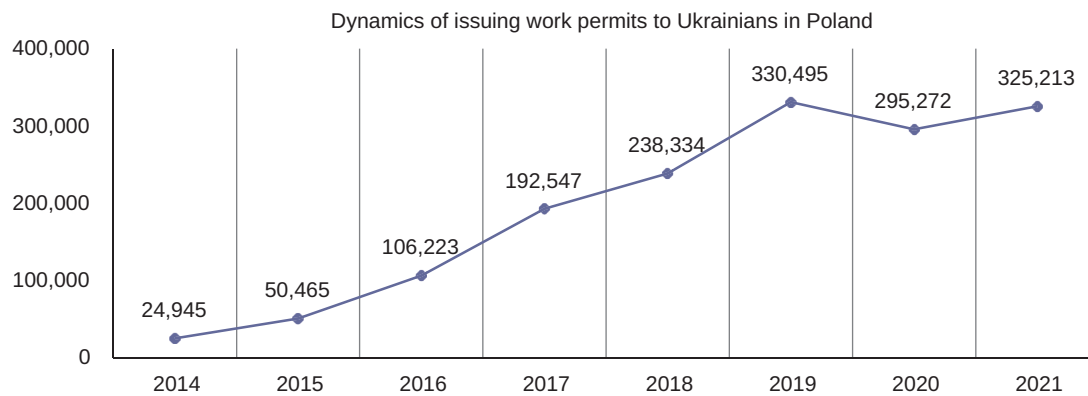


Figure 1. Issuance of work permits to Ukrainians in Poland (2014–21)

Source: Labour Market Department of Ministry of Family and Social Policy in Poland.

Analysing the situation with the employment of Ukrainians in the Warmia-Masuria province, it is worth considering the number of permits issued by the provincial government to citizens of Ukraine. Since the largest number of permits was issued to Ukrainians at the national level in 2019, and there was a decline in 2020, it makes sense to choose these two years for the sample. In addition, we consider it important to add a gender aspect to the study.

Table 1. Issuance of work permits to citizens of Ukraine in the Warmia-Masuria province (2019–2020)

Year of issuance of the permit	For women	For men	Total
2019	2,368	4,965	7,333
2020	1,561	3,306	4,867

Source: Labour Office of the Warmia-Masuria province.

As can be seen from Table 1, more permits were issued to men – 35% more permits than to women in 2019 and 36% more permits than in 2020. It is also worth noting the downward trend in the issuance of work permits to Ukrainians in the province in 2020, when 33% fewer contracts were issued than in the previous year. However, these dynamics can be explained by the coronavirus pandemic, which at that time had a strong global impact on public life and, in particular, employment opportunities and conditions. In this context, it should also be noted that according to the Labour Office of the Warmia-Masuria province in 2019-2020, Ukrainians as a nationality received the largest number of work permits. For comparison, in 2019 the second largest number was granted to citizens of Belarus, who received 564 permits, which is approximately one-eighth the number of permits received by Ukrainians.

An important aspect of the modern labour migration of Ukrainians to Poland is the demand for highly qualified Ukrainian workers in various spheres of public life. That is, Ukrainians can work not only as construction or agricultural labourers, but also as, for example, office managers or IT specialists. Polish authorities often listen to employers' requests to facilitate the employment of Ukrainian workers (Tokariuk 2019).

Ukrainians who receive work permits in the Warmia-Masuria province choose different fields of activity and groups of professions. Table 2 presents the variability of Polish proposals in the field of activity for foreigners in 2020 (see Table 2).

Analysing the data from Table 2, it can be concluded that in 2020 most permits were issued to Ukrainians in the processing industry, a total of 1,277, while the areas of public administration and national security, financial and insurance activities, organisations and extraterritorial teams were not represented by Ukrainians with official work permits.

Table 2. Polish offers of work permits for foreigners in 2020 by sphere of activity

Spheres of activity	Number of permits issued	Number of permits issued to Ukrainians
Farming, forestry, hunting, fishing	52	33
Mining and extraction	3	3
Processing industry	2,013	1,277
Production and supply of electricity, gas, steam, hot water, and air conditioning	2	2
Water delivery; wastewater management and reclamation	1	1
Construction	1,352	1,019
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor transport	187	167
Transport and warehouse management	1,259	855
Accommodation and catering	247	51
Information and communication	8	7
Financial and insurance activities	0	0
Real estate services	29	0
Professional, scientific, and technical activities	265	203
Activities in the field of administrative and support services	1,315	1,087
Public administration and national security; compulsory social welfare	0	0
Education	4	4
Healthcare and Social Care	16	10
Activities related to culture, entertainment and recreation	27	15
Other services	119	112
Households with hired employees; households that produce goods and provide services for their own needs	13	13
Organizations and extraterritorial teams	0	0

Source: Labour Office of the Warmia-Masuria province.

In terms of selected professions, such professions as artisan and contractor predominated – at 37% and 35%, respectively (see Fig. 2). It is important that in 2020, only 5 Ukrainians here received a permit to work in public authorities or to hold positions in management structures, which is not even 1% of the total number of permits.

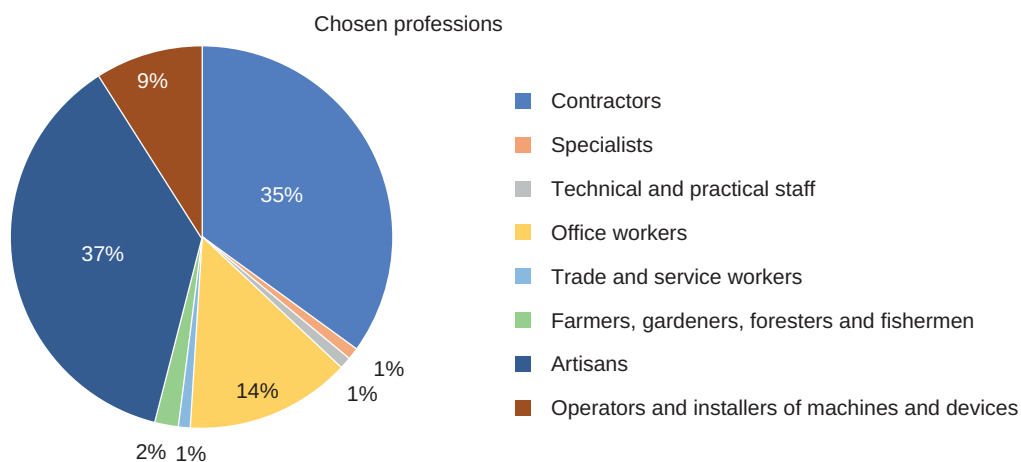


Figure 2. Professions chosen by Ukrainians with work permits in 2020

Source: Labour Office of the Warmia-Masuria province.

In 2020, most permits were issued to Ukrainians in the Warmia-Masuria province for a period of more than two years – 2,695 permits – with only 10 permits being issued for periods up to three months (see Fig. 3).

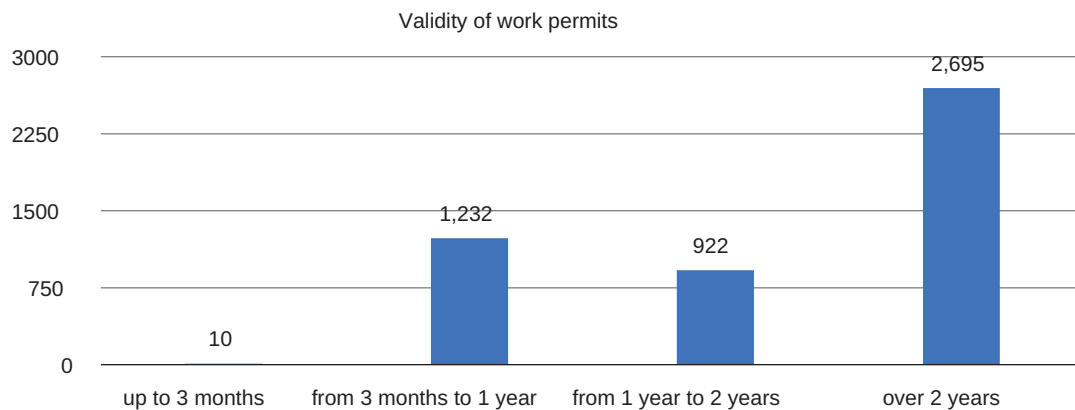


Figure 3. Validity of work permits of citizens of Ukraine in the Warmia-Masuria province in 2020

Source: Labour Office of the Warmia-Masuria province.

5.2. Seasonal work permits for citizens of Ukraine in Poland

Another opportunity for employment of Ukrainians in Poland is provided by obtaining a seasonal work permit. This document is issued on the basis of an application by the entity that entrusts work to a foreigner. A seasonal work permit may be issued for no more than nine months in a calendar year. To apply for a seasonal work permit, the employer applies to the district employment service. While waiting for an extension of the seasonal work permit, a foreigner can work for the entire waiting period with the same employer, but only for up to 30 days if he/she wants to work for a new employer (Adamczyk et al. 2022).

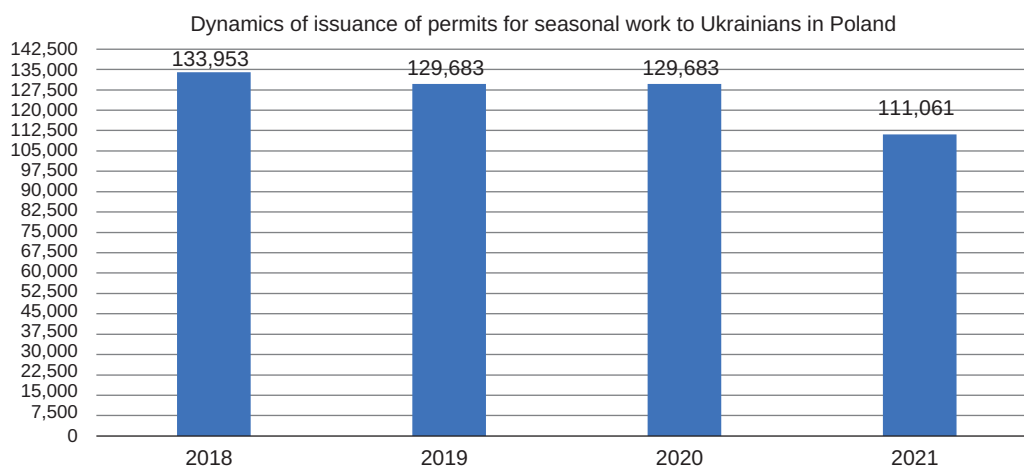


Figure 4. Seasonal work for Ukrainian citizens in Poland (2018–2021)

Source: Labour Market Department of Ministry of Family and Social Policy in Poland.

The period 2018–21 shows a downward trend in the issuing of seasonal work permits (see Fig. 4). However, it should be noted that despite the challenges associated with the coronavirus pandemic, the number of issued seasonal work permits remained at an average level. Concurrent with the end of the period of intensive seasonal work at the end of May 2020, Poland became aware of a labour shortage, and accordingly, the demand for foreign workers has recovered.

The trend towards a decrease in the number seasonal work permits issued in the Warmia-Masuria province from 2019 to 2021 reflected the situation in the country as a whole.

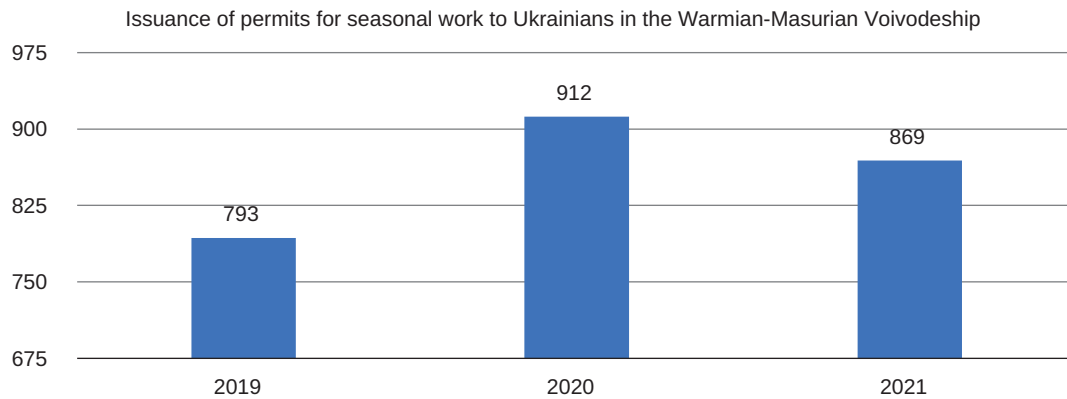


Figure 5. Seasonal work permits for citizens of Ukraine in the Warmia-Masuria province (2019–2021)

Source: Labour Office of the Warmia-Masuria province.

As can be seen in Figure 5, the year 2020 saw an increase in the number of permits issued to Ukrainians for seasonal work compared to 2019, with a decline in the following year. In the peak year 2020, 174 more permits were issued to women than to men. It should be emphasised that the total number of seasonal work permits issued in the Warmia-Masuria province in 2020 was 948 permits, 912 of which were obtained by Ukrainians. Seasonal work permits issued to Ukrainians in 2020 covered two areas of activity: the provision of accommodation and food services at 13.8%, with farming, forestry, hunting, and fishing accounting for the remaining 86.2%.

5.3. Issuing employer declarations to Ukrainians in Poland

In addition to permanent and seasonal work permits, migrants looking for employment in Poland can also take advantage of the opportunity to obtain an employer declaration. If the employer wants to provide a job to a foreigner in a simplified mode, he/she can submit a declaration to the regional labour service. Under the terms of the declaration, the term of employment of a foreigner cannot exceed 24 months, and work for a foreigner does not include seasonal work that requires a permit. An important advantage for the employee is that if the employer wishes to continue working with a foreigner after the expiration of the declaration, he/she can apply for a simplified work permit that does not entail a labour market check (Deklaratsiia 2021).



Figure 6. Employer declarations for citizens of Ukraine in Poland (2018–2021)

Source: Labour Market Department of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy in Poland.

The year 2020 saw a decline in the issuance of employer declarations to Ukrainians in Poland – 1,329,491 declarations compared to 1,475,923 declarations in 2019 [see Fig. 6]. This situation is largely connected with the spread of COVID-19, and an increase in the number of issued declarations is observed in 2021 – 305,613 more declarations than in 2020.



Figure 7. Employer declarations for citizens of Ukraine in the Warmia-Masuria province (2019–2021)

Source: Labour Market Department of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy in Poland.

By contrast, at the level of the Warmia-Masuria province, a sharp increase in the number of issued declarations can be observed from 2018 [see Fig. 7]. The largest number was issued in 2021 – 57,035 employer declarations. However, other provinces issued a greater number of such declarations than Warmia-Masuria (Boiko 2022).

5.4. Employment of Ukrainians in the Warmia-Masuria province through the Employment Centre and employment agencies

The Employment Centre also plays an important role in the employment of Ukrainians in the Warmia-Masuria province. According to official data, in 2020, the top five countries in terms of the number of employed people in the Warmia-Masuria province through the Employment Centre were Poland, Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, Moldova, and Russia [see Fig. 8].

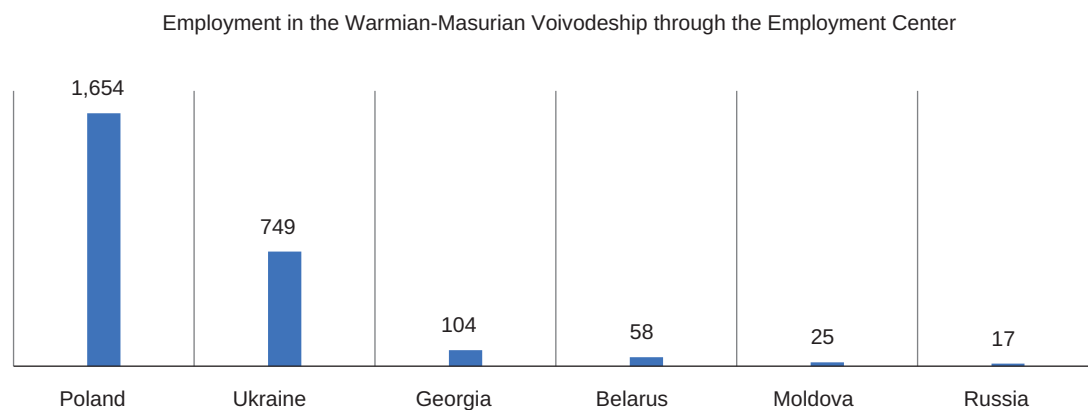


Figure 8. Employment in the Warmia-Masuria province gained through the Employment Centre in 2020

Source: Information on the activities of employment agencies provided by the Marshal of the Warmia-Masuria province.

Temporary employment in the Warmia-Masuria province is also interesting to analyse. In 2019, the employment authorities of the province concluded civil law agreements with representatives from 12 foreign countries. Interestingly, the number of Poles hired temporarily was significantly lower than the number of Ukrainians – 1,302 Poles and 2,444 Ukrainians (see Fig. 9).

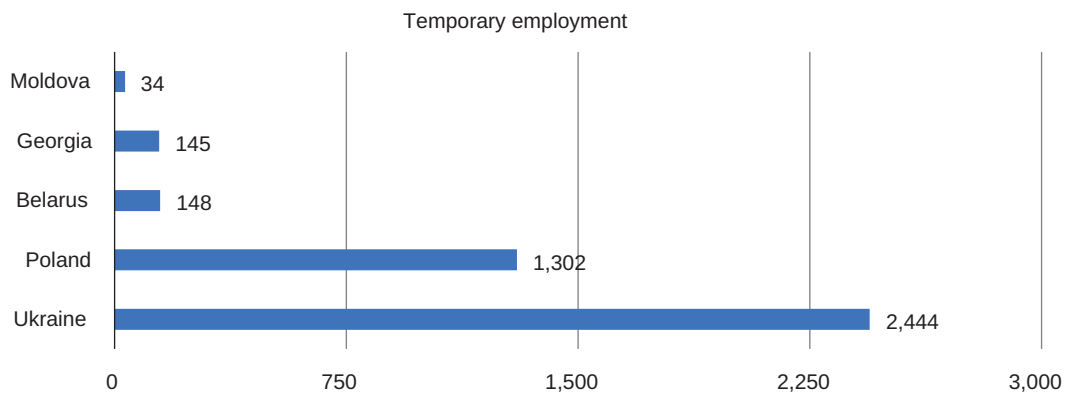


Figure 9. Temporary employment in the Warmia-Masuria province in 2019

Source: Information on the activities of employment agencies provided by the Marshal of the Warmia-Masuria province.

In addition, the Employment Centre of the Warmia-Masuria province analysed 418 contracts for temporary employment of Ukrainians in 2019 to determine which professions were most represented (see Table 3).

Table 3. Professions chosen by those temporary employed in Warmia-Masuria province in 2019

Chosen profession	Number of Ukrainians
Adjuster and operator of metalworking machines	1
Plasterer	1
Waiter	1
Welder	1
Installer of building structures	2
Contractor of construction works	3
Kitchen helper	3
Machine operator	4
Washing machine operator	5
Administration and development specialist	7
Locksmith	7
Office and hotel assistant and cleaner	9
Storekeeper	13
Operator of machines for the plastic production	28
Worker in another field	123
Butcher and fish processor	210

Source: Labour Office of the Warmia-Masuria province.

Among the employment agencies that helped Ukrainians the most to get a job in the province in 2019 [see Fig. 10], the Ukrainian Services agency should be singled out. In 2019, this agency hired 1,219 Ukrainians for temporary work, which amounts to nearly half of the 2,444 Ukrainians temporarily employed through employment agencies.

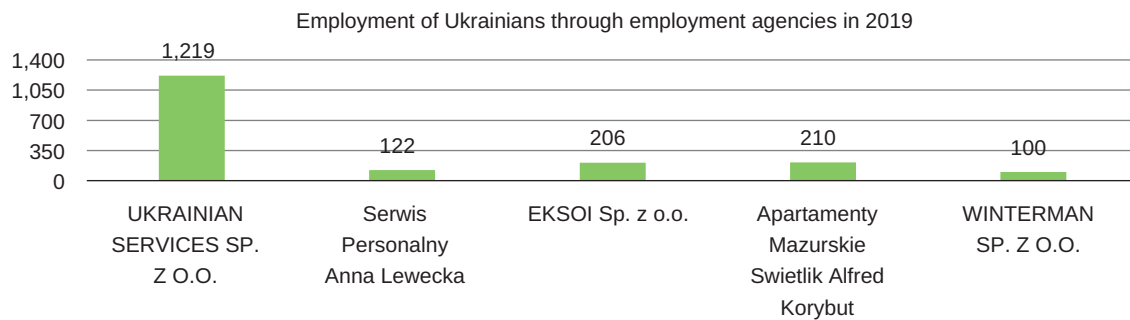


Figure 10. Employment of Ukrainians in the Warmia-Masuria province through employment agencies in 2019

Source: Information on the activities of employment agencies provided by the Marshal of the Warmia-Masuria province.

5.5. Legal status of Ukrainian migrants in the Warmia-Masuria province

During the first 10 months of 2020, 151 inspections were conducted on the legality of employment of foreigners in the Warmia-Masuria province. The local department of the border service reviewed the status of more than 4,200 workers from abroad and found more than a thousand people working illegally. 90% of detected illegal workers were Ukrainians. However, it should be understood that such a high figure reflects the large proportion of workers from Ukraine in the province. Foreigners who work informally in Poland also include citizens of Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, and Uzbekistan (Sered 2020).

From January to the beginning of June 2021, the legality of employment of 954 foreigners, mostly Ukrainians and Belarusians, was checked in the Warmia-Masuria province, and 91 violations were revealed. A striking case was that of an employer who is an entrepreneur in the manufacturing sector in Elk County and illegally employed 15 foreigners, including four Ukrainians (U.P.M.P 2021).

The most frequent centres of illegal labour in the Warmia-Masuria province are such counties as Działdowo, Iława, Kętrzyn, Nidzica, and Olecko. Polish companies that have headquarters in the country's largest cities send migrants to the region for illegal work. According to employees of the State Traffic Inspection, workers, most of whom are Ukrainians, worked illegally, mainly in industrial enterprises, as well as in the fields of construction and trade (Sered 2020).

In addition to employment offences, Ukrainian labour migrants commit other crimes, which, although not critical, destabilise the situation in Poland itself and negatively affect the international image of Ukraine. In general, the legal status of foreigners in Poland is regulated by the Law of 12 December 2003, which lays out the rules and conditions of entry of foreigners into the territory of the state, transit through its territory, their stay and departure from Poland, and the competencies of the authorities in these cases. According to Article 289, the police have the right to control the legality of the stay of foreigners in Poland in case of reasonable suspicion, violation of public order, or committing a crime (PolUkr 2014).

According to A. Jurkun, press secretary for the municipal police headquarters in Olsztyn, the coronavirus pandemic led to the beginning of changes to legislation that provide for special solutions for foreigners in Poland. The changes concern aspects of extending a foreigner's stay, validity of work, or validity of a residence card or temporary identity card.

In addition, A. Yurkun has noted that violations of the law by foreigners in Poland tend to be incidental. Analysis of statistics for 2020 shows that the share of crimes committed in Olsztyn and Olsztyn County by foreigners is insignificant. A total of 2,134 offences were detected within the municipal police headquarters in Olsztyn, only 35 of which were committed by foreigners, which accounts for a mere 1.6% of the total.

The largest number of offenders who are citizens of other states was recorded in 2018 – 44 people [see Table 4]. Despite the fact that in 2019 and 2020 there were fewer violations by foreigners, the general upward trend in the number of offences committed by foreigners in Poland should be noted with reference to 2015 and 2016 levels.

Table 4. Offences committed by foreigners in Olsztyn County in 2020

Year	Number of foreign offenders
2015	15
2016	12
2017	18
2018	44
2019	33
2020	35

Source: Author's tabulation based on information provided by the Municipal Police Headquarters in Olsztyn.

The means by which Ukrainian labour migrants secure employment in Poland are a work permit, a seasonal work permit, and an employer declaration. According to recent statistics, Ukrainians have received the most work permits in the Warmia-Masuria province. There were also the largest number of Ukrainian temporary workers employed through the Employment Centre. As for the diversity of professions chosen by Ukrainians, the traditional attitude that Ukrainians can work in Poland only for those jobs that Poles themselves do not want to do is no longer relevant. Labour migrants from Ukraine not only work as employees in various fields, but can also run their own businesses. However, a significant number of labour migrants from Ukraine are working illegally in Poland.

6. Modern challenges of labour migration from Ukraine to the Warmia-Masuria province

Despite a number of advantages of Ukrainian labour migration to Poland and in particular, to the Warmia-Masuria province, Ukrainian labour migrants face various challenges and problems, often due to discriminatory treatment based on nationality.

To assess the current integration policy of Poland, we consider it appropriate to use the Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), which is a consortium of European organisations led by the Migration Policy Group and covers 52 countries. The MIPEX index is multidimensional, as it analyses integration policy in eight directions: labour market mobility; family reunification; education; long-term stay; participation in the political life of the country; obtaining citizenship; protection against discrimination, and health care.

Non-EU citizens have faced a number of obstacles in Poland. Thus, according to MIPEX for 2020, the country's integration policy is estimated at 40 out of 100 points. Poland's approach to the integration of migrants MIPEX classifies as "equality on paper". As in most Central and Eastern European countries, immigrants in Poland enjoy some basic rights but do not have equal opportunities. Official Warsaw still needs to invest in equal rights and equal opportunities for immigrants, which are below the average in Poland compared to most MIPEX countries (MIPEX 2020).

Poland's current policy encourages the public to perceive immigrants not as equals but as strangers. Immigrants in Poland face many obstacles in several areas, mainly in the labour market, education, health care, and political participation. Mobility in the Polish labour market is assessed as partially unfavourable, as foreigners can get a job here and start a business, but they do not have access to the support and benefits available to Polish citizens. Under such a restrictive policy, the public experiences a higher level of xenophobia and a lower level of social trust, which leads to fewer contacts and positive experiences with immigrants. Poland's integration policy is rated below the EU average (MIPEX 2020).

When considering the manifestations of discriminatory treatment of Ukrainian labour migrants by Poland, it is necessary to investigate the problem of education. According to residents of Górowo Iławeckie, a city in Warmia-Masuria where a Ukrainian school operates, there is a problem with the education of the children of labour migrants. After the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the flow of labour migrants began to increase significantly. As a result, from 2015 to 2021, the number of children of labour migrants and internally displaced persons seeking to study in Ukrainian schools

in Poland increased. In general, these institutions contributed to the education of such children, and the payment for accommodation in the dormitories was optimal for all. It should be noted that in Ukrainian schools in Poland, it is mandatory to study Ukrainian language, literature, and history.

However, problems began to arise after the adoption of a law on the education of foreigners in Poland in 2021, according to which school principals must treat students from national minorities as Polish citizens. The Ministry of Education of Poland calculates subventions for the education of students from national minorities, and principals, in turn, provide information on the number of such students. However, the government's new decision that students from Ukraine should be treated as foreigners, not as representatives of national minority, has been paradoxical, as it led to the situation that they cannot study in Ukrainian schools in Poland and, consequently, cannot study their native language, literature, and history. First is the matter of discrimination against Ukrainians on the basis of nationality. Complicating the matter are demands from the Polish Ministry of Education for the return of previous subventions allocated for the education of Ukrainians in schools.

Prior to the adoption of the new law, the school only had a positive impact on the development and future of children of Ukrainian labour migrants. Parents had an economic motive to give seek a good education for their children. Currently, the situation in schools remains controversial, as the principal has no right to ask parents whether they want their children to study as minority citizens or as foreigners. This problem is thought to have arisen with the appointment of the new Minister of Education, a former provincial governor in Lublin who was not very sympathetic to Ukrainians. Conversely, students of Polish schools in Ukraine do not suffer the same restrictions to study native language and history as students of Ukrainian schools in Poland have.

An unpleasant challenge for Ukrainians in Poland was the spread of the thesis that infectious diseases come to Poland from Ukraine. In 2018, 359 cases of measles were recorded in Poland. At the beginning of 2018, the first outbreak of measles (6 people) took place at the factory in the Warmia-Masuria province, it was revealed that the first two people to fall ill were natives of Ukraine. In this context, the information portal "Sputnik Polska" noted the statements of local officials and ordinary residents. The first believed that Ukrainians were responsible for the situation, while ordinary residents called for the deportation of sick Ukrainians back to their country of origin. It was also emphasised that the treatment of sick Ukrainians should not be provided at the expense of the Polish public purse. In addition, "Sputnik Polska" journalists inferred that the entire European continent is at risk of diphtheria brought by workers from Ukraine (Lubicz Miszewski 2018).

Ukrainian workers sometimes face poor working conditions at factories in Warmia-Masuria. For example, in 2017, more than thirty Ukrainians were held in inhumane conditions and forced to work in food processing factories in Nowe Miasto County. Border guards observing these factories saw that they were in operation, but suspiciously, no workers were leaving them. During the inspection, it was determined that the Ukrainians were there in spartan conditions. It should be noted that among the 48 identified, 35 did not have work permits or contracts, and two were staying in Poland illegally (Monitor Info 2017).

One of the leaders of the Ukrainian minority in Warmia-Masuria shared stories about the problems that often arise for Ukrainian labour migrants on their way to the province. First of all, there are cases when employers refuse to pay Ukrainians who work illegally. Our recounts being approached by men who worked illegally on the roads. Their employer had not paid their salary for six months, later promising to pay when they finished work and returned home. The employer failed to keep his promise, leaving the 21 people with a total debt of approximately 26 thousand euros. The men turned to our respondent for help, who, in turn, found a lawyer for them. In an unprecedented decision, the court sided with the labourers, ordering the owner of the enterprise to forfeit all the money, despite the fact that the workers did not have official employment. However, having transferred all the property to close relatives, the employer did not have money that could be collected, and it took years before the issue was resolved.

The leader of the Ukrainian minority in the province considers it a challenge for labour migrants to go through the lengthy bureaucratic procedure of obtaining official employment and a work permit. According to the head of the Olsztyn branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Poland, the work of Ukrainians is not properly valued, and Ukrainians themselves agree to lower wages than a Polish citizen would receive. Unfortunately, our respondent also has emphasized that during his

practice with Ukrainian labour migrants, accidents have occurred, some of them fatal. There are also cases of blackmail and threats from the Polish population. For example, after a fight in which a Ukrainian took part, he was threatened with reprisals against his family if he testified to the police.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also caused significant complications for labour migrants. These problems were widespread and not limited to the Warmia-Masuria province. First of all, Ukrainians faced the problem of sudden job loss. Therefore, those who had work permits but lost their jobs had to obtain another work permit. Due to the spread of the coronavirus infection, the number of applications for permits increased, as did the waiting time to receive them, and many migrants have, for a considerable time, lost the opportunity to work officially (Cope et al. 2021).

The processing of requests for a Polish residence permit took even longer. The declaration of a public health emergency on 16 March 2021 caused the province offices to suspend the personal reception of applicants, thus making it virtually impossible for people to access the offices. Although the offices were to resume receiving clients by the end of May 2021, some of them did not resume their work until the end of July. In addition, a significant complication for labour migrants was the requirement of timely submission of certain additional documents, which were difficult to obtain due to the work schedule of the institutions that issue them (Cope et al. 2021).

Due to the epidemic, changes in the legislation came into force on 2 May 2021, providing special solutions for foreigners staying in Poland. Regulatory changes gave those seeking to stay in Poland, as well as those prevented from leaving by measures against the spread of infection, the opportunity to stay legally in Poland.

Terms for the following activities were extended until 30 days after the lifting of the epidemic measures:

- the legal stay of foreigners in Poland, if such terms expired during the epidemic period;
- such documents as 'karta pobytu', temporary identity cards issued to foreigners, and "consent to tolerant stay", as well as documents issued for a specific period of time to EU citizens;
- submission of documents for legalisation of stay;
- validity of previously issued work permits, including seasonal permits, as well as applications from employers for employment of a foreigner (Office for Foreigners 2020).

New provisions in the law allowed employers to change working conditions, in particular to reduce working hours or wages or send an employee to a remote work regime (Office for Foreigners 2020). Although such changes should have helped to reach a compromise between the worker and the employer and maintain safe working conditions, this often led to the employer's abuse of the opportunity to change working conditions by significantly worsening them.

The pandemic had a particularly negative effect on the work of female labour migrants. First and foremost, having lost their jobs, Ukrainian women were left without income and social security. It is important that most migrant women are the main breadwinners in the family and support other family members by sending money transfers to Ukraine, which became impossible after the loss of their jobs. In addition, migrant women were often not paid their final wages, and landlords did not make concessions (Cope et al. 2021).

Therefore, the labour migration of Ukrainians to the Warmia-Masuria province, as well as to Poland in general, cannot be interpreted as an exclusively positive process. The presence of discriminatory treatment, cases of severe working conditions, and the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic contribute negatively to the general picture of the employment situation of Ukrainians in Warmia-Masuria.

7. Conclusions

Ukrainian labour migration to the Warmia-Masuria province presents a mixed picture. Low wages and high unemployment in Ukraine, on the one hand, and the demand for labour and attractive working conditions in neighbouring Poland, on the other, are key drivers of Ukrainian labour migration. It should be understood that close ties between countries, geographical location, and a certain similarity between languages and cultures contribute to the choice of Ukrainian workers' place of migration.

The Warmia-Masuria province, in turn, attracts Ukrainians both with the presence of enterprises ready to employ Ukrainians and with the large Ukrainian minority in the region. Ukrainians make up the largest share of foreigners working in the Warmia-Masuria province.

Indeed, Ukraine is leading in terms of issued work permits in Poland. In 2016, among foreigners, 82.8% of permits were issued to Ukrainians; by 2021, this indicator had decreased significantly, but remained at the level of 68.5%. The Warmia-Masuria province issued the most permanent and seasonal work permits in 2019 and 2020 to Ukrainians, and, Ukrainians also made up the largest number of temporary employees to find work through the Employment Centre. While men from Ukraine received more work permits than Ukrainian women, the situation with seasonal work permits is reversed.

Despite the presence of a significant number of labour migrants from Ukraine in Warmia-Masuria, the fact remains that the majority of Ukrainian migrants choose other provinces for employment. This is confirmed by statistics on the issuance of work permits. For example, in 2021, the most permits for seasonal work were issued to Ukrainians in the Masovia province – 47% of the total amount, while in the Warmia-Masuria province – only 0.78%. The largest number of general work permits for Ukrainians was also issued in the Masovia province – 17%, at the same time the number of issued work permits in Warmia-Masuria was 1.1 % (Employment 2022).

The nature of Ukrainian employment in Poland is changing dynamically, as Ukrainians choose new professions, contribute to the most developed spheres of Polish society, and run their own businesses. However, competition for employment remains an important factor. The bureaucracy surrounding the issue of work permits or other relevant documents for a potential employee is frequently cited as grounds for refusing employment. In this case, it is easier for the employer to hire a Pole who does not need an additional work permit. However, such actions can also be considered discriminatory, as the selection was not based on the skills and competence of the applicant (Bachanski 2022).

In 2020, inspections for the legality of employment of foreigners in the Warmia-Masuria province revealed that 90% of informally employed workers were Ukrainians. Other types of offences committed by Ukrainians in the province also come into play. These can have a negative effect on Ukraine's image abroad, which is formed in part from an assessment of the behaviour of its citizens.

Ukraine's relations with the Warmia-Masuria province provide many prospects for cooperation, which may further positively affect the working conditions of Ukrainian migrants in the province. However, the prospects for improving the employment of Ukrainians in Warmia-Masuria can not be interpreted unambiguously for Ukraine, as migration is not only a "brain drain", but the non-return of citizens to their home country changes the demographic situation, involves family separation, and heightens socio-economic tensions.

Important trends in the labour migration of foreigners to Poland can be traced on the basis of a survey of 332 out of 361 district labour services in Poland. 70% of respondents consider the impact of foreigners on the labour market to be quite positive, 27.7% of respondents consider it neutral, and 2.2% consider it rather negative.

Only 0.6% of respondents considered the assignment of work to foreigners to lead to the high-intensity displacement of Polish workers from the labour market, while 24.6% assess the intensity as medium or low, and 74.8% did not observe such a phenomenon. Asked whether the main motive for employers to hire foreigners is the opportunity to offer worse working conditions that domestic workers would not accept, 36.8% of respondents rather agreed, 35.7% rather disagreed; 7.2% completely agreed with this statement, and 7.9% of departments surveyed did not agree at all.

This leads to the conclusion that migrants in Poland have a mostly positive impact on the local labour market, and that issuing work permits to foreigners has almost no effect on the displacement of Polish workers from the labour market. However, Polish employers often use foreigners as cheap labour (Employment 2022).

Taking into account the consequences, both positive and negative, of the labour migration of Ukrainians to Poland, and in particular to the Warmia-Masuria province, it is worth noting optimistic, pessimistic, and realistic assessments of the potential development of the situation. An optimistic scenario predicts the stabilisation of the Ukrainian economy and the improvement of the labour situation in Poland, which will reduce the volume of labour migration from Ukraine. The pessimistic

scenario includes significant weakening of Ukraine's economic development, which will tend to increase migration and make seasonal migration more long-term. Before the start of the full-scale military incursion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, a realistic scenario predicted that economic indicators in Ukraine would show no significant change. However, evaluating the current situation with decline in the domestic economy by a third and increase in migration flows, it can be considered that the pessimistic scenario has come true, mostly due to the full-scale war in Ukraine.

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