

THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL LABOUR MIGRATION ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION IN UKRAINE: TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND PROJECTIONS

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Annotaion. The article is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the impact of external labour migration on the demographic situation in Ukraine in the context of modern socio-economic transformations caused by globalization processes, military actions, and internal instability. Amid a prolonged socio-economic crisis, low living standards, insufficient job availability, and weak social support for the population, external labour migration has become a mass phenomenon with both positive and negative consequences for the country's demographic structure.

The article outlines the main trends of Ukrainian labour migration over the past decade, particularly the directions of migration flows, the socio-demographic profile of migrants, the scale of emigration of the working-age population, and its impact on the age and gender structure of the population. The author draws attention to the demographic ageing of the population, declining birth rates, a growing proportion of elderly people, and a shortage of qualified labour, which hinders the socio-economic development of the country. Special attention is given to the phenomenon of "demographic fatigue" in regions with high emigration levels and the problem of social orphanhood, where children are left without parental care for extended periods.

The study considers the economic aspects of external labour migration: the influence of remittances on household incomes, the dependence of many family budgets on foreign earnings, and the issues of repatriation of migrants' knowledge and experience. At the same time, the article highlights the risks of losing human capital, "brain drain", and weakening of social ties with the state.

Based on an analysis of available statistical data, international reports, and sociological surveys, the author offers forecast scenarios for the development of Ukraine's demographic situation if current migration trends persist. Strategic directions of state policy in the field of labour migration regulation and demographic recovery are proposed, including the creation of conditions for the return of migrants, development of the domestic labour market, stimulation of birth rates, and support for young families.

Keywords: external labour migration, demography, emigration, repatriation, migration policy, birth rate, population ageing, Ukraine.

1. Introduction.

Under current conditions, Ukraine is facing a large-scale phenomenon of external labor migration, which has a direct and profound impact on the country's demographic situation. The mass departure of the working-age population, especially young people, leads to demographic aging, a decline in birth rates, disruption of age and gender structures, as well as the emergence of regional imbalances. At the same time, migration processes are taking place against the backdrop of a complex socio-

economic situation, military aggression, and internal instability, which further intensify negative demographic trends. These developments pose serious challenges to the formulation of effective state policy, particularly in the areas of labor migration and demographic recovery.

2. Analysis of scientific publications.

The issue of labor migration and its demographic consequences is actively studied in both Ukrainian and foreign scientific literature. Scholars, in particular, examine the scale of migration, the socio-economic motives behind citizens' departure, the impact of migration on the labor market, population structure, family institutions, and public administration. However, under current conditions, both the scale and nature of labor migration have changed, necessitating a renewed comprehensive approach to studying its demographic impact - especially in the context of martial law, economic instability, and the potential return of labor migrants.

This problem has been explored in the works of the following scholars: A.F. Melnyk, in "Labor Migration of the Population of Ukraine: Socio-Economic Consequences and State Regulation Policy," provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors driving labor migration, its economic benefits, and demographic risks, particularly the depopulation of rural areas; O.V. Rudnytskyi, in "Ukraine's Migration Policy under Globalization Challenges," addresses the institutional aspects of managing migration processes and the challenges they pose to Ukraine's demographic security; T.O. Yaroshenko, in "The Impact of External Labor Migration on Demographic Processes in Ukraine," presents an analysis of the socio-demographic profile of migrants and describes the phenomenon of demographic exhaustion in certain regions; E.M. Libanova, in "Human Development in Ukraine: Minimizing Social Risks," provides statistically grounded data on migration and its impact on the quality of human capital in Ukraine; A.M. Sukhovirskyi, in "Demographic Crisis in Ukraine: Causes, Trends, Consequences," focuses on the decline in the number of young people due to prolonged emigration and demographic aging; O.V. Kuzmenko, in "Labor Migration in the System of Ukraine's National Security," analyzes the risks posed by large-scale external labor migration to the country's demographic and labor potential, emphasizing the need to improve state migration policy;

The study "Migration Processes in Ukraine: Trends and Challenges for Regional Development" explores the impact of external labor migration on the socio-economic development of Ukraine's regions. It considers the phenomenon of the "migration vacuum" and its consequences for demographic structure and more.

3. The aim of the work.

The purpose of the scientific article is a comprehensive analysis of the impact of external labor migration on the demographic situation in Ukraine, identifying its main trends, identifying risks and challenges for socio-demographic development, as well as the formation of forecasts for further changes in the demographic structure. In addition, research aims to develop scientifically sound proposals for improving state policy in the field of regulation of labor migration and demographic stabilization, taking into account modern challenges and international experience.

4. Review and discussion.

In recent decades, Ukraine has faced numerous demographic challenges, among which external labor migration stands out as particularly significant. It has become a large-scale social phenomenon encompassing millions of citizens, primarily of working age. At the same time, labor emigration has a direct impact on the demographic situation in the country, leading to changes in the age structure of the population, a decrease in the birth rate, and the intensification of aging processes. This underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon, taking into account the social, economic, political, and institutional factors that drive it.

The study of external labor migration in the context of demographic changes is essential both from a scientific and practical perspective. Migration processes not only transform the labor market but also affect household structures, social security, healthcare systems, and pension burdens. Particular attention must be paid to regions with high levels of emigration, where “demographic depletion,” social depression, and an increase in the elderly population without adequate support are observed. This situation requires a deep understanding of the causes, consequences, and possible policy decisions at the level of national migration policy.

Currently, there is growing scholarly interest in the relationship between external labor migration and demographic trends. Ukrainian scholars have addressed various aspects of this issue, ranging from analysis of migration flows to assessing the impact on the population’s age and sex structure, fertility rates, social institutions, and human capital. Against this backdrop, it is appropriate to examine scientific approaches and concepts that provide a deeper understanding of both the nature of migration and its long-term impact on Ukraine’s demographic situation.

In her academic work *“External Migration Processes of Labor Resources: Factors, Conditions, and Consequences for Ukraine,”* O.S. Kvasha examines external labor migration as a multifactorial socio-economic process that has a systemic impact on the internal demographic situation in Ukraine. She emphasizes that the largest outflow of migrants is observed among economically active persons of working age, which significantly reduces the country’s labor potential. This phenomenon causes demographic destruction, manifested in population decline, national aging, age group imbalance, and an increase in the dependent population [1].

O.S. Kvasha identifies the main factors stimulating migration as low wages, employment instability, lack of social guarantees, and general socio-economic uncertainty in the country. Such conditions force people to seek a better life abroad, thereby contributing to the “brain drain” and deepening regional disparities. The scholar stresses the need to develop a long-term national strategy for demographic renewal, which should include incentives for migrant return, reintegration into the labor market, the creation of attractive employment conditions in Ukraine, and the strengthening of youth labor potential. In this way, the connection between external labor migration and national demographic security is highlighted, as well as the need for its systematic regulation.

In the monograph *“Threats to Ukraine’s Demographic Security,”* I.A. Tsvihun explores external labor migration as one of the key factors weakening the country’s demographic security. She emphasizes that the intensive increase in emigration, especially among young and middle-aged individuals, has led to the loss of labor potential, directly threatening Ukraine’s demographic balance. She underscores that migration processes have not only economic but also deep socio-demographic consequences, including population decline, national aging, and decreasing birth rates in specific regions.

Tsvihun views labor migration as a structural threat that destabilizes the population reproduction system and creates risks to national security in the socio-demographic dimension. Special attention is given to regional aspects of the issue, particularly depopulation in rural areas due to labor emigration, which leads to the degradation of human capital, abandonment of entire settlements, and the collapse of social infrastructure. Among the proposed risk mitigation strategies is the formation of a comprehensive national demographic security policy, which should balance migration freedom with state interests in population reproduction. The author proposes developing the domestic labor market, encouraging labor migrants to return, and creating conditions for youth employment and professional self-realization in Ukraine. Thus, this position is strategic and comprehensive, emphasizing the need for systemic changes in migration governance.

In his study *“Assessing the Consequences of External Labor Migration in Ukraine,”* O.V. Pozniak [3] provides a comprehensive analysis of the demographic and socio-economic challenges posed by Ukraine’s active labor emigration. He stresses that amid prolonged economic instability and regional disparities, external migration has become a mass phenomenon directly affecting the population’s age structure and reproduction rate. Particular attention is paid to the emigration of working-age individuals, which results in demographic aging, a reduction in the proportion of young people, and declining natural growth indicators. The author notes that some Ukrainian regions are already experiencing demographic depletion, exacerbated by low fertility rates and the emigration of young families abroad.

From a socio-economic standpoint, the researcher highlights the destructive impact of external labor migration on local economies. The departure of a significant portion of the active population reduces labor resources, disrupts the worker-to-dependent ratio, decreases productivity, and increases the financial dependency of many households on remittances. While these remittances create an illusion of stability, they simultaneously entrench poverty and delay structural reforms in the economy. Pozniak emphasizes that this situation hampers the development of the national labor market, reduces investment attractiveness, and complicates the implementation of demographic policy.

As solutions, the author proposes a national strategy for migrant reintegration, the creation of conditions for return migration, incentives for entrepreneurship among returnees, the development of the domestic labor market, and targeted social policy. He believes that systematic support for young families, access to quality education and healthcare, pension reform, and enhancing the quality of life in Ukraine can curb emigration and promote demographic recovery.

In the article *"Recent Trends in International Labor Migration and Their Consequences for Ukraine,"* M.I. Pityulich [4] analyzes modern transformations in labor migration and their impact on Ukraine's socio-demographic situation. The author stresses that external labor migration has become systemic, especially among residents of border regions, and serves not only as a means to overcome economic instability but also as a source of long-term demographic risk. One major consequence is the gradual decline of the working-age population, aging, lower birth rates, and imbalance among age groups.

The scholar notes that the emigration of young, active, and reproductively capable individuals leads to serious changes in Ukraine's demographic structure, deepens depopulation, and undermines internal development potential. The situation is particularly alarming in rural regions, where labor migration causes "demographic dehydration," leading to losses in labor, cultural, and social capital. The article emphasizes the need to preserve human capital, reduce brain drain, and create return migration incentives.

The author recommends a national policy focused on developing the domestic labor market, increasing regional investment, promoting employment programs, raising social standards, and improving the quality of education. It is also crucial to develop effective mechanisms for cooperation with recipient countries regarding the social protection and legal support of labor migrants. Thus, the scholar offers a comprehensive assessment of not only the threats but also the potential solutions to the demographic and social issues caused by external labor migration.

In her work *"The Impact of Population Income on the Demographic Situation and External Labor Migration,"* L.I. Shvab [5] explores the causal links between citizens' welfare, birthrate dynamics, and the scale of external labor migration. She asserts that low income levels in Ukraine are a key determinant of both declining fertility and increasing emigration sentiment among the working-age population. Labor migration, in her view, results from citizens seeking to meet basic socio-economic needs in the absence of sufficient government support, labor market instability, and a deteriorating quality of life.

L.I. Shvab focuses on how external labor migration changes the demographic structure of society. The departure of young, reproductive-age individuals reduces fertility rates, accelerates population aging, and creates asymmetry in the age structure, complicating pension system sustainability and long-term development. The researcher also notes the reduced demographic potential of rural areas due to mass labor emigration. While remittances support consumer demand, they do not offset the loss of human capital.

To address these issues, Shvab recommends that the state implement targeted employment policies, increase real incomes, create new jobs, and enhance social protection for youth. She believes that only by improving the country's economic environment can mass emigration be halted and demographic stability achieved. Her work highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to mitigating the negative effects of external labor migration through national economic strengthening.

V. Helman and K. Myacheva identify "brain drain" – the irreversible or long-term emigration of highly qualified professionals – as one of the defining features of modern migration. Many university

graduates go abroad due to a lack of opportunities to apply their skills in Ukraine. Young people are seeking better futures and development prospects. The unsatisfactory demographic state of the population and the mass emigration of working-age individuals are largely tied to dissatisfaction with the country's economic conditions. Given Ukraine's adverse demographic trends, the gradual transformation of temporary labor migration into resettlement migration poses a serious demographic threat. Reducing labor migration—or at least slowing its rate—requires narrowing wage differentials between Ukraine and major recipient countries, stabilizing the national economy and currency, creating effective communication with professionals, guaranteeing rights and freedoms, and ensuring a stable future. One of the state's key tasks is the successful implementation of the *Strategy of State Migration Policy of Ukraine* [6, pp. 55-56].

In conclusion, under current conditions, external labor migration has become one of the main factors shaping Ukraine's demographic situation. Prolonged economic instability, war, regional labor market decline, and the absence of effective social policies have caused massive emigration, especially of working-age individuals, in search of better living conditions. This process has become a long-term trend, transforming from a temporary phenomenon into a permanent pattern that directly affects both the quantity and quality of the population.

One of the main demographic trends is the decreasing proportion of young and reproductive-age individuals. Many women of reproductive age leave the country, delay childbirth, or realize their reproductive plans abroad, thus deepening the demographic crisis. Meanwhile, the share of elderly people in the population structure is increasing, leading to demographic aging and an unfavorable ratio of workers to dependents.

Another marked trend is the intensification of depopulation in rural and border regions with the highest emigration rates. The departure of active populations from these areas results in demographic exhaustion, reduced economic activity, and the collapse of educational and healthcare infrastructure. Simultaneously, diasporas are increasingly forming their own social networks abroad, reducing the likelihood of return. All these factors suggest that external labor migration is not only a socio-economic issue but also a profound demographic challenge requiring a systemic state response.

Projections regarding the impact of external labor migration on Ukraine's demographic situation indicate a worsening of demographic problems if current trends continue. Without comprehensive state-level measures, further population decline, a growing imbalance between the working and non-working population, and accelerated demographic aging are expected. Particularly vulnerable will be regions with high emigration levels, already experiencing social-demographic degradation and depopulation.

If large-scale migration continues without incentives for return migration and the integration of acquired experience and capital, Ukraine risks losing a significant portion of its human potential. This will impact not only demographics but also the state's capacity for sustainable socio-economic development. Worsening demographic indicators will strain the social security and healthcare systems and deepen labor shortages in key economic sectors.

However, with the implementation of effective migration and demographic policies—including measures to encourage births, develop the domestic labor market, support youth, and facilitate migrant return—there is potential to mitigate negative trends. Such a policy must rely on forecasting data, international experience, and institutional coordination across government branches. Thus, Ukraine's demographic future depends greatly on the state's ability to recognize migration not only as a challenge but also as a potential resource, provided it is managed rationally.

5. Conclusions.

Overcoming the negative impact of external labor migration on the demographic situation in Ukraine requires a comprehensive approach at the state level, which will include both short-term and strategic measures. First of all, it is necessary to create conditions for reducing motivation for emigration, providing competitive wages, legal and stable jobs, as well as proper social protection in

the middle of the country. Particular attention should be paid to the development of infrastructure and support for small and medium -sized businesses in rural and depressive regions, where emigration is the most intensive.

Equally important is the implementation of the state policy of returning migrants to their homeland. This is possible through the introduction of repatriation programs that will provide preferential conditions for opening a business, recognition of diplomas and professional experience gained abroad, as well as promoting social adaptation and reintegration. Creating a State Fund for Supporting the Return of Ukrainians who worked abroad will accumulate financial resources to stimulate their participation in the economic development of the state.

In addition, overcoming demographic effects of migration requires an active stimulation of fertility. This involves both the material support of young families (preferential housing, childbirth payments, access to quality medicine and education), and the formation of a positive image of a large family. In the long run, it is important to ensure the harmonization of national migration policy with European standards and to increase Ukraine as an attractive country not only to return its citizens, but also to attract skilled labor from other countries.

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