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## Ukrainian refugees and the European labor market: socio-cultural markers of interaction

### Los refugiados ucranianos y el mercado laboral europeo: marcadores socioculturales de la interacción

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#### Abstract

The study aims to identify the main aspects of the influence of the socio-demographic and cultural characteristics of migrants from Ukraine on their integration into the labor market in Europe.

The methodology of the research is based on the methods of systematic approach and structural-functional analysis with the use of general scientific methods of SWOT-analysis, description, analysis and synthesis, comparison, and generalization. The use of these methods allowed for an analysis of the totality of statistical data and the results of sociological research on migrants, the peculiarities of national culture in Ukraine as a general environment of professional activity of migrants from Ukraine, their system of values in comparison with similar characteristics of Europeans.

As a result, the conclusion is that most Ukrainian refugees will face a mismatch with the needs of the European labor market due to the difference in their usual prevailing type of organizational culture and value system, which causes the need for an adaptation policy. It is shown that the risks of mismatch should be identified, controlled, and avoided by means of developed public policies, including special communication campaigns.

**Keywords:** values, culture, management, refugees, foreign workers, labor market.

#### Introduction

Russia launched a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This event radically affected the

#### Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es identificar los principales aspectos de la influencia de las características sociodemográficas y culturales de los migrantes de Ucrania en su integración en el mercado laboral en Europa.

La metodología de la investigación se basa en los métodos de enfoque sistemático y análisis estructural-funcional con el uso de métodos científicos generales de análisis DAFO, descripción, análisis y síntesis, comparación y generalización. El uso de estos métodos permitió analizar la totalidad de los datos estadísticos y los resultados de la investigación sociológica sobre los migrantes, las peculiaridades de la cultura nacional en Ucrania como entorno general de la actividad profesional de los migrantes de Ucrania, su sistema de valores en comparación con características similares de los europeos.

Como resultado, la conclusión es que la mayoría de los refugiados ucranianos se enfrentarán a un desajuste con las necesidades del mercado laboral europeo debido a la diferencia en su tipo de cultura organizativa y sistema de valores habitual, lo que provoca la necesidad de una política de adaptación. Se demuestra que los riesgos de desajuste deben ser identificados, controlados y evitados por medio de políticas públicas desarrolladas, incluyendo campañas especiales de comunicación.

**Palabras clave:** valores, cultura, gestión, refugiados, trabajadores extranjeros, mercado laboral.

European and world economies, in particular the labor market. A situation has emerged that is

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characterized primarily by the abundance and unusual composition of Ukrainian refugees in European countries. Whereas in previous periods migrants were predominantly men, who traveled purposefully to earn money to meet labor market needs, now it is mostly women, children, and the elderly (Oxford Analytica, 2022). Researchers note that this war was the most serious refugee crisis in Europe since World War II (Leon et al., 2022). However, due to the fact that events are unfolding very rapidly, and the situation is constantly changing, there have not yet been studies that have thoroughly and comprehensively examined this topic, and in particular the conditions, influencing factors, and prospects for the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the European labor market. This issue, therefore, has so far not only been unresolved but not even sufficiently addressed. This study is an attempt to do just that.

With this in mind, the study aimed to identify the main aspects of the influence of socio-demographic and cultural characteristics of migrants from Ukraine on their integration into the labor market in Europe. Achieving this goal required focusing on the following main research tasks, the implementation of which are outlined in the relevant sections of this article: to provide a theoretical basis for highlighting the influence of national values on the conditions and results of work of Ukrainian refugees in Europe; to improve the methodology of research of this influence; to identify features of this influence; to develop recommendations for optimization of approaches to the integration of Ukrainian refugees in the labor market in Europe.

### Theoretical Framework

In our opinion (and this is the main hypothesis of the study), the main problem of integration of Ukrainian refugees into the European labor market is the need to overcome certain discrepancies between the values, norms, and behavior patterns inherent in the organizational culture that accompanied the professional activities of migrants in Ukrainian companies on the one hand, and their European patterns, on the other. Therefore, we consider it expedient to go out in our study according to the concept of G. Hofstede (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), who developed his own concept of national cultures and proposed six dimensions of it, which are:

1. Power distance, associated with different solutions to the basic human problem - inequality.

2. Uncertainty avoidance associated with the level of stress in society in front of an unknown future.
3. Individualism vs. collectivism related to the integration of individuals into primary groups.
4. Masculinity vs femininity, related to the distribution of emotional roles between women and men.
5. Long-term and short-term orientation related to the choice of focus for people's efforts in relation to the future, present, or past.
6. The indulgence associated with pleasure versus control of the basic human desire associated with the enjoyment of life.

On the other hand, it is important to pay attention to the opinion of S Schwartz (2006), according to which cultural value orientations are a tool of conceptualization and operationalization of the key element of culture. These orientations characterize cultures, not individuals. Evaluations of a country are not preserved in the mind of any individual, nor do differences between any pair of individuals fix cultural distances between societies (Lassalle et al., 2020). These orientations are basic, they justify and give coherence to the ways in which social systems function. They are external to individuals and are expressed in the distribution of expectations and opportunities faced by members of a cultural group (ILO, 2022).

An important theoretical foundation for the study of this range of issues is that institutional and group differences cause social tension, conflict, and cultural change. Distinguishing cultural orientations from basic individual values allows us to investigate the impact of societies' normative culture on the values of their members. Cultural value orientations are an aspect of societies' cultural system; core values are an aspect of individuals' personality system (Schwartz, 2007). If we distinguish between them, we can use them together to gain a much deeper understanding of human behavior in different societies (Bannikova, 2016). For this purpose, the work applies factual and statistical material contained in the studies of a number of authors (Beaumont, 2022; Berezivska, 2022; Chaliuk, 2022; De Coninck, 2022).

### Methodology

To achieve the goals of the study, a systematic approach and structural-functional analysis were used with the use of general scientific methods of SWOT-analysis, description, analysis and

synthesis, comparison, and generalization. Thanks to this methodological basis based on processing statistical material and the results of sociological research, the characteristics of migrants from Ukraine were systematized and the range of countries for which the issue of integration policy for the labor market is of paramount importance was determined. Based on the comparison of value components of the business culture of Ukrainian companies and common values of Ukrainians with similar European values outlined zones and countries of potential contradictions. This made it possible to identify with which of the European labor markets the Ukrainian value type of organizational culture (as a generalized model) and the general value system can best be integrated.

To solve the research tasks, we applied the concepts of Hofstede and Schwartz to data from sources containing statistical information concerning Ukrainian refugees (Beaumont, 2022; Berezhivska, 2022; Chaliuk, 2022; De Coninck, 2022). Further use of the author's

methodology proposed and tested by us (Bannikova, 2016), as well as the methods of other scholars, in particular Lybanova (2018), Sokołowicz & Lishchynskyy (2018) and Lassalle et al., (2020) allowed to make theoretical and practical conclusions.

Note that the results obtained were comparable to those of other researchers. It was taken into account that the situation we studied is quite different in its qualitative and quantitative indicators from the situations investigated by other scientists. So appropriate corrections were made, taking into account which conclusions were made.

**Research Results**

At the first stage of the study, we will characterize the group of migrants from Ukraine. For this purpose, we analyzed and summarized data on migration from Ukraine after February 24, 2022. The basic quantitative indicators obtained in the course of this stage of the study are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Number of refugees who left Ukraine as of June 21, 2022, persons*

Country	Number of registered refugees from Ukraine in countries	Number of refugees granted temporary protection status	Number of border crossings with Ukraine	Number of border crossings to Ukraine
Republic of Poland	1 180 677	1 180 677	4 146 144	2 073 052
Republic of Moldova	85 797	no data available	507 552	138 488
Romania	82 733	40 202	691 413	370 707
Slovak Republic	78 972	78 782	525 620	254 316
Hungary	25 042	25 042	814 607	no data available
Belorussia	9 006	no data available	16 660	no data available
Russian Federation*	1 305 018	no data available	1 305 018	no data available
Total	2 767 245	1 324 703	8 007 014	2 836 563

\* expected projected number of refugees  
*Source:* Ukraine refugee situation (Operational data portal, 2022).

The main primary recipient countries of migrants from Ukraine were those with which it borders. During the first days of the war, these countries greatly simplified the border crossing procedure. Most Ukrainian citizens were accepted by Poland, which accounted for about 60% of all refugees. Much less went to Romania and other neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2022).

It should be borne in mind that such statistical analysis only characterizes border crossings, not the “completion of the migration line”. Obviously, eight million border crossings with Ukraine and the number of those remaining in the primary recipient countries provide an opportunity to talk about at least two million who have moved on. The main “final migration destination” countries were Poland (1.3 million),

Germany (656,000), and the Czech Republic (427,000). Spain, Moldova, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Italy, USA, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden and Portugal, Great Britain, etc. were also final destinations (IOM, 2022).

In support of Ukrainian refugees, as of April 8, 2022 39 countries have introduced a total of 519 measures, most of which relate to areas such as education, health care, or access to other key services. Cash and in-kind social protection payments account for approximately 30% of these measures. At the EU level, granting temporary protection status to Ukrainian refugees grants them rights including the right to residence, access to the labor market and housing, medical care, and access to education for children. According to (Martin, 2022), in order to be successful, a country's migration policy should include a set of measures aimed at ensuring that migrants are not only involved in the labor market of the country they arrived in, but also integrated into its society.

With regard to the labor market, as Anderson & Poeschel & Ruhs (2021) note, there is no universally accepted definition of a labor or skills "shortage". From the perspective of employers, a "labor shortage" usually means that the demand for labor exceeds the supply. There are currently almost 5.3 million refugees from Ukraine in Europe (Operational data portal, 2022). According to statistics from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as of June, there were approximately 4.9 million refugees from Ukraine in 44 European countries in need of such integration (International Monetary Fund Blog, 2022).

Along with this, researchers note that the size and speed of this migration has taken Europe by surprise (Adler, 2022). Most recipient countries lack the necessary facilities and infrastructure to accommodate the large numbers of refugees now crossing their borders. Many European countries have responded to the lack of housing in these countries: efforts to (temporarily) house large numbers of Ukrainian refugees continue in many European countries (European Commission, 2022; Walker, 2022a). In addition, in early March 2022, the European Union (EU) activated a provision of the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive that provides for the unlimited admission of certain types of refugees (in this case Ukrainians) during a crisis and the immediate and automatic admission of refugees not in need of asylum (Walker, 2022b). Thus, Ukrainian refugees avoid the lengthy

administrative process of recognition and receive quick access to basic services and a work permit for an initial period of three years (Martin, 2022; Walker, 2022b).

To analyze the risks arising in recipient countries in the labor market, on the one hand, the characteristics of migrants from Ukraine are important. Thus, among refugees, there are predominantly women, children (about 80%), and people over 60 years old. Among the total number of refugees, approximately 2.75 million are of working age. Of these, 43.5%, or 1.2 million, worked before the conflict began and left or lost their jobs during the conflict. Of these, more than 87% used to work full time. The vast majority (88%) were employees of businesses, while the remaining 12% were self-employed. Two-thirds had a college degree and 49% had a high-skilled occupation; only 15% had a low-skilled occupation (ILO, 2022). Along with this, according to ILO, almost 53% of migrants from Ukraine will not have any relationship with the labor market. This is a separate challenge for recipient countries.

To date, about ten countries have groups of migrants from Ukraine potentially important to their labor market. Note that the situation in Poland, the Czech Republic, Spain, and Germany is critical for finding solutions and strategies, given the number of migrants.

Poland now has 410,000 previously employed refugees, including 200,000 highly skilled workers, 146,000 with medium qualifications, and 64,000 with low qualifications. According to Polish researchers, 76 percent of Ukrainian refugees in Poland have higher education. Higher education is a kind of indicator that a person can master the language, can think, and can learn a new profession (Miroshnychenko, 2022).

Thus, the basic characteristics of migrants are potentially acceptable for the possibility/necessity of their integration into the labor markets of recipient countries.

The next stage of analysis should be the labor markets of these countries. The most relevant for these labor markets in the discussions of recent years is the problem of labor shortages. Along with this, as Anderson & Poeschel & Ruhs (2021) point out, there is no universally accepted definition regarding "shortages" of labor or skills. From the perspective of employers, a "labor shortage" usually means that the demand for labor exceeds the supply of labor. Some

employers may be unwilling or unable to meet the demand and pay higher wages.

This situation is fundamentally different from the Ukrainian labor market before February 24, 2022, where the number of applicants far exceeded the number of vacancies (Work.ua, 2021), which can lead to contradictions in the interaction of migrants from Ukraine and the labor markets of recipient countries or their harmonization.

We agree with Miroshnychenko (2022) about the fact that the labor market of some EU member states may “absorb” Ukrainian refugees of certain professions, actualizing the professional segment of migration. It is known that today's European labor market requires migrant workers. Approximately 18.3 million workers in EU member states are migrants (i.e., 8% of the labor market). In Germany, some sectors depend on migrant workers by 20-30%. In Spain, due to the shortage of 500 thousand construction workers, developers are forced to slow down the implementation of a number of projects. In France, due to a shortage of nurses and paramedics, 20% of hospital beds are not used. This situation is characteristic of many EU member states.

At the same time, professional affiliation is not the only criterion by which to judge the success or failure of integrating migrants into the labor market. Today the question of in which country it is easiest for Ukrainian refugees to integrate into the local labor market is mostly considered by Ukrainian researchers. We agree with the opinion of Filipchuk et al., (2022), according to which at this stage Poland is the most favorable for Ukrainians, through the higher standard of living, historical connections, similar language, large Ukrainian diaspora. A significant factor is the similarity of Ukrainian and Polish cultures. But not everything is as it seems at first sight.

An important issue of attracting migrants to the labor market at their place of residence is the question of values, which also belongs, after all, to the cultural sphere. The basic document that defines EU values, and which Ukrainian refugees must consider, is Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union. It states that the EU is built on values that include: respect for human dignity; freedom; democracy; equality; the rule of law; respect for human rights, including minority rights. According to the Treaty, several EU values are common to society. These are: pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice,

solidarity, and equality between women and men (Mtchedlishvili, 2018).

The latest World Values Survey (WVS) 2020, suggests that there are certain contradictions between European (EU) and Ukrainian value systems. According to the study, Ukraine has clearly declared a European path of development, but its value and the normative system is one of the barriers to movement in this direction. Already in 2020 the Ukrainian society was characterized by changes, negative for democratic development, in particular the growth of xenophobia (the share of those who do not wish to live next door to immigrants increased from 19% to 27.1%, with people of other nationalities - from 17% to 24.8%); an increase in the prevalence of gender stereotypes that university education is more important for a boy than for a girl, from 18% to 24.5%; that “if a woman earns more money than a man, it tends to cause problems” - from 20% to 30.9%; decrease of the share of those who support the fact that “not the government, but independent experts make decisions based on what they think is best for the country” - from 65% to 46.2%; increase of the share of those who support military management of the country, from 13% to 21.1%; decrease of trust to the majority of state institutions (courts, government, Verkhovna Rada, educational institutions, public institutions and services in general) - except the Armed Forces and National Police, trust to which has increased. Trust in public organizations and big business has also decreased (Danyuchenko, 2020).

The World Values Survey 2020 also provides an opportunity to draw basic parallels along two value lines (traditional versus secular and survival versus self-expression values) that are important for understanding societies and the people who live with them as they relate to those countries where most migrants from Ukraine turned out. The study showed that the resemblance of Ukrainians to residents of European countries exists in only one - the second vector. And the greatest correspondence is with France, Austria, Andorra, Spain, Hungary, and Slovenia. But none of these countries is the leader in terms of the presence of migrants from Ukraine. At the same time, leading recipient countries have significant differences in value systems with migrants from Ukraine, which can be a source of potential risks in the labor markets and public life.

Accordingly, potential contradictions in the interaction of migrants with Ukraine and the



societies of the EU countries are already at the basic value level. Note that cultural differences can be an important criterion in the choice of destination for migrant workers. They also often determine the length of stay.

In our opinion, we should also note that an important factor for the development of effective strategies and solutions for providing refugees with jobs is the following value-cultural level - elements of organizational culture common to Ukrainian migrants and common to European companies, which contribute to the efficiency of the labor process. Using the various cultural dimensions presented in Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov (2010), as well as our improved methodology for researching organizational cultures of international companies (Bannikova & Mykhailova, 2019), organizations need to check the suitability of job applicants with the values of the organizational culture and thus determine and understand whether the recruiting of employees will have a positive effect on the functioning of the company.

Earlier we proved that the mechanism of organizational identification plays a special role in this case. In Ukraine, there is a specificity of the formation of organizational culture, and the main factors of its formation are: the behavior and values of the top management, general economic conditions, the scope of the organization's activities, the strategy of the

organization's development, the size of the organization (Bannikova & Mykhaylyova, 2017).

That is why even though migrants can positively influence the work of organizations, they can also be a source of conflicts, misunderstandings, and communication problems (Klimas, 2019; Rakowska, 2019). We should not forget, in our opinion, that there is a high risk of prejudice and stereotypes towards migrants, as well as artificial divisions between workers within the organization. Undoubtedly, this affects the work atmosphere and interpersonal relationships, which in turn affects job performance. This leads to further consequences in the form of the fundamental question of whether it is worth staying in a particular country, whether it is better to look for a more culturally similar country or return to one's home country (Sandilya, Deleva & Deleva, 2022, March 10). Therefore, the cultural (and more specifically cultural-organizational) aspect may be a decisive factor for Ukrainian workers, which confirms our hypothesis.

## Discussion

In general, we can say that forced migration from Ukraine forms not only negative but also positive potentials for the EU countries. A systematic analysis of these potentials allows us to point out the following (Table 2):

**Table 2.**

*Impact of migration of Ukrainian refugees to the EU: A SWOT analysis*

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A special system of measures is introduced in the EU countries in order to integrate Ukrainians into the labor market of these countries.</li> <li>2) A special and effective system of coordination and management has been developed and implemented in the EU countries at the national and local levels to address the problem of Ukrainian refugees.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Lack of people with sufficient professional qualifications and training among Ukrainian refugees.</li> <li>2) Ukrainian refugees have to undergo a complex process of verification and confirmation of their professional qualifications.</li> </ol>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Integration of Ukrainian refugees into the EU countries can be an important factor that will positively affect the sustainable functioning of healthcare, as well as social and food sectors in these countries.</li> <li>2) Increased labor supply and employment in the host countries.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Due to the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the European labor market, the level of expenditures on social needs may increase in the EU countries.</li> <li>2) Due to the increased demand for skills and insufficient supply of skills in EU countries, an imbalance may arise, resulting in an increase in unemployment among immigrants.</li> </ol>

*Source:* author's development.

When analyzing statistical and sociological data, one should keep in mind that for the economies

of many EU countries, Ukrainian refugees can be both a burden and a lifesaver. According to

Goldman Sachs, the four largest EU countries (Germany, Poland, France, Sweden) will spend almost 0.2 percent of GDP to support refugees. The budget deficits of these countries will grow by 1.1% of GDP in 2022.

Note that the goal of the current EU migration policy is to select the most active and able-bodied people. For this purpose, some countries do everything possible to identify such people and offer them jobs. In Germany, for example, they facilitate the employment of Ukrainian medical personnel, help them pass language exams, and get used to them. French and Polish organizations offer free language courses and introduce them to the local culture.

The solution of issues of establishing relations between migrants from Ukraine and EU countries should concern not only labor relations, taking into account the structure of migrants described above. At the same time, this structure also requires addressing issues of providing places in kindergartens and schools. After all, women migrated with children mostly without men, so many of them will find it difficult to find official employment since they will not be able to leave their children by themselves. Public kindergartens in Poland already do not have enough places for all children from Ukraine, and the cost of private ones is too high.

### Conclusions

Thus, having investigated the situation resulting from Russian aggression in Ukraine, as a result of which millions of Ukrainian refugees found themselves outside their country, we have identified the main aspects of the influence of the socio-demographic and cultural characteristics of migrants from Ukraine on their integration into the labor market in Europe.

First of all, the structure of migrants determines different vectors of work with them: from professionally differentiated (depending on the needs of the labor market of the recipient country) to the social welfare of “non-labor categories of migrants”. In this aspect, it has been established that many Ukrainian refugees face a mismatch of available skills with the needs of the labor market, which determines the need for professional retraining. In addition, additional measures should be taken to prevent threats such as exploitation in the workplace, bullying, or sexual harassment, which may arise in relation to migrants as a socially vulnerable category of workers. These risks should be identified, monitored, and addressed through well-

developed public policies, including special communication campaigns. Questions regarding the details of the content of such public policies and special communication measures should be the subject of further research.

The development of public policy toward migrants should take into account value differences at different levels: societal, organizational, and personal, which involves monitoring migrants' values and measures to address the differences.

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