

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT OF THE UKRAINIANS. MIGRATION TOWARDS MOLDOVA, ROMANIA AND BULGARIA

DESPLAZAMIENTO INTERNO DE LOS UCRANIANOS. MIGRACIÓN HACIA MOLDAVIA, RUMANÍA Y BULGARIA

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Abstract

The evolution of the migration and refugee crisis in Ukraine and in several European countries, due to the full-scale armed conflict which started on February 24th, 2022 is a relevant topic nowadays. This recent large scale migration event reflected in a severe humanitarian crisis and in high scale migratory flows inside Ukraine and towards Europe. With the aim to see the magnitude of the migration phenomena and their consequences, the internal migration in Ukraine and towards three Eastern European countries: Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria have been investigated during the first several months after the Russian invasion. All these countries welcomed the largest wave of refugees in their recent history and tried to adapt their policies for a successful integration of the Ukrainian refugees into their labour market and societies. The use of a methodology of quantitative and qualitative analysis, based on several official data sources, as well as the analysis of interviews with Ukrainian refugees during the field work in Bulgaria, confirm these findings, stating however that there are still problems for a better integration mainly due to economic and bureaucratic reasons. Some proposals have been discussed how to improve this situation.

Keywords

Ukraine; Moldova; Romania; Bulgaria; Armed conflict; Refugees; Displacement; Integration and Adaptation

Resumen

La evolución de la crisis migratoria y de refugiados en Ucrania y en varios países europeos, debido al conflicto armado iniciado el 24 de febrero de 2022 es un tema

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relevante en la actualidad. Este reciente evento migratorio a gran escala se reflejó en una grave crisis humanitaria y en enormes flujos migratorios dentro de Ucrania y hacia Europa. Con el objetivo de ver la magnitud del fenómeno migratorio y sus consecuencias, se ha investigado la migración interna en Ucrania y hacia tres países de Europa del Este: Moldavia, Rumanía y Bulgaria, durante los primeros meses posteriores a la invasión rusa. Todos estos países dieron la bienvenida a la mayor ola de refugiados en su historia reciente y trataron de adaptar sus políticas para una integración exitosa de los refugiados ucranianos en su mercado laboral y sus sociedades. El uso de una metodología de análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo basada en varias fuentes de datos oficiales, así como el análisis de entrevistas con refugiados ucranianos durante el trabajo de campo en Bulgaria, confirman estos hallazgos, afirmando sin embargo que aún existen problemas para una mejor integración debido principalmente a razones económicas y burocráticas. Se han discutido algunas propuestas para mejorar esta situación.

Palabras clave

Ucrania; Moldavia; Rumanía; Bulgaria; Conflicto armado; Refugiados; Desplazamiento; Integración y Adaptación

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict has its origins in 2014 with the Euro-maidan protests, the change of the Government of the pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich and the controversial referendum in Crimea, which has been annexed by the Russian Federation. In April 2014, pro-Russian groups in Donbass seized government buildings in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region and proclaimed the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics as independent states. This event escalated into a several year's long conflict between the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the Russian separatists.

In 2021 and in early 2022, major Russian and Belarusian joint military exercises took place near the Ukrainian border. A conflict has started to emerge between NATO and the Russian Federation because of the further enlargement of the Alliance towards Ukraine and the fear of military invasion of Ukraine from the Russian Federation.

On 21 February 2022, Russia officially recognised as independent the two self-proclaimed separatist states in Donetsk and Lugansk and sent troops into their territories. On February 24th, Russia started an armed conflict against the whole of Ukraine, which has been denominated "special military operation" and has been internationally condemned. The armed conflict reflected in a major humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and high scale migratory flows inside the country and towards Europe. The understanding of the explosive Ukrainian migration is the main object of study in the present publication.

In this unprecedented migration situation, in March 2022, the EU adopted temporary protection scheme for persons fleeing the war in Ukraine, Protection Measures in response to the internally and externally displaced Ukrainian nationals, giving them a legal status in the EU to live, the right to work, access to social security, medical care and education (EU Protection, 2022). This temporary protection benefits Ukrainian citizens who lived in Ukraine and were forced to leave their homes due to the Russian invasion on February 24th 2022, foreigners and stateless persons who were present in Ukraine legally and were forced to leave their homes due to the Russian invasion being unable to return to their countries, foreigners and stateless persons who lived in Ukraine on a "long-term basis", regardless of whether they can return to their native country, as well as family members of all the categories mentioned above. At the same time, the European Union significantly simplified the rules of border checks, relaxing the requirements for border, customs and veterinary control. The introduction of the mechanism of temporary protection means that citizens of Ukraine do not need to apply for asylum immediately after crossing the border. The main points of the Directive refers to the arrival at the EU, residence and legal status, housing, education, employment, social benefits and healthcare (EC, 2022). In addition, the civil society, donors and international organisations contributed with resources in order to help the Ukrainian population inside and outside Ukraine (Impact Initiative, 2023). This has been completed by collecting and analysing data on

the mobility and vulnerabilities of displaced persons (IMO DT, 2022) as well as by financial support and donations from the Ukrainian diaspora (Hincu, 2022).

From the beginning of the conflict to June 15th, 2022, more than 7.7 million border crossings from Ukraine have been registered and more than 5 million Ukrainian refugees arrived in Europe. The major host countries were Poland (1,170,000) and Germany (780,000) as well as the rest of the neighbouring countries such as Slovakia (78,500), Hungary (24,500), Romania (98,000) and Moldova (85,500). These numbers continue to increase along the first year after the beginning of the conflict. The situation recorded by mid-March 2023 shows that there are more than 8,113,170 Ukrainian refugees settled down in Europe. The countries cited before, show again an important presence of Ukrainian refugees living there: Poland (1,573,200), Germany (861,300), Slovakia (112,360), Romania (110,000), Moldova (107,200) and Hungary (34,300) (UNHCR, 2023).

The European countries, which hosted Ukrainian refugees by June 15th are represented in the following Figure 1, made by Datawrapper software (Datawrapper) and by using data from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR, 2022). Countries of Western Europe such as France, Italy, UK, Spain, Netherlands, Bulgaria or Turkey, among others, have been also important host countries helping the refugees.

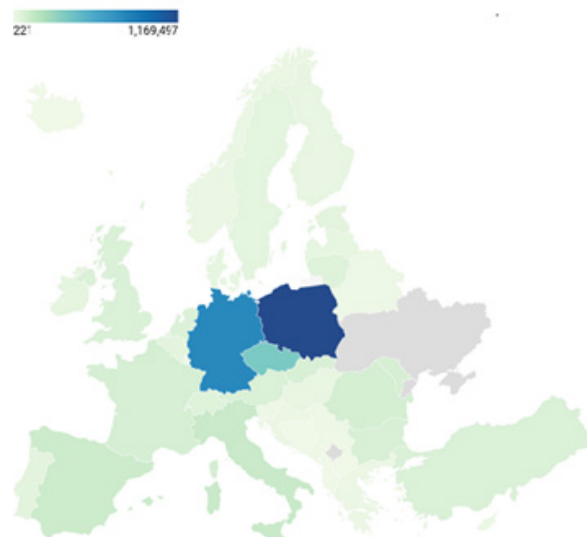


FIGURE 1. THE UKRAINIAN REFUGEES SETTLED IN EUROPE ON JUNE 15TH, 2022. Own elaboration by Datawrapper software using UN Refugee Agency data (UNHCR, 2022) Interactive map published in <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/pXCcC/2/>

Poland is one of the most demanded countries for the Ukrainian refugees due to its geographic and cultural closeness to Ukraine with 1,234,718 people registered for temporary protection at mid July 2022, followed by the rest of the neighbouring to Ukraine countries such as Slovakia (85,771), Romania (45,530) and Hungary (26,932) (UNHCR, 2022). The registration for a status for temporary protection of Ukrainian refugees in different European countries by January 2023 is given in the following Table 1.

Country	Registered for temporary protection Ukrainian refugees
Poland	1,563,300
Germany	1,020,000
Czech Republic	482,600
Italy	169,000
Spain	160,000
France	118,000
Romania	109,400
Slovakia	107,000
Austria	92,000
Netherlands	85,000
Baltic States	70,000
Hungary	33,600

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES REGISTERED FOR TEMPORARY PROTECTION IN DIFFERENT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BY JANUARY 2023 (UNHCR, 2023)

The contemporary Ukrainian migration has been a subject of intensive study by several scholars. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has been struggling with economic and social conflicts resulting in increase of migration flows towards the Visegrád countries (Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary) due to their geographic situation and proximity as well as their ethnic and historical ties with Ukraine (Igllicka & Weinar, 2008; Benč, 2016; Eröss et al., 2016; Jaroszewicz, 2018). Migration from Ukraine to Hungary had special characteristics due to geopolitical and economic factors and the presence of a large Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia (Eröss et al., 2016). The immigrant flows to Poland, Czech Republic and recently Slovakia are positive, due to the favourable characteristics of the labour market (Kaczmarczyk, 2015; Strielkowski & Gryshova, 2016; Benč, 2016; Koroutchev, 2020; Koroutchev & Novotný, 2020).

In the context of migration between Ukraine and Bulgaria, it has to be noted that the initial educational migration of Bulgarians to Ukraine in the decades of late socialism was transformed into a reverse marital migration to Bulgaria, which evolved into labour immigration in the early 1990's especially in the case of young Bulgarians from the historical diaspora in Ukraine. After the entrance of Bulgaria in the EU in 2007, the opening of the European labour market attracted Ukrainian citizens mainly due to the abolition of the EU visa regime for Ukrainian citizens in 2017 and the deteriorating economic and social situation in Ukraine (Hristov, 2021 and the references therein). Similar studies have been performed in the case of the contemporary migration of Ukrainians in Romania (Piperno, 2007) and Ukrainian and Moldavians to the EU (Davidova-Minguet, 2016).

Recently, the geopolitics of Russia and Eastern Europe has been widely discussed since the changes that took place after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. The transition towards democracy and the market economy and the existing tensions and conflicts, the actors and the integration or intentions for

that of the countries of Eastern Europe to the large Euro-Atlantic structures and the EU has been analysed from the geopolitical point of view (Marcu, 2021 and the references therein).

The analysis after the beginning of the armed conflict on February 24th 2022, has been also in the focus of numerous studies with respect to historical perspectives (Bauer, 2022), economic theory of alliances (George and Sandler, 2022), the consequences for the African countries (Duho, 2022) and the Arab World (Tárik, 2022), the future of NATO (Davidson, 2022) and the explosive Ukrainian migration due to the Russian armed conflict in 2022: the case of Bulgaria (Koroutchev, 2023) among others. The later work has referred to the traditions, language and historical ties between Ukraine and Bulgaria. As is known, Ukrainian citizens have diverse ethnic origin. Especially, Southern Ukraine has been home to the largest historical Bulgarian diaspora (more than 300,000) and a large number of ethnic Moldovans. The first Bulgarians settled in southern Bessarabia at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, at the time of feudal sedition in the Ottoman Empire, and after the Russo-Turkish Wars of 1806–1812 and 1828–1829. These original Bulgarians represent a large percentage of asylum seekers in Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania. Their adaptation in the host countries is facilitated by the language, being a historical dialect forms of Bulgarian and Romanian, in addition to Ukrainian and Russian ones (Hristov, 2012).

Finally, the history of the 20th century has to be taken into account to see that similar precedents have occurred during the WWI when the invasion of Belgium (1914) and Serbia (1915) led to a migration of similar scale as what is occurring in Ukraine nowadays or during the WWII when more than half a million Ukrainians and one million Poles were displaced when the border between Poland and the Soviet Union was redefined. During some more recent war conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, over one million people fled their homes (Gartell, 2022).

The aim of the present research is to highlight the evolution of the Ukrainian internal and external migration flows during the first months after the beginning of the full-scale armed conflict in order to understand the size of the humanitarian crisis in the country. This period was the most dynamic with respect to migration flows and represents a special interest for analysis. In addition, new techniques based on the Displacement Tracking Matrix has contributed to a better understanding of the magnitude of the phenomena and to give an innovate elements to the analysis. An important part of this study is an original analysis of the impact of the Ukrainian migration on several neighbouring countries, which have historical and traditional ties with Ukraine: Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria. As is known, a large Bulgarian diaspora and ethnic Moldavians live in Southern Ukraine, which makes the present research of special interest. The analysis can be considered as well as a first attempt for making such a comparison in the context of the migration due to the armed conflict. The research has been done in order to see the challenges these countries are facing, as well as to understand the level of adaptation of the Ukrainian refugees and their access to the labour market of the countries. In addition, a field work has been performed with Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria in order to see their daily problems and the level of adaptation in the country as well as to understand the

challenges and their future plans. The analysis shows several differences between the main characteristics of the Ukrainian refugees in the three countries, which are mainly related to specific governmental policies for settlement and to the access to the labour market. Some proposals have been discussed, which include more flexibility at the labour market, fast recognition of the qualifications and experience of the refugees, possibilities for remote work as well as an easier address registration procedure.

The paper is organized as follows: In section 2 the methodology used for this research is presented. Section 3.1 is devoted to the results concerning the Ukrainian migration flows inside the country between March and in May 2022. Section 3.2 presents an analysis and comparison between the Ukrainian migration flows in Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria. Finally, Section 4 presents the main conclusions of the research.

2. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of the migration of the Ukrainian refugees inside the country and abroad is based on quantitative and qualitative methods combining statistical analysis of data from several official sources. For this aim data for internal and external displacements, periodically published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), statistics from Bulgaria for Ukraine official platforms, several key publications of the European Council and the ICMDP as well as recently published analysis about the geopolitical situation in Eastern Europe and contemporary migration between Ukraine and the selected countries has been used. Additionally, Datawrapper software has been applied for a better visualization of the results.

The access to the internal displacement and mobility flows, and to the local needs, identifying areas with high humanitarian risk, offered by the IOM with the help of the Displacement Tracking Matrix tools in Moldova and Romania have been used. This allowed to know the volume and the scope of the migration crisis and to analyse the labour demand and its evolution during the first several months after the beginning of the armed conflict in February 2022.

To analyse the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in relation to their adaptation to the Bulgarian labour market, 20 interviews have been performed in face in Russian or English languages. Five of them were also conducted in the capital Sofia and the rest during the fieldtrip at Eastern Bulgaria and the Black Sea resorts (5 in Primorsko, 5 in Varna and 5 in Balchik) with the aim to understand the main challenges for the Ukrainian refugees inside the country and their adaptation to the Bulgarian labour market. For selecting the participants, social connections from the first ones to their closest contacts has been used. The participants in the interviews were women of the age 18-60, who have arrived alone or with children. In addition, there were one young man (17 years old), whose mother took part of the interviews, but he also gave his own opinion about the situation. All the participants had a good education and have worked in different sectors. Between them were 2 students, who were accepted in Ukrainian universities, three experts from the health sphere and the rest were women who have worked in the administration, in the

industry and the tourist sector. This gave them a good access to similar positions in the Bulgarian labour market. The interviews have incorporated several questions regarding their age, family status, education, previous labour experience, how they have accessed the current position, what is the level of their expectations and what are their future plans. First, the participants were asked to give a brief account of their background and family status before leaving Ukraine. Then, they were asked to discuss the obstacles during their route to Bulgaria from their home regions in Ukraine, as well as their difficulties to adapt to the host country in the aspects cited above. It is important to highlight that due to the psychological troubles and fear, several of the participants were reserved to give in-deep details. Finally, important conclusions were reached.

3. RESULTS

3.1. INTERNAL MIGRATION IN UKRAINE DUE TO THE ARMED CONFLICT

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) started in March 2022 a series of assessments with the Ukrainian population in order to understand the humanitarian crisis in the country by interviewing several thousands of citizens aged 18 and over and assuming that children travel together with their adult relatives, mainly females (UIDR1, 2022). The location of internally displaced people in Ukraine by March 16th, 2022, is represented graphically in Figure 2. It can easily be noticed that the majority of the internally displaced people at that time were concentrated in western Ukraine. In the opposite side are the southern regions Odessa and Kherson.

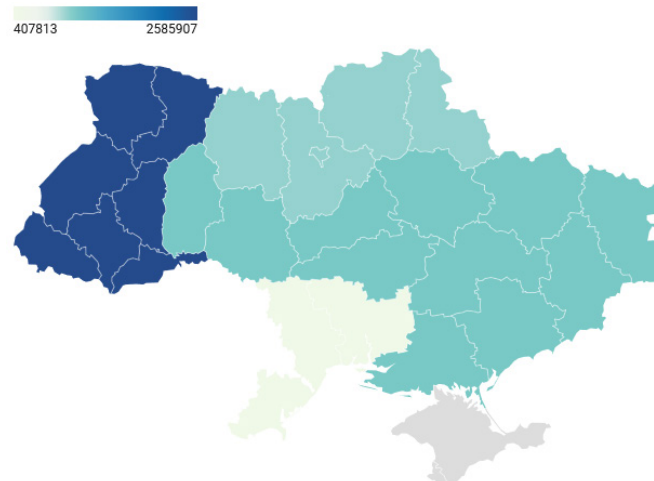


FIGURE 2. LOCATION OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE IN MACROREGIONS IN UKRAINE (NORTH, WEST, EAST AND SOUTH), MARCH 16TH, 2022. Own elaboration by Datawrapper software using Ukraine Internal Displacement data (UIDR1, 2022). Interactive map in: <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/WzF3s/1/>

In general, three major groups have been formed due to the armed conflict: those considering leaving (2,217,717 people), refugees (3,077,398 people) and Internally Displaced People (IDP), which is the most representative group with 6,477,723 people (Figure 3). The timing of movement, represented in Figure 4, shows that those who moved to another place before the war were a minority and represented 5.1% of the interviewed, while those who moved once the war started were 48.3% similar to those who moved once the armed conflict has reached more or less stable front lines – 45.3% (labelled as Reached in Figure 4) (UIDRI, 2022).

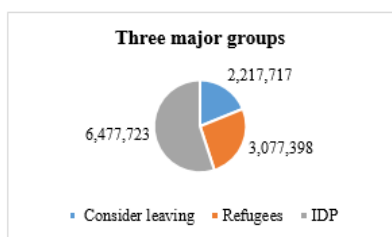


FIGURE 3. THREE GROUPS FORMED DUE TO THE CONFLICT.

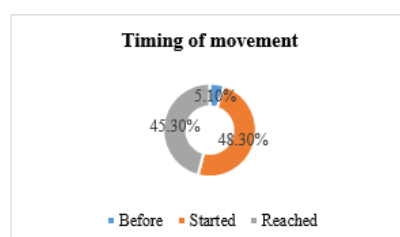


FIGURE 4. TIMING OF THE DISPLACEMENT

Own elaboration by using Ukrainian Internal Displacement data (UIDRI, 2022).

Figure 5 represents the IDP according to their origin/location by March 16th, 2022, across the different macro regions. The origin, marked in blue colour, is the usual place of residence of the refugees, while the location (marked in yellow) is the new settlement of the internal refugees. As can be seen, by March 2022, most IDP come from the eastern (37%) and northern (19%) parts of Ukraine and from the Kyiv region (30%), while the current location was predominantly western Ukraine (40%), where there was practically no armed conflict and to a lesser extent to the central regions of the country.

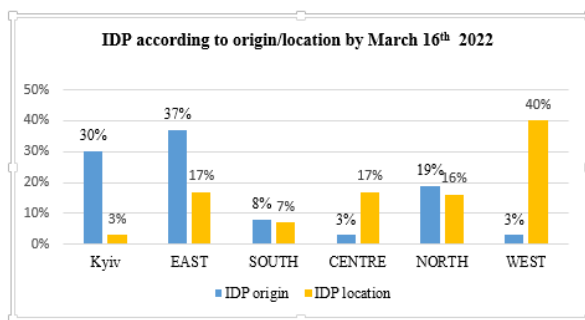


FIGURE 5. IDP BY MARCH 2022 – MACRO REGIONS.

Own elaboration by using Ukrainian Int. Displacement data (UIDRI, 2022)

Details regarding the corresponding IDP by origin and location by March 16th, 2022, are given in the following Figures 6 and 7. Kyiv city gives the biggest contribution of IDP by origin, while Kyiv region gives the biggest one by location. Data from (UIDRI, 2022).

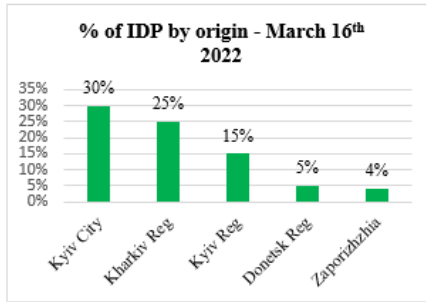


FIGURE 6. IDP BY ORIGIN, MARCH 2022

Own elaboration by using Ukrainian Internal Displacement data (UIDR1, 2022)

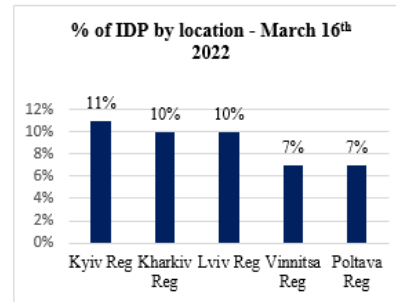


FIGURE 7. IDP BY LOCATION, MARCH 2022

An initial hypothesis is that after some months and the successful defence of Kyiv and Kharkiv, there will be backflows to these regions. In order to confirm it, a comparison has been made with the situation three months later. In Figure 8, the situation by May 23rd, 2022 is presented, where the location of the internally displaced people is represented. It can be seen that three months later, many of the displaced people have returned to their original regions in Eastern Ukraine, which confirms the initial hypothesis. Some additional data are given in Figures 9, 10 and 11, which show that the situation in Kyiv has improved as well as many of the displaced people have returned there as well (UIDR5, 2022).

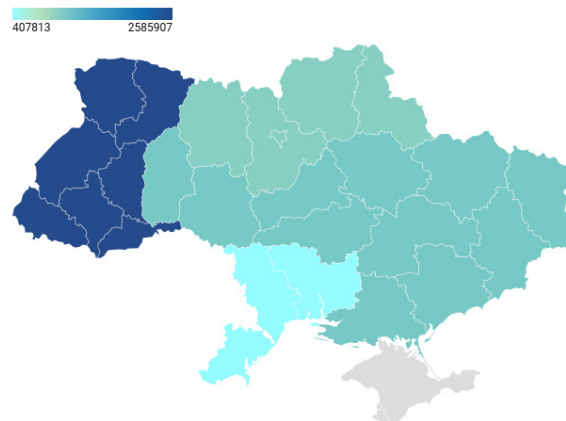


FIGURE 8. LOCATION OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE IN MACROREGIONS IN UKRAINE, MAY 23RD, 2022. Own elaboration by Datawrapper software using Ukraine Internal Displacement data (UIDR5, 2022). Interactive map in <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/WzF3s/4/>

It is seen that 30/3%, of relation between origin/location in the case of Kyiv by March 16th, 2022 (Figure 5) has reduced to 16/3% three months later (Figure 9). The same tendency is seen for the Northern part of Ukraine 19/16% has transformed to 12/18% by May 23rd, 2022. However, the eastern and southern part of the country continue to show the misbalance due to the massive migration from the escalation of the conflict in these regions during the spring of 2022 (Figures 9-11)

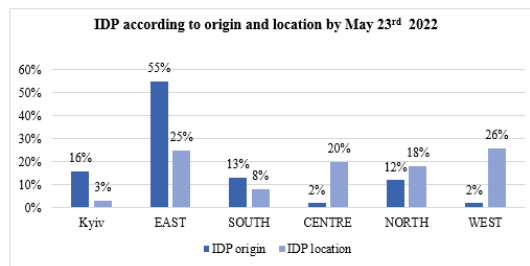


FIGURE 9. IDP BY MAY 2022 – MACRO REGIONS.
Own elaboration by using Ukrainian Int. Displacement data (UIDR5, 2022)

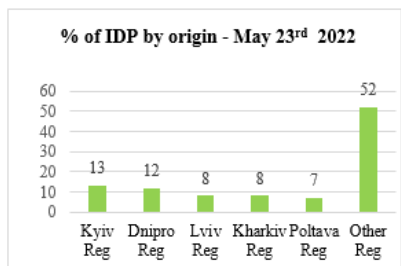


FIGURE 10. IDP BY ORIGIN BY MAY 2022

Own elaboration by using Ukrainian Internal Displacement data (UIDR5, 2022)

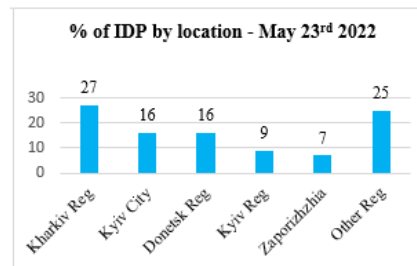


FIGURE 11. IDP BY LOCATION BY MAY 2022

3.2. UKRAINIAN MIGRATION TO MOLDOVA, ROMANIA AND BULGARIA

3.2.1. General characteristics

According to data offered by the IOM, by April 2022, Moldovan authorities reported 430,226 arrivals from Ukraine, while Romanian authorities reported 924,112 arrivals from Ukraine respectively (IOM Moldova, 2022; IOM Romania, 2022). At the end of January 2023, the number of people registered for temporary protection in Romania was 110,900 (UNHCR, 2023). This program is not applicable in the case of Moldova as being a country still not belonging to the EU. However, the country is considered as the one which has hosted more Ukrainian refugees per capita than any other country in Europe. By the same time, data published by the Bulgarian Council of Ministers, nearly 195,000 Ukrainian citizens had crossed the borders of Bulgaria and over 91,000 had chosen to stay in the country, about 35,000 of them children. At the end of June, there were nearly 120,000 people registered for temporary protection (BfU, 2022), while at the end of January 2023, this number increased up to 151,700 (UNHCR, 2023).

In April 2022, the IOM published the results of the surveys with Ukrainian refugees in Moldova (IOM Moldova, 2022). The majority of the responders were women (84%), while the rest were predominantly men of age 60+. They came mainly from Odesa region and less from Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Zhytomyr regions (Figure 12). Some travel story regarding the migration of Ukrainians through Moldova can be found in (Lowry & Gnip, 2022).

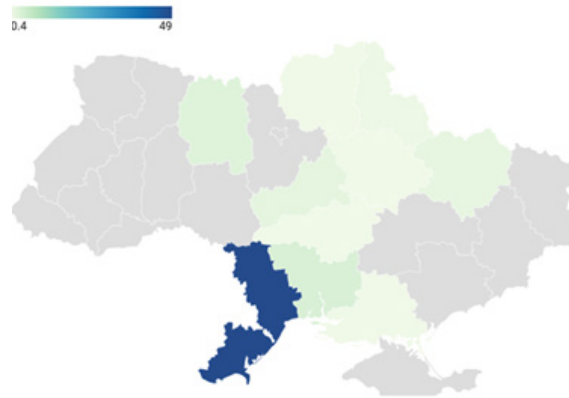


FIGURE 12. REGION OF USUAL PLACE OF RESIDENCE BEFORE LEAVING UKRAINE TO MOLDOVA. Own elaboration by Datawrapper software using IOM data for Moldova (IOM Moldova, 2022). Interactive map with identification of the different Ukrainian regions can be seen at <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/iXg29/1/>

During April 2022, IOM performed surveys as well with Ukrainian refugees in Romania by focusing on the same aspects as in the case of Moldova (IOM Romania, 2022). The majority of the responders were women (84%), while the rest were predominantly men of age 60+. The main home regions were similar to the Moldova case, i.e. Odesa region and to a lesser extent Mykolaiv and Kyiv, followed by Kherson, Kharkiv and Donetsk (Figure 13).

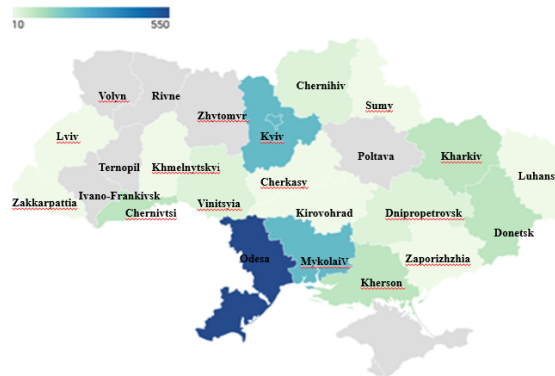


FIGURE 13. DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDERS ACCORDING TO THEIR REGION OF USUAL PLACE OF RESIDENCE BEFORE LEAVING UKRAINE TO MOLDOVA. Own elaboration by Datawrapper software using IOM data for Romania (IOM Romania, 2022). Interactive map with identification of the different Ukrainian regions can be seen at <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/SSdzU/5/>

The situation in Bulgaria is similar to that of Romania. The Ukrainian refugees who arrived in the country come mainly from the same regions i.e. Odesa and to a lesser extent Mykolaiv, Kyiv, Kherson and Kharkiv (BfU, 2022). This is a natural phenomenon due to the historical ties between these regions and especially Southern Ukraine with its large Bulgarian diaspora.

3.2.2. Preferences for settlement abroad

In the following figure 14 (left) the preferences where to stay if not Moldova are given. As can be seen, the first two places are Germany (15%) and Romania (11%), followed by Slovakia, Poland and Bulgaria. In Figure 14 (right) the preferable places to stay outside Romania are Germany followed by Bulgaria and Poland.

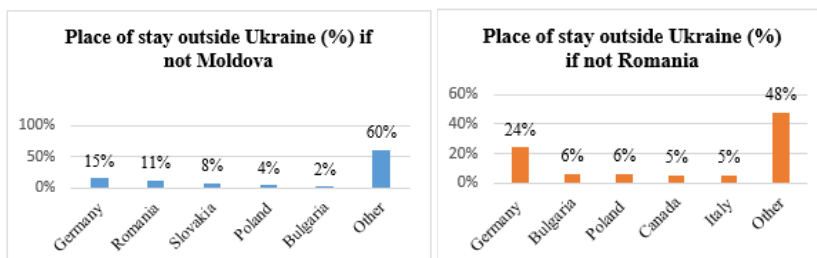


FIGURE 14. LEFT - PREFERENCE TO STAY OUTSIDE UKRAINE (IF NOT MOLDOVA); RIGHT - IF NOT ROMANIA. Own elaboration by using data from (IOM Moldova, 2022; IOM Romania, 2022)

There are no available open data for the preference of Ukrainian refugees to stay outside Ukraine for the case of the Ukrainian refugees who have entered Bulgaria as no similar surveys have been done from the IOM.

3.2.3. Gender and age characteristics

Due to the military mobilization of the male part of the Ukrainian population, the age group of the participants of the surveys is predominantly formed by women of age groups 18-29, 30-39 and 40-49. In the following Figure 15, the similarities between the age distribution of the Ukrainian refugees in Moldova and Romania (IOM Moldova, 2022; IOM Romania, 2022) are represented.

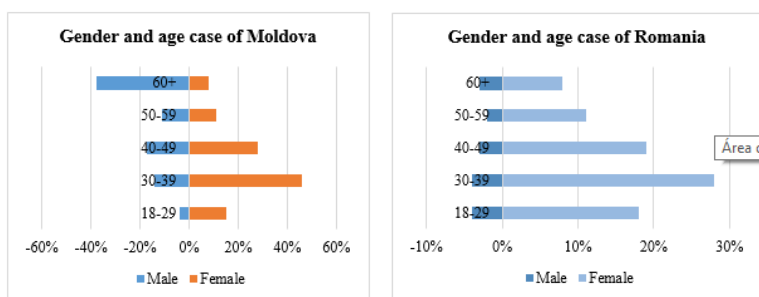


FIGURE 15. GENDER AND AGE OF THE UKRAINIAN REFUGEE'S RESPONDERS. Own elaboration by using data from (IOM Moldova, 2022; IOM Romania, 2022)

The Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria represent a very similar pattern to that in Romania (not presented here) with a difference of less than 10% of all age windows (BfU, 2022).

Figure 15 represents an important difference between the case of Moldova from one side and Romania and Bulgaria from the other side. Actually, the main difference between both cases results in a major representation of both males and females in the case of Moldova within a working age of 30-39 and 40-49, as well as a larger representation for the same country of males of age 60+. A possible explanation could be the closeness of the country to Ukraine, their former history within the Soviet Union as well as the possibilities to stay with families and friends living there.

The reasons to choose Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria as a country of destination are very similar for the three cases and they differ in a few percentages. The main reason is due to the fact that relatives and friends have already settled in these countries (more than 48%), followed by arguments of better protection (20%), accommodation (10%) and so on. (IOM Moldova, 2022; IOM Romania, 2022; BfU, 2022).

3.2.4. Temporary Protection Directive and similar programs for the Ukrainian refugees in Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria

In the following Figure 16 a comparison the dynamics of arrival of the Ukrainian refugees since the beginning of the conflict is shown. A pick of arrivals is registered during the few weeks after 24th of February 2022 in the three countries, followed by a slowing down of the number of arrivals and a later increase during the summer months.

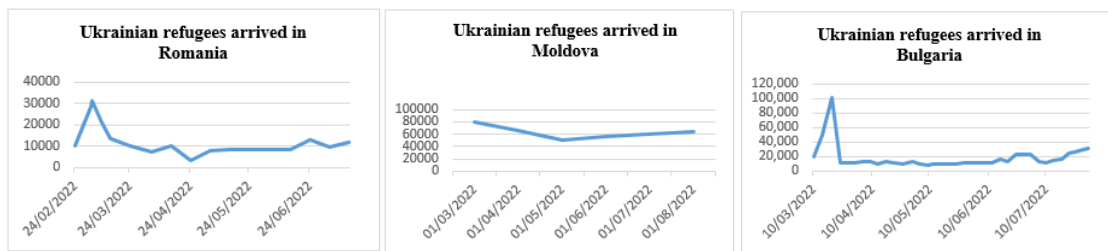


FIG. 16. UKRAINIAN REFUGEES ARRIVED IN MOLDOVA, ROMANIA AND BULGARIA DURING THE FIRST FIVE MONTHS AFTER THE BEGINNING OF THE ARMED CONFLICT. Own elaboration using data from (UNHCR-R, 2023; UNHCR-M, 2023; BfU, 2022)

The Temporary Protection Directive has been successfully applied in Romania and Bulgaria, being EU countries, while for Moldova it has been not applicable. By mid-March 2023, there have been 122,362 Ukrainians registered in Romania and 154,590 in Bulgaria (UNHCR, 2023).

According to data from the Bulgarian Council of Ministers, at the end of April 2022 over 50,000 Ukrainian citizens were accommodated in hotels or state and local departmental buildings under the ‘Programme for the Use of Humanitarian Aid for Displaced Persons from Ukraine’, which entered into force in mid-March. This means that more than a third of these refugees have been accommodated by Bulgarian citizens. This initial national aid programme was in force until the end of May 2022, providing the places for accommodation with 40 BGN (approximately €20) per day per refugee for shelter and food, the so-called program 60/40. Since the beginning of June, the Ukrainian refugees were accommodated in different bases for recreation

and relaxation along the country. Before this happened, most of the people were accommodated in hotels on the Black Sea coast due to the large number of accommodation facilities and the substantial Russian and Ukrainian-speaking communities in the region of Varna and Burgas, which provided sufficient support (DS, 2022).

Romania maintained its 50/20 social support program for a long time, which provided 50 lei for accommodation and 20 lei for food per day. However, one year later, the support program is changing, and instead of compensating homeowners, the state will pay Ukrainians 400 euros a month for four months. During this time, they must find a job and continue to pay for housing on their own. The 50/20 program, however, will continue for students studying in Romania and Ukrainians over 65 years old (Dopomoha, 2023).

Finally, in Moldova, each Ukrainian refugee family member is entitled to 2,200 MDL/month. The eligible for this financial aid are families headed by a single parent or headed by a child (below 18), those with an unaccompanied or separated child or headed by an older person (above 60) as well as families with one or more persons with specific needs (UNHCR Help Moldova, 2022).

3.2.5. Resettlement inside the countries

The resettlement of the Ukrainian refugees across the three countries is different. In Moldova, they are mainly concentrated in the capital Chişinău and partially in the southern part of the country. In Romania the resettlement of the refugees is inside the country and mainly in the northern, southern and eastern part of the country and cities such as Maramureş, Suceava, Braşov, Galaţi, Constanţa as well as in the capital Bucharest. The main concentration of Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria is the Black Sea Region, where nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of all working people who received temporary protection were employed in the main municipalities such as Nessebar, Primorsko, Varna and Balchik (Figure 17).

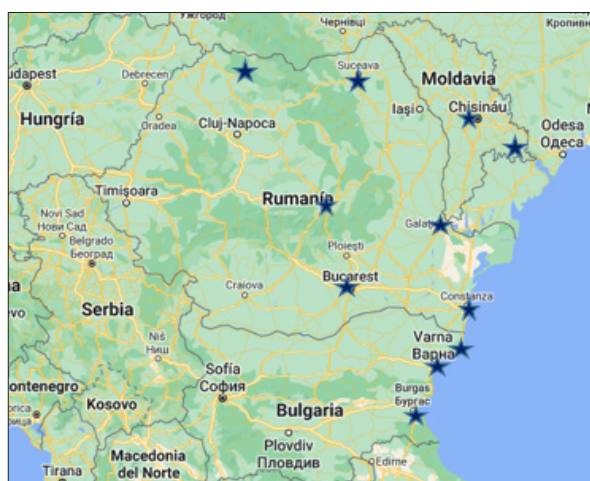


FIGURE 17. MAIN RESETTLEMENT ACROSS MOLDOVA, ROMANIA AND BULGARIA. Own elaboration by using Google maps and data from (IOM Moldova, 2022; IOM Romania, 2022; BfU, 2022).

3.2.6. Education and access to the labour market

When comparing the education level of the Ukrainian refugees in the three host countries, very similar patterns can be observed. Between 25% and 30% have university education, between 35% and 40% have secondary education, around 25% have vocational education and only few percent are people with a primary or without any education (UNHCR Moldova, 2022; IOM Romania, 2022; BfU 2022)

One of the most important issues of the adaptation of the Ukrainian refugees in the host countries is related to the labour market and their access to it. For this aim the similarities and differences of the governmental policies in the three countries for hiring Ukrainian refugees have been explored.

In Moldova, Ukrainian citizens can apply directly to the employer for an individual employment contract, without contacting the Office for Migration and Asylum. Employers can hire Ukrainian citizens based on an identification number assigned to Ukrainian citizens at the border crossing checkpoint and a copy of their identity card. Within five days of employment, the employer must notify the National Employment Agency (Job Moldova, 2022).

In Romania, Ukrainian citizens can work up to 9 months only with a declaration (responsible statement). After this time, they need to apply for a temporary protection in order to continue to work in the country (Serban, 2022).

In Bulgaria, Ukrainian refugees can legally stay and work in the country if they receive the status of temporary protection, granted automatically if they have been living in Ukraine before February 24th, 2022, and after obtaining a foreigners identity card (BGfUA, 2022).

Analysing the Moldavian labour market for the Ukrainian refugees at mid-June 2022, it has been found that 560 of the Ukrainian refugees have found jobs mainly in the following sectors: trade (10%), construction (7%), agriculture (6%), and hospitality (7%), (UNHCR Moldova, 2022).

The situation of the Ukrainian refugees who started a job in Romania is very dynamic. The share of them raised from 6% in March to 30% in June (IOM Romania 2022). In absolute numbers, by the end of March 2022, nearly 1,900 Ukrainian refugees have been employed in Romania. By June 2022, the number of the employed Ukrainians in Romania raised to 10,000 with 40% of them active in the manufacturing sector, around 17% in the construction sector and 10% in the hospitality sector.

Finally, by July 2022, around 7,400 Ukrainians started to work in Bulgaria mainly in the sectors of hospitality (65%), trade (10%), manufacturing (7%), information technologies (3%) and finance (1%) (BfU). In October the number of the Ukrainian refugees integrated in the labour market in the country raised only up to 9,160. However the lack of childcare, the difficulties in legalizing diplomas, the lack of state support for language courses and the difficult living conditions offered by the provisional Government, remain as major obstacles to finding a job and to convince the Ukrainian refugees to continue to stay in the country (Popov & Ilieva, 2022; Fileva, 2023).

3.2.7. Results from the performed interviews with Ukrainian refugees in Bulgaria

The original hypothesis was that in general, the adaptation of the Ukrainians is relatively good despite of the bureaucratic difficulties and the lack of satisfactory migratory policy in the host country. This hypothesis was mainly based on the historical ties and common traditions between Ukraine and Bulgaria. In order to confirm or reject the hypothesis, several interviews across the country have been performed during 2022. As has been stated in the Methodology section, 5 interviews have been conducted in Sofia and another 15 during the fieldtrip at the Black Sea Region (5 in each of the cities Primorsko, Varna and Balchik). The participants in the interviews were women of the age 18-60, who have arrived alone or with children. All of them had a good education and the majority had experience in the tourist sector, which gave them a good access to similar positions in the Bulgarian labour market and mainly at the hotels in Sofia and the Black Sea. The interviews have incorporated several questions regarding their age, family status, education, previous labour experience, how they have accessed the current position, what is the level of their expectations and what are their future plans.

All the interviewed Ukrainian refugees have started to work mainly in the tourist, service and entertainment sectors and have succeeded to adapt very quickly and to learn the Bulgarian language at a relatively good level. The owners of the companies, which hired Ukrainian workers were also very satisfied from their professionalism and their previous experience in similar sectors.

It is important to note that even before the war, for about 10 years, a large part of the seasonal workers at the Black Sea resorts in Bulgaria were young people (mostly students) from Ukraine. For some of them, the adaptation to the Bulgarian labour market is at a very advanced stage (Hristov, 2021).

Olena (Woman 25 years old): I had some experience in the tourist sector in my home town Odesa. Knowing Russian and English it was relatively easy to find a job in a bar at the beach. For my future plans, I will go back to Ukraine once the war is over.

Anna (Woman 46 years old): In Kharkiv I worked as a nurse, but once in Bulgaria, I had to start a job as a sales assistant in a supermarket in Sofia in order to support myself. I learned rapidly Bulgarian.

Svitlana (Woman 52 years old): We went by bus from Odesa region in last March and we settled down in Balchik, a northern small touristic town at the Bulgarian beach. I started a work in a bar although previously I worked as a school teacher. The life had adapted me to any circumstances, and I am grateful that being close to Odesa (at about 550 km) I have a relatively quiet life in Bulgaria and I could help in some way my relatives, who stayed in Ukraine, but I would like to return once the war finishes.

A very interesting interview has been performed with a family from Mykolaiv region (grandmother, mother and a daughter) who are owners of a small hotel in their region and who have found a job at a similar hotel at St. Konstantin and Elena resort. The interview revealed their experience in the tourist sector, their satisfaction of their current situation and adaptation as well as their wish to go back to their land when this is possible. The daughter has passed the entering exams

in Medicine and in September she wanted to start her first year at the University campus of Odesa.

Tetyana (Woman 18 years old): I am very happy to have passed successfully the exams at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Odesa. In a couple of weeks, I will take the bus from Varna and I will arrive in Odesa to start my first year as a student of medicine. I will miss a lot the 6 months spent at St. Konstantin and Elena resort, where I made a lot of friends. The Bulgarians are very friendly and open minded, and this helped my family a lot.

However, the above observations apply to a reduced part of the refugees. The rest of them have strong difficulties to integrate and to start a job in a near future mainly due to the low wages, the reduced childcare and the complex bureaucracy. According to the interviewed refugees, only 20% reported to have a paid job, 50% reported that their new job was below their level of education and almost 70% face difficulties in making ends meet. These statistics are coherent with the general one, known from a recent survey with some 14,500 of them, chosen from different European countries having been performed during August and September 2022 (Fleeing Ukraine, 2023).

Despite of the current difficulties, which in general has been reported in almost all European countries, in various spheres of the Bulgarian public life it becomes more and more common to meet Ukrainian citizens. This is mainly due to their individual efforts to adapt and integrate as soon as possible, which in general confirm our original hypothesis.

As future steps towards a better integration and adaptation, more flexibility is needed especially at the Bulgarian labour market, where shortage of specialists is a serious problem, and could be covered by Ukrainians. The current policy of quotas for foreigners to access to the Bulgarian labour market could be made to be more flexible according to the needs of the labour market. Additionally, in a general context, for the three countries, assessment of skills and recognition of qualifications of refugees could be highly desirable, as well as the launching of some kind of freelancing platform helping displaced Ukrainians find remote, online work, facilitating thus their entry into the job market. Another procedure that should be made easier is the address registration, especially for people who do not own property, which is a big issue for foreigners and Bulgarians alike.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This article explores the explosive character of the Ukrainian refugees across Europe and the internally displaced people in Ukraine, phenomena that occurred after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022. The internal migration phenomena inside Ukraine have been compared at the beginning of the conflict with those registered three months later in order to show the change of the patterns. This has been possible due to the use of new tools such as the Displacement Tracking Matrix. Our initial hypothesis concerning the internal migration from the central and northern part of Ukraine has been confirmed. It has been shown that the outflow from Kyiv three months later is much lower compared to

the beginning of the conflict. However, in May 2022 the migration from Eastern Ukraine is comparable and even greater to that in March 2022, with a tendency of backflows inside this part of the country, which is due to the escalation of the armed conflict in these regions.

The Ukrainian migration flow towards Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria has also been discussed in detail. These countries have been chosen in relation to the common historical ties, which relate them. Note that Ukrainian citizens have diverse ethnic origin and Southern Ukraine has been home to the largest historical Bulgarian diaspora and a large number of ethnic Moldovans.

For the three countries an analysis is presented which concerns several aspects regarding the Ukrainian immigrants such as their region of origin, age and gender, dynamics of arrivals, desired final destinations, reasons to choose the country, resettlement within the three countries, education, access to the labour market and the respective legislations.

Some important conclusions have been reported in relation to the above-mentioned aspects:

- * The home regions of the refugees are very similar and are especially located in Southern Ukraine, which is related to the common historical ties. The gender and age characteristics are also very similar, due to the ban for Ukrainian men below 60 years old to freely leave Ukraine.
- * The Temporary Protection Directive are successfully applied in Bulgaria and Romania being EU countries. Very similar national programs have been applied in these two countries and an additional scheme has been applied in Moldova.
- * The education background is also very similar of the Ukrainian refugees in the three host countries. The majority of them have secondary education followed by those with university and vocational ones.
- * Some important differences have been observed when comparing the legislation related to the labour market. In Moldova, Ukrainian citizens can apply directly to the employer for an individual employment contract, without contacting the Office for Migration and Asylum, while in Romania, they can work up to 9 months only with a declaration (responsible statement). In Bulgaria, Ukrainian refugees can legally stay and work in the country if they receive the status of temporary protection, granted automatically if they have been living in Ukraine before February 24th, 2022.
- * Other similarities have been observed in the labour market of the three countries showing similar patterns mainly related to trade, construction, hospitality and tourism, being the Romanian labour market the most dynamic.

In addition to the above conclusions, interviews have been performed in Bulgaria with Ukrainian immigrants. They confirmed the original hypothesis stating a good adaptation to the labour market due to the good background and preparation of the majority of them, the similarities in traditions as well as the efforts of the governments and the business sector for a better integration. However, as has been

mentioned before, these observations apply to a reduced part of the refugees as the rest have strong difficulties to integrate and to start a job due to the low wages, the reduced childcare and the complex bureaucracy. These observations are similar when compared with the results of the interviews performed on a large basis in several European countries (see section 3.2.7).

The final conclusion states that despite of the unprecedented governmental efforts of the three countries to face the Ukrainian migration flows and to solve the most urgent related issues, there are still problems for a better integration of the Ukrainian refugees in the selected countries mainly due to economic and bureaucratic reasons.

To improve the situation, some proposals have been done, which include more flexibility at the labour market, according to the current economic needs, fast recognition of the qualifications and experience of the refugees, possibilities for online work, especially for women with children as well as an easier address registration procedure.

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