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## **Transnational practices in labour market performance of Ukrainians in Poland during the war**

### **Extended Abstract**

**Topic and theoretical focus.** Topic of the proposed paper is labour market performance of Ukrainian war refugees in Poland, with the focus on the role of migrants' transnational practices in this process. The classical theoretical approach to the economic integration of migrants is assimilation theory (Chiswick 1978). It posits a U-shape pattern of occupational mobility of migrants in the destination country during their stay, after initial downgrading. The crucial factor behind the labour market performance of migrants is thus the accumulation of the destination country specific capital, with the pivotal role of accumulation of human capital including also the language of the receiving society (Chiswick 1978, De Vroome and Van Tubergen 2010). The propensity of migrants to accumulate such capital is, in turn, linked to the time horizon of their stay in the given country (Cortes 2004, Adda et al. 2021): migrants planning to settle in the destination country are more likely than temporary migrants to make investments in this regard. More recent approaches suggest that the process of acquiring country-specific human capital (and the overall process of integration in the destination country) can be seen as an interplay of factors categorised as aspirations and capabilities (de Haas, 2021).

At the same time, a common message stemming from the results of studies using various indicators of economic integration of involuntary migrants points to their inferior position on the labour market of the destination countries at the initial phase of migration when compared to other migrants (e.g., Cortes, 2004; Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2018). This negative 'immigration entry effect' (Bakker et al. 2017) is interpreted in relation to circumstances of involuntary migration such as lack of a pre-migration preparatory phase and limited opportunities for choosing a destination country that would be optimal for the migrants' skills (Dustmann et al. 2017). Consequently, the relatively low level of human capital of the arriving humanitarian migrants (especially language skills) and its limited transferability are considered as the main factors restraining the economic integration of involuntary migrants at the start (De Vroome and Van Tubergen 2010, Lumley-Sapanski 2021). In the context of the aspirations-capabilities framework (de Haas 2021), the inferior position of involuntary migrants in the labour market could be attributed to a limited set of capabilities. Importantly, in the case of such migrants the time horizon in the destination country is uncertain due to the temporariness of legal protection rules and the unpredictability of the situation in their home countries (Dustmann et al. 2017), which is not conducive towards investments in the destination country-specific capital.

**The research goal** of the proposed paper is to contribute to the research on the labour market performance of involuntary migrants and its drivers in the analysis of the Ukrainian forced migration to Poland after the outburst of the full-scale Russian invasion on Ukraine in February 2022. The analysed case is unique in several respects when compared to studies on involuntary migration in other contexts. First, the Ukrainian community was sizeable already before the full-scale war (estimated at 1.3 million), thus at least part of those escaping the war might have counted on social networks in Poland and/or the help of co-ethnics. Second, the vast majority of Ukrainian war refugees have been women and children, because Ukraine has not allowed for free emigration of men from the country during the war. Third, according to various studies (e.g. Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2023), Ukrainian war refugees constitute a well-educated population with a high share of persons with a University degree. Finally and importantly, according to earlier studies (ibid), the majority of Ukrainian war refugees work while being in Poland, but their substantial part (12-25%) perform remote work in Ukraine, which is an

exceptional situation in the context of refugee studies. This also implies that the transnational social space between the Ukraine and Poland encompasses not only flows of people, goods or money transfers, but also remote work.

Two general research questions addressed in the proposed paper are as follows:

**Q1.** What are the determinants (in terms of individual capabilities and aspirations) of the mode of labour market participation in the case of war refugees from Ukraine in Poland (work in Poland, remote work in Ukraine, unemployment/inactivity)?

**Q2.** What are differences between Ukrainian war refugees working in Poland and those working remotely in Ukraine with respect to labour market outcomes (occupation, overqualification, job satisfaction) of Ukrainian war refugees in Poland?

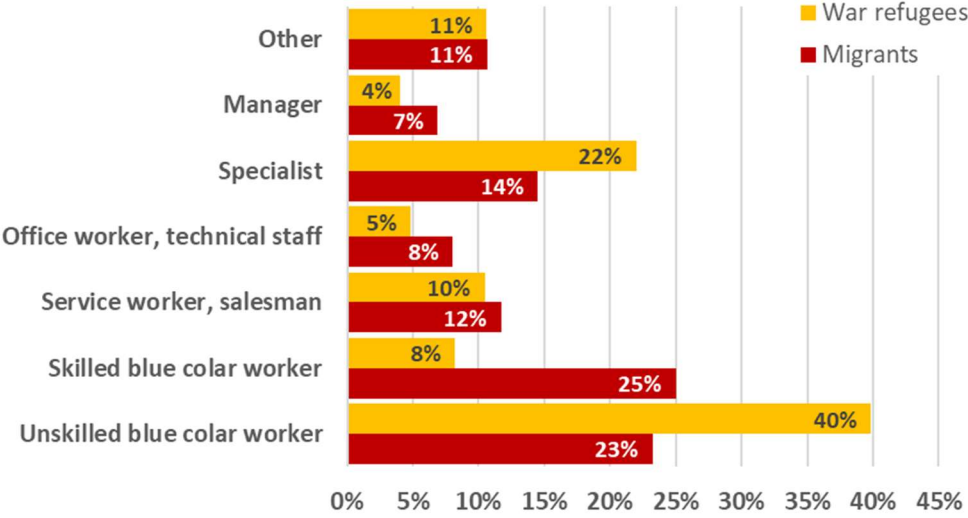
The planned research is to contribute to the literature on economic integration of migrants, in general, and, involuntary migrants in particular – a topic of utmost importance in the times of increased forced migration towards Europe. It introduces a novel element and perspective to this field by taking into account the possibility of a remote work and transnational practices related to it. According to our knowledge the drivers and consequences (labour market outcomes) of such work have not, yet, been analysed in the case of voluntary or involuntary migrants. Our contribution is to fill this gap.

**Data and methods.** Data analysed in the paper derive from the online survey (N=1034) on Ukrainian war refugees (having arrived in Poland on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 or later) conducted in February 2023 within a panel study “Between Ukraine and Poland” operated by the Centre of Migration Research and Centre of Excellence in Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw. The survey was devoted to the competencies and professional aspirations of Ukrainian war refugees and collected detailed information about labour market trajectories of migrants. It was a second wave of the panel study. Therefore, in the planned study we can take into account also selected information/variables from the first wave of the panel (establishment survey from July-September 2022).

The analytical strategy involves a set of regression models. First, we will estimate the selection model for mode of labour market participation – working in Poland, remotely in Ukraine or not working. Second we will estimate a series of models for those working in Poland and Ukraine with dependent variables relating to labour market outcomes such as: occupational status, perceived overqualification, job satisfaction. As a robustness check, and to better evaluate the effect of the mode of work (in Poland or Ukraine), we will also conduct respective analysis for all working migrants including a variable denoting the mode of work as a dependent variable in the models for labour market outcomes. As regards the determinants, we will take into account individual characteristics of Ukrainian war refugees denoting their capabilities (e.g. knowledge of the Polish language and foreign languages, human capital, social capital, financial and non-financial resources) and aspirations (migratory plans, needs and plans regarding upskilling).

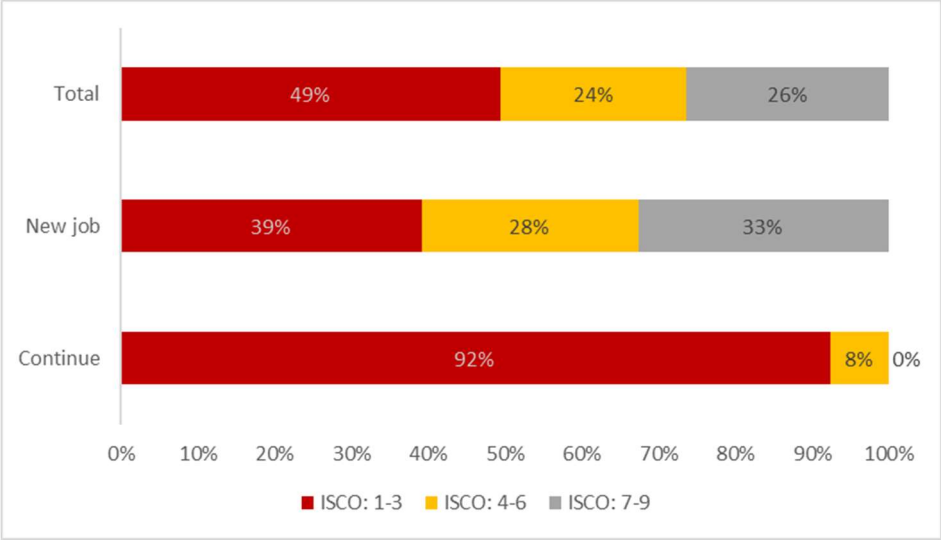
**Expected findings.** We expect that both drivers and labour market outcomes differ between Ukrainian war refugees working in Poland and Ukraine. It would explain the polarisation of the occupational structure of Ukrainian war refugees in Poland – their overrepresentation in the occupations of specialists and in simple jobs – observed in the mid-2022 (Figure 1). Importantly, such polarisation has not been observed in the case of other migrants (i.e. Ukrainians having arrived in Poland before the full-scale war in Ukraine) (Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2023). According to our initial analysis and expectations, remote work in Ukraine relates first of all to highly-skilled posts, while work in Poland more often leads to jobs in the lowest strata of the Polish labour market (Figure 2). These are likely to correlate with other labour market outcomes such as overqualification and job satisfaction.

Figure 1. Ukrainian war refugees and migrants by occupation in mid-2022 in Poland



Notes. N=7617  
 Source. CMR/CESS 2022 survey of Ukrainians in Poland (research panel “Between Ukraine and Poland”).

Figure 2. Ukrainian war refugees working in a new job and continuing job from before the full-scale war by occupation in February 2023 in Poland



Notes. N=681  
 Source: CMR/CESS 2023 survey of Ukrainian war refugees in Poland (research panel “Between Ukraine and Poland”).

We also expect that determinants of having work in Poland include capabilities of Ukrainian war refugees to enter the Polish labour market, but also their aspirations to stay in Poland for longer. In the case of remote work in Ukraine, we expected that its determinants encompass high capabilities related to human capital (education, knowledge of foreign languages) of Ukrainian war refugees and rather lack of their aspirations to stay in Poland for good. At the same time, we assume that the place of work influences labour market outcomes of Ukrainian war refugees in Poland – occupation, overqualification and job satisfaction. For example, we expect that working in Poland increases the

probability of the problem of overqualification. However, working in Ukraine might increase the probability of a lack of work stability, i.e. contributing to a decrease of job satisfaction.

Overall, we argue that taking into account the two modes of work performed by Ukrainian war refugees – in Poland and remotely in Ukraine – allows for drafting the full picture of the labour market performance of this group of involuntary migrants in Poland and other countries. It also allows for demonstrating the new tendencies stemming from both a spectacular increase in the access to new technologies and the growth of the popularity of remote work (and its accessibility and acceptance) which will impact modes of voluntary and involuntary migrants labour market participation in the future.

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