



# Displaced Ukrainians in European Labour Markets

Leveraging innovations for more inclusive integration

Maria Vincenza Desiderio  
Kate Hooper

INTEGRATION FUTURES WORKING GROUP

# Displaced Ukrainians in European Labour Markets

Leveraging innovations for more inclusive integration

Maria Vincenza Desiderio  
Kate Hooper

May 2023

# Contents

---

- Executive Summary** ..... 1
  
- 1 Introduction** ..... 3
  
- 2 A Snapshot of Ukrainians’ Integration into European Labour Markets** ..... 4
  - A. How many are finding work? ..... 7
  - B. What kinds of jobs do they hold? ..... 9
  
- 3 Strategies to Help Displaced Ukrainians Find Quality Jobs** ..... 11
  - A. Connecting Ukrainians with employers ..... 12
  - B. Lifting labour market restrictions ..... 14
  - C. Helping new arrivals access child care ..... 17
  - D. Making integration services more flexible and accessible ..... 19
  - E. Offering tailored training for qualified professionals ..... 20
  - F. Streamlining qualifications recognition procedures ..... 23
  
- 4 Conclusions and Recommendations** ..... 26
  
- About the Authors** ..... 29
  
- Acknowledgments** ..... 30

## Executive Summary

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has led to displacement in Europe on a scale not seen since World War II. Welcoming new arrivals has put enormous pressure on reception and integration systems, but also presents opportunities—including the prospect that displaced Ukrainians' entry into the labour market could help address some of Europe's pervasive skill shortages. A large share of these newcomers have a tertiary education, including many who are qualified to work in shortage sectors such as health care and education, and the EU decision to activate the Temporary Protection Directive has provided swift access to residence and associated rights, including permission to work.

Overall, displaced Ukrainians have made good progress in entering European labour markets, although employment rates vary widely from country to country. Many new arrivals have prioritised finding employment quickly over finding a job that fully utilises their skills, especially when they have family members to support or plan to return to Ukraine in the near future. To date, most have taken low-skilled jobs despite their higher qualifications, often reflecting issues such as language barriers and difficulties getting their credentials recognised. There are also parallels with the aftermath of the 2004 EU enlargement, when many Eastern Europeans sought to find work quickly to capitalise on wage and currency differentials, regardless of whether jobs allowed them to make the best use of their skills. And with most men barred from leaving Ukraine, women and children make up the majority of displaced Ukrainians in Europe, and the lack of affordable child care has prevented some parents from accessing full-time employment at all.

Designing policies and programmes to support the labour market integration of displaced Ukrainians presents several challenges. The speed and scale of arrivals has placed enormous pressure on integration services and ancillary systems (e.g., schools, housing, and child care), many of which are struggling to respond amidst budget constraints. Many Ukrainians' desire to return to Ukraine, as circumstances allow, is also shaping their decisions about finding work, participating in integration programming, and what types of training or support are seen as most useful.

As the war in Ukraine stretches on and many of those displaced, despite hopes of a quick return, remain abroad, the mismatch between workers' skills and the jobs they hold could lead to a loss of earnings for families while also keeping European societies from fully benefitting from the skills and experience Ukrainians have to offer. These trends suggest the need for integration services that can support multiple aims and that have on-ramps for migrants seeking assistance after months or even years in a receiving country.

---

*The response to the Ukraine crisis has produced remarkable innovations, promising practices, and new partnerships that offer fresh ideas for how to approach labour market integration.*

Despite these challenges, the response to the Ukraine crisis has produced remarkable innovations, promising practices, and new partnerships that offer fresh ideas for how to approach labour market integration. These include:

- ▶ **Easing labour market restrictions for foreign-qualified professionals in shortages occupations and adopting a 'career pathway' approach.** Allowing qualified Ukrainians to work in fields such

as health care, teaching, and child care with appropriate supervision while getting their foreign qualifications recognised can help alleviate pressure on public services, provide much-needed support to other Ukrainians in their mother tongue, and help these workers resume their careers in their chosen profession. This, in turn, can help Ukrainian professionals keep their skills up to date, which will be useful to future, postwar reconstruction efforts in Ukraine. Temporary regulatory waivers (such as those implemented in Latvia, Italy, and Portugal) should be combined with on-the-job qualifications assessment, language training, and bridging programmes to ensure that participating workers have a clear path to full professional recognition at the end of the transition period. The European Commission could also find inspiration in this career pathway approach as it pursues its goal of streamlining the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals more broadly.

- ▶ **Tapping the skills and networks of both new arrivals and diaspora communities.** Examples have emerged across Europe of Ukrainians finding ways to support each other. This can involve foreign-qualified professionals taking up temporary roles in schools or medical centres to provide Ukrainian-language services, community-based child-care solutions to help adults in single-parent households join the workforce, and diaspora members connecting new arrivals with services and personal and professional networks. Policymakers should explore ways to leverage and support such community-led efforts, which have not only bridged gaps in overtaxed services but can also help build or maintain public support for welcoming and assisting newcomers.
- ▶ **Offering fast-track bridging training to help new arrivals qualify for jobs in their chosen profession.** Fast-track modules can allow new arrivals to plug gaps in their skills or training without needing to start over from scratch. And by enabling newcomers to begin vocational training even before they have attained a certain level of host-country language proficiency (i.e., by running vocational training in the mother tongue and language classes in parallel), programmes can provide a faster route to a destination-country qualification that employers are familiar with and that opens new employment opportunities. Sweden has pioneered fast-track modules for refugees, though these programmes are currently not open to beneficiaries of temporary protection (the status held by many Ukrainians).
- ▶ **Providing more flexible and accessible integration services.** Utilising digital technology (for example, distance and asynchronous learning) and offering integration programmes as modules, rather than one long course, could help make these services more accessible to displaced Ukrainians balancing other commitments, including work and/or child care. Examples include the partially remote programme run by Sweden's Sophiahemmet University to support the professional recognition of Ukrainian doctors and nurses, and the package of measures Czechia has adopted to speed up qualifications recognition for Ukrainian health professionals, which includes professional webcasts and distance learning. Virtual programming could also open up niche offerings (e.g., occupation-specific language courses) to newcomers in a wider range of locations.

The labour market integration strategies of the future will need to accommodate migrant and refugee populations with a diversity of profiles and priorities, and significant shifts in demand for services over time. Modular and more flexible approaches can offer more options for displaced Ukrainians and other groups (including temporary and circular migrants) to build new skills and address gaps in their training that might

otherwise prevent them from practising their profession, while also meeting labour market needs. Finally, in an era of budget and capacity constraints, integration policymakers will need to maintain and scale up their cooperation across policy portfolios (including housing, education, labour, and social policy) and with employers and civil society.

## 1 Introduction

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led millions of displaced Ukrainians (and people of other nationalities) to seek protection in other countries since February 2022. One year on, in February 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that more than 8 million refugees from Ukraine had sought safety in countries across Europe, including 5 million who had registered for temporary protection.<sup>1</sup> Within the European Union, most of these registrations have taken place in Poland (1.6 million), Germany (1 million), and Czechia (500,000). Czechia, Estonia, Poland, Lithuania, and Bulgaria, meanwhile, host the largest number of temporary protection beneficiaries relative to their population size.<sup>2</sup> Ukraine's military conscription means that most arrivals are women and children, in contrast to the 2015–16 European migration crisis when a large share of those arriving by land or sea were young men<sup>3</sup>—a difference that has brought new challenges and considerations when receiving and integrating new arrivals.

Displaced Ukrainians began to arrive in Europe at a time when many of its countries were reporting acute labour shortages, particularly in sectors such as accommodation and food services, architecture, construction, engineering, health and social care, information and communications technology, computer programming, and logistics.<sup>4</sup> In the first few months, governments and civil-society stakeholders focused on meeting the newcomers'

*As displaced Ukrainians have increasingly sought and found work, this has presented an opportunity to explore whether their labour market integration could help address some of the acute labour shortages facing Europe.*

immediate needs, including connecting them with housing and services and enrolling children in schools, and on reinforcing the capacity of local infrastructure to handle these additional demands. But as displaced Ukrainians have increasingly sought and found work, this has presented an opportunity to explore whether their labour market integration could help address some of the acute labour shortages facing Europe.

1 These data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) use statistics provided by national authorities. The number of registrations for temporary protection covers European countries that have offered such protection, whether under the European Union's Temporary Protection Directive or a national scheme, including the European Economic Area (which includes EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway), Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and several Balkan states (Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo). Note that some of the individuals who have registered for temporary protection may have since returned to Ukraine or to another country of origin. See UNHCR, 'Ukraine Refugee Situation', updated 28 March 2023.

2 UNHCR, 'Ukraine Refugee Situation'; Eurostat, 'Temporary Protection for Persons Fleeing Ukraine - Monthly Statistics', updated February 2023.

3 Phillip Connor, 'Asylum Seeker Demography: Young and Male', in *Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2016); Talitha Dubow and Katie Kuschminder, 'Family Strategies in Refugee Journeys to Europe', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no. 4 (December 2021): 4262–78.

4 European Commission, *European Economic Forecast Winter 2022* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022); Orsetta Causa et al., 'The Post-COVID-19 Rise in Labour Shortages' (Economics Department Working Papers No. 1721, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Publishing, Paris, 7 July 2022).

Early evidence suggests that displaced Ukrainians' labour market entry is progressing well, with many working-age adults starting to find jobs. Some European countries have sought to recruit Ukrainian health-care professionals, teachers, and child-care providers to mitigate pressures on education and health systems. But the focus on accessing work quickly—in whatever form it can be found—can sometimes come at the expense of finding a quality job that fully leverages Ukrainians' skills and experience. A range of challenges, including language barriers, qualifications recognition requirements, and issues securing child care have meant that many have accepted jobs that are below their skill levels, less stable, and/or part time. Given that many Ukrainians hope and plan to return to Ukraine in the near future, this focus on early rather than longer-term employment is entirely logical. Yet, this also suggests that their potential to fill Europe's pressing labour shortages may go underutilised. This waste of skills and loss of earnings may accumulate if many displaced Ukrainians end up either settling in their host countries or moving back and forth between those countries and Ukraine, whether because the conflict there becomes protracted or because of Ukraine's candidacy to become an EU Member State.<sup>5</sup>

This report explores how displaced Ukrainians are faring in European labour markets and how governments can work together with civil society and employers to help new arrivals find decent jobs. It reviews what is—and is not—known about these Ukrainians' early labour market outcomes and the barriers they must contend with when seeking work. The report also highlights opportunities to help newcomers access work and integration programming and, in doing so, to help European employers and societies benefit from their skills.

## 2 A Snapshot of Ukrainians' Integration into European Labour Markets

The European Union's March 2022 decision to activate the Temporary Protection Directive for displaced Ukrainians created a swift and straightforward pathway for this group to obtain a residence permit and access employment, education, and public services.<sup>6</sup> As a result, new arrivals from Ukraine have not had to file individual asylum applications, which has lessened the burden on Europe's already backlogged asylum systems and enabled Ukrainians to avoid the delays in accessing employment and services that asylum seekers often encounter while waiting for their applications to be processed.<sup>7</sup> Ukrainians can start looking for work as soon as they get temporary protection status, and the directive's clear rules around work authorisation can reassure cautious employers.<sup>8</sup>

5 European Commission, 'Support for Ukraine—Application for EU Membership', accessed 16 February 2023.

6 Council of the European Union, 'Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 Establishing the Existence of a Mass Influx of Displaced Persons from Ukraine within the Meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and Having the Effect of Introducing Temporary Protection', *Official Journal of the European Union* 2022 L 71/1 (4 March 2022).

7 Under the recast Reception Conditions Directive, asylum seekers should receive the right to work within nine months. However, debates continue about when exactly this clock starts, which means that some discrepancies remain among EU Member States. See European Union, 'Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 Laying down Standards for the Reception of Applicants for International Protection (Recast)', *Official Journal of the European Union* 2013 L 180 (29 June 2013), 96–116.

8 Research suggests that employers can be wary of hiring asylum seekers and refugees because of the complexity of the rules governing their ability to work. See Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and UNHCR, *Engaging with Employers in the Hiring of Refugees* (Paris and Geneva: OECD and UNHCR, 2018).

The picture is more complex for third-country nationals displaced from Ukraine who are not able to return to their country of origin. The Council decision allowed Member States to decide whether to apply the Temporary Protection Directive or an alternative national status to permanent residents of Ukraine, and to decide whether to include third-country nationals who held a temporary status in Ukraine (e.g., a work or study visa) at all.<sup>9</sup> Only a few Member States (for example, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain) opted to include the latter group, and some have since begun to lift these protections and require them to apply for a residence permit in the host country (e.g., work, study, or asylum) or to return to their country of origin.<sup>10</sup> While this group makes up a small share of the population displaced from Ukraine and is thus not the focus of this report, it is worth reflecting on this uneven treatment and its potential to drive some into irregular status or prompt secondary movement.<sup>11</sup>

For Ukrainians, the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive provides a quick route to join the labour market, even though some questions remain around the duration of their status. However, there are other important dynamics at play that are shaping the employment outcomes of displaced Ukrainians. First and foremost, an exit ban that prevents most Ukrainian men ages 18 to 60 from leaving Ukraine has

---

*For Ukrainians, the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive provides a quick route to join the labour market.*

meant that almost all Ukrainians arriving in Europe are women, children, or people over the age of 60.<sup>12</sup> A sizeable share of new arrivals are not of working age, and many of those who are have to navigate child- and/or elder-care responsibilities that can limit their ability to look for work that matches their skills. This is especially true in areas where child-care services are oversubscribed.<sup>13</sup>

A second important dynamic is the close economic, social, and cultural ties between Ukraine and Europe, which have meant that many displaced Ukrainians have been able to tap into existing social networks in Europe on arrival. Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, a sizeable population of Ukrainians was already living and working in Europe. At the end of 2021, 1.55 million Ukrainians held a residence

9 Council of the European Union, 'Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 Establishing the Existence of a Mass Influx of Displaced Persons from Ukraine'.

10 For example, the Netherlands announced it would lift protection for this group on 4 March 2023, while as of 1 September 2022, third-country nationals who did not have Ukrainian nationality/permanent resident status or family members who were Ukrainian needed to either obtain a residence permit (e.g., work, study, or training), apply for asylum, or undergo regular checks to ensure they were unable to return to their country of origin. See Government of the Netherlands, Immigration and Naturalisation Service, 'European Directive Extended: Ukrainians Entitled to Longer Residency in the Netherlands', updated 14 October 2022; German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 'Displacement, Entry and Asylum: War in Ukraine', accessed 9 December 2022; Meltem Ineli Ciger and Suleyman Demirel, 'Reasons for the Activation of the Temporary Protection Directive in 2022: A Tale of Double Standards', The ASILE Project, 6 October 2022.

11 Estimating the size of the third-country national population from Ukraine in Europe is challenging, as many appear to have returned to their countries of origin. In Germany, third-country nationals reportedly made up around 3 per cent of the displaced population from Ukraine, or about 29,000 people, as of August 2022, while the Netherlands had registered 6,600 people by October 2022, of whom 'a large portion' previously held a temporary residence permit in Ukraine. See Zeit Online, 'Manchen Kriegsflüchtlingen aus der Ukraine könnte Abschiebung drohen', Zeit Online, 30 August 2022; Government of the Netherlands, Immigration and Naturalisation Service, 'European Directive Extended'.

12 This exit ban was introduced by the 24 February 2022 decree imposing martial law in Ukraine. Limited exceptions apply to men who are unable to serve in Ukraine's military on health grounds or who are primary caregivers.

13 The OECD estimates that, on average, 50–60 per cent of Temporary Protection Directive beneficiaries are of working age, although the exact share varies across countries. See OECD, 'The Potential Contribution of Ukrainian Refugees to the Labour Force in European Host Countries' (OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine, OECD Publishing, Paris, 27 July 2022).



permit in the European Union.<sup>14</sup> The total population is likely considerably larger when factoring in other groups, such as Ukrainians who also hold citizenship in an EU country,<sup>15</sup> Ukrainian asylum seekers, and Ukrainian citizens who lack a valid residence permit and have either been using visa-free travel for repeated short-term stays in the Schengen zone or overstayed a visa.

In recent years, Poland has been the major destination country for Ukrainians in the European Union, with 651,221 Ukrainian citizens holding a valid Polish residence permit at the end of 2021, followed by Italy (230,366) and Czechia (193,547).<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the Ukrainian share of the overall national population was largest in Czechia, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Slovakia.<sup>17</sup> Before the war, Ukrainians enjoyed simplified temporary labour migration rules in several neighbouring countries. The largest channel is Poland's employer declaration scheme, which has exempted Ukrainians from applying for a work permit if they hold a job offer for temporary nonseasonal employment.<sup>18</sup> Latvia also has a simplified migration regime for Ukrainians employed in construction and logistics,<sup>19</sup> and Czechia offers a special work visa for Ukrainians in agriculture, the food industry, and forestry.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, visa-free travel to the Schengen zone has allowed Ukrainians to travel to other parts of Europe and look for work, whether through legal or irregular channels. For example, while Ukrainian citizens have received the lion's share of first residence permits for work since 2013, in recent years Ukrainians have also made up an important share of the informal workforce in the care and domestic services sectors in countries such as Germany and Italy.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the Temporary Protection Directive may provide a route for some of these workers who are already in Europe to regularise their status and improve their labour market situation.

A third noteworthy dynamic is the educational profile and labour market participation of displaced Ukrainians. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that two-thirds of working-age displaced Ukrainians have tertiary education, and that about half previously worked in high-skilled occupations.<sup>22</sup> However, while the ILO found that most were employed before the war, prewar data on Ukraine's labour force show a notable gender gap, with 74.5 per cent of men ages 15–64 participating in the labour force compared to 63.2 per cent of women.<sup>23</sup> Helping new arrivals in Europe, most of whom are women, find work will need to take into account these gender dynamics.

14 These data refer to valid residence permits as of 31 December each year, instead of those currently residing in the country at that point in time. See Eurostat, 'All Valid Permits by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship on 31 December of Each Year [MIGR\_RESVALID]'; updated 21 October 2022.

15 Available data suggest that 193,343 Ukrainians acquired EU citizenship between 2010 and 2020 inclusive; this figure includes partial data for Romania, and includes the United Kingdom until 2019. See Eurostat, 'Acquisition of Citizenship by Age Group, Sex and Former Citizenship [MIGR\_ACQ]'; updated 18 March 2022.

16 Eurostat, 'All Valid Permits'.

17 Eurostat, 'All Valid Permits'.

18 Under the employer declaration scheme, nationals of Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine can work in Poland in nonseasonal employment for up to 24 consecutive months, provided they have a Polish employer's declaration of intent to hire them. Russia, which was also among the countries benefitting from the scheme, was removed in October 2022. Most employer declarations have been filed for work in agriculture, construction, and domestic services. See European Migration Network (EMN), 'Poland 2021' (EMN Country Factsheet, August 2022).

19 Authors' interview with Agnese Lace, Senior Policy Analyst, Providus, November 2022.

20 Since 2019, Ukrainians have also enjoyed a reserved quota in the country's skilled employee programme. See EMN, *EMN Annual Policy Report on Asylum and Migration 2021 – Czech Republic* (Brussels: EMN, 2022).

21 Eurostat, 'First Permits by Reason, Length of Validity and Citizenship [MIGR\_RESFIRST]'; updated 21 October 2022.

22 International Labour Organisation (ILO), 'The Impact of the Ukraine Crisis on the World of Work: Initial Assessments' (ILO Brief, 11 May 2022).

23 ILO, 'The Impact of the Ukraine Crisis on the World of Work'; State Statistics Service of Ukraine, *Labour Force of Ukraine 2019* (Kyiv: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2020), 46–47.

Getting an accurate, up-to-date picture of how Ukrainians are faring in European labour markets remains a challenge. Some governments have yet to publish official data on their labour market participation. And the data that do exist have some blind spots—for example, undercounting Ukrainians in more informal types of employment, remote employment for Ukrainian companies, and self-employment, and failing to capture return migration to Ukraine that takes workers out of the host country’s labour market. In some countries, the legal status of displaced Ukrainians may also affect what data are collected; for example, their temporary protection status in Sweden currently means that they are excluded from the population registry.<sup>24</sup> The rest of this section draws on both official data sources and stakeholder interviews to assess labour market trends among displaced Ukrainians.

## A. *How many are finding work?*

Displaced Ukrainians have started to find work in Europe, but rates of employment vary widely by country. In Poland, for example, a National Bank of Poland survey found that about one-third of working-age Ukrainians had already secured a job offer or were working by late April or early May 2022. One year after the war began, the share had roughly doubled, to reach 60 per cent, although an estimated 10–15 per cent of those employed were working remotely for Ukrainian companies.<sup>25</sup> In Czechia, more than 40 per cent had found work as of August 2022.<sup>26</sup> However, labour market integration in other countries has been slower. In Spain, for example, about 13 per cent of working-age Ukrainians who were registered for temporary protection status had found work by the end of October 2022. And Germany’s employment agency reported an additional 51,000 Ukrainians registered as employed (providing social security contributions) in August 2022, while almost 400,000 employable Ukrainians were registered with job centres (although this figure includes some not actively seeking work).<sup>27</sup>

---

*Displaced Ukrainians have started to find work in Europe, but rates of employment vary widely by country.*

Labour market dynamics and regulations can help explain some of this variation. Relevant factors include the types of jobs available (and at what skill level), the language skills and qualifications typically required to find work and how these compare to the profile of Ukrainian jobseekers, and the availability of different labour market integration services. But another key consideration is Ukrainians’ intention to stay versus return to Ukraine. The same National Bank of Poland survey found that two-thirds of Ukrainians in the country wished to return to Ukraine as soon as possible, and that achieving financial independence was

24 Swedish Migration Agency, ‘Information for People Coming to Sweden from Ukraine’, accessed 14 April 2023.

25 Agata Górny and Paweł Kaczmarczyk, ‘Between Ukraine and Poland: Ukrainian Migrants in Poland during the War’ (Centre of Migration Research Spotlight No.2 [48], February 2023).

26 Iza Chmielewska-Kalińska, Beata Dudek, and Paweł Strzelecki, *The Living and Economic Situation of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland: Report of the Questionnaire Survey Conducted by NBP Regional Branches* (Warsaw: National Bank of Poland, Department of Statistics, 2022); Novinky.cz, ‘Práci v Česku má 107 tisíc uprchlíků z Ukrajiny - Novinky’, Novinky.cz, 28 August 2022.

27 Germany’s data on employment count those registered for social security contributions. Figures for those registered with job centres include people who are and are not actively seeking work (for example, because they are enrolled in an integration course, education, or looking after family members). See Government of Spain, Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, ‘Ciudadanos ucranianos en España con documentación de residencia en vigor – 31 December 2021 to 31 October 2022’, accessed 9 December 2022; Marcel Leubecher, ‘Rund 604.000 Ukrainer beziehen Grundsicherung für Arbeitssuchende’, *Welt*, 2 November 2022; German Federal Employment Agency, *Berichterstattung zu den Auswirkungen der Fluchtmigration aus der Ukraine auf den deutschen Arbeitsmarkt und die Grundsicherung für Arbeitssuchende* (Nuremberg: German Federal Employment Agency, 2022).

a top priority.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, surveys in Germany found that about half wished to stay in Germany as of June 2022, rising to two-thirds in October 2022.<sup>29</sup> This difference may also be linked to where displaced Ukrainians decide to settle; those seeking to return to Ukraine (whether on a temporary or permanent basis) may choose to stay in a neighbouring country where the return journey is quicker and cheaper, and thus have different labour market objectives than Ukrainians settling in other European countries. For those who plan to settle in their host country long term, this can be a key factor (alongside others, such as host-country language proficiency) in encouraging Ukrainians to invest time in attending full-time integration programmes before seeking a job.<sup>30</sup> In Germany, for example, early surveys of displaced Ukrainians found that employment rates were higher among those who planned to return home—suggesting an emphasis on early employment—compared to those who planned to stay in Germany for longer and therefore might prioritise long-term integration supports.<sup>31</sup>

When it comes to finding work, displaced Ukrainians have some advantages compared to other refugee or even immigrant populations in Europe. These include their high education levels and close ties to many European countries, as noted above. European employers have also demonstrated remarkable solidarity with Ukrainian newcomers (see Box 1), in stark contrast to the discrimination many other refugee and migrant populations experience when searching for work.

Even with this warm welcome, Ukrainians can nevertheless face significant barriers to labour market participation. Many of these issues are common for displaced populations, including limited destination-country language proficiency, the need to build up professional or social networks to connect with employers, and difficulties getting foreign qualifications or work experience recognised or valued by destination-country employers. Some Ukrainian newcomers are also still in temporary housing, which can slow the process of putting down roots and finding employment.

Language, in particular, has played a big role in whether displaced Ukrainians have been able to find work and what types of jobs they can secure. Use of a *lingua franca* (e.g., English in many European countries, and Russian in the Baltic states) can speed up this process. This might help explain why, for example, 42 per cent of working-age Ukrainians had found a job in the United Kingdom by late July 2022,<sup>32</sup> while 13 per cent of working-age Ukrainians in Switzerland (where German, French, and Italian are more commonly used for work) had done so by late October 2022, primarily in the hospitality sector.<sup>33</sup> In certain sectors or occupations, such as information and communications technology, English is particularly prevalent and jobs may match up well to some Ukrainians' skillsets, given Ukraine has a reputation for producing world-class coders and software developers.<sup>34</sup>

28 Chmielewska-Kalińska, Dudek, and Strzelecki, *The Living and Economic Situation of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland*.

29 Ifo Institute, 'Refugees from Ukraine Want to Work in Germany' (press release, 21 July 2022); Ifo Institute, 'One in Five of Germany's Ukrainian Refugees Has Found a Job' (press release, 16 November 2022).

30 Tetyana Panchenko and Panu Poutvaara, 'Intentions to Stay and Employment Prospects of Refugees from Ukraine' (EconPol policy brief 46, November 2022).

31 Herbert Brückner et al., *Ukrainian Refugees in Germany: Escape, Arrival and Everyday Life* (Nuremberg: German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2023).

32 Chmielewska-Kalińska, Dudek, and Strzelecki, *The Living and Economic Situation of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland*; UK Office of National Statistics, 'Visa Holders Entering the UK under the Ukraine Humanitarian Schemes – Follow-up Survey: 20 July to 4 August 2022', updated 26 August 2022.

33 Guillaume Rey and Mathieu Henderson, 'La difficile intégration professionnelle des réfugiés ukrainiens en Suisse', RTS Switzerland, 24 October 2022.

34 Sam Shead, 'Global Tech Firms Are Lining up to Hire Ukraine's World-Renowned Coders', CNBC, 11 March 2022.

Other barriers are more specific to this population of mostly women and children. These include the fact that many prospective workers must first find affordable child care or enrol their children in schools before taking up employment. The gaps described above between Ukrainian women and men's labour market participation may also mean that some prospective workers lack recent work experience, which can impede labour market entry.

### BOX 1

#### Ukrainian jobseekers and positive discrimination by European employers

European employers have shown considerable solidarity with displaced Ukrainians, bucking a longstanding trend across Europe of labour market discrimination against migrants, refugees, and ethnic minority groups. On paper, these Ukrainians face a double disadvantage—holding a temporary status, which could make some employers wary of hiring them and investing resources in training employees who may not stay long term, and often juggling responsibilities in single-parent households. Yet their experiences to date run counter to this norm.

This solidarity has taken the form of positive discrimination, with employers actively seeking to hire members of this vulnerable population, as well as initiatives to train and provide services to displaced Ukrainians. Some employer associations have set up or repurposed online portals to help connect Ukrainians with employment opportunities and provide information about the hiring process to interested employers. Examples include the Business Helps platform established by the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA), the Federation of German Industries (BDI), the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), and the Central Association of German Crafts and Trades (ZDH), as well as the hospitality association Hosco's dedicated page for Ukraine. In Poland, where solidarity with displaced Ukrainians and opposition to Russia's actions are especially widespread, employers have shown a great deal of interest in hiring Ukrainians. Job portal data in the first three months of the war showed a sharp rise in the number of jobs advertised for Ukrainians, and there are examples of employers creating new jobs specifically to support Ukrainians. In some cases, employers have also stepped in to provide child-care support or language training to new hires to address employment barriers and backlogs in state-run services. For example, some retailers in Czechia are providing Ukrainian-language recruitment support and Czech language training to new hires. This engagement has helped smooth the way for Ukrainians to enter European labour markets, and illustrated the potential of employer-led integration efforts.

Sources: European Network Against Racism, *Racism and Discrimination in Employment in Europe 2013-2017* (Brussels: European Network Against Racism, 2017); Thomas Liebig and Kristian Rose Tronstad, 'Triple Disadvantage? A First Overview of the Integration of Refugee Women' (working paper 216, Social, Employment, and Migration Working Papers, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Publishing, Paris, 30 August 2018); Wirtschaftshilft, 'BDA, BDI, DIHK und ZDH unterstützen Unternehmen bei der Bewältigung der Folgen des Russland-Ukraine-Krieges', accessed 9 December 2022; Hosco, 'Jobs for Ukrainian Refugees', accessed 9 December 2022; Maciej Bukowski and Maciej Duszczyk, eds., *Hospitable Poland-2022+: How to Wisely Support Poland and Poles in Helping People Fleeing the War in Ukraine?* (Warsaw: Wise Europa, 2022); EuroCommerce, 'Commerce Sector', updated 16 May 2022.

## B. What kinds of jobs do they hold?

Displaced Ukrainians have tended to find jobs that require fewer formal qualifications and/or little host-country language proficiency. For example, data from the Netherlands suggest that Ukrainians there are finding work primarily in the hospitality, agriculture and horticulture, logistics, and services industries. Around half have found temporary employment through agencies, for example as cleaners or warehouse

employees.<sup>35</sup> This aligns with early evidence from Spain, where the majority of displaced Ukrainians who have found jobs are working in the construction, accommodation, retail, and domestic work sectors, and Estonia, where most employed Ukrainians with temporary protection have found work in manufacturing, administrative and support services, retail, and accommodation and food services.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, data from Poland paint a two-sided picture; while 40 per cent of displaced Ukrainians in the country work in unskilled, blue-collar jobs (in most cases below their levels of qualifications), about 20 per cent work as specialists, notably in the IT, financial, and accountancy and education sectors.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the incidence of part-time and temporary employment is high. Survey data suggest some Ukrainians are looking for part-time rather than full-time work, especially in countries or regions where child care is oversubscribed.<sup>38</sup> These lower-skilled and temporary jobs can offer a fast route into the labour market, and the ability to start earning money and supporting family members in the destination country and in Ukraine.

*Survey data suggest some Ukrainians are looking for part-time rather than full-time work, especially in countries or regions where child care is oversubscribed.*

Employment trends observed among displaced Ukrainians in Europe—and particularly in the countries closer to Ukraine—are reminiscent of early employment trends among intra-EU movers from Eastern European countries in the wake of the European Union’s 2004 enlargement. Many of these intra-EU movers took low-skilled jobs in Western Europe, regardless of their own higher qualifications, and still benefited from higher salaries than were available in

their origin countries and from favourable exchange rates.<sup>39</sup> Wage differentials between positions in Ukraine and those in host countries in Europe can also be significant, even in low-wage roles.

But while labour market entry is an important achievement for new arrivals, the nature of these jobs could create problems down the road. Studies suggest that in an economic downturn, workers in less-skilled roles and those on part-time or short-term contracts are often among the hardest hit.<sup>40</sup> With concerns looming about an economic slowdown triggered by rising inflation and energy prices, there is a risk that some newly employed Ukrainians could lose their jobs or see employment opportunities dry up.

A second set of concerns relates to a potential mismatch between displaced Ukrainians’ skills and the types of jobs they are finding. Circular migration and low-skilled employment were distinctive patterns of Ukrainian migration to Europe, even prior to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. A crucial distinction between current and previous cohorts is the higher qualification levels of the Ukrainians displaced since early 2022, which could lead to skills mismatch on a much larger scale. Surveys in Poland, for example, found that about half of displaced Ukrainians in the country had a university degree.<sup>41</sup> Another issue in Poland and the Baltic states is that the outbreak of war in Ukraine led many Ukrainian men who were

35 UWV, ‘Ruim 46.000 meldingen ontvangen van werkenden vluchtelingen uit Oekraïne’ (news release, 1 November 2022).

36 Government of Spain, Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration, ‘Ciudadanos ucranianos en España’; Statistics Estonia, ‘Ukrainians in the Estonian Labour Market’, accessed 29 March 2023.

37 Górny and Kaczmarczyk, ‘Between Ukraine and Poland’.

38 Chmielewska-Kalińska, Dudek, and Strzelecki, *The Living and Economic Situation of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland*.

39 OECD, *Free Movement of Workers and Labour Market Adjustment* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012).

40 See, for example, Sakai Ando et al., *European Labor Markets and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Fallout and the Path Ahead* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2022).

41 Chmielewska-Kalińska, Dudek, and Strzelecki, *The Living and Economic Situation of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland*.

working abroad to return to fight, resulting in worker shortages in manual labour roles, and these jobs are generally a poor fit for the highly educated Ukrainian women who have since arrived in these countries.<sup>42</sup> Self-reported data collected by Statistics Lithuania when registering new arrivals suggest that many newcomers to the country are professionals; for example, as of late 2022, alongside lower-skilled and manual roles in trade (8.3 per cent), cooking (7.2 per cent), and construction (5.7 per cent), others reported previously working in health care (7.7 per cent), management (7.1 per cent), accounting (6.0 per cent), teaching (4.6 per cent), law (3.7 per cent), and finance (2.6 per cent).<sup>43</sup>

The underemployment that results from a mismatch between workers' skills and job profiles can have a negative impact on both newcomers and their host society. For European countries struggling to fill both structural and cyclical vacancies, this would represent a lost opportunity to address some of these pervasive labour shortages. For Ukrainians, periods of time spent in lower-skilled and lower-wage roles could have a scarring effect on newcomers' career prospects. Ukrainians who decide to stay in their destination countries, as well as those who end up moving back and forth between those countries and Ukraine, may find themselves trapped in low-quality jobs.<sup>44</sup> For Ukrainians who do return to Ukraine, even a short period of underemployment can translate to missed earnings, skills obsolescence, and lost opportunities to learn new skills that could be used to support Ukraine's postwar reconstruction. Efforts to promote the labour market integration of displaced Ukrainians should thus consider issues relating to job quality and skills waste, in addition to access to employment overall.

### 3 Strategies to Help Displaced Ukrainians Find Quality Jobs

Despite the promising signs that Ukrainians are beginning to enter destination-country labour markets, there is still much more work to be done to tackle uneven progress across Europe and build on early successes. Newcomers' pre-existing ties with Europe, whether through direct personal connections or the larger Ukrainian diaspora, can help displaced Ukrainians find work. But those who lack strong professional and social networks, who have not worked recently, or who face other barriers to employment (e.g., child-care responsibilities, language barriers, and the need to have credentials recognised) could benefit from more tailored supports—both to help them enter the job market and to find work that matches their professional profile and minimises skills waste.<sup>45</sup>

This section looks at six issue areas essential to supporting Ukrainians' labour market integration in Europe. It considers initiatives that have been launched to date as well as areas of unmet need, highlighting how addressing these gaps could both help newcomers and improve the chances that they fill persistent vacancies in receiving-society labour markets.

42 Council of Europe, *Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Poland by Ms Leyla Kayacik, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, 30 May – 3 June 2022* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2022).

43 Statistics Lithuania, 'War Refugees from Ukraine: Professions', accessed 16 November 2022.

44 Meghan Benton, Susan Fratzke, and Madeleine Sumption, *Moving up or Standing Still? Access to Middle-Skilled Work for Newly Arrived Migrants in the European Union* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute and ILO, 2014).

45 International Organisation for Migration (IOM), *Recognition of Qualifications and Competences of Migrants* (Brussels: IOM, 2013); Maria Vincenza Desiderio, *Improving Access to Labour Market Information for Migrants and Employers* (Brussels: IOM, 2014); OECD, *Matching Economic Migration with Labour Market Needs* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2014).

## A. *Connecting Ukrainians with employers*

Limited labour market information or professional networks can make it difficult for newcomers to find suitable jobs.<sup>46</sup> For example, migrants who are not familiar with the host-country labour market and are not proficient in the local language may find it hard to access information on available jobs commensurate with their skills or on related labour market requirements. In turn, employers may be put off from hiring otherwise qualified candidates by opaque rules governing the labour market access of those with different migration statuses, complex qualifications recognition regulations, and—as discussed above—bias against foreign-born workers.

Ukrainians have some advantages compared to other displaced populations, including the clear right to work afforded by the Temporary Protection Directive and, in some cases, existing connections with Europe. For example, surveys of displaced Ukrainians in Poland that were conducted in Spring 2022 found that 54 per cent had ties with the country: 14 per cent had previously worked in Poland, while the remainder had family members (28 per cent) or friends (12 per cent) who had previously worked there.<sup>47</sup> While these personal networks and the Ukrainian diaspora in Europe can play a vital role in connecting new arrivals with employment opportunities, more can be done to help those without such connections navigate the job search process and understand what tools and services are available. Greater attention could also be paid to providing reliable information to employers interested in employing displaced Ukrainians.

---

*Ukrainians have some advantages compared to other displaced populations, including the clear right to work afforded by the Temporary Protection Directive and, in some cases, existing connections with Europe.*

Most EU Member States have set up dedicated webpages that serve as virtual one-stop shops by gathering—and translating into Ukrainian—relevant information on reception and integration services, including available labour market services. In some contexts, these services include online job-matching portals to connect prospective employers with new arrivals. Often, these portals predate the Ukraine crisis, although some have created special landing pages for Ukrainians with information translated into Ukrainian and/or a *lingua franca* such as English or Russian. Denmark, for example, has created a dedicated webpage (JobguideUkraine.dk) that provides comprehensive guidance for Ukrainian jobseekers in Denmark as well as links to three existing job-matching platforms for different skill levels/sectors that also offer tailored information in English, Ukrainian, and Danish.<sup>48</sup> Other tools, such as the Europass platform, have also been translated into Ukrainian.<sup>49</sup>

46 Desiderio, *Improving Access to Labour Market Information for Migrants and Employers*; OECD, *Matching Economic Migration with Labour Market Needs*.

47 Chmielewska-Kalińska, Dudek, and Strzelecki, *The Living and Economic Situation of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland*. The survey was conducted between 13 April 2022 and 12 May 2022 by the National Bank of Poland's regional branches with a sample of 3,165 adult displaced Ukrainians who arrived after 24 February 2022.

48 Danish Ministry of Employment, 'JobguideUkraine.dk', accessed 9 December 2022.

49 European Union, 'Europass', accessed 24 March 2023.

Some online resources go a step further, with job-matching platforms that can connect Ukrainian jobseekers with European employers. Since February 2022, a flurry of initiatives have been launched at the sectoral, national, and EU levels (including the EU Talent Pool pilot announced in October 2022). Some of these platforms are state-led; for example, CzechInvest (a business development agency set up by the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade in the early 1990s) runs a platform that connects Ukrainian jobseekers with employers registered with the country's Labour Office.<sup>50</sup> The private sector and civil society have taken the lead in establishing other platforms, such as Austrian Jobs for Ukraine (operated by a consortium of private-sector and nonprofit partners), Belgium's Jobs for Ukraine platform (operated by a placement company and a nonprofit), and the Jobs for Ukraine site that posts opportunities from more than 60 countries (run by the placement company Adecco), while Germany's UATalents platform is an interesting example of a diaspora-run operation.<sup>51</sup> In some cases, privately run platforms seek to connect displaced Ukrainians with remote work opportunities, which can offer new arrivals more flexible employment conditions in Ukrainian or another language. For example, the nonprofit-run EmployUkraine reports having registered more than 2,000 employers (including multinationals such as Allianz, Amazon, Dell, Microsoft, and Unilever) and more than 8,000 Ukrainian jobseekers.<sup>52</sup>

At the European level, in October 2022, the European Commission launched the EU Talent Pool pilot to match displaced Ukrainians with European employers. Unlike the original Talent Pool proposal outlined in the EU New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which aimed to connect third-country nationals outside Europe with European employers, this pilot focuses on displaced Ukrainians who are already in Europe and hold temporary protection status.<sup>53</sup> For now, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Spain are participating in the pilot, which enables participants to create and post a CV, access support from European Employment Services (EURES) advisors, and search for jobs through the EURES portal.<sup>54</sup> Registered employers can also search the database of candidates who have uploaded their CVs, filtering by occupation, education level, location, language skills, and other attributes. The pilot and Europass CV tools are accessible in English, Russian, and Ukrainian, but the job offers themselves are generally not translated.<sup>55</sup>

The success of the Talent Pool pilot and other job-matching platforms will depend on how widely they are used, both by displaced Ukrainians and by European employers. While some Ukrainians will rely on their own networks to find work, such platforms hold particular promise for jobseekers who lack strong networks, those who wish to find a job more closely aligned to their skillsets, and those willing to move for better employment opportunities (either within a country or to another EU Member State). Most job-matching platforms focus on displaced Ukrainians within Europe, but opening these platforms up to

50 Czech Invest, 'Tržiště Pracovních Příležitostí', accessed 9 December 2022.

51 For more information, see Austrian Jobs for Ukraine, 'About Us', accessed 9 December 2022; Jobs for Ukraine, 'Home', accessed 9 December 2022; Adecco, 'Jobs for Ukraine', accessed 9 December 2022; UATalents, 'Get a Job You Will Like!', accessed 9 December 2022.

52 EmployUkraine, 'Hire Ukrainian Talent', accessed 9 December 2022.

53 The European Commission published the New Pact on Migration and Asylum in September 2020, which included a proposal to set up an EU Talent Pool that would allow skilled workers located outside the European Union to register their interest in migrating to Europe and connect them with European employers and migration authorities. See European Commission, 'Communication from the Commission on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum' (COM [2020], 609 final, 23 September 2020).

54 While the online services of the European Employment Services (EURES) are open to everyone, regardless of nationality, EURES advisors can usually only assist nationals. See European Commission, 'EURES—EU Talent Pool Pilot', accessed 9 December 2022; European Commission, 'EURES Services – Help and Support', accessed 9 December 2022.

55 EURES, 'EU Talent Pool Pilot - Q/A', accessed 9 December 2022.



Ukrainians outside Europe could help those about to flee or in transit plan their journey and access quality employment as soon as they arrive.

## B. *Lifting labour market restrictions*

Displaced Ukrainians have gravitated towards lower-skilled, temporary jobs in Europe, despite their high level of qualifications. As discussed above, this may be motivated by a desire to find a job and start earning money quickly, but it likely also reflects barriers to accessing work in more high-skilled and regulated professions, such as language requirements and the need to get foreign qualifications recognised.

Pressing labour shortages have led some EU countries' labour market and regulatory authorities to consider waiving some of these restrictions on a select or temporary basis. In part, this builds on experimentation during the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw some countries lift requirements on a temporary basis to recruit more health-care workers, for example. This flexibility has generally taken one of the following forms:

- ▶ **Waiving qualification recognition requirements on a temporary basis.** Several countries have temporarily exempted Ukrainians from meeting certain requirements to work in regulated professions. In Latvia, for instance, Ukrainian health professionals (including physicians, nurses, midwives, and dentists) can practice for up to one year under the supervision of an experienced Latvian-qualified medical practitioner.<sup>56</sup> Exemptions from general recognition requirements (i.e., doing additional training and passing exams to obtain registration in professional registries) also apply for temporary employment in construction and in electrical power engineering, as well as for vocational education and training (VET) teachers and foreign language teachers.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, in the German state of Saxony, Ukrainian teachers who pass an initial assessment are hired on probation while employment checks are completed.<sup>58</sup> Other countries have allowed qualified Ukrainians to work at lower levels within their profession while they complete standard labour market requirements. For example, in Estonia, Ukrainian-qualified doctors and teachers have been employed as medical and teaching assistants, pending the recognition of their qualifications.<sup>59</sup> These efforts have often focused on health professions and build on efforts during the pandemic to fill gaps in the strained health-care workforce. In Austria, pandemic-era policies allow Ukrainian and other foreign-qualified doctors to work as nonlicensed physicians under the responsibility of a locally licensed doctor, though this will be revoked when the World Health Organisation declares the pandemic over.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, in Italy, Ukrainian-qualified health professionals fleeing war who can present a European Qualifications

56 Under the *Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians*, adopted on 3 March 2022, a wide array of Ukrainian health professionals who hold a long-term visa can apply to the responsible Latvian regulatory authority to practice their profession for up to one year under the supervision of a Latvian-qualified practitioner. Documentation including educational and professional credentials, a declaration of activity, and a verification questionnaire can be provided in English, Latvian, or Russian. Similarities between the Latvian and Ukrainian medical training systems have meant that medical professionals trained in Ukraine have not been required to take any qualifications examinations in Latvia, as allowed under the law. See Government of Latvia, *Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians*, adopted 3 March 2022, effective since 4 March 2022.

57 As outlined in Government of Latvia, 'Īslaicīgu profesionālo pakalpojumu sniegšanas kārtība Latvijas Republikā reglamentētā profesijā', Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 47, 21 January 2021.

58 School Education Gateway, 'How EU Member States Find Teachers for Refugee Students', updated 8 April 2022.

59 Authors' interview with Raul Eamets, Dean, University of Tartu, Faculty of Social Sciences, September 2022.

60 European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons (ESCRS), 'Ukraine Support', accessed 9 November 2022.

Passport for Refugees<sup>61</sup> can practice their profession temporarily in public and private hospitals, exempt from qualifications recognition and language requirements, building on temporary pandemic-related exceptions to the standard rules.<sup>62</sup> In the first two weeks after this policy's implementation, more than one thousand job offers for Ukrainian health professionals were recorded across Italian regions.<sup>63</sup>

- ▶ **Lifting language requirements.** Some Member States have also loosened or lifted language requirements for certain professions, in line with guidance from the European Commission, especially in countries where Russian is widely used.<sup>64</sup> Latvia's *Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians* permits employers to hire Ukrainians who are not proficient in Latvian, insofar as this does not interfere with the performance of the job's duties.<sup>65</sup> In practice, interpretation is accepted as a sufficient means of clear communication, including for medical professionals and pharmacists. Meanwhile, Lithuania has temporarily waived Lithuanian language requirements in certain sectors for Ukrainian professionals, leaving it to the discretion of employers to decide whether a role can be performed without speaking Lithuanian.<sup>66</sup>
- ▶ **Hiring Ukrainian professionals to serve the Ukrainian community.** Finally, some Member States have sought to recruit Ukrainian professionals to help provide services to the displaced Ukrainian population. This approach can help address capacity constraints in overtaxed systems, albeit likely on a small scale, and provide Ukrainian-language services to Ukrainians with limited host-country language proficiency, all while tapping the skills of the Ukrainian community. In some cases, these recruitment efforts have been accompanied by policies lifting or relaxing certain standard requirements. For example, in Latvia, Ukrainian teachers, child-care providers, and sport coaches have been authorised to teach or supervise Ukrainian nationals without needing to meet local regulatory and language requirements.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Ukrainian child-care professionals and teachers in Romania can provide services to Ukrainian pupils.<sup>68</sup> Other countries have allowed Ukrainians

61 The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees is a standardised document explaining the qualifications a refugee is likely to have based on the available evidence. It also includes information on work experience and language proficiency level, based on a combination of available documentation and structured interviews. The passport is much faster to obtain than full recognition of qualifications and is valid across Europe. See Council of Europe, 'European Qualifications Passport for Refugees', accessed 24 April 2022.

62 President of the Republic of Italy, 'Decreto Legge 21 Marzo 2022, No. 21. Misure Urgenti per Contrastare gli Effetti Economici ed Umanitari della Crisi Ucraina', *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana* 163, no. 67 (21 March 2022).

63 *Redattore Sociale*, 'Ucraina, più di mille richieste di infermieri e medici dalle regioni', *Redattore Sociale*, 5 April 2022.

64 The European Commission encourages Member States to implement measures to facilitate access to professional practice by temporary protection beneficiaries who have no or limited knowledge of the host-country language, such as through language courses or arrangements to practice under supervision or in a setting where local language skills are not needed. See European Commission, 'Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/554 of 5 April 2022 on the Recognition of Qualifications for People Fleeing Russia's Invasion of Ukraine', *Official Journal of the European Union* 2022 L1 107/1 (5 April 2022).

65 Government of Latvia, *Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians*, Section 16: Exceptions in Relation to the Individual Requirements Laid down for the Performance of the Work Duties.

66 European Website on Integration, 'Lithuania: New Arrivals from Ukraine Exempt from Language Requirements for Employment', updated 4 April 2022.

67 Government of Latvia, *Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians*, Section 15: Employment of Ukrainian Civilians in Education and Sports.

68 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 'Romanian and Ukrainian Teachers, United for the Education of Refugee Pupils in Romania' (press release, 15 December 2022). Other examples include France, where long-term resident professionals and even students of Ukrainian origin have been recruited on temporary contracts by schools to facilitate the integration of Ukrainian displaced children into the mainstream education system. Authors' interview with senior programme manager, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) France, September 2022.

to work in lower-level positions serving other Ukrainians while completing local qualifications or licensing requirements. In Spain, for example, Ukrainian student teachers can be employed as part-time language assistants in schools while they complete their qualifications.<sup>69</sup> And in Polish cities and towns near the Poland-Ukraine border, Ukrainian and Polish medical practitioners work together to provide free health care to newly arrived Ukrainians, and Ukrainian health-care providers can access Polish language training to help them prepare for licensing exams.<sup>70</sup> These approaches build on similar solutions pioneered in Scandinavia during the 2015–16 crisis; Sweden, for example, created fast-track routes for Syrian teachers that allowed them to teach reception classes for new arrivals in Arabic while also studying Swedish as part of their internship.<sup>71</sup>

Lifting labour market restrictions on a selective basis can enable new arrivals to put their skills to use and provide much-needed Ukrainian-language services to other newcomers, including those experiencing trauma, while also alleviating pressure on overburdened health-care, education, and child-care systems. These innovations can provide important lessons both about how to meet needs in emergency settings and, more broadly, about where there are opportunities to reduce or streamline restrictions on foreign-qualified professionals in order to enable them to put their skills to work in receiving communities. Yet these approaches also come with a few caveats. Decisions about introducing temporary exemptions will need to weigh who does and does not qualify, and the risk of stoking frictions if only some newcomers benefit from these policies. And because labour market regulations are intended to protect public safety and the local workforce, the logic behind these decisions and the benefits they aim to bring should be communicated carefully to the public. Local capacity is also an important consideration, given that these policies often require that foreign-qualified professionals be supervised by experienced local professionals, which may take them away from other priorities.<sup>72</sup> Finally, as these exemptions only allow qualified professionals to practice on a temporary basis, policymakers should explore longer-term options as well, including ways to build on this experience and connect participants with tailored language and vocational training that can expedite their access to formal recognition and full employment.

---

*Lifting labour market restrictions on a selective basis can enable new arrivals to put their skills to use and provide much-needed Ukrainian-language services to other newcomers.*

69 European Commission, 'Teachers for Refugee Students – EU Education Solidarity Group for Ukraine Reports First Outputs on Measures for Schools' (news release, 8 April 2022).

70 World Health Organisation, 'Polish and Ukrainian Medical Staff United in Providing Health Support to Ukraine's Refugees' (news release, 10 August 2022).

71 Anna Karlsdóttir, Hjördís Rut Sigurjónsdóttir, Ása Ström Hildestrand, and Alex Cuadrado, 'Policies and Measures for Speeding up Labour Market Integration of Refugees in the Nordic Region' (Nordregio working paper 2017:8, Stockholm, December 2017); European Commission, 'Teachers for Refugee Students'.

72 In practice, in the health sector, the overstretched workloads of the more experienced hospital professionals might complicate the task of offering adequate supervision to newcomers.

### C. *Helping new arrivals access child care*

There is extensive research documenting how limited access to affordable child care impedes women's participation in European labour markets.<sup>73</sup> For displaced Ukrainians, many of whom are women heading up single-parent households, access to affordable child care can make it possible to participate both in the labour market and in labour market integration programmes. Enrolling children in local schools can help parents join the workforce, although some families still opt for remote learning to allow their children to continue following the Ukrainian curriculum or because local school systems are oversubscribed, as they are in many receiving countries. As of September 2022, Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science estimated that about half a million Ukrainian children were participating remotely in Ukrainian schooling from other countries.<sup>74</sup>

Ukrainians holding temporary protection status who have young children may be entitled to free child care or receive subsidies to cover child-care expenses, depending on how these services are organised in different countries. In some cases, governments have enacted special measures to make this possible. France, for example, is covering the costs of child care for Ukrainian children, while Ireland adapted its laws to allow displaced Ukrainians to access its child-care subsidy schemes.<sup>75</sup> Denmark, meanwhile, offers subsidies for Ukrainian parents to look after their own and other people's children as part of a suite of measures intended to alleviate pressure on child-care facilities and schools.<sup>76</sup> Some countries also offer free child care for parents who have young children and are participating in integration courses. In Germany, for example, some regions fund child care during integration courses—an arrangement that predates the war in Ukraine—but this is subject to availability.<sup>77</sup> New arrivals from Ukraine may need support to navigate the available child-care options, including the processes for securing subsidies or qualifying for free child care, especially if they lack destination-country language proficiency.

But in many places, child-care services are oversubscribed for residents and new arrivals alike. For example, as of early October 2022, the waitlist for day care places in Helsinki, Finland was four months.<sup>78</sup> Often, these child-care shortages predate the war in Ukraine. A 2009 review found shortages of child-care places in almost all EU Member States and regional disparities within countries, with shortages more common in cities with greater population density but also present in some rural areas experiencing financial constraints.<sup>79</sup> More recent studies indicate that these shortages have persisted in countries such as France and Germany.<sup>80</sup> Affordability is another important issue. A 2021 study found that child-care costs for parents

73 Janneke Platenega and Chantal Remery, *The Provision of Childcare Services: A Comparative Review of 30 European Countries* (Luxembourg: European Commission, Expert Group on Gender and Employment Issues, 2009); EMN, *Integration of Migrant Women* (Brussels: EMN, 2022).

74 Ukraine Media Centre, 'Ministry of Education and Science Reported How Many Children Are Schooled in Ukraine and Abroad', Ukraine Media Centre, 7 September 2022.

75 WEKA, 'Un accueil gratuit en crèche pour les enfants ukrainiens', WEKA, 12 April 2022; John Downing, 'Emergency Law Will Ensure that Ukrainian Refugee Parents Will Qualify for Childcare Payments', Independent.ie, 2 May 2022.

76 Government of Denmark, 'New Agreement on the Reception of Displaced Children and Young People from Ukraine' (press briefing, 25 April 2022).

77 Franziska Schork, Franziska Loschert, and Holger Kolb, 'Zeitenwende' bei der Arbeitsmarktintegration? Teilhabe und Prekarität von Ukrainerinnen und Ukrainern am deutschen Arbeitsmarkt' (policy brief 2022-3, SVR, Berlin, 2022).

78 Authors' interview with Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment officials, 3 October 2022.

79 Platenega and Remery, *The Provision of Childcare Services*.

80 OECD, *Good Practice for Good Jobs in Early Childhood Education and Care* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019).

varied from 5 per cent to 80 per cent of women's net median earnings in different European countries; while subsidies are usually available for low-income and single-parent households, child care can still represent a major burden for those with already limited earnings.<sup>81</sup>

Addressing shortages of child-care places is an ongoing challenge that cannot be remedied overnight. The European Union moved quickly in March 2022 to free up cohesion and recovery funds to support displaced Ukrainians, including in the form of care services.<sup>82</sup> But training and recruiting more workers to fill shortages will take time and require creativity, such as leveraging the skills of newcomers themselves. Retaining new workers will also require governments to tackle structural issues in the child-care sector, such as low pay and challenging working conditions.<sup>83</sup>

In the meantime, some displaced Ukrainians are seeking part-time or flexible work that would lessen their need for child-care services, as documented by surveys in Poland, for example.<sup>84</sup> Remote work arrangements and self-employment may also provide greater flexibility in terms of hours than local job markets, although the prevalence of these forms of work can be hard to track in official labour market data. Interviews with government and civil-society representatives suggest that some Ukrainians have managed to work remotely, at least for a time, or run a business virtually.<sup>85</sup> In Romania, Ukrainian women have shown a preference for informal self-employment in occupations such as cooking or sewing, which may partly be explained by the comparative ease of caring for children while keeping a flexible work schedule.<sup>86</sup> Some tech firms have also sought to connect Ukrainians with remote work opportunities to help them secure a stable source of income while on the move, and such positions could similarly help balance work and child-care needs.<sup>87</sup>

Grassroots and local initiatives are also emerging in response to capacity constraints, although it is difficult to assess their scale at this point. For example, government officials from Finland described in an interview how the Ukrainian community has taken steps to bridge gaps, noting an example of Ukrainians who work on Finnish farms doing so in shifts and dividing up child-care duties among themselves.<sup>88</sup> Here, there are parallels with the Ukrainian diaspora's efforts to help connect new arrivals with services and to offer services to fellow Ukrainians, including child care and schooling (as described in Section 3.B.). The private sector can also play a role. For example, reports suggest some companies in Lithuania offer onsite child care to help new arrivals start work

---

*Government officials from Finland described ... an example of Ukrainians who work on Finnish farms doing so in shifts and dividing up child-care duties among themselves.*

81 OECD, *Net Childcare Costs in EU Countries 2021* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2022).

82 European Commission, 'Ukraine: Cohesion Funding to Support People Fleeing Russia's Invasion of Ukraine' (press release, 8 March 2022).

83 OECD, *Good Practice for Good Jobs*.

84 Chmielewska-Kalińska, Dudek, and Strzelecki, *The Living and Economic Situation of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland*.

85 Authors' interview with German Federal Chancellery official, 22 September 2022; authors' interview with a representative of Startup Migrants, 22 September 2022.

86 Authors' interview with Mihaela Matei, independent expert, Romania, August 2022.

87 For example, EmployUkraine was set up to connect employers with Ukrainian tech workers seeking remote work, and Work.Ua (Ukraine's national jobs board) now includes search categories for Ukraine and its regions, other countries, and remote work. See EmployUkraine, 'Hire Ukrainian Talent'; Work.Ua, 'Ukraine's #1 Job Site', accessed 9 December 2022.

88 Authors' interview with Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment officials, 3 October 2022.

in sectors such as health care, computer programming, teaching, and crafts.<sup>89</sup> Civil-society organisations have also stepped in to offer support. For example, the Vodafone Foundation in Portugal has supported Portuguese and English language training for displaced Ukrainians, accompanied by free, on-site child care.<sup>90</sup> Such initiatives build on longstanding efforts to provide training to stay-at-home migrant mothers at their children’s schools so as to facilitate integration and potential labour market participation (such as Vienna’s Mom Learns German programme and Finland’s Your Turn, Mothers project<sup>91</sup>).

#### D. *Making integration services more flexible and accessible*

Ukrainians’ participation in integration services across Europe has been uneven to date, especially as many prioritise finding employment and their intentions to stay versus return to Ukraine fluctuate. Some countries have seen significant uptake—for example, between February and September 2022, more than 100,000 Ukrainian adults participated in an integration course in Germany<sup>92</sup>—while other countries (such as Finland) have struggled to get Ukrainians to enrol in their integration courses. As with employment patterns, these differences may be rooted in factors such as newcomers’ intended length of stay, their existing fluency in the destination-country language or another *lingua franca*, and how regulated the labour market is. But the flexibility and accessibility of integration services is also important, particularly as more Ukrainians enter the labour market and may reconsider their short- and medium-term plans as the war continues.

One step to improve flexibility and accessibility is to change the rules about who can participate in government-funded labour market integration courses. For example, Sweden’s introduction programme is not currently open to holders of temporary protection, whose status is treated as equivalent to that of asylum seekers, although municipalities may choose to offer alternative services to this group. Some other Member States, such as Finland, limit unemployed migrants’ and/or recent arrivals’ access to certain services. These rules curb some Ukrainians’ access integration services (such as language training, qualification recognition, or upskilling) that could set them on the path to quality employment that makes full use of their skills.

Another way to bring more flexibility into integration programmes is to reconsider how they are scheduled. Offering programmes during school hours or after work, for example, could help newcomers fit attendance in around other commitments, such as child-care responsibilities or employment. Options to participate remotely could also help boost participation and potentially lower costs, given savings on the use of physical spaces. During the pandemic, governments had to shift much of their programming online, including language courses. This shift offered more flexibility for participants juggling work or family commitments, and opened these offerings up to those living in more remote areas. Czechia and Estonia, for example, found that this shift helped boost both participation and completion rates.<sup>93</sup> But shifting integration services online can come with some trade-offs. Remote courses provide new arrivals with fewer

89 Liz Alderman and Patricia Cohen, ‘Fleeing War in Ukraine, They’re Met With Employers Offering Paychecks’, *The New York Times*, 23 March 2022.

90 Silvia Maia, ‘Ukrainian Children in Portugal without Places in Day Care Centres and Kindergartens’, *Europe-Cities*, 15 May 2022.

91 OECD, *Making Integration Work: Family Migrants* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017); EMN, *Integration of Migrant Women*.

92 *Sonntagsblatt*, ‘100.000 Ukraine-Geflüchtete haben Integrationskurs besucht’, *Sonntagsblatt*, 6 September 2022.

93 Jasmijn Sloopjes, *The COVID-19 Catalyst: Learning from Pandemic-Driven Innovations in Immigrant Integration Policy* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2022).

opportunities to connect with other people in their local community. They also rely on access to a computer or smartphone and a certain level of digital literacy; thus, they may exclude people without access to this technology or the requisite digital skills. And depending on when these courses are scheduled, participation may still hinge on parents being able to find child care.

Finally, policymakers could consider a more modular approach to integration programming. While it is important not to water down services or undermine confidence in their quality, policymakers need to be realistic about what new arrivals are willing and able to sign up for—and when. As discussed, displaced Ukrainians can be reluctant to commit to full-time integration courses, and some integration services (such as language training) have struggled to keep up with demand. Instead of offering integration programmes that require significant time commitments and cover a wide range of topics, policymakers could consider a more modular approach that allows participants to only take the courses they need or wish to prioritise. For example, some displaced Ukrainians may wish to learn the host-country language regardless of whether they plan to stay long term, while others may wish to skip it if they already speak enough of the language to handle day-to-day interactions. Similarly, embarking on a lengthy qualification recognition procedure may only seem worthwhile if a Ukrainian professional anticipates putting down roots in the host country.<sup>94</sup>

### *E. Offering tailored training for qualified professionals*

Alongside efforts to streamline or even revise restrictions on labour market access for certain professions (see Section 3.B.), another important strategy for helping displaced Ukrainians find jobs commensurate to their skills is to offer training tailored to their professional profiles. Bridging programmes that offer vocational and/or language training can provide a faster route to quality employment for new arrivals with in-demand skills, by ‘bridging’ gaps in these professionals’ training or skills without requiring them to retrain from scratch. These programmes depend on a preliminary assessment of newcomers’ professional competences and skills, and on the availability of tailored training modules. Over the past decade, there has been a shift towards offering more personalised labour market integration supports, with early competency assessments now part of many European introduction programmes, although the costs of providing this individualised training can be quite high.

Bridging programmes in Europe date back to the 1990s, but gained prominence starting in 2015, when large-scale refugee arrivals and ongoing skills shortages led several destination countries with highly regulated labour markets (e.g., the Scandinavian countries and Germany) to offer combined vocational and language training and support for credential recognition procedures in shortage occupations. The most comprehensive package can be found in Sweden, which offers fast-track programmes for a wide range of shortage sectors (see Box 2).

<sup>94</sup> In Poland and Latvia, many Ukrainian displaced persons are reportedly eager to learn the local language regardless of their intention to work and stay in the host countries. Authors’ interview with Paweł Kaczmarczyk, Director, Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw, August 2022; authors’ interview with Alise Apsīte, Senior Expert, Latvian Labour Market Department, Career and Job Search Support Division, September 2022.

**BOX 2****Sweden's fast-track programmes for foreign-trained refugees in shortage occupations**

Sweden's fast-track programmes are some of the most comprehensive bridging programmes in Europe. The Swedish Public Employment Service (in cooperation with local employers, trade unions, and universities) has offered this set of programmes since 2016, and they now cover 14 shortage sectors encompassing 30 occupations, including physicians, pharmacists, dentists, nurses, teachers and kindergarten teachers, construction and industrial engineers, painters, butchers, chefs, and professional drivers. Newly arrived refugees with skills in these sectors can participate in an intensive three-step programme involving skills mapping, validation, and additional training to obtain an occupational certificate that allows them to work in the given occupation. The three-step programme is offered in the participants' mother tongue and is combined with vocation-specific Swedish language training. Two key strengths of the Swedish fast-tracks are that each programme focuses on a specific occupational outcome and that, in contrast to other bridging courses, host-country language skills are not needed to participate in the skills assessment, validation, and complementary training—a fact that facilitates newcomers' early participation in these activities.

These fast-tracks have shown promising results to date in terms of matching participants with jobs commensurate to their skills. In 2017, on average, 45 per cent of refugees in vocational or nonacademic fields of work had gotten a job after 13–15 months in the fast-track programme. However, even though the programmes have a limited number of places available, these have often gone undersubscribed. One reason for this has been the difficulty of finding enough candidates with the right skills profile (and that share the same language) among largely low-skilled refugee arrivals. In this respect, the characteristics of the Ukrainian displaced population could make these newcomers a better fit than most. Yet, in Sweden, beneficiaries of temporary protection (which includes most displaced Ukrainians in the country) have the same rights as asylum seekers and are thus not eligible for the fast-track programmes and the broader, generous integration offerings that the national government reserves for refugees, though they can access some services at the local level. Reconsidering this restriction or developing similar supports for displaced Ukrainians could help fill labour shortages, while also supporting newcomers' integration. Yet, as fast-track programmes are costly for the state, the (supposedly) temporary nature of Ukrainians' residence in the country—as with the uncertainty around asylum seekers' stay—is an understandable disincentive for the government to invest in expanding fast-tracks to these groups of newcomers.

Sources: Anna Karlsdóttir, Hjördís Rut Sigurjónsdóttir, Åsa Ström Hildestrand, and Alex Cuadrado, 'Policies and Measures for Speeding up Labour Market Integration of Refugees in the Nordic Region' (Nordregio working paper 2017:8, Stockholm, December 2017); Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Working Together: Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and Their Children in Sweden* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2016); Björn Lindahl, 'Fast Track for Refugees Took Opposite Directions in Sweden and Norway', *Nordic Labour Journal*, 25 April 2022.

While bridging programmes offer a promising model for helping foreign-trained professionals apply their skills in destination countries, they are often undersubscribed. In addition to issues related to finding enough participants with the right skills profile (described in Box 2), another common impediment is the duration of fast-track or bridging programmes. Most of these programmes are relatively long: In Sweden, it takes more than 15 months on average to fast-track newcomers into jobs requiring academic exams and licensing certificates, as in the health sector.<sup>95</sup> And while this is quicker than the average time it takes

95 Karlsdóttir, Sigurjónsdóttir, Hildestrand, and Cuadrado, 'Policies and Measures for Speeding up Labour Market Integration'. A six-month fast-track for teachers has been introduced that allows participants to teach reception classes in their mother tongue while completing vocational language training. It has benefitted from the fact that teaching is an occupation where bridging courses have historically been more developed.



refugees to access jobs in line with their qualifications if not participating in a fast-track programme, it still represents a significant time investment. For displaced Ukrainians, many of whom view their stay as temporary, this may not seem a worthwhile investment. Moreover, many bridging courses are organised on a full-time basis, which makes them incompatible with early employment—a priority for many Ukrainian newcomers.

An important innovation among these types of integration programmes has been the shift towards more part-time or partly remote bridging courses. For instance, the bridging course launched by the Sophiahemmet University in Sweden in 2022 for Ukrainian licensed doctors and nurses can be partially attended remotely. The course, which uses local funds, aims to fast-track these medical professionals' qualifications recognition through a combination of medical theory and practice activities (in English) and tuition in Swedish medical language.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, Czechia adopted measures in 2022 to speed up qualifications recognition for Ukrainian health professionals;<sup>97</sup> these include professional webcasts to help Ukrainians prepare for licensing exams and a special accredited distance-learning course on health-care-relevant Czech language, in addition to on-the-job training.

For displaced Ukrainians who are searching for or have already found work, a practical compromise may be combining bridging training with bridging jobs. Canada's alternative career pathway approach,<sup>98</sup> which encourages new arrivals to take up jobs in their fields but at a lower level while completing licensing and training requirements, is a promising model that could be integrated into some existing European initiatives for Ukrainians in regulated professions. Ongoing experimentation with supervised employment of Ukrainian doctors in Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Portugal, for example, could offer fertile ground for piloting such career pathway strategies, if the supervised work that is already occurring were to be paired with bridging training and support to help Ukrainians move on to practising independently. Beyond the health sector, a similar career pathway approach with on-the-job language and upskilling modules could give the notable number of Ukrainian women who entered low-skilled jobs in the hospitality sector opportunities to progress up the career ladder.

Such approaches that combine supervised work experience and bridging training are in line with international best practices in the recognition of foreign qualifications. Research has shown supervised work to be the most effective way to swiftly bridge qualifications gaps, particularly where the academic qualification systems in a migrant's origin and destination countries are similar, while also enabling

96 The course was developed in cooperation with Ukrainian doctors and nurses and is funded through the county's administrative boards, as part of a strategy launched at the beginning of 2022 to allocate county funding to projects that organise training for new arrivals (regardless of their country of origin) with experience in health care. See Sophiahemmet University, '[New Course for Ukrainian Healthcare Professionals](#)' (press release, 15 June 2022); Stockholm County Administrative Board, '[Fyra miljoner till utbildningsprojekt ska ge fler nyanlända jobb inom hälso- och sjukvården](#)', updated 28 April 2022.

97 Author conversation with Jan Kepka, Head of Unit for Integration of Immigrants and Information, Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, Ministry of Interior, Czechia, August 2022. See also Lekariproukrajinu.cz, '[For Ukrainian Doctors](#)', accessed 24 April 2022.

98 Ontario, for example, offers a hybrid programme for internationally trained registered nurses that consists of several components: orientation, English language and communications skills training, competency-based courses (tailored to the gaps identified in each participant's initial competency assessment), simulation labs, clinical placements (which allow participants to obtain Canadian work experience in a supervised setting), preparation for the National Council Licensing Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN), and employment supports as they enter the workforce. See Government of Ontario, '[Ontario Internationally Educated Nurses Course Consortium](#)', accessed 11 May 2023.

foreign-qualified professionals to earn money.<sup>99</sup> However, as discussed in Section 3.B., in occupations facing acute shortages, experienced professionals may have limited capacity to supervise newcomers. This can be a stubborn obstacle to the successful implementation of such measures, unless industry organisations, employers, and managers (e.g., hospital or school directors) are involved at the outset of the programme’s design and implementation.

*Research has shown supervised work to be the most effective way to swiftly bridge qualifications gaps... while also enabling foreign-qualified professionals to earn money.*

In addition, industry and employer engagement is vital to earn their endorsement of these courses, make sure that newcomers receive appropriate training, and ensure that costs are shared fairly. Tailored labour market integration measures for newcomers—be they bridging courses, vocation-specific language training, or intensive programmes to support qualification recognition—are expensive in terms of both financial and human resources. For instance, it can be challenging to find teachers able to run specialised language courses focused on construction engineering for speakers of different foreign languages, or, even more difficult, to conduct specialised vocational training courses in each of the languages spoken by newcomers participating in a fast-track programme. To overcome such resource and capacity constraints, which in a time of budget austerity can seem insurmountable, integration policymakers should bring employers more fully into these processes. Employer engagement and support can help expand the available capacity to provide vocational language and on-the-job training, especially in sectors facing acute shortages.<sup>100</sup> Private-sector actors can help strengthen the design, funding, and provision of fast-track integration offerings that combine upskilling, vocation-specific language training, and credentialing with employment or apprenticeships. This engagement can also help expand these courses beyond high-skilled occupations, which have been the primary focus to date. With shortages reported across sectors and skill levels, there is an opportunity to expand this tailored training approach to help meet the needs of European economies, while also addressing labour market participation and skills gaps among migrant and refugee populations, including Ukrainian newcomers.

## ***F. Streamlining qualifications recognition procedures***

Bridging courses and fast-track programmes currently only exist for a small number of (mostly regulated) professions facing acute shortages. Looking beyond the health and education sectors, where most of these initiatives have been concentrated to date, there are opportunities to build on these innovations and to tap the skills of Ukrainians and other foreign-qualified professionals in many other professions experiencing shortages in Europe. For both regulated and nonregulated professions, there are also opportunities to streamline the recognition of qualifications both as a stepping-stone to obtaining a license (for regulated professions) and to help employers understand the value of foreign-acquired qualifications and encourage them to recruit foreign-trained professionals.

<sup>99</sup> Dovelyn Rannveig Mendoza et al., *Reinventing Mutual Recognition Arrangements: Lessons from International Experiences and Insights from the ASEAN Region* (Manila and Washington, DC: Asian Development Bank and Migration Policy Institute, 2017).

<sup>100</sup> The Triple Win programme implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the German development cooperation agency, supports upskilling, qualifications recognition, and international recruitment of nurses for German employers, and German employers bear substantial costs for these services—offering an example of how such approaches can be practicable. See GIZ, ‘Sustainable Recruitment of Nurses (Triple Win)’, updated January 2022.

The European Commission has called for the streamlining of qualification recognition procedures to help beneficiaries of temporary protection enter the labour market. In its April 2022 Recommendation on the Recognition of Qualifications for People Fleeing Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, the European Commission called on Member States to provide simple and rapid qualifications recognition mechanisms that keep formalities to a minimum, put in place fast-track procedures for professionals with temporary protection status, and limit case-by-case assessments.<sup>101</sup> More broadly, as part of its agenda on attracting talent to Europe, the Commission's work programme for 2023 includes an EU-level initiative to streamline qualification recognition for third-country nationals, which could go as far as legislative action, and stands to benefit both displaced Ukrainians and other professionals with foreign qualifications.<sup>102</sup> Current practices that combine fast-track recognition of academic credentials for candidates from a country party to the European Education Area, with bridging training to plug gaps on host-country-specific credentials (such as through supervised employment and adaptation periods, as discussed in Section 3.E.), could offer food for thought for an EU-wide scheme.

Even prior to the war in Ukraine and the country's candidacy to become an EU Member State, Ukrainian and European authorities were working closely together to align Ukraine's qualifications standards and framework with those of the European Union.<sup>103</sup> Ukraine's education information system (which keeps a digital record of many Ukrainians' credentials) has helped facilitate the adoption of streamlined qualifications recognition procedures, notably for academic qualifications, in this specific context.<sup>104</sup>

Several European countries have also taken steps to address credential recognition barriers, including:

- ▶ **Documentation gaps.** Formal qualifications recognition procedures set documentation requirements that can be difficult for new arrivals to meet. Some countries, such as Latvia, have introduced accommodations for displaced Ukrainians by allowing them to submit documentation in English or Russian (instead of getting these documents formally translated).<sup>105</sup> But even this may be difficult to do for some Ukrainians who may have fled without their original qualifications. In this scenario,

101 This latter limitation applies when Ukrainian qualifications for a given profession have already been assessed and there are no serious doubts about their equivalence with the local qualifications. European Commission, 'Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/554 of 5 April 2022'.

102 European Commission, 'Annexes to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions—Commission Work Programme 2023: A Union Standing Firm and United' (COM [2022] 548 final, 18 October 2022), point 35.

103 Ukraine is part of the European Higher Education Area, whose members have agreed to ensure the mutual recognition of qualifications for academic purposes. See European Higher Education Area, 'Full Members', accessed 9 December 2022. Ukraine is also a longstanding partner country of the European Training Foundation, which has supported the reform of the country's education system as well as the alignment of the Ukrainian Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework. See European Training Foundation, 'Ukraine', accessed 9 December 2022; European Union, 'The European Qualifications Framework', accessed 9 December 2022.

104 In May 2022, the European Commission issued guidance on credential recognition. See Luca Lantero et al., *Guidelines on Fast-Track Recognition of Ukrainian Academic Qualifications* (Brussels: European Commission, 2022). In some cases, streamlined recognition has been possible for vocational credentials as well. For example, in Germany, Ukrainian displacement prompted the German Federal Ministry for Transport and its Ukrainian counterpart to sign an agreement for the automatic recognition of lorry drivers' driving licences and competency certificates, with the aim of ensuring that Germany logistic companies can recruit Ukrainian lorry drivers directly (rather than having to employ them through Polish or Lithuanian companies, as has generally been done to date). See Pölös Zsófia, 'Germany Recognizes Ukrainian Driving Licenses to Cut HGV Driver Shortage', Trans.info, 22 April 2022; Agnieszka Kulikowska-Wielgus, 'Foreign HGV Mileage on German Roads Further Increased in 2022 Q1', Trans.info, 19 April 2022.

105 Government of Latvia, *Law on Assistance to Ukrainian Civilians*.

Ukrainians can make use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedures that were first rolled out in Europe in response to the large-scale arrivals of refugees and migrants in 2015–16.<sup>106</sup> The creation of a European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, in particular, has laid the groundwork for the ongoing simplification of recognition requirements for displaced Ukrainians.

- ▶ **Addressing information gaps.** The opacity of qualification recognition procedures can discourage foreign-qualified professionals from seeking recognition, while also deterring employers who do not understand the value of foreign qualifications or the recognition process from hiring well-qualified candidates with such credentials.<sup>107</sup> This information gap thus contributes to poorer employment outcomes for foreign-trained professionals while also prevents European economies and employers from benefitting from their skills. Across Europe, Member States have moved quickly to compile information about labour markets and employment opportunities for Ukrainians (see Section 3.A.), and to provide newcomers with details on credential recognition rules and procedures. Meanwhile, at the EU level, the European Training Foundation (in cooperation with Ukraine’s National Qualification Agency) has set up a resource hub available in English and Ukrainian that compiles information for displaced Ukrainians, European regulators, and prospective employers on qualifications recognition and labour market access in EU Member States, with links to databases with information on the diplomas and qualifications that Ukrainian institutions issue.<sup>108</sup> This type of resource not only helps credential recognition authorities carry out their work, but by sharing reliable information on Ukrainian qualifications with employers, it can also help build their trust in these credentials even in nonregulated occupations.<sup>109</sup>

Even as governments focus on helping Ukrainians find jobs quickly, it is important not to overlook the value of helping them get their qualifications recognised—both to help Ukrainians find high-quality work and, crucially, to enable them to apply their full range of skills. The experimentation seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, and now in response to displacement from Ukraine, is a reflection of the frictions that exist between rigid professional regulations and the need to quickly and efficiently enable newcomers with in-demand skills to bring those to bear in European labour markets facing persistent shortages. This moment offers a chance to move away from protectionism to pragmatism and pursue reforms that can break enduring taboos around professional regulation and qualifications recognition, which for decades have reduced Europe’s attractiveness for foreign-qualified professionals.<sup>110</sup>

106 For an example from Norway, see NOKUT, *Toolkit for Recognition of Refugees’ Qualifications* (Oslo: NOKUT, n.d.).

107 For an overview of the issue, see IOM, *Recognition of Qualifications and Competences of Migrants*. In Sweden, for instance, various studies have demonstrated that holding a local rather than a foreign credential is the key determinant, along with local language knowledge, for getting any job, not just optimal job matching. See Karlsdóttir, Sigurjónsdóttir, Hildestrand, and Cuadrado, ‘Policies and Measures for Speeding up Labour Market Integration’.

108 The resource hub also links to resources on Ukrainian qualifications and diplomas, such as the one developed under the Erasmus+ Q-ENTRY project. See Q-ENTRY, ‘Q-ENTRY Database on Higher Education Entry Qualifications’, accessed 9 December 2022.

109 In unregulated professions, employers are the main gatekeepers of labour market access by foreign-qualified professionals, making it crucial to help them get acquainted with the value of qualifications issued in Ukraine.

110 European Commission, ‘Commission Staff Working Document Impact Assessment Accompanying the Document - Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and the Council on the Conditions of Entry and Residence of Third-Country Nationals for the Purposes of Highly Skilled Employment and Repealing Directive 2009/50/EC’ (SWD [2016] 193 final, 7 June 2016).

## 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Regardless of the trajectory of the war in Ukraine, migration between Ukraine and Europe is likely to continue at sustained levels for the next decade at least. Circular migration between the two, which was already significant before the war, will likely be a distinctive feature of postwar Ukrainian migration to Europe. Approaches to the labour market integration of displaced Ukrainians should keep this circularity in mind and aim to balance several priorities: facilitating Ukrainians' swift labour market entry while also ensuring that they can access jobs that allow them to fully apply their skills and, in doing so, help address some of Europe's shortages over the short to medium term.

Europe's response to displacement from Ukraine has sparked remarkable innovation as policymakers think creatively about how to meet the needs of this population, even with limited resources. The high level of formal qualifications among these mostly female newcomers, the large share of working-age adults taking care of children or older people, and Ukrainians' status as temporary protection beneficiaries have also challenged receiving societies to tailor their integration services to serve humanitarian arrivals with different needs and profiles. These innovations include new and improved approaches to tackling barriers to labour market integration, such as easing restrictions on access and offering bridging courses. They have also involved a willingness to revisit complex qualification recognition procedures and to develop new partnerships among state and nonstate actors, with members of the public, diaspora communities, civil-society organisations, and employers all stepping in to aid displaced Ukrainians.

There is a window of opportunity to build on these innovations to develop new, comprehensive labour market integration strategies that are capable of accommodating the diverse needs and profiles of displaced Ukrainians and other immigrant and refugee populations (including other displaced groups but also, for example, temporary and circular migrants and the highly skilled). The European Commission's 2023 plans to streamline the recognition of foreign-earned qualifications is just one example of how efforts sparked by or given greater urgency by the Ukraine crisis (and the pandemic as well) can be scaled up and institutionalised to benefit a wider range of immigrants and refugees and, by helping to address critical labour shortages, European societies more broadly. In a context of budget and capacity constraints, this momentum can only be sustained if cooperation among integration policymakers, labour market authorities, regulatory bodies, employers, and civil society are maintained and built upon. To achieve this, policymakers should consider the following recommendations:

- ▶ **Leverage the skills of new arrivals.** Across the European Union, there are examples of displaced Ukrainians helping to meet each other's needs when faced with gaps in official services, whether by sharing child-care shifts to help single parents join the workforce or by working as preschool or school teachers or health-care professionals to provide Ukrainian-language services directly to their community. Newcomers can be part of the solution to the capacity bottlenecks that stem from large-scale arrivals (or in some cases, those that existed before them), and receiving countries would do well to leverage these contributions. Beyond the direct benefits for overstretched public services, utilising Ukrainians' skills in this way can build and maintain public support for welcoming and assisting newcomers (which can quickly fray around issues of insufficient resources and public services) and set them on the road to practising their profession in destination societies without restrictions.

- ▶ **Institutionalise the role of diaspora and civil-society organisations in integration service provision.** Diaspora and civil-society organisations have played an important role in addressing capacity constraints in reception and integration services, such as by helping orient new arrivals and enrol them in services, offering alternative housing and child-care solutions, and helping connect newcomers with employment opportunities. Integration policymakers should explore ways to sustain this mobilisation, both by discussing more formal partnerships with diaspora and civil-society organisations and by providing training and resources to help organisations handle these additional responsibilities.
- ▶ **Engage employers in developing and providing labour market integration services.** Employers have played a critical role in helping new arrivals find work, and in some cases, providing language and vocational training and even child care. This engagement is motivated both by a strong sense of solidarity with displaced Ukrainians and the ongoing difficulties of recruiting and retaining workers across a range of sectors and skill levels in Europe. Integration policymakers should capitalise on this engagement and make the case to employers that they should roll out more labour market integration services in the workplace, including fast-track or bridging pathways that can help newcomers swiftly apply their skills and experience. But employers' commitment to these investments will hinge in part on greater certainty about the status of displaced Ukrainians and their ability to keep working in Europe. Governments should keep this dynamic in mind as they explore longer-term scenarios for Ukrainians living and working in Europe.

As policymakers work to support Ukrainians in not only finding any job, but one that enables them to fully apply their skills in the occupations for which they have been trained, flexibility will be important. Increasing numbers of displaced Ukrainians are finding employment (if often below their skill levels), and balancing time-consuming integration courses with work and, often, family responsibilities can be challenging. For the many Ukrainians who hope to return to Ukraine in the not-too-distant future, investing time in such programmes may also not be a top priority. Flexible integration services and policies that expand access to them can help serve the needs of workers with different profiles and aspirations. Recommendations include:

- ▶ **Build more flexible, modular integration courses that allow migrants to efficiently plug skills gaps.** Traditional, full-time integration courses can be ill-suited to highly qualified workers with foreign credentials who seek to quickly gain host-country-specific information or skills without starting their training from scratch. Lengthy, generic programmes may also not be practical for temporary migrants and those with competing demands on their time (for instance, those already working and/or juggling care responsibilities). Yet individualised training adapted to newcomers' profiles can be prohibitively expensive. A promising and more affordable solution may be to invest in self-standing integration modules, such as language and vocational training modules at different levels to allow semi-proficient and experienced newcomers in different fields to plug specific gaps. But even these integration modules can be costly unless they are implemented at scale, which is why these have rarely been available beyond big cities with large newcomer populations, if at all. Creative ways to provide training that is both specific and cost-effective include: engaging employers to provide on-the-job training opportunities and leveraging distance learning to connect more people with a wider variety of tailored training programmes than could be done in person in any one location. Remote training

and employment opportunities would also benefit the many newcomers fleeing the war who have physical disabilities and other health issues.

- ▶ **Expand second-chance integration offerings.** Typically, the most comprehensive integration programmes are only available to newcomers in a country. This leaves behind migrants and refugees who cannot commit to full-time integration programmes in this initial period, whether because they have to prioritise immediate employment and/or child care or because they initially plan to stay only for a short time. Breaking up long integration courses into self-standing training modules and delivering some of these online, as described above, could also make it easier to offer these as second-chance programmes to people looking for integration support at a later point. This would also benefit migrants who find low-skilled jobs upon arrival in order to support themselves and their families, but who would eventually like to move up the career ladder. Providing options with flexible schedules (for instance, by using technology to provide asynchronous training that migrants can do when they have time) would greatly benefit displaced Ukrainians and others who might struggle to attend in-person appointments. Much can be learned from the pandemic, which brought about radical shifts in service delivery out of necessity, as language courses, orientations, and other integration services (including job-matching) were moved online.
- ▶ **Work across government and with nongovernmental actors to remove integration barriers.** In some cases, the obstacles that migrants face in accessing integration supports extend beyond the realm of integration policies themselves, and overcoming them depends upon adjustments in other policy areas (such as education, housing, transport, and health). For instance, the fact that many working-age displaced Ukrainians are heading up single-parent households has put the areas of child care and education under the spotlight. With child-care services in many receiving communities oversubscribed, unaffordable, or difficult to navigate for newcomers, and a large share of Ukrainian children still enrolled in Ukrainian distance learning, many parents are confined to their homes and unable to enter the workforce fully, if at all. This requires creative solutions such as incentivising employers to provide on-site child care, engaging diaspora communities to set up informal child care, and providing child care at integration centres (or integration courses at children's schools).

The uncertainty about how many Ukrainians will arrive and stay in Europe, and for how long, is often presented as a challenge for integration policy, posing questions such as: which newcomers will commit to what types of programming, and what should be prioritised for people who do not intend to stay? But there is a strong case for making sure that all working-

age displaced Ukrainians can access quality employment and opportunities to build their skills, regardless of their intentions to stay. Not only does this quickly translate into better outcomes for workers and their families in terms of earnings (and, relatedly, remittances) and reducing exploitation, but it also provides more potential to address some of the chronic labour market shortages Europe is facing. For those who do return, such programmes can put them on a path to contribute to the eventual reconstruction of Ukraine and strengthen the country's economic, political, and social ties with Europe.

---

*There is a strong case for making sure that all working-age displaced Ukrainians can access quality employment and opportunities to build their skills, regardless of their intentions to stay.*

## About the Authors

---



### MARIA VINCENZA DESIDERIO

Maria Vincenza Desiderio is a senior independent expert on migration, integration, development, and qualification recognition policies. She has published widely and regularly advises governments, international organisations, and civil society on these issues. Previously, she was a Senior Policy Analyst at the Migration Policy Institute Europe (MPI Europe), where her work focused on economic migration, immigrant integration, foreign credentials recognition, and the linkages between migration and development. She has also worked as a Migration Analyst at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), where she contributed to the OECD flagship publication *International Migration Outlook*, and as a Research Officer at the International Organisation for Migration, where she coordinated the research activities of the Independent Network of Labour Migration and Labour Market Integration Experts (LINET).

Ms. Desiderio holds a master's degree with honours in international relations, with specialisation in European economic policy and the role of migration, and a bachelor's degree in political science, both from the University of Rome, La Sapienza. She also earned a certificate in asylum law and international law.

---



### KATE HOOPER [@kmchooper](https://twitter.com/kmchooper)

Kate Hooper is a Policy Analyst with MPI's International Programme, where she leads the Institute's global work on labour migration. She is also the primary point person for the Transatlantic Council on Migration, MPI's flagship international initiative that brings together senior policymakers, experts, and other stakeholders to discuss responses to pressing migration, protection, and immigrant integration issues. Her areas of research include legal migration pathways, fair and ethical recruitment, labour market integration, and complementary pathways for displaced populations.

Ms. Hooper holds a master's degree with honours from the University of Chicago's Committee on International Relations and a bachelor of the arts degree in history from the University of Oxford. She also holds a certificate in international political economy from the London School of Economics.



## Acknowledgments

---

This report was prepared for a meeting of the Integration Futures Working Group, which was held in Prague in December 2022, co-hosted by the Migration Policy Institute Europe (MPI Europe) and the Czech Ministry of the Interior. The theme of the meeting was 'Integration Policy for Troubled Times: Building Inclusive Societies amid Disruptions'.

The authors thank the participants of that Integration Futures Working Group meeting and colleagues who generously shared their insights on this topic. Special thanks go to Jan Kepka for his valuable insights and support throughout this process, and to Paweł Kaczmarczyk for original insights offered at early stages of this research and throughout the project. The authors also thank their MPI colleagues Meghan Benton, Michelle Mittelstadt, and Lauren Shaw for their valuable comments and edits, and Shreya Bhat for her research assistance.

The Integration Futures Working Group is an MPI Europe initiative that brings together senior policymakers, experts, civil-society officials, and private-sector leaders to stimulate new thinking on integration policy. It is supported by the Robert Bosch Foundation.

For more information on the Integration Futures Working Group, visit: [www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/integration-futures-working-group](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/integration-futures-working-group).

MPI Europe is an independent, nonpartisan policy research organisation that adheres to the highest standard of rigour and integrity in its work. All analysis, recommendations, and policy ideas advanced by MPI Europe are solely determined by its researchers.

© 2023 Migration Policy Institute Europe.  
All Rights Reserved.

Design: Sara Staedicke, MPI

Layout: Liz Hall

Cover Photo: Alexey Shvirin/International Organisation for Migration

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, or included any information storage and retrieval system without permission from Migration Policy Institute Europe. A full-text PDF of this document is available for free download from [www.mpieurope.org](http://www.mpieurope.org).

Information for reproducing excerpts from this publication can be found at [www.migrationpolicy.org/about/copyright-policy](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/about/copyright-policy). Inquiries can also be directed to [communications@migrationpolicy.org](mailto:communications@migrationpolicy.org).

Suggested citation: Desiderio, Maria Vincenza and Kate Hooper. 2023. *Displaced Ukrainians in European Labour Markets: Leveraging innovations for more inclusive integration*. Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe.

Migration Policy Institute Europe is a nonprofit, independent research institute that aims to provide a better understanding of migration in Europe and thus promote effective policymaking. MPI Europe provides authoritative research and practical policy design to governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders who seek more effective management of immigration, immigrant integration, and asylum systems as well as successful outcomes for newcomers, families of immigrant background, and receiving communities throughout Europe.



Residence Palace, 155 Rue de la Loi, 3rd Floor, 1040 Brussels  
+32 (0) 2235 2113

