



SUMMARY

The impact of outward migration needs an over-arching state response that benefits migrants and society as a whole involving full respect for their human rights. COVID-19 has accelerated the need for a comprehensive migration governance framework as envisaged in frameworks such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement.

- Effective migration policies require a centrally coordinated and evidence-based whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.
- Ukrainian migrants abroad and immigrants residing in Ukraine must be included in the entirety of respective government COVID-19 action. Special attention must be given to migrants vulnerable to risks of violence, exploitation and abuse.
- Dialogue and cooperation with host countries must be enhanced, to protect human rights and to establish well-governed and managed mobility corridors for Ukrainian citizens.
- Migrants must be assisted and protected from pre-departure to post arrival and return. Their positive potential as development actors must be maximized.
- Positive domestic conditions and incentives must be created to stimulate permanent and temporary Ukrainian migrant and diaspora return, or their investment in productive economy.
- COVID-19 returnees to Ukraine, workers unable to leave and their families, must receive income-generating support, capacity building and job-matching services to aid their domestic labour market integration.
- Communities of return must be aided with stimulus packages and infrastructure projects, Small & Medium Enterprises must be given access to funding and capacity building to adapt to changing needs.
- Regular migration into Ukraine must be incentivized by granting access to the labour market and official employment in line with economic demands and regularization programmes.

OVERVIEW

Ukraine's population is one of the fastest shrinking in the world and likely to decrease to 35 million people by 2050. Low fertility and high mortality rates combine with high levels of outward migration. There are an estimated three million Ukrainian workers abroad at any given time. High poverty levels and difficulties in finding employment with decent pay are reinforced by political, social and security-related push factors. In the past years, European Union (EU) member states have gradually become the main destination for Ukrainian migrant workers. Data suggests almost half of them are employed in low-skilled occupations for which they are overqualified. Growing numbers of Ukrainian students abroad add to this brain-drain, with only few planning to return. Rising prospects of employment abroad in line with education and professional attainments further stimulate increasingly long-term outward migration. There are 1.4 million registered internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine, out of whom 734,000 reside more permanently in Government Controlled Areas (GCA). Reportedly, over a third of the total do not intend to return to their places of origin. Migration of the young, the better educated and well-off has serious long-term implications on rural economic sustainability and social cohesion. Foreign migration into Ukraine is currently not a mitigating factor. Ukraine



continues to lag behind its neighbours in economic development and welfare and has been reluctant to open its labour market to foreign nationals. Ukrainian migrant workers are prone to the risks of fraudulent recruitment, exploitation, abuse, with an estimated 260,000 Ukrainians having fallen victim to human trafficking since 1991. At the same time, migrant remittances are vital to poverty reduction, reaching almost USD 16 billion in 2019, equivalent to 10 percent of Ukrainian GDP. They may drop by up to a fifth as migrant work sectors are hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Up to a quarter of Ukrainian migrant workers may be forced to return into an economy forecasted to shrink by 3.5 percent amid rising unemployment. Moreover, returnees might be stigmatised as burdening an already weak domestic labour market.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The 2030 Agenda recognises migration as a core development consideration and commits to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights. This commitment is reaffirmed by the GCM, which covers all dimensions of international migration and rests on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. SDG targets that directly reference migration recognise migrant women, men and children as a vulnerable group to be protected, and migrants as agents of development. Meeting these targets is critical in achieving a wide range of development goals. Facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration helps reducing inequality in and among countries (SDG 10). Remittances are vital for poverty reduction (SDG 1), and international student mobility is crucial for promoting quality education (SDG 4). Well-designed migration policies are key to effectively combat human trafficking and exploitation, especially of women and children, and to the ending of forced labour. Such policies thus promote peace, justice and help to build strong institutions (SDG 16). They are critical in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (SDG 5), and in promoting full, productive employment and decent work for all (SDG 8).

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- The issue of migration requires a human rights-based, gender-responsive and child sensitive whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach and integration into Ukraine’s main state development and strategy plans. Coordination between different government entities must be strengthened and centralized under the Cabinet of Ministers to ensure cohesive policy design and effective implementation.
- Implementation of Ukraine’s Strategy of the State Migration Policy must be accelerated and strengthened with a legal and institutional framework. Mechanisms for dialogue and coordination must include civil society, the private sector, migrant groups, academia, the international community and other relevant stakeholders.
- Migration policies must be evidence-based through systematic, timely and integrated government collection of data while upholding the right to privacy and data protection. The current lack of data on immigrants in Ukraine must be addressed. This allows understanding of skillsets, needs and geography of migrants, returnees and their communities, to analyze local labour market requirements, and to map public attitudes, social cohesion and the impact of integration efforts.
- The immediate task is to ensure the safety and human rights of all migrants, in particular Ukrainian migrants still stranded abroad. This includes access to health information, testing, treatment and social protection, assisted return in accordance with WHO recommendations, and the provision of post-arrival medical, psychosocial and legal support.





- Returning migrants, seasonal workers unable to leave and their family members, especially women and the youth, must be provided with income-generating opportunities, the matching of savings with grants, as well as with training, skill upgrades and transparent job-matching services to aid integration into the domestic labour market.
- To create incentives and opportunities for people to stay or return, communities of origin should be further supported through stimulus packages and the funding of small-scale infrastructure projects. Small and Medium Enterprises must be provided with easier access to financing and capacity building, especially in the area of IT, to adapt their businesses.
- The use of formal channels for remittance transfers at better cost must be incentivized. Mechanisms for their productive use should include innovative savings and investment instruments in cooperation with the banking and finance sectors.
- Encompassing programmes should be developed to engage diasporas and harness their potential to advance domestic development through temporary or permanent return, investments, and knowledge and technology transfer.
- Pathways for safe and regular migration into Ukraine should be opened in line with demographic and labour market demands. The existing quota principle should be abolished, access to immigration permits simplified and include foreign students after graduation.
- Domestic conditions to reduce adverse drivers that compel people to migrate must be created. This includes decent job opportunities, and educational and vocational training systems in line with labour market requirements. These measures must be complemented by the overall improvement and access to basic services, in particular health, education and housing, but also security and justice.
- Well-governed mobility corridors providing continued, safe access to foreign labour markets for Ukrainian citizens must be established. The Government of Ukraine should draw guidance from the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and consider subscribing to the tenets of the GCM.
- Cooperation with countries of destination must be enhanced to this effect and negotiations on bilateral agreements continued. These must ensure the right to social security and in particular pension portability.
- Special attention must be given to migrants vulnerable to risks of violence, exploitation, in particular human trafficking and forced labour. This especially concerns irregular migrants, women with children, adolescent girls and people facing socio-economic difficulties. Adequate funding must be provided, the institutional and legal framework strengthened and aimed at protection and prevention. Victims must be recognized in their status and aided with psychosocial and economic assistance and access to justice.
- Migration alters family structure and affects children in many different ways. The Government must ensure that children left in substitute care by their migrating parents are supported in their emotional well-being and psychological development. The Government must provide legal protection and assistance to transfer legal guardianship, and identify vulnerable children to ensure that all children have uninterrupted access to services and social assistance initiatives.
- Targeted information campaigns in Ukraine are needed to warn against the dangers of fraudulent recruitment and irregular migration, and to inform about host country policies and social security systems.
- The Ukrainian Government must establish a legal framework to ensure an ethical, well-regulated and closely monitored recruitment process. Migrants must be provided with



health tests and medical certification, cultural orientation programmes, and strengthened consular services upon arrival in host countries.

- Rights of regular as well as irregular migrants within Ukraine must be guaranteed in accordance to international law and standards, including protection against xenophobia and discrimination. Foreigners in Ukraine regardless of their status must be included in the entirety of the Government’s COVID-19 response. Those intending to leave must be provided with temporary housing, testing and treatment, where needed and feasible.
- Undocumented migrants in employment and with strong social and family ties should be regularized. The Government must act on its stated plans to establish proper mechanisms and programs for regularizing irregular migrants in selected categories and already residing in Ukraine, including a migration amnesty for foreigners, asylum seekers and stateless people.
- The experience of COVID-19 should be used to strengthen institutional capacities in Ukraine to manage labour migration effectively and harness the potential of in/out-migration to advance sustainable development.

