

# Ukrainian Migration to Europe: Policies, Practices and Perspectives

This issue of *Central and Eastern Europe Migration Review* (CEEMR) is dedicated to migratory flows from one of the largest source countries for the European Union (EU). Almost a decade ago, Düvell (2006) even referred to Ukraine as Europe's Mexico. Ukraine indeed seems to have the second-largest migration corridor in the world, the US–Mexico corridor being the largest (Migration Policy Centre 2013). This comparison, however, refers more to the migration corridor between Ukraine and Russia. Estimates of the migration flows between these two countries are really impressive, though they vary greatly between fewer than 100 000 and more than 3.5 million (Migration Policy Centre 2013). One of the explanations for the great disparity between these estimates is the lack of migration regulations (it is a visa-free regime for Ukrainians in Russia) and significant undocumented migration.<sup>1</sup> When it comes to migration from Ukraine to the EU, the general pattern and the numbers seem to be different. There is no doubt that estimates of Ukrainian migrants in Europe might also be somewhat imprecise, due to the lack of a fully standardised definition and to the specifics of migrant statistics in member-states. Notwithstanding significant undocumented migratory movements, due to its visa policies, the EU obviously has more instruments for regulating and registering the inflow of Ukrainian migrants. Here the estimates from different sources vary at around 1 million. According to Eurostat (2011, 2014) Ukrainian nationals currently represent the fifth-largest migrant group in the EU (after Turks, Moroccans, Chinese and Indians). Eurostat (2014) puts the total number of Ukrainian residents currently living in the EU as high as 634 851 persons. Given the high numbers of Ukrainian nationals (and the Ukrainian-born) living in Europe, the dearth of academic books and monothematic issues of scientific journals focused on Ukrainian migration is striking.

Since the 1980s there has been a growth of both popular and academic interest in a writing genre called 'migrant literature,' where authors with direct experience of leaving their home country describe their lives in new and often strange socio-cultural settings. Novels, short stories and plays in this literary genre often highlight the same themes as academic studies of migration. To date, there are few Ukrainian authors who have reflected their migration experiences in their writing. However, apart from the successful Ukrainian-origin British novelist Marina Lewycka, it is hard to name a single Ukrainian author who has articulated migration experience to international acclaim. This point, perhaps, helps to explain why the theme of Ukrainian migration has been somewhat neglected, both within Ukraine and elsewhere, despite its social, cultural and political importance. Fortunately, academic researchers have been busy mapping out the story of Ukrainian migration to Europe over the last three decades, using both 'hard data' and migrants' own stories. In this special monothematic issue of the CEEMR, the fruits of this empirical scholarly research are presented together to provide the journal's readers with an overview of Ukrainians' experiences of migration in a variety of national contexts and from a range of perspectives.<sup>2</sup>

## The current situation in Ukraine

It is important to mention from the outset that preparation of this monothematic issue started before the Ukraine's Maidan protests of late 2013. Therefore, the articles presented here pay only limited attention to the changing current economic, political and social situation, factors that are likely to influence Ukrainian migration patterns both domestically and internationally. On the one hand, more than three months of large civic protests violently suppressed by the incumbent Ukrainian regime eventually resulted in a change of president and government and gave Ukrainians a promise of smoother European integration, linked with freedom of movement within the EU. On the other hand, the involvement of the Russian Federation in domestic Ukrainian politics destabilised the situation even further, leading to military conflict in the eastern part of the country. The Russian annexation of the Crimea and the military aggression of pro-Russian (in fact Russian-backed) separatists, especially in the Donetsk and Luhansk *oblasts* of the Donbas region, resulted in military and civilian casualties and the exodus of civilians from the conflict zones.

Many Ukrainian and international experts have already expressed their concern about the exodus of civilians fleeing the various war zones. According to estimations by the UNHCR published on 23 July 2014, the number of internally displaced people in Ukraine is over 100 000. Approximately 90 per cent of people who moved to safer locations within the country are from Eastern Ukraine, and the rest left Crimea following its annexation by Russia.<sup>3</sup> The number of cross-border movements is also very high. The Russian Federal Migration Service reported that around 142 000 Ukrainian citizens were sheltering in Russia and about 42 000 had requested political asylum.<sup>4</sup> The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) also reported that the number of applications from Ukrainian asylum-seekers in the EU reached 1 039 in June 2014.<sup>5</sup>

The conflict in Ukraine is not over yet and it is hard to make any definite prognosis. One thing that is clear is that many Ukrainian refugees from Donbas and Crimea will a) not be able to return home due to the destruction of property and infrastructure and b) may not be willing to do so because of security concerns and the lack of job opportunities. Experts have already forecast a second exodus from the Eastern regions when the current conflict ends. In short, notwithstanding the immediate humanitarian crisis, the displacement of Ukrainian citizens because of conflict in 2014 will have a substantial impact on the national economy and will constrain government reform plans. The attitudes of Ukrainians towards their internally displaced compatriots represent an important avenue of future research because there is a risk of growing intolerance and social conflicts.<sup>6</sup>

The research articles presented in this special issue provide a snapshot of Ukrainian migration to various parts of Europe prior to the events of late 2013 and 2014; they represent the experience of Ukrainian migrants over a longer period. While the political landscape has changed, the impact of previous patterns of migration from Ukraine will undoubtedly shape future patterns and behaviour in critical ways. For this reason, the seven articles in this issue are important: they help to set the scene for Ukrainian migration in the post-Maidan era.

## Overview of the studies in this special issue

The opening article, by *Marta Jaroszewicz* and *Piotr Kaźmierkiewicz*, examines the current state of Ukraine's emigration policy. The authors' main aim is to find an answer to the key question posed in the title of the article: *Does Ukraine Have a Policy on Emigration?* After a systematic and critical analysis, their final verdict is negative. The authors claim that, in spite of the substantial outflow of Ukrainian population and a growing awareness of the fact that this outflow might affect the future development of the country, Ukrainian policy-makers' response to emigration is insufficient. Acknowledging the positive examples of bilateral

agreements and some successful legislative measures in the area of labour migration (e.g. measures to avoid double taxation, the recognition of qualifications and the transfer of remittances), the authors believe that the preparation of a comprehensive government programme regulating emigration and a focus on assisting returning Ukrainian migrants are hindered by the country having no dedicated state agency for migrant affairs and insufficient political interest. This article is enhanced by a fascinating study of interest groups – including the diaspora and non-governmental and religious organisations – and their impact on migration policy and practice.

The second article, by *Ignacy Józwiak*, presents the results of ethnographic research conducted in the small town of Solotvyno in the Transcarpathian region of Western Ukraine. This case study has two goals: 1) to present, acknowledge and understand the daily life practices of people living in a Ukrainian border region characterised by social and economic hardship – i.e. the disintegration of industry, a lack of infrastructure, unemployment, significant emigration, etc., and 2) to discuss important border-related social phenomena. The article explores the role of the state border in changing political circumstances and how this impacts on cross-border contacts and daily life practices. There is also discussion of the ethnic identity of the inhabitants of this Ukrainian–Romanian borderland.

The third article in this special issue examines the role of neighbourhood ties and social networks among Ukrainian circular migrants in Poland. The author, *Sabina Toruńczyk-Ruiz*, who based her analysis on the data from the respondent-driven sampling in the Polish capital city of Warsaw and its suburbs, showed that the social relations of Ukrainian migrants in a given area are formed by kinship and ethnic ties not related to this area. The author argues that Ukrainians do not tend towards spatial concentration. This finding is explained by the fact that being constantly on the move, circular migrants generally have poor contacts with native Poles (not only in the neighbourhood) and most of their ethnic social ties (often formed before migrating to Poland) are related to job opportunities rather than to place of residence (which is often changing). According to the author, the existence of the small ethnic clusters could be explained more by structural factors than by the personal preferences of Ukrainian migrants. The author sums up her analysis by noting that the dependency of circular migrants on dispersed transnational networks and the lack of interest in the local community could have important policy implications – it might hamper the integration of circular migrants on the local level.

The fourth article authored by the editor of this issue, analyses education–employment mismatch among Ukrainian labour migrants in the Czech Republic. Using data from two national migrant surveys, I challenge the stereotype of the typical Ukrainian migrant: university professors laying bricks or digging roadside trenches. This study suggests that the Czech Republic attracts Ukrainians with widely differing levels of education. Many of the migrants surveyed did not complete secondary education. At the same time, an analysis of the educational and occupational structure of migrants in comparison to the majority Czech population provides evidence of a significant waste of Ukrainian human capital. According to this research, every fifth Ukrainian migrant faces the risk of having a job where most of his or her fellow employees have a lower level of education. This waste of human capital tends to be persistent. Even if relatively well-educated, Ukrainians have the highest odds for occupying unskilled jobs in the Czech Republic and they tend to get stuck in these jobs. This education–employment mismatch cannot be explained by migrants' personal characteristics, language skills, problematic legal status or low formal education.

The fifth article, by *Francesca Alice Vianello*, also studies the problem of the waste of human capital among Ukrainian migrants. This study is based on in-depth interviews conducted in both source and destination countries and explores the experiences of migrant women from the L'viv, Ivano Frankivsk and Chernivtsi regions of Ukraine working in the domestic and care sectors in the Veneto region of Italy. The main focus here is these Ukrainian women's subjective perceptions of their own downward mobility. In her

article, Vianello analyses life trajectories of migrant women with a special emphasis on responses to their declining social status. One of the interesting findings is the claim that Ukrainian women employed in the Italian domestic and care sectors often experience a double process of downward mobility: prior to migration and in the destination country. As the author's analysis of the personal stories of well-educated Ukrainian migrant women suggests, the second devaluation of skills in the country of destination is mitigated by two main strategies: a) social skidding, when migrants working in the domestic sector avoid working for poorly educated and working-class families and b) weakening the hierarchy within the labour setting, when migrants seek an informal and respectful relationship with their employers.

The penultimate contribution to this special issue, by *Renáta Hosnedlová* and *Mikolaj Stanek*, discusses the transnational behaviour of Ukrainian immigrants in Spain. Using data from Spain's national immigrant survey, this study examines how different factors affect three main areas of transnational activity: 1) making visits home to Ukraine, 2) pursuing indirect contacts with compatriots, and 3) sending remittances home. The evidence presented reveals the importance of gender roles on Ukrainian migrants' transnational activities. Ukrainian women are more intimately and emotionally involved with other family members through indirect contacts. In contrast, men tend to focus on their role as breadwinner by providing financial support more frequently. This article highlights the crucial role of the family location (separation from spouses or partners and children) in defining the intensity of contacts with the country of origin. The authors also show that the legal status of Ukrainian immigrants in Spain has a significant impact on patterns of transnational behaviour where undocumented migrants, who cannot travel home to Ukraine, tend to compensate for this constraint by a) having more frequent indirect contacts and b) sending remittances home more often.

The final article looks at Ukrainian migration to Portugal. Here *Maria Lucinda Fonseca*, *Sónia Pereira* and *Alina Esteves* discuss the facilitating role of migrant networks. The authors examine the dynamics of this relatively recent trend in Ukrainian migration; in spite of the rather insignificant historical linkage between the countries, Ukrainians have today become the second-largest migrant group in Portugal. Based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, the article describes the basic features of this migration and its future prospects and provides an insight into the functioning of the so-called 'migration industry'. Examination of the role of networks in promoting Portugal as a destination for Ukrainian migration involves the study of different actors, including lawyers, travel agents, recruiters, intermediaries, organisers, brokers, and even semi-legal and criminal organisations. This research highlights some interesting dynamics in Ukrainian migrants' social networks: developing from somewhat instrumental 'travel agencies' primarily facilitating migration to Portugal in the early stages to the quite active social networks which play such a crucial role in assisting and maintaining migration and providing positive feedback to others in later years. In their concluding remarks, the authors acknowledge that, after a period of very rapid expansion followed by decline, Ukrainian migration to Portugal seems to have stabilised and exhibits an overall tendency towards permanence.

### **Concluding remarks**

The articles included in this special issue examine both the situation in Ukraine as a sending country and migrants' experiences in the different destination countries. The country-specific contributions combine research methods and use various data sources to describe different aspects of migration and migrants' integration, focusing particularly on emigration policies, migration-related practices in the border region, neighbourhood ties and the spatial concentration of migrants in the destination country, over-education through migration and migrants' perceptions of their downward mobility, the role of migrant networks and the transnational practices of migrants. A common theme in all of the articles of this special issue is that

Ukrainian migration to the EU deserves more attention. Ukraine's destiny is very important to the EU not only because of common borders, the country's potential accession to the EU, and concern about growing numbers of asylum-seekers from Ukraine stemming from the recent conflict. Ukraine was, is, and undoubtedly will always be part of the European cultural region, connected geographically, historically, economically and politically, and through processes such as international migration.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the authors of the articles and the anonymous reviewers whose comments and suggestions improved each of the contributions. I also would like to acknowledge the substantial support given by the CEEMR Editor-in-Chief, Agata Górny, and the Managing Editor, Renata Stefańska.

This issue is dedicated to the brave people of Ukraine, who have not been afraid to risk their lives in the struggle for a better future for their children and grandchildren.

Glory to Ukraine and its heroes, alive and fallen!

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The great variation in the estimates could also be partly explained by the fact that the number depends on the defining criterion (i.e. country of birth or citizenship), the method and timing of data collection (register *versus* census data) and the overall quality of Russian national statistics on migration.

<sup>2</sup> The preparation of this issue was initiated by researchers in the large interdisciplinary *International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe (IMISCOE)* network who specialise in Ukrainian migration (<http://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/projekt/2130/>). Earlier drafts of some country-specific articles in this special issue will appear in a forthcoming book entitled: *Beyond Circulation? Ukrainian Migration to the European Union*.

<sup>3</sup> A map with the statistics and a detailed overview of the population displacement by region, as of 23 July 2014, is available online at: <http://unhcr.org.ua/attachments/article/1244/ukrdisplacementunhcrocha20140723.pdf>. Data collected from local authorities and NGOs are likely to be incomplete and the statistics for the Luhansk *oblast* are missing.

<sup>4</sup> The data are from the same source as in Note 3. In view of Russia's geopolitical interest and its involvement in Ukraine's current crisis, the data reported by the Russian Federal Migration Service should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>5</sup> The data are based on the *EASO Newsletter* for July–August, available on the web: <http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/EASO-Newsletter-July-August-2014.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Oleh Pokalchuk, a social psychologist, highlighted these issues in an interview on *Radio Era* in Ukraine: see [http://eramedia.com.ua/article/204588-voseni\\_ukran\\_sld\\_chekati\\_drugu\\_hvilyu\\_pereselennya/](http://eramedia.com.ua/article/204588-voseni_ukran_sld_chekati_drugu_hvilyu_pereselennya/)). In predicting the second wave of displacement, he emphasised that there are differences in both culture and political attitudes between the inhabitants of the Eastern regions and the rest of Ukraine.

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