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## Migration and Sustainable Development: The Use of Ukrainian Workers' Potential on the Polish Labour Market

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Katarzyna Włodarczyk<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** This paper features a case of using the potential brought in by workers from Ukraine who arrived in Poland. The paper's main objective involves assessing the evolution of Ukrainian citizens' potential by Polish employers and proposing recommendations for steps to be taken in the future by local governments and individual employers about the employment of immigrants from Ukraine to fulfill the assumptions of sustainable development.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The presented article features both theoretical considerations and the results of the author's research. For these deliberations, the results of the author's research were used (in the form of a diagnostic survey) conducted between 03.2019 and 04.2020 among the citizens of Ukraine who resided in Poland.

**Findings:** The analysis of the conducted study allows claiming that the potential of migrants from Ukraine is not fully utilized to fulfill the current needs of the Polish labor market.

**Practical Implications:** The conclusion after analyzing the gathered theoretical and empirical material, demonstrating the need to undertake and devise an entire set of actions in order to implement the sustainable development in the operation of Polish companies and, in particular, to use the capabilities of the incoming workers. Such actions ought to be conducted both at the level of organizations, at a local level, and the level of the entire economy.

**Originality/Value:** The conducted research may be treated as a pilot study to research the issue further.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, migrations, organization changes, micro and macro sustainable.

**JEL codes:** J15, J24, J61, M50, O15.

**Paper Type:** Research article.

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<sup>1</sup>University of Szczecin; Poland, [katarzyna.wlodarczyk@usz.edu.pl](mailto:katarzyna.wlodarczyk@usz.edu.pl);

## **1. Introduction**

In-depth deliberations on the implementation of sustainable development measures and diagnosing migration processes continuously occurring in the modern world should remain a constant focus of science and practical applications. The inclusion of the aspects of migration into the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development provides a splendid opportunity for assessing the impact of migration on the scope of development-related issues and assessing the feedback of their volume, i.e., understanding how development may affect migration and migrants' lives. The central assumption of the 2030 Agenda concerning migration is found to fulfill the tenth goal regarding the reduction of inequality within and among countries. It can be achieved by facilitating orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including implementing planned and well-managed migration policies. However, an analysis of the 2030 Agenda provisions demonstrates that references to migration issues can also be found in other goals, which will be examined further in the article. Migrations are linked to sustainable development in many dimensions, and if well managed, they may translate into its result. Nevertheless, migration management requires a comprehensive approach from the side of national, local governments, employers, societies, and migrants themselves.

Migrations may be a powerful driving force of sustainable development for many participants of the process, including for migrants themselves and societies - both countries of migrants' origin and their destination countries. Mutual relations are occurring between the process of migration and the development of a given country. Migration chiefly affects the economic development of destination states, but it may also have a significant impact on personal growth, limitation of migrants' and their family's poverty levels; it may contribute not only to the improvement of one's material situation but also to one's well-being, it may shape new goals in terms of education, professional and personal plans. Migration provides migrants with an opportunity to escape political threats; it constitutes a form of defense from a problematic situation (which in the contemporary world frequently concerns women, youth, and children), while it leads to an overall improvement of the quality of life.

Furthermore, migration may have a decisive contribution to the development of a migrant's country of origin. It is achieved through money transfers, investments, trade development, and knowledge exchange, and consequently, economic growth and unemployment decrease. Migrants may positively impact the development of the countries to which they arrive since they frequently fill in labor gaps, they open up new markets and business opportunities connecting their countries and their new place of residence. Migrants' presence may contribute to greater consumption and business activity, innovations, and cultural contacts in their destination country. Furthermore, an inflow of migrants may help alleviate a demographic low, aiding the states with aging, stagnating, or decreasing population of productive age by changing their population proportions. Moreover, migrants may exert a positive influence on workforce productivity and GDP growth per capita.

Migration is a process that is characteristic of contemporary economies of all countries. They may determine the economy's distinctness while being a decisive factor of its success. Migrants play an especially significant role in the labor market. Migrants' competencies ought to match the needs of the economy and employers.

This paper features a case of using the potential brought in by workers from Ukraine who arrived in Poland. Economic, social, and political transformations in Ukraine as well as an accompanying workers' outflow to other countries in Europe, including to Poland, may provide an interesting example of combining the above-specified aspects, i.e., migration processes, workers' flow, and the use of migrants to achieve the goals of sustainable development. The article presents deliberations on the use of skills, professional experience, and knowledge of Ukrainian nationals who moved from their homeland to Poland. For these deliberations, the results of the author's research were used (in the form of a diagnostic survey) conducted between 03.2019 and 04.2020 among the citizens of Ukraine who resided in Poland. The paper's main objective involves assessing the evolution of Ukrainian citizens' potential by Polish employers and proposing recommendations for steps to be taken in the future by local governments and individual employers about the employment of immigrants from Ukraine to fulfill the assumptions of sustainable development.

## **2. Literature Review**

Sustainable development is understood as the socio-economic development of present societies without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987). The implementation of the idea of sustainable development requires global protection of the natural environment, solidarity in relations between different countries, particularly affluent and impoverished ones, as well as solidarity with future generations and treating the areas of economic, political, social, and environmental actions as interdependent (United Nations, 2015; Watling and Zhou, 2011; Smaniotto *et al.*, 2020; Krzyśko *et al.*, 2020).

Many authors in their research and works conducted and still conducts discussions about the mutual relations between economic development and the state of the natural environment (Ayres and Bergh, 2005; Mazzanti, 2008; Panayotou, 2016).

The concept of sustainable development encompasses a process within the scope of which it becomes possible to achieve high quality of living in the long-term while simultaneously conserving natural resources and the environment and ensuring social, economic, and spatial development. Growth is achieved by implementing sustainable order as a model of growth integrating all the dimensions of sustainable development typically defined as economic, social, environmental, institutional, and political orders. In the literature, some studies undertake a critical analysis of the plans implemented within sustainable development (Wijkman and Rockström, 2012; Adelman, 2018; Blicharska *et al.*, 2019).

Sustainable development can be measured by applying several methods. Hence there is no single universal system of indicators. Many articles present various approaches to indicators (Szopik-Depczyńska *et al.*, 2018; Kono, Ostermeyer and Wallbaum, 2018; Valenti, Kimpara, Pretoc and Moraes-Valenti, 2018). Individual EU countries created their systems of sustainable development measurements, which Eurostat monitors. In Poland, the most common method of monitoring sustainable development involves statistical indicators proposed by Statistics Poland. Several indicators regarding the above-specified areas are used from the databases of Statistics Poland within the scope of individual orders of sustainable development.

Thirty-one indicators have been created for the social order, which refers to seven areas, i.e., demographic changes, public health, social inclusion, education, access to the labor market, public safety, and sustainable consumption. Twenty-nine indicators have been adopted to assess the economic order, which concerns economic growth, employment, innovativeness, transport, and sustainable production models. For assessing the environmental order, another 29 indicators are employed in the following fields, climate changes, energy, air protection, aquatic ecosystems, freshwater resources, land use, biodiversity, and waste management. The last of the orders regards institutions and politics, and it is assessed with 12 indicators evaluating sustainable development financing, trade globalization, policy cohesion and effectiveness, civic society (openness and participation as well as civic activity), and equality in management (Sustainable Development Indicators for Poland, 2015). The literature on sustainable development in Poland provides many descriptions of sustainable development indicators and the concept of indicators selection (Balas and Molenda, 2016; Teneta-Skwiercz, 2018; Raszkowski and Bartniczak, 2018).

A UN document titled “Transforming our world, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” determines the conditions for implementing the concepts of sustainable development (United Nations, 2015). In September 2015, the UN member states, including Poland, adopted the document which stipulates 17 goals and 169 targets linked to those goals; goals and targets are corresponding to three dimensions of sustainable development, economic, social, and environmental (Sosik and Dongil, 2018; Armeanu *et al.*, 2018; Ioan *et al.*, 2020; Zemanová and Druláková, 2020). Also, in literature, we can find the question, is it possible to realize 17 goals together? (Zimm, Sperling, and Busch, 2018).

According to the UN documents, sustainable development of the Earth is defined as development that meets the needs of the present, while at the same time preserves, protects and reinstates health, maintains the balance of the Earth’s ecosystems without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The 17 goals of the Agenda 2030 include No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, Reducing Inequality, Sustainable Cities and

Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Life Below Water, Life On Land, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, Partnerships for the Goals (United Nations, 2015; Jaremen, Nawrocka and Żemła, 2019). A new vision for sustainable development outlined in the 2030 Agenda concentrates on five main areas defined as 5P, People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership. Within the framework of these individual areas, the following methods of actions have been devised (United Nations, 2015):

- people - actions aimed at reaching excluded groups, creating conditions and opportunities of benefiting from universal human rights and economic achievements by everyone, guaranteeing all people equal access to economic resources, basic services, land, natural resources, technologies and finances;
- planet - actions integrating social, economic and environmental aspects of development, for the purpose of economic growth, social inclusion, rational use of natural resources, achieving a better quality of life and solving the problem of poverty;
- prosperity - transformation of economies in order to create new jobs, promoting sustainable consumption and production, using new technologies and business potential, ensuring access to good education, health care, clean water, electric power, transport, telecommunication, facilitating starting up business activity, investments, trade exchange and intensive sustainable development of cities;
- peace - actions for peace, efficient, just and responsible institutions, strengthening the role of the law, social inclusion and co-decision of competent institutions supporting governments, property rights, freedom of speech and media, political freedom, access to justice and lack of discrimination;
- partnership - actions for partnership based on solidarity, cooperation, responsibility and transparency between governments, local, regional administration, scientific circles, business and all other stake holding parties and groups.

Migration and labor force mobility seem to be significant factors of sustainable development (Ali, Egbetokun, and Memon, 2018). Migrations are movements of people for a permanent or temporary change of residence, taking place within geographical space involving migrations of people inside a country (internal migrations) and outside of a country (external migrations) (Cambridge Business English Dictionary, see also, Light, Parminder and Karageorgis, 2017; Lyons, 2017). Migrants most often decide to change their place of residence under the influence of economic conditions. Chiefly it is an opportunity for finding a job and increasing income in their household. Other factors that play a significant role in deciding to migrate are personal (e.g., improvement of the standard of living, professional development), political and security-related factors as well as socio-cultural factors

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(Dekker *et al.*, 2018; Kuzior *et al.*, 2020). The factors affecting the balance of migration may be further divided into attractive and repelling ones (Smith, 2017; Martin-Cano *et al.*, 2020; Tkachenko, Kuzior, and Kwilinski, 2019).

Labor migration is an interdisciplinary problem in scientific researches and considerations (Hua, Xu, and Piquero, 2017). The impact of migration on the labor market is described in the classic economic theory of migration (Lewis, 1954; Laurila, 2019). Workers' flow may benefit both the country from which citizens emigrate and they immigrate. In the country from which workforce outflows, unemployment falls, and wages rise, monetary assets are received from individuals who found employment abroad. In a country receiving immigrants, they limit wage increases; they take on many onerous works performed in worse conditions, which natives of that country are unwilling to undertake (Gosh, 1996; Riaño, 2021; Ricci, Crivellaro, and Bolzani, 2021).

The theory of dual labor market created by Piore (1979); Massey *et al.* (1993) plays a significant role in assessing migration processes. According to that theory, the demand for immigrants' work solidifies is owed to labor market segmentation, causing a portion of people from a given country to be unwilling to accept work in specific jobs or sectors due to low prestige seasonality, danger, etc.

Furthermore, when assessing the migration phenomenon through the prism of the labor market, social theories are worth mentioning, mainly the theory of migration networks and associated theories (Mangalam and Schwarzweller, 1970). In line with the assumptions of those theories, a proportion of migrants experience an emulation effect - they emulate others (including acquaintances) who work abroad. Thanks to migration, new networks of contacts are created, and an individual deciding to emigrate feels more secure in a new location because they know people who came to the new territory before them and may draw from their experience (Massey *et al.*, 1998). Migration networks are considered an element of social capital, and their growth facilitates further migrants' inflow thanks to reduced costs of obtaining information (Haas, 2008; Ren and Qiao, 2010).

An influential group of theories regarding migration includes the theories of development that refer to geographical economics. Those theories point out, among other things, the benefits drawn by better-developed countries and regions on account of immigration. The benefits chiefly arise from obtaining human capital from poorer and politically weaker countries (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1998; Haas, 2005; Jones, 1998; Lewis, 1996; Massey *et al.*, 1993). In this part of the paper, political theories explaining certain aspects of migration should be mentioned. They concern in particular about the political and safety-related conditions that affect emigration. While emigration on account of the experienced sense of danger is understandable and raises no doubts, particularly on moral grounds, the issues resulting from the policy of affluent countries may raise certain controversies.

Those countries treat immigrant workers as a buffer used to reduce employment during an economic downturn (Devis, 1988; Golinowska, 2001). Furthermore, population migrations need to be recognized as an essential factor facilitating economic, social, and ecological development (Li Xiangwei *et al.*, 2017), since they constitute a significant component of demographic changes occurring at a national level, they partly compensate for the effect of population aging, and they affect the size of workforce resources. Within the framework of the actions based on the 2030 Agenda and the actions undertaken in individual countries, migrations ought to be supported, and concrete measures should be promoted to improve migrant's living conditions significantly.

The migration phenomenon holds a special place in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The Agenda features provisions concerning humanitarian crises and forced population displacements for the advancement of development; furthermore, it contains provisions supporting people most vulnerable to threats, including refugees, people displaced internally, and migrants. The 2030 Agenda assumes that actions will be taken to provide lifelong learning opportunities to all people, including migrants, that all forced labor and human traffic, and child labor will be eradicated. Positive contribution brought in by migrants for the growth favoring social inclusion and sustainable development is emphasized (United Nations, 2015). Detailed references regarding migration may be found in the provisions concerning the implementation of the following goals, 4 - quality education, 5 - gender equality, 8 - decent work and economic growth, 10 - reduced inequality, 16 - peace, justice, and strong institutions, as well as 17 - partnerships for the goals.

To implement the fourth goal, an assumption was made that high-quality education must be ensured, and lifelong learning of all citizens ought to be promoted. Detailed provisions define the need for a global increase of the number of scholarships offered to citizens of developing states, and in particular, to individuals coming from the least developed countries, small island developing States as well as African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries. The fifth goal involves achieving gender equality as well as empowering women and girls.

When implementing this assumption and considering it in terms of migration, it is emphasized that all forms of violence against women and girls both in the public and private domain (such as human trafficking, sexual abuse, other forms of abuse) must be ended. The eighth goal - promoting stable, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. In the provisions concerning the implementation of that goal, the following references to migration can be found, taking immediate action aimed at eradicating forced labor, contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking; prohibiting child labor; protecting workers' rights, and promoting safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers.

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The provisions regarding the fulfillment of the tenth goal, i.e., reducing inequalities within and among countries, refer to migration in detail through the provisions concerning facilitating safe and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies, reducing transaction costs of international money transfers from migrants. In the realization of the sixteenth goal - by promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies, ensuring access to fair justice systems to all people, and developing practical, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels facilitating social inclusion, it is assumed that all abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children will be ended. In turn, in the seventeenth goal - namely, revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development - provisions related to migration stipulate that assistance needs to increase for the enhancement of capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts (United Nations, 2015).

Propagation of migration and mobility as a driving force for development is essential both from the standpoint of the countries of migrants' origin and countries of their destination, mainly when they are low- or medium-income countries. Thereby, within the scope of implementing sustainable development, it is essential to tackle the challenges of such a situation. Hence, it is worth mentioning that migration ought to be considered as a factor supporting growth. Migrants should be provided with conditions in which their dignity will be respected and the law, as well as human rights, will be observed. Additionally, steps should be taken to enable migrants' assimilation with a new place of residence. At the same time, the challenges arising from growing urbanization must be noticed. Migrants, particularly those arriving in the first wave, typically come to large metropolises.

Therefore, it is recommended that steps be taken to facilitate migration management within the regional cooperation framework and direct the incoming people to territories that need new workers. It is also advisable to consider engaging the arriving migrants in social activities to benefit a local community. However, it is necessary to effectively manage migration through the operations of national and local government institutions in order to face challenges such as "brain drain," effective use of migrants' potential, or the impact of migration on the process of urbanization (Idu, 2019; Kuzior *et al.*, 2020). Regional and global mobility of people creates a multitude of opportunities to implement the concept of sustainable development, contributing to the reduction of poverty levels and innovation growth.

***Migrations from Ukraine to Poland and the labour market:*** The Polish labor market is an example of how migrants' potential is used for development. From 2016 to 2019 Polish labor market was in excellent condition. It resulted from a stable pace of

economic growth, low rate of unemployment with simultaneous wages growth. Moreover, the situation of the most poorly remunerated workers improved. Until the pandemic outbreak in 2020, this favorable economic situation in Poland also affected the increase in the demand for workers. This growing demand for workers resulted not only from climbing financial ratios. The problem of the Polish labor market concerned workforce deficit, which was chiefly owed to the outflow of Polish citizens abroad and the aging of the Polish population. The personnel deficit affected both well-paid sectors as well as qualified physical laborers. Apart from programmers and IT specialists, the most difficult positions to recruit were physical laborers, i.e., machine and forklift operators, electricians, or production sector workers. That is why, in that period, Poland experienced an increase in the demand for employees from abroad. An essential advantage of employing foreigners in Poland included lower costs for employers on migrants' lower expectations regarding remuneration.

The largest group of foreigners who arrived over the last five years in Poland were the citizens of Ukraine (Ryndzak, 2019; Migration Profile of Ukraine, 2011-2015). According to the estimates of Statistics Poland, 2 106 101 foreigners lived in Poland on 31 December 2019. The majority of them came from Ukraine. There were 1 351 418 of them, i.e., nearly 65% of all foreigners (Statistics Poland, 2020). The nationals of Ukraine lead the statistics of entries, settlements, visas, individuals who take up work, and the ones who study in Poland and apply for Polish citizenship. Poland's popularity as a destination country for Ukrainians is due to several reasons, including its geographical and cultural proximity. Migrants from Ukraine arriving in Poland encounter minor problems with communication with Poles and adaptation to Polish living conditions; they are also positively perceived by the Polish society, which is a significant factor facilitating a decision to come and stay in Poland.

In most cases, Ukrainians migrate to Poland for labor-related reasons, for the short-term, and regularly (they migrate cyclically, often seasonally). Ukrainians come to Poland to work (most typically in construction, home care, and agriculture) to earn money and support their budget and/or the household's budget they are a part of. To that end, they take advantage of favorable entry conditions and legal employment conditions, including the system of employer declarations.

Since 2018 there have been significant changes in defining and presenting the number of declarations regarding work undertaken by foreigners in Poland, and a seasonal work permit was introduced. Only in 2018 and 2019, an average of nearly 1.5 million declarations regarding the employment of Ukrainian nationals in Poland was filed. Women took One-third of the jobs. Half of the employed Ukrainians were no more than 34 years old. The most significant number of people were employed in manufacturing (one-third of the employed), in construction (approx. one fifth) and services (approx. 18%). Ukrainians chiefly performed menial work (according to Statistics Poland estimates, menial work constituted half of all work permits granted).

Furthermore, they were frequently employed as laborers and machine operators (approximately two-fifths of all Ukrainian nationals residing in Poland). A great majority (over a million) worked under a contract of mandate, and only about 30% had a regular employment contract. Most typically (nearly a million individuals), employers offered a job for longer than three months (Statistics Poland, 2020).

During the years 2018-2019, most Ukrainian citizens accepted work in the following professions, laborers performing menial work in industry, laborers performing menial work, laborers performing menial work in general construction, warehouse workers, hand packers. Ukraine nationals also performed specialists jobs (such as, e.g., representatives of public authorities, higher officials and managers, and specialists), but they constituted only 0.6% of all employed immigrants (Statistics Poland, 2020).

The factors that attracted workers from Ukraine to Poland were chiefly economic ones, among which remuneration was a dominant aspect - nearly three times higher than its average value in Poland compared to Ukraine. Moreover, Poland recorded lower unemployment and a decidedly higher GDP per capita than Ukraine. The factor which may also be recognized as an attractive element for Ukrainian nationals was Poland's cultural proximity, language similarity, traditions, and historical aspects. The delicate political situation in Poland was not without its significance to Ukrainian nationals (World Bank, State Statistics Service of Ukraine, Pieńkowski, 2020; Ryndzak, 2018; Semenenko, Halhash and Sieriebriak, 2019; Horská *et al.*, 2019).

Analyses of trends in the Polish labor market indicate that the size of Ukrainian immigration in Poland should not undergo any significant changes during subsequent years. Some of the people residing in Poland may want to return to their families. Some of them will probably bring their loved ones to Poland, settling in Poland permanently. An aspect of immigration from Ukraine to Poland that is worth emphasizing in the conducted analysis is how well educated immigrants coming from Ukraine are, or the Polish labor market may translate into highly efficient work at relatively low costs (Chmielewska, Dobroczek and Panuciak, 2017). In the case of menial work, for some Poles, Ukrainians might be perceived as competition, but without a doubt, they supplement labor supply, resulting in a reduction of companies' operating costs. Relatively good education of immigrants might in the future translate into them holding higher positions in enterprises.

The presented analysis indicates that Poland, thanks to administrative facilitations offered to immigrants from Ukraine and the ease of linguistic communication and its spatial proximity, may be chosen as a destination country for labor immigration by Ukrainians in the long term.

***Assessment of the competences of workers from Ukraine on the Polish labour market - research result:*** The employment of foreigners constitutes a significant aspect of sustainable development implementation in each state. Also, in Poland, numerous steps are taken demonstrating that the inflowing workforce enables effective

development and complete disposal of additional labor resources. An example of steps undertaken to benefit Ukrainian nationals residing and working in Poland is a project organized by the University of Szczecin for Ukrainians. It involved using funds from the European Social Fund and organizing a training course for Ukrainian nationals to raise their professional competencies in the regional labor market. Through the employment of the ESF funds within the framework of the POWER program (Measure 3.1 Competences in higher education), courses have been organized from which a total of 150 citizens of Ukraine benefited.

The course provided students with an opportunity to learn or improve their Polish language skills and acquire basic knowledge of labor law and labor market, Polish culture, history of the West Pomeranian region, political situation, and socio-economic changes. The course offered assistance in adapting to a new place of living. Classes conducted within the scope of the course allowed many participants to acquire new or to improve their previous competencies, and thereby to adapt to the needs of the labor market, to increase their professional activity, to break through barriers related to residence in a new place, as well as to improve the quality of their professional and private life.

During the course organization and the project duration, between March 2019 - April 2020, a study in the form of a diagnostic survey was conducted among the Ukrainian nationals who participated in the project. The study's objective was to obtain information on the professional competencies of Ukrainian citizens and assess the possibility of using their potential for the needs of the local labor market. In the study, the current Ukrainians' positions on the West Pomeranian labor market were evaluated, and their previous professional experience and skills. One hundred correctly filled-in questionnaires were received. The research sample was not representative, but the conducted research may serve as an indicator for actions, and at the same time, it may constitute a pilot study for the organization of in-depth study on the issue.

Sixty females and 40 males participated in the study. The participants' age structure was as follows, nearly one fourth (22%) of the sample were young individuals less than 29 years old, the largest age group was formed by people between 30 and 39 years of age (45%), whereas the remaining sample - one third - was made up of individuals older than 40. In two-thirds of the cases, the respondents declared that they possessed higher education. A quarter of those surveyed had secondary education, and only 9% claimed to have completed primary or vocational education. A great majority of Ukrainian nationals partaking in the study worked at the time of the study (86%). Typically, they were employed based on a job contract (79%). 18% declared that they worked under a contract of mandate or a specific task contract. Three individuals started up their business activity. Ukraine usually held 1-year contracts or contracts for the undefined period (the situation concerned half of those surveyed).

A substantial majority of employed individuals (63%) worked between 30-50 hours per week. However, looking at their declared needs, it occurred that two-fifths of the

surveyed Ukrainian citizens would like to work 30-40 hours per week, and another two-fifths would prefer working more than 40 hours. Among the latter group, some individuals were prepared to accept working over 50 hours a week (8%). The remuneration that workers from Ukraine received for the work performed was usually (55%) within the range of PLN 11-15 per hour (net remuneration). In turn, 30% of those surveyed obtained remuneration between PLN 16 and 30.

Therefore, more than two-thirds of the individuals surveyed received more than PLN 20 in net pay per hour. There were no workers among the surveyed sample who earned a net more than PLN 31 per hour of work. The survey participants were asked about a satisfactory remuneration amount. The study results indicate that every fifth Ukrainian citizen would be satisfied with pay ranging between PLN 16-20. However, the rate that would satisfy 34% of the workers from Ukraine was PLN 21-24, and for 24% - the satisfactory amount would be PLN 26-36.

However, Ukrainian nationals were not entirely able to find their footing in the conditions offered to them by the West Pomeranian labor market. Operating on the labor market, only 16% of the respondents declared that they were not afraid about their future and did not experience any worries regarding their jobs. Those who indicated their fears specified insufficient Polish language skills as the biggest worry (52%). Moreover, other substantial worries reported by Ukrainian nationals concerned unfair employer practices (33%) and a hostile atmosphere at the workplace (29%).

The study took into account the professional experience possessed by individuals arriving from Ukraine. The study demonstrated that those individuals most frequently do not work in their professions, and they do not work at the position complying with their education. In Ukraine, the respondents typically used to work as specialists (three-fifths). Nearly one-third of them used to hold managerial positions, 15% used to run their businesses. The professions most often practiced in Ukraine by the respondents before their arrival to Poland included jobs of economic nature, e.g., an economist, salesperson, manager, or running one's own business. The study also revealed that the examined Ukrainians, in most cases, completed higher education, and the job they were currently doing fell below their qualifications. In Poland, Ukrainians most often worked in the vocations of production fitters, warehouse workers, in catering, cooks, bartenders, waiters or kitchen assistants, performing office work or working in accounting, as sales assistants or cashiers, physical laborers. None of the researched Ukraine nationals worked as a manager or a specialist. These results indicate the untapped immigrants' potential.

The surveyed themselves highly evaluated their competencies, which employers could make use of on the labor market. In the case of IT skills, respondents declared as follows, 79% operated smartphones, 78% operated web browsers, 85% used electronic mail, 59% used Office package, e.g., Word and Excel, 61% used Windows operating system, 82% used communicators, 79% also used social media sites, 74% declared the ability to use office equipment, i.e., printer, fax, etc. When assessing their competencies

in the field of knowledge, experience, skills, and individual traits, their declarations were as follows:

- 81% of those surveyed estimated their knowledge and education to be good or very good, while the remaining (19%) claimed it to be average.
- every tenth surveyed individuals estimated their linguistic skills to be low or very low; nearly half of them deemed them high, while over two-fifths considered their language skills to be average.
- in the respondents' own opinion, their specialist knowledge (related to the profession practiced in Ukraine) was broad (over 80% so declared), every fifth surveyed individual judged their specialist knowledge to be average or very low.
- as far as computer skills were concerned, 7 out of 10 surveyed individuals believed that the computer skills they possessed were high or very high.
- when assessing professional experience, only 4% of the surveyed individuals believed that it was minimal. The others thought it to be average (every fifth individual) or extensive and very extensive (three-quarters of those surveyed).
- -specific skills involving machine and equipment operation were deemed low or very low by 7% of the respondents; a quarter of them believed them to be average, while two-thirds thought they were highly or even very highly skilled in that respect.
- coping in difficult situations - in this case, the respondents' opinion predominantly indicated that they possessed the trait at a high or very high level (79% of the surveyed respondent so declared).
- risk-taking - a quarter described themselves as having a very low or low level of the trait, nearly one-third claimed an average level of risk-taking inclination, and the others (44%) proclaimed to be high or very high risk-takers.
- high or very high creativity and initiative-taking ability were observed and assessed as a feature possessed by nearly three-quarters of the respondents.
- spotting new opportunities - only every twentieth respondent did not demonstrate the trait, every seventh judged to possess an average level of the ability, while a significant majority (over 80%) estimated to be able to spot new opportunities in their professional environment to a high or very high degree.
- a great majority of the respondents (89%) claimed that they possessed a high or very high ability to learn quickly.
- 9 out of 10 of those surveyed believed that they are excellent at teamwork; only every tenth respondent was judged to have a weak or average capacity for teamwork.
- the skill of communicating and a high degree of communication effectiveness as indicated by nearly 90% of the respondents. 8% of those surveyed were deemed to possess the skill at an average level, and only 5% of the respondents described themselves as having low communication skills.

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- exerting influence on others, mobilization - nearly two-thirds of Ukrainians assessed their abilities in that regard to be good or very good, and every fifth of them described them to be average.
  - nearly three-fourths of the respondents believed they possessed a high degree of the ability to argue and defend their own beliefs.
  - two-thirds of those surveyed thought they could conduct negotiations and negotiate with high skill, and every fourth of them, with average skill.
  - over one-tenth of those surveyed virtually did not perceive any leadership competencies in themselves; a quarter of them deemed those competencies to be average. However, nearly two-thirds indicated that they would manage teams and people and be a leader - this skill they believed to possess to a high or very high degree.
  - the respondents occurred to be highly independent people. Nearly 80% of the respondents declared that they were highly independent.
  - over 80% believed that they could cope well and even very well with managing their time in the working environment.
  - The surveyed occurred to be highly ethical individuals - a significant majority (87%) declared that they operated in line with ethical principles in professional dealings, and they indicated that they developed this competence to a high or very high degree.
  - in the case of loyalty, over three-quarters believed that they possess a high degree of this trait, and every fifth of the respondent judged to possess an average level.
  - nearly all (96%) of them believed that they reacted responsibly in their professional activities, and they demonstrated that the trait was highly or very highly developed in their case.
  - Over 90% of the respondents believed that they were guided by honesty to a very high degree in their professional lives.
  - 8 out of 10 respondents replied that they demonstrated a high or very high degree of persistence in achieving the tasks entrusted to them by an employer or a superior. The others are deemed to possess an average degree of the trait.
  - over 80% thought themselves to be consistent (to a high or a very high degree), 15% judged their actions in that regard to be at an average level, and only two individuals assessed themselves to show low consistency.
  - the surveyed individuals also judged their physical fitness very high (more than three-quarters of those surveyed), and only every fifth respondent claimed to be of average fitness.
  - only every tenth respondent assessed their health condition to be average. Others judged it to be good or very good (over 91% of such assessments).
  - only every tenth of respondents believed their appearance to be average or judged it to be poor, whereas nine out of ten surveyed individuals estimated their appearance to be good or very good.

Research results demonstrate that the nationals of Ukraine operating on the West Pomeranian labor market constitute not only a critical quantitative dimension of that market but that they also represent a significant qualitative aspect of that group of workers since they are highly skilled yet demonstrate low demands. The respondents possess both high specialist skills (knowledge, experience, certificates, and qualifications). This highly developed aptitude impacts their effective and favorable performance of the tasks assigned to them and relevant subjective competencies, skills, aptitudes, physical traits, and abilities. A high level of the examined competencies demonstrates that such competencies may be used in one job position and various situations in the labor market.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The first part of the article contains theoretical considerations regarding migrations and how they relate to the concept of sustainable development. The next part presents the migration of Ukrainian citizens to Poland and the changes occurring in the Polish labor market. The next part features an assessment of the competencies of Ukrainians in Poland, based on the conducted research, followed by a summary and proposals for actions to be taken at the micro (companies), meso (regional), and macro (the entire economy) levels.

The issue undertaken in the article was analyzed by employing interdisciplinary research methods. Such an approach enables applying various disciplines, paradigms, and perspectives, and this methodological eclecticism ensures cognitive effectiveness. The presented article features both theoretical considerations as well as the results of the author's research. In the theoretical section, the literature of the subject was examined along with the publications of the UN, the European Commission, the World Bank, the NBP, the Statistics Poland, the State Statistic Service of Ukraine, and the Migration Service of Ukraine. A classic literature analysis method was employed, involving the determination of the status of research with a critical reflection of such research (Paré *et al.*, 2015; Sylvester, Tate and Johnstone, 2011; Templier and Paré, 2015). In the empirical section, research results were presented in the form of a diagnostic survey conducted among the citizens of Ukraine. A total of 105 individuals participated in the survey. The following research hypothesis was formulated, employers operating on the regional market do not take full advantage of the professional skills possessed by Ukrainian migrants. Hence their potential is not used for the fulfillment of sustainable development goals concerning labor market growth. Because only 105 individuals took part in the study, the research sample was not representative. Therefore, the conducted research may be treated as a pilot study to further research on the issue

### **4. Results and Discussion**

The literature of the subject assumes that human resources constitute the most critical factor determining the operation of organizations as well as economies in the

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contemporary world. Human capital is understood as skills, knowledge, abilities, motivation, attitudes, or even health conditions (Delaney and Huselid, 1996). Human resources may constitute a source of skills enabling capitalization on new opportunities and increase in competitiveness (Khan *et al.*, 2019).

The changes constantly occurring in the economic business environment, including chiefly the development of new technologies, jobs turnover, immigrants inflow, demographic low, integrational processes, and in the recent months - the pandemic - are but a few selected elements forcing employers to face new challenges related to employing and keeping employees, as well as to finding such personnel whose skills are suited to the profile of a given business operation. All analyses and research results constitute essential information to authorities, employers, and institutions because, on the one hand, they provide orientation as to workers' potential. On the other hand, they enable full utilization of the skills in all the jobs offered, thereby increasing efficiency and competitiveness in an individual organization and the entire region. Hence the actions are a response to the implementation of the ideas of sustainable development. The continuation of studies on assessing various aspects of sustainable development, including migration, apart from their significance, is justified by a relatively limited number of comprehensive and current studies in that regard.

Therefore, it is worth preparing research of a continuous nature that would present both distinct individual aspects and, when jointly analyzed, it would provide comprehensive knowledge of the issue. It would require an interdisciplinary approach expressed in a multitude of research aspects. Such research ought to have a double-track character - it ought to be conducted in quantitative and qualitative terms. Explanation of various mechanisms occurring in sustainable development is essential not only from an academic standpoint. Such research and analyses may also constitute a source of inspiration for businesses, social institutions, and it may facilitate undertaking appropriate steps within the scope of the realized economic, social, and ecological policy in individual countries.

## 5. Conclusions

Accepting immigrants from Ukraine in Poland may facilitate boosting the region's potential and of its economy, while at the same time it may accompany the implementation of the 2030 Agenda provisions. The actions for immigrants' benefit ought to be undertaken by representatives of authorities, institutions, and employers, constantly cooperating, to represent the region as a place of work that is open to foreigners, caring for the development of migrant workers and ensuring that they will stay with a respective company, designing work stations in such a way to provide the workers from Ukraine with an opportunity of making the best use of their abilities, providing them with opportunities for promotion and growth, creating positive psychological contact and planning the continuity of work positions for workers from Ukraine.

The analysis of the conducted study firstly allows claiming that the potential of migrants from Ukraine is not fully utilized to fulfill the current needs of the Polish labor market. The second conclusion arises after analyzing the gathered theoretical and empirical material, demonstrating the need to undertake and devise an entire set of actions to implement sustainable development in the operation of Polish companies and, in particular, use the capabilities of the incoming workers. Such actions ought to be conducted both at the level of organizations, at a local level, and the level of the entire economy. Fundamental actions should include:

- supporting Ukrainian nationals in the study of the Polish language by organizing and subsidizing language courses. The courses ought to be universally available, accessible, and extensive promotional campaigns should cover them in order for the information to reach the largest possible group of potential participants. Those actions should be taken both by local authorities and by self-governments in cooperation with companies;
- employing Ukrainian nationals who speak Ukrainian or Russian at official positions to which they apply, in order to facilitate and streamline the formalities related to residence and work in Poland;
- starting active cooperation between territorial local government entities and employers, in order to ensure efficient information exchange regarding employers' needs regarding the employees they require, as well as the current number of Ukrainians seeking employment in the region;
- undertaking an individualized approach to workers hired by employers among the citizens of Ukraine. It would enable recognizing their professional experience and skills in order to entrust them with professional duties that are suited to their education and previously acquired professional experience as well as, as much as possible, offering them work at a level similar to their previous position, which to a greater extent may contribute to raising the quality of the work performed by Ukrainians and to utilizing their full potential,
- cooperation between authorities, employers, social institutions and offering assistance in the adaptation of migrants and their families to a new place of living (e.g., assistance in obtaining social benefits, access to education, health care, the possibility of obtaining information within the scope of consultations, information on institutions of informal character, etc.).

The application of the above-proposed solutions will enable both businesses and authorities to ensure managing economic, ecological, social, and human dimensions - particularly important from the standpoint of this article - in a sustainable manner. The crucial assumption of that strategy involves such management, which creates one desirable cohesive whole out of each of those dimensions separately and all of them together.

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