

MIGRATION AND CRISIS: WHAT THE EXPERIENCE OF UKRAINE REVEALS

On May 28th, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine published the results of repeated modular selective survey of population (households) of Ukraine on migration. The survey was carried out by M. Ptukha Institute of Demography and Social Research of the National Academy of Sciences and the State Statistics Service within the European Union Project “Effective Governance of Labour Migration and its Skills Dimensions”, and implemented by ILO in Ukraine and in Moldova from April till June 2012.

More than 45.5 thousand Ukrainians aged 15 - 70 years from 23.5 thousand households from all over the country were interviewed. The survey revealed that roughly 1.2 million Ukrainians were either working or looking for work abroad for a period of two and a half years or over (from January 2010 to June 2012). The proportion of migrant workers in the surveyed period was 4.1% (out of all working-age population of Ukraine). According to the same survey conducted in 2008, during the period from early 2005 to June 2008, 1.5 million inhabitants of Ukraine worked abroad, and from early 2007 to June 2008 they were 1.3 million, which, respectively, amounted to 5.1% and 4.4% of those of working age. External labor migrants, who were included in the survey in 2008 and 2012, did not include people who went to work abroad beyond the terms previously covered by surveys, family members of migrants reunited with them in the host countries, pendulum migrants. According to other Ukrainian experts, when taken into consideration these categories allow to evaluate the external labor migration from Ukraine at 4.5 - 5 million. However, recently published survey results show that the crisis has not affected considerably the level of Ukrainians' participation in the external migration.

The survey also showed that the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians legalized their stay and employment in host countries, and only one in five migrant worker remained irregular (according to the studies, conducted in 2008, it was vice versa). More than three-quarters of Ukrainians seek employment through friends, relatives, acquaintances and a significant minority directly through an employer, private agencies and private individuals providing employment. Ukrainian workers transfer over 60% of the remittances personally, through friends, relatives, courier, drivers, and only about 40% through banks, by post or other organizations. “Employment Niche” of Ukrainian immigrants spreads gradually albeit slowly from the secondary market for vacancies towards skilled labor.

All this means a further increase in the social value of migrant networks, forming a developed migration system that connects Ukraine with a number of host countries, including the EU.

The findings of the new survey made the relationship between the two main reasons for the departure of Ukrainian labor emigrants - low wages and unemployment - even more distinct in favor of the former (79% vs. 11%). This widening gap between the two major causes of emigration indicates lack of investment in the development, i.e. investments in long-term structural projects that will ensure the wage growth and jobs for a longer period. But it also points to the formation of a single social space, which includes Ukraine and countries of destination.

The results of the household survey established that young people today are not able to find employment in Ukraine. A few months earlier in November 2012, of the five thousand people polled by online recruitment site HeadHunter, 48% of young specialists with higher or incomplete higher education (the average age of the respondents was 30 years) expressed serious intentions of leaving Ukraine to work abroad, primarily in Europe, USA / Canada, Australia; another 43% said they sometimes considered such a possibility. Among the main reasons for leaving, the youth mentioned the lack of a good future for themselves and their families in Ukraine, low wages, lack of opportunity for a professional fulfillment, unstable political situation, the possibility for normal low status work abroad, and the easiness of starting a business. Among the positive reasons when choosing the destination country they stated high educational level in the West and the availability of scholarships.

In recent years, the number of migrants from Ukraine grew primarily due to family reunification, i.e. mostly because of the young people leaving for studies and work in the host countries. One of the countries that are the most popular destinations for Ukrainian students is Germany. According to the latest household survey, Germany occupies a remarkably higher position in comparison with other countries in regards of the number of Ukrainian labour immigrants with higher education (90% vs. 19% in Hungary and Spain, which share the second position).

The Ukrainian immigration system, which developed particularly in the years of the economic crisis, has become a basis for further integration of the current "labor migration" and the "migration of skilled professionals" by expanding the space of horizontal mobility. Thus, the question arises whether or not this Ukrainian trend is a part of a broader process that makes the effectiveness of migration policies dependent on building a "horizontal principle" of the formation of regulatory mechanisms with the simultaneous participation of host and donor societies, and the migrants themselves.

