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“The Value of life and labor” of Ukrainian migrants abroad

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ABSTRACT. This article presents an investigation of the problems of Ukrainian migrants abroad. Due to the very difficult financial and socio-economic situation in Ukraine, many people have decided to go abroad to work, to study or to marry. Very often they face problems of attitude towards them as citizens of a “Third country”. They are sometimes seen as third class people and as modern slaves because even their own country does not value their lives and labor, does not care about them either at home or abroad. Their country does not know the numbers of Ukrainian migrants abroad and their children who are “orphans with living parents”. Therefore, the “value of life and labor” of Ukrainian labor migrants abroad is very cheap as they often accept heavy and unskilled jobs for little money in order to send this money to Ukraine. Unfortunately, this is the only time when their lives and their remittances are valued by the state as a part of Ukraine's GDP and a source for future government tax revenue in Ukraine.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ukraine had four mass waves of emigration since 1870-1880th and these migration flows continue today. The most popular directions of flow for emigrants from Ukraine are Poland, Portugal, Spain, Russia (female and male migration); Italy (female labor migration), Turkey (female married migration), etc. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians are working abroad. They are very good workers for small salaries and so their labor is very cheap. Many Ukrainians are also victims of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. In Europe markets exist for slaves from Ukraine and this information is openly available. The aim of this article is to explore the “value of life and labor” of Ukrainian migrants abroad and consider what changes are possible to improve this situation.

2. REASONS CAUSING UKRAINIANS TO GO ABROAD

Ukrainian migration flows from Ukraine have continued for many decades and it can't easily be stopped. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians work and live abroad. So, what's happening in Ukraine? Why are Ukrainians forced to go abroad for either for short periods or permanently? Why is the “value of life and labor” of Ukrainian migrants abroad so cheap? What needs to be done to change this situation?

First of all, people can't survive on the minimum wage €51.12 per month in Ukraine, and because of this 70% of the population is below the poverty line (Table 1).

Table 1 - The comparison of minimum wages in 2015 in the nearest and most popular countries for Ukrainian migrants - Turkey, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Russia (January 1, 2015) [1].

Countries	Minimum wage of countries per month in 2015 (€)	The difference in minimum wages between Ukraine and other countries (times)
Ukraine	1218 UAH (€51.12)	
Spain	€756.70	14.8
Portugal	€589.17	11.5
Turkey	1201.50 Turkish lira (€424)	8.2
Poland	1.750 PLN (€405)	7.9
Russia	5.965 rubles (€86.50)	1.7

Using this data of minimum wages [1], a comparison was conducted in 2015 between Ukraine and the most popular countries for migration Ukrainians, - Turkey, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Russia in order to explain this migration from Ukraine.

So, the Ukrainian nation was brought to this poverty and destitution by its ruling regimes and due to the socio-economic and political situation in the country Ukrainians were forced to seek work abroad for small salaries and harsh conditions. So, the “value of life and labor” of Ukrainians abroad is so cheap, and even the minimum wage of recipient-countries of Ukrainians are 8-15 times greater than the minimum wage in Ukraine. This comparison of differences in minimum the wages of Turkey, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Russia and Ukraine in 2015 is presented in Fig. 1.

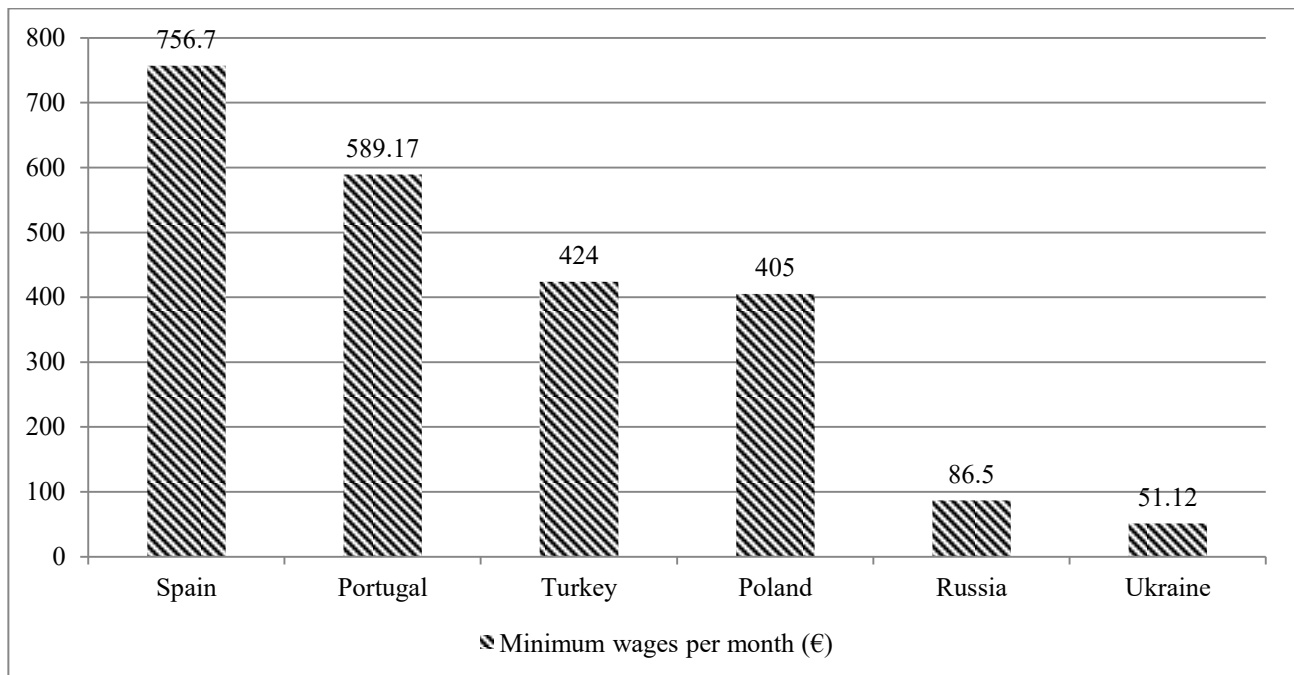


Fig. 1 - The comparison of differences in minimum wages of Turkey, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Russia and Ukraine in 2015 (€) [1]

Therefore, the reasons for Ukrainian migration are the economic and political crisis, unemployment, poverty, low wages and pensions in Ukraine.

3. THE SIZE OF THE POPULATION OF UKRAINE DURING 1990-2014

The size of the population of Ukraine is shrinking constantly. According to data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine [2], during 1990-2014 the population of Ukraine was reduced by 6412251 people or 12,37% (Table 2), which is more than the population of the two countries, Estonia and Georgia, together.

Table 2 - The size of the population of Ukraine during 1990-2014 according to data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine [2]

Years	The number of the population of Ukraine, person	The number of the population in urban areas	The number of the population in rural areas
1990	51838500	34869200	16969300
1995	51728400	35118800	16609600
2000	49429800	33338600	16091200
2005	47280817	32009320	15271497
2010	45962947	31524795	14438152
2014	45426249	31336623	14089626

The main reason for this reduction of population is migration. However data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, in the Demographic Yearbook “Population of Ukraine,” Chapter 6 “Migration” [3] does not reflect the real situation and it presents only a small number of Ukrainian migrants abroad during 2002-2013 (Table 3).

Table 3 - The number of Ukrainian migrants according to data from State Statistics Service of Ukraine during 2002-2013 [3]

Years	Total migration of the population from Ukraine	Total migration of the population from urban territory	Total migration of the population from rural territory
2002	42473	32715	9758
2003	39489	31087	8402
2004	38567	30344	8223
2005	39580	30484	9096
2006	44227	35299	8928
2007	46507	37361	9146
2008	37323	28960	8363
2009	32917	24740	8177
2010	30810	23173	7637
2011	31684	23885	7799
2012	76361	67948	8413
2013	54100	46342	7758

It's seems that Ukrainian migrants do not exist for the state because official sources do not show any kind of statistics about the real number of Ukrainian migrants and their children, “orphans with living parents”. Ukraine lacks a nationwide database of Ukrainian current and returned migrants and their children.

4. ATTITUDE TO UKRAINIAN MIGRANTS ABROAD

In different countries Ukrainian female and labor migrants encounter a range of attitudes towards themselves. There is a respectful attitude in Portugal where they are considered to be very good, and honest workers [4-5], while in Italy [6] and Poland [7-9] they are seen as cheap workers and objects for labor and sexual exploitation; but in Turkey there is a dismissive attitude to Ukrainian women (the phenomenon of prostitution ‘Natasha’ in Turkey). Ukrainian women are very often victims of Human Trafficking and migrant smuggling, and as such are the subjects of movies [10-11], documentary films [12-13] and publications about these subjects [14-15] around the world.

What becomes of them subsequently in their host countries? How many of them returned to their country to origin? Their subsequent fate is interesting only to their families because the government takes no care of them or any other migrants. If Ukrainian women get into difficult situations abroad their families have to try to help them without the help of any governmental organization but with that of a private organization or individual [16].

5. WHAT DOES THE STATE UKRAINE KNOW ABOUT NUMBER OF UKRAINIAN MIGRANTS ABROAD? (ON THE EXAMPLES OF OFFICIAL DATA FROM POLAND AND PORTUGAL)

Every year in Poland the number of Ukrainian labor migrants increases. According to data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in Poland (Danych Ministerstwa Pracy i Polityki Społecznej) [17], in 2014 the number of Ukrainian migrants, who asked about an official job in Poland, was 372 946, and 38,59% of them or 143 956 were women (Table 4).

In Portugal, according to data from the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) [18], during the period 2012-2014 there were approximately 38 000 - 44 000 Ukrainian female and labor migrants: in 2012 officially were 44 074 Ukrainians, in 2013 - 41091 Ukrainians, in 2014 - 37 852 Ukrainians in Portugal (Table 5).

That is, if the number of Ukrainian migrants in Poland and Portugal alone, in 2012 are added up, [the number of 223 671 Ukrainian migrants in Poland [17] and 44 074 migrants in Portugal [18],] without including Ukrainian migrants to any other countries, the number of Ukrainian migrants in 2012 can be shown to be 267 745. This number was confirmed by the official sources of Poland and Portugal [17-18], and is 3,5 times higher than the official number of Ukrainian migrants in 2012 that is given in data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine. The Demographic Yearbook "Population of Ukraine," Chapter 6 "Migration," page 264, gives the number of Ukrainians who left the country in 2012 as 76 361 [3].

Therefore, data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine does not reflect the true situation in respect of Ukrainian migrants abroad, and is thus useless.

Table 4 - Number of statements for work permits in Poland from Ukrainian labor migrants during 2007-2014 [17]

Years	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of all statements for work permits from Ukrainian migrants	20260	142960	180133	169490	153779	223671	80243	372946
Number of statements from Ukrainian female migrants	7968	69310	88895	77889	69089	86073	35114	143956

6. HOW CAN ILLEGAL UKRAINIAN MIGRANTS CROSS THE BORDER?

In the Western regions of Ukraine there is some trade, tourism and production, but the majority of the population of these regions survives by means of smuggling, trafficking, migrant smuggling, labor migration, corruption, etc. In this way the Ukrainian population has been brought to poverty and destitution and people are forced to go abroad by legal and illegal ways. Some of people from these regions can enter countries of the EU, for example the Republic of Hungary, Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic due to agreements on local border traffic [19-21]. Some Ukrainians have passports from other countries even if this is prohibited by the Constitution Ukraine. There are also a large number of illegal Ukrainian migrants who are smuggled across the border to the Slovak Republic [22], Hungary and Romania [23] etc.

Table 5 - The number of resident foreigners in general and of Ukrainian migrants in Portugal during 2012-2014 (data from the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service, SEF) [18]

Country	The number of residence in 2012			The number of residence in 2013			The number of residence in 2014		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Portugal									
For all foreigners	417042	206513	210529	401320	195544	205776	395195	191565	203630
For Ukrainians	44074	23147	20927	41091	20746	20345	37852	18679	19173

For Ukrainians, who cross the border by illegal means it is difficult to survive and integrate into the host country's society. First of all, these Ukrainians deliberately violate international laws and the borders of their country and their host country, and so they can be arrested and deported at any moment.

Secondly they can very easily become victims of human and labor trafficking or migrant smuggling. It is better for them to cross the border legally ways and so be able to work legally because Ukraine has international social security agreements with some countries, including Austria, Bulgaria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland [24], and any period of legal work abroad will be added to their pension fund in Ukraine.

7. THE LEVEL OF REMITTANCES FROM UKRAINIAN MIGRANTS TRANSFERRED INTO UKRAINE

Remittances from Ukrainian migrants are very valuable for Ukraine because this money forms a part of Ukraine's GDP every year. According to data from the National Bank of Ukraine and IOM Mission in Ukraine [25], in 2012 the level of remittances, transferred to Ukraine was USD 7.5 billion, which accounts for 4% of Ukraine's GDP. According to the Institute of Demography and Social Studies, USD 4.5 billion of this amount was sent home by labor migrants, and without these remittances Ukraine's economy might have lost 7% of its potential.

According to data from the World Bank [26], the level of remittances, transferred to Ukraine during the period 1990-2014 was approximately USD 7-10 billions (Table 6), but even though the Ukrainian government hadn't given these people the chance to work in their own country and didn't protect them from the many risks abroad, they will try to tax their earnings abroad [27].

Table 6 - The level of remittances transferred to Ukraine during 1990-2014 according to data from the World Bank, USD [26]

1990-1994	1995-1999	2000-2004	2005-2009	2010-2014
6,535,000,000	7,822,000,000	8,449,000,000	9,667,000,000	7,354,000,000

This level of remittances transferred to Ukraine during 1990-2014 according to data from the World Bank is presented in Fig. 2.

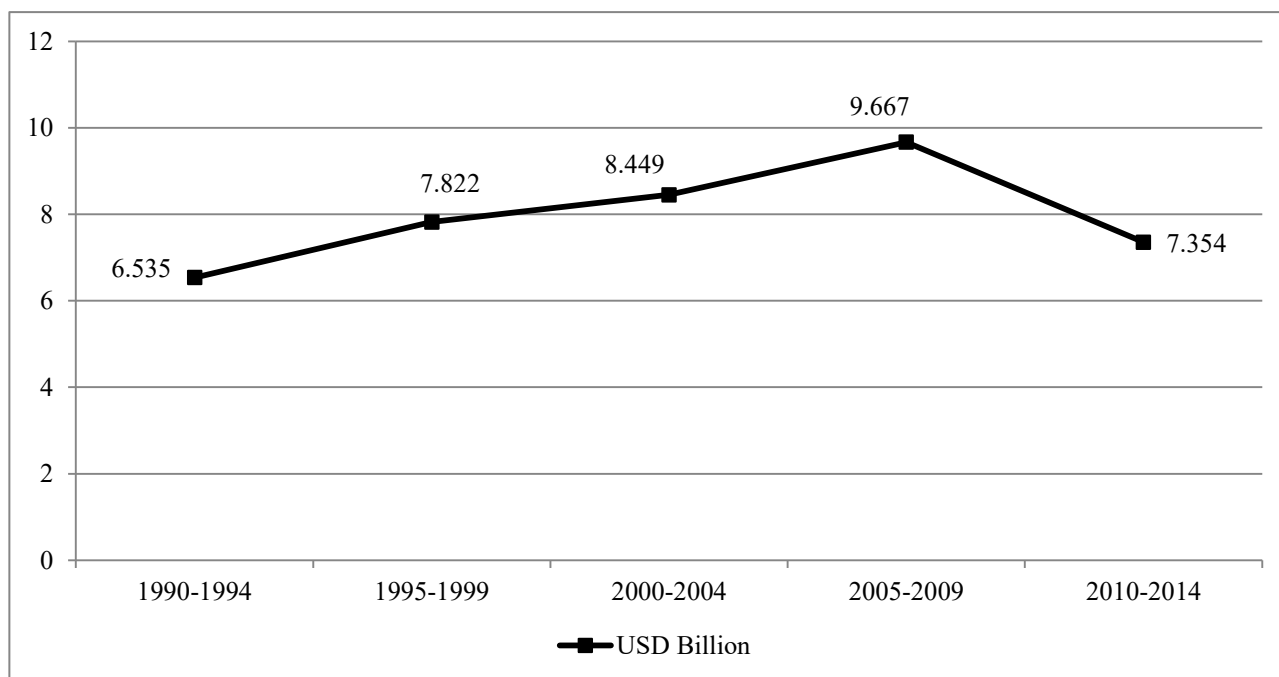


Fig. 2 - The level of remittances transferred to Ukraine during 1990-2014 according to data from the World Bank, USD Billion [26]

This situation will cause many Ukrainians abroad to seek unofficial ways of sending money into Ukraine and to avoid the official banking channels, which will only increase the illegal economy in Ukraine. Workers cannot pay taxes to two countries on the same income.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have explored "the value of life and labor" of Ukrainian migrants abroad, their problems and reasons for going abroad and the attitude towards them in several countries of the world.

In the study I looked at the minimum wage of Ukraine, Turkey, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Russia in 2015, and reached the conclusion that the majority of Ukrainians work, study and marry abroad to avoid the very difficult financial and socio-economic situation in Ukraine.

This research also discovered that data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine does not reflect the true situation of Ukrainian migrants. It presents a small number of Ukrainian migrants abroad contradicting the data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy of Poland and the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service.

The article also explored how Ukrainian migrants can illegally cross the border and which benefits they can get with an official job abroad.

The research found that the level of remittances from Ukrainian migrants transferred into Ukraine during the period 1990-2014 was approximately USD 7-10 billion and these remittances are very valuable to Ukraine as they form a part of Ukraine's GDP every year but despite this the Ukrainian government will try to get taxes from Ukrainian migrants abroad under a new Ukrainian law. Unfortunately, only their remittances are valued by the state as a part of Ukraine's GDP and a source for future government taxes in Ukraine. However the Ukrainian migrants, who transfer their remittances to Ukraine by banks, will seek to find unofficial ways to send money to Ukraine, because Ukrainians, who work legally, cannot pay taxes two countries, a host country and the country of origin.

The general conclusion of the research is that Ukraine does not value the lives and labor of Ukrainian migrants, does not care about them at home or abroad and does not know the numbers of migrants abroad and their children, "orphans with living parents". This means that the "value of life and labor" of Ukrainian labor migrants abroad is very cheap because they agree to perform heavy and unskilled jobs for little money in order to transfer this money to Ukraine.

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