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(Pand)Economic Migration: An Attempt to Assess the COVID-19 Impact on European Migrant Workers Situations

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Abstract:

Purpose: *The main objective is an attempt to present the decision motives and situation of economic migrants during COVID-19 pandemic. The research hypothesis adopted is "The push, pull and indirect obstacles created in the first year of the pandemic, had an impact on European labour migrants only in the short term."*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *The basis were economic migrants from the Ukraine, Poland and Germany. The literature analysis, desk research and descriptive statistics method as well as selected statistical analysis indicators were applied. The conducted analyses feature references to reports and data bases collected from Eurostat and bureaus of statistics of individual countries.*

Findings: *The impact of the COVID-19 on emigration depends on the nature of the migration factor dominating among emigrants. In the case of migrants from Ukraine or Poland (mainly labour nature of migration), the impact of the COVID-19 was short-term. Despite the restrictions, differences in the labour markets of the sending and receiving countries continued to be a strong motivation. The uncertainty for migrants in terms of legislation was also short-term. In the case of emigrants from Germany, in which emigration is dominated by more effective allocation of human capital, the pandemic slowed down the scale of emigration.*

Practical Implications: *The results of the research will be useful not only for migrants, but also for governments. It can also constitute a starting point for in-depth considerations on pandemic impact on international migration and labour markets. Due to the different nature of European countries, economic migration will help government bodies to adopt effective migration policy by developing more effective methods to support the migrant employment.*

Originality/Value: *It is a unique comparison of economic motives for foreign emigration taking into account the impact of the elements of the push-pull theory, both within the EU migration to/from the EU from/to third countries, in the first year of the pandemic.*

Keywords: *Economic migration, labour market, COVID-19, international migration.*

JEL codes: *F22, O15, E24, F66.*

Paper Type: *Research article.*

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, the current COVID-19 pandemic has changed almost every international area, including the labour market and economic migration (Grima *et al.,* 2020). Despite this unforeseen event, the situation of labour migrants before and during the pandemic did not change in the long term. This research concerns the economic emigration from Ukraine to Poland, from Poland to Germany and from Germany to United States of America (USA).

Among the so called emigration countries in Europe, the leading position is held by Ukraine (HDI=0.779; 2019) (Vakhitova and Fihel, 2020). A high and persistent unemployment rate as well as incomparably low remuneration as compared to the European Union (EU) states continue to drive the citizens of Ukraine towards other countries. Despite Ukraine not being the EU member, the Ukrainian economic migrants, chose Poland (Vakhitova and Fihel, 2020) as one of their main European migration destination. According to the status at 31st December 2019 there were about 614,000 insured "non-EU" foreigners in Poland, with the strongest group (78.0%, 479,113 employees) being the citizens of Ukraine (Mrugała and Nasiński, 2020).

Due to numerous economic changes, in recent years Poland (HDI=0.880; 2019) began transforming its migration profile from an emigration to emigration-immigration country. Nevertheless, in spite of becoming the seventh largest economy in the EU (Fredriksson, 2019), the labour market factors such as e.g., the remuneration level or the supply and demand mismatch became a push factor for some citizens to undertake a decision to continue or to start economic emigration. Germany, neighbouring country, became a destination for temporary and permanent Polish emigrants (mainly for economic purposes). In 2019 in the discussed country, Poles constituted the second biggest group of emigrants (the predominating nationality were Romanian citizens), with a majority working under short-term contracts (OECD, 2020). It may appear that Germany (HDI=0.947; 2019) as the biggest contributor to the European Union GDP in 2019 (24.7% EU GDP), in accordance with the classic push pull theory should be profiled as the immigration country. While the years long mass influx of foreign nationals to this country is discussed, the broadening German emigration does not attract attention. In 2019 the nature of German emigration was in majority within Europe, i.e., towards Switzerland (16,340 people) and Austria (11,904 people).

According to Statistisches Bundesamt (2020), the country rated as the third destination were the United States of America - USA (9,782 people). On the other hand the existing economic emigration from Germany was of a different nature than emigrations from the countries named above (Landesmann *et al.,* 2015). The outline of modern, economic migration from Germany was based on mainly personal factors and intervening obstacles. Rather qualitative than quantitative nature of their emigration was mainly related to brain circulation, sometimes to brain drain. Most emigrants left Germany to pursue their professional career development and they took up employment compliant with their qualifications. A majority of them also rely on improving their living standard abroad. The USA (HDI=0,926; 2019) has one of the largest labour markets and it is one of the largest forums for labour exchange in the world.

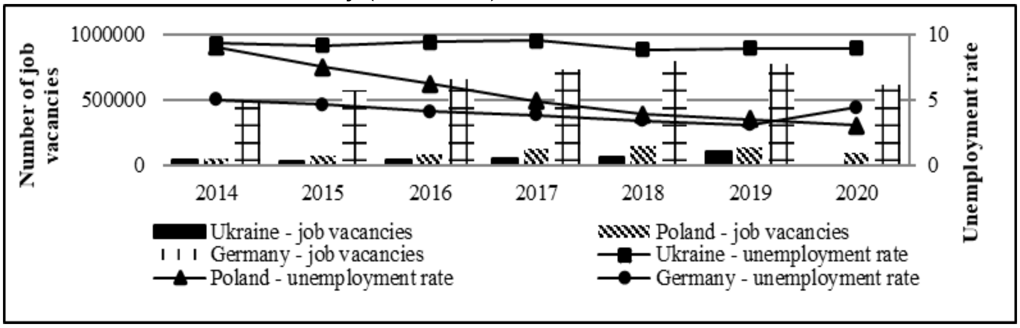
Despite the fact of lower minimum hourly wage ratio than f.e. in Germany in 2019, USA still had a higher pace of socio-economic development. Developed infrastructure, modern organizational methods or opportunities to raise or gain qualifications on the primary labour market was one of the factors that attracted emigrants from Europe.

The COVID-19, however, had an impact on changes in the labour markets of countries receiving migrants. The consequences of these changes were, in turn, visible in the decisions taken by migrants.

2. Labour Markets of Selected Countries before COVID –19 Pandemic

Even in countries mentioned above (receiving and sending migrants), countries with high and very high human development level (HDI), there was a inconsistencies and imbalance in national labour markets. This situation was reflected in the insatiable demand for work, expressed in an average number of job vacancies on the labour market and the unemployment rate (Figure 1, Table 1). What is more, in 2020, the imbalance was further aggravated by the pandemic situation.

Figure 1. *Insatiable demand for work and unemployment rate [%] according to LSF in Ukraine, Poland and Germany (2014-2020)*



Note: *No data for Ukraine (job vacancies) for 2020.*
Source: *Compiled by the authors based on data from Central Statistical Office, Eurostat, www.statista.com, http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua.*

The labour market imbalance (2014-2019) with respect to the unemployment rate and work demand, expressed by way of Pearson's linear correlation indicates a strong dependency of a negative direction for Poland (R= –0.98), Germany (R= –0.97), USA (R= –0.85) and weaker correlation for Ukraine (R= –0.54). The data analysis for the Polish, German and American labour markets indicates that situation on those markets featured an increase of job vacancies with a simultaneous fall of the unemployment rate which deepen the imbalance on the labour market.

Table 1. *Insatiable demand for work (job vacancies) and unemployment rate (LSF), USA (2014-2020)*

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
job vacancies	5.0 m	5.6 m	5.5 m	5.8 m	7.3 m	6.4 m	6.6 m
unemployment rate	6.2%	5.3%	4.9%	4.4%	3.9%	3.7%	3.9%

Source: *Compiled by the authors based on data from Eurostat and Job Openings and Labour Turnover Survey.*

Moreover, the above-mentioned situation existed in parallel with filling the gap of workers with foreign employees. If the demand for work cannot be satisfied by domestic supply, searching of employees abroad by entrepreneurs seems reasonable. A weaker, negative correlation was observed on the Ukrainian labour market, which indicated that the Ukraine's unemployment rate is not strongly related to the number of job vacancies.

In 2020, in the first half of the year, the situation of filling of staff shortages by migrants in labour markets mentioned-above was disrupted as a result of numerous changes and limitations of COVID-19. Employers were temporarily deprived of the possibility of employing new employees from abroad and the migrants themselves were deprived of seeking for better job prospects. Nevertheless, despite the fact of COVID-19 restrictions in selected labour markets (Poland, Germany), as a result of huge imbalances, employees were still searched abroad. A detailed assessment of the above-mentioned situation is presented in sections 3 and 4.

3. Changes Caused by the COVID–19 Pandemic and their Consequences in the Labour Markets

Due to the COVID–19 pandemic, the studied countries saw an introduction of changes related to so-called sanitary regime which had a direct impact on the existing functioning of the employers as well as migrant workers. Primarily, in the year 2020, the Ukrainian labour market, featured a high level of employee redundancies (over 4 million employment agreements terminated). In December 2020 the number of redundancies was over 86% higher than the number of those employed at that time.

Furthermore, the number of the registered unemployed at that time rose by about 36% in a year over year comparison (1st January 2021 to 1st January 2020) (Trofimchuk, 2021). Regardless of the above changes, during first year of pandemic some Ukrainian workers returned from economic emigration to their home country, which was caused by an absence of information and a high uncertainty (related to the economic and social sphere). In Poland, the COVID-19 restrictions had a direct impact on the following sectors: hospitality, tourism, commerce at shopping centers, and sports, cultural, and leisure entities. Nevertheless, other sectors became also destabilised due to a range of factors such as situation on the labour market. Uncertainty, lack of stabilisation as well as volatile dynamics of legislative changes (introducing consecutive restrictions) triggered a series of restructuring and organisation processes within the entities operating on the Polish labour market.

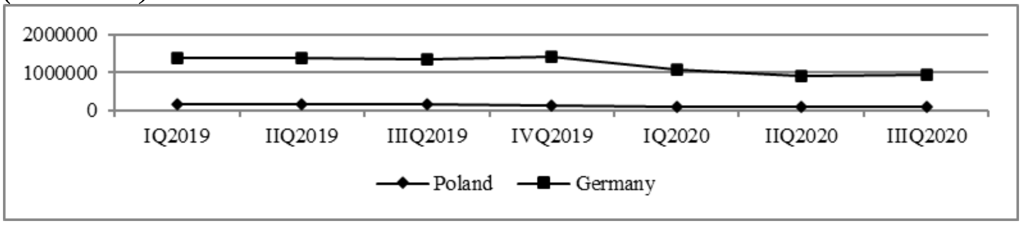
In relation to the epidemic situation alone, over 86,000 jobs were cut within three quarters of 2020 (Q12020 – about 29,300, Q22020 – about 41,300, Q32020–16,300 jobs). On account of the pandemic 5.8% of all employees worked remotely in the 3rd quarter of 2020. The employers tended to reach with a growing frequency for instruments related to collective redundancies (it is estimated that in 3Q2020 up to 60,000 people lost their jobs due to COVID-19 situation) (GUS, 2021). Some entities decided to repurpose or create alternative options in order to maintain their business functioning (such as remote services rendering, goods delivery e.g., in the catering sector, etc.).

In Germany freezing the social and economic life resulted in an introduction of reduced working time by about a third of enterprises. For the employed it meant part-time work or even a loss of work. In January about 86% of all catering sector companies employed their staff at a reduced number of working hours. In retail and the automotive sector this was the case in half of the enterprises. The highest percentage within this regard was recorded in the tourist sector – about 90% of travel agents and other companies limited their working hours (DW, 2021). Analysis of the data provided by Statistisches Bundesamt (DESTATIS) confirms that the adverse effects were most severe in the following sectors: wholesale and retail, production and hospitality, art, entertainment and leisure activity providers as well as transport and communication (Destatis, 2021).

As per information of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the USA in March 2020 the American labour market registered over 7.1 m unemployed. In April 2020 the unemployment rate rose to 14.7%, which constituted the highest increase of the discussed factor since at least 1948 (!) (BLS, 2020). Nevertheless, since May 2020 the unemployment rate was successively falling to reach the level of 6.7 % (10.7 m unemployed) by the end of 2020 (BLS, 2021). The major sectors suffering due to the 1st wave of the pandemic were leisure and hotel sectors, including catering facilities (employee reduction by up to 485,000 people).

In above situations, immigrants who also lost their jobs in a short time got stuck into hosting country, without the possibility of a quick job change (due to legislative issues). Moreover, neither job position or working environment was safe. A tangible effect of the COVID–19 pandemic impact on the labour markets was a significant fall in demand for work, which at the same time meant a lack of availability of work for domestic and foreign workers (Figure 2).

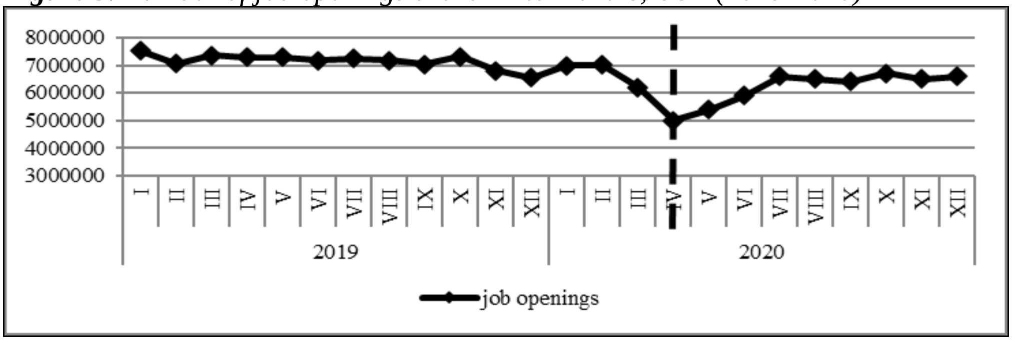
Figure 2. *Number of job vacancies in Germany and Poland divided into quarters, (2019-2020)*



Source: *Compiled by the authors based on data from Central Statistical Office of Poland and Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung (IAB) Nürnberg, Germany.*

While the precision level of the statistics regarding job vacancies is a rather controversial issue, the data for the past two years (2019-2020) – the year preceding the pandemic and its breakout – is worthy of attention. At the beginning of the "corona crisis", in the quarter on quarter comparison, the number of vacancies in Germany fell by 23.3%, while in Poland by 39.0%. At the same time, noted unemployment in Germany increased up to the level, where there was only one vacancy per 3.1 unemployed. In comparison – in the referential quarter of 2019 this value was 1.6. In Poland at the end of the 3rd quarter of 2020 (September) there were 13 registered unemployed per 1 job offer. In the referential quarter of 2019 this ratio was 10:1. With regards to the scale of job vacancy numbers in the USA as registered under the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics they are included in a separate figure (Figure 3).

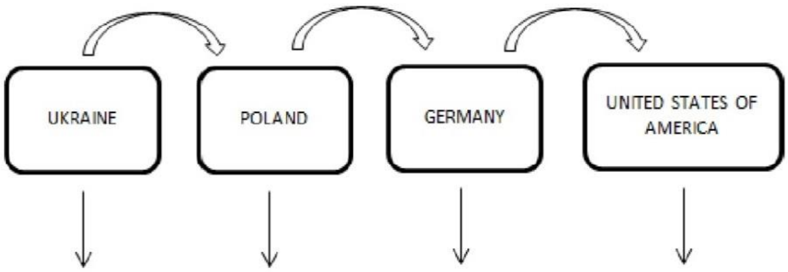
Figure 3. *Number of job openings broken into months, USA (2019-2020)*



Source: *Compiled by the authors based on Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.*

In the USA, the level of work demand reported by the entrepreneurs in 2019 was maintained at a stable level between 6.5 m to 7.5 m offers. From March 2020, following the announcement of the COVID – 19 pandemic alert in a month to month comparison the number of offers began falling drastically. The highest slump (by 19.4%) was noted after the 1st quarter of 2020, in April. However, as regards the work demand on the American labour market just after the first crisis the process of restoration began in order to regain its stability with respect to the numbers of job vacancies in 2020 (yet at a lower level than in the comparable months of 2019). What is more, surprisingly there was no visible changes between wages or working conditions between the both sending and hosting country before and during the first year of COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 4).

Figure 4. *Countries receiving and sending migrants in the context of the push-pull theory – selected factors before and after the COVID–19 pandemic announcement*



	High human development	Very high human development	Very high human development	Very high human development
2019				
GDP (trillion U.S. dollars)	$0,154	$0,596	$3.861	$21.433
GDP per capita (U.S. dollars)	$3,663	$15,695	$46,468	$65,280
Unemployment (% of total labour force)	8.2%	3.3%	3.1%	3.7%
Minimum wage per hour	$1.1	$3.9	$10.3	$7.3
2020				
GDP (trillion U.S. dollars)	$0,156	$0,594	$3.806	$20.937
GDP per capita (U.S. dollars)	$3,727	$15,656	$45,724	$63,544
Unemployment (% of total labour force)	9.5%	3.6%	4.3%	8.3%
Minimum wage per hour	$1.0	$4.5	$11.5	$7.3

Note. *For the purposes of this paper data on minimum hourly wage provided in different currencies was first converted into Polish zlotys and then into U.S. dollars according to the average National Bank of Poland exchange rate at the end of December 2019 and 2020.*
Source: *Compiled by the authors based on data from IMF, Human Development Report 2020 UNDP, www.statista.com, Eurostat, www.bls.gov, data.worldbank.org*.

Despite the fact of decline of chosen indicators, migration from these countries continues in the same direction, from a country with lower economic growth to a country with higher economic growth. As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions unemployment has risen in all countries. The highest increase in year over year comparison in unemployment (as a % of total labour force) was noticed for USA (124,3%) then in Germany (38,7%), Ukraine (15,9%) and Poland (9,1%). The COVID–19 pandemic had a clear impact on the overall situation in selected labour markets which resulted in the deterioration of the situation of domestic and foreign workers. Nevertheless, the visible decline on those labour markets was short-term - mainly in the 1st and the 2nd quarter of 2020. The above mentioned situation in chosen countries: Ukraine, Poland, Germany and USA also confirms that even in developing and developed countries there are inequalities that generate economic migration.

4. Economic Migrants Situation at the Time of the COVID 19 Pandemic

Regardless of the kaleidoscope of the dynamic changes in the global economy, the basis for the contemporary operation of the global labour market continues to function partially on the grounds of the invariant, traditional theoretical powers. One type of such economy theories, which was reflected even in times of a pandemic is the theory of migration push-pull factors by Everett Lee (1966). The migrants decisions are taken on the grounds of four factor categories: push factors (factors motivating a migrant to leave their home country), pull factors (factors encouraging migrant to arrive at a country of a chosen destination), personal factors (factors individual to every migrant) as well as intervening obstacles (Mohamed *et al.*, 2020). Figure 4 shows that the arguments of the push pull type considering the economic factor of the migration stimuli, even in COVID-19 times continue to be the following interactions (Barwińska-Małajowicz and Puchalska, 2010):

- lower pace of socioeconomic development than in the receiving country;
- high unemployment rate to lower unemployment rate;
- lack of the prospect of finding a job to demand for foreign labour force;
- lower wages to higher wages.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in e.g., common use by entrepreneurs the so called remote work mostly in sectors such as e.g., IT, banking (Khan *et al.* 2020). Such a change has created the potential for migrant workers to stay in their home countries, but continue working for the host country. Furthermore, the COVID–19 pandemic time generated an increase of intervening obstacles range that could significantly influence the decision about seeking decent working conditions abroad. The pandemic intervening obstacles reflected in e.g., possessing documents on legal employment in the receiving country, changing COVID–19 regulations such as restrictions on movement between borders and also the economic condition of both receiving and sending country.

In 2020 the emigrants undertaking a decision to continue or to take up economic emigration encountered additional difficulties (either direct or indirect) related e.g., to closing international and/or national domestic borders, restrictions on entry from outside of the EU, the Schengen Area and other countries from the so called positive list (i.e., countries with high COVID–19 rates), introduction of restrictions regarding quarantine for those crossing national borders, suspension of aviation operations. Bearing in mind the essence of E. Lee's theory, these restrictions have undoubtedly created a new indirect obstacles for foreign emigrants (Kallio, 2016). In Poland rapid lock-down of economy that took place after March 2020, changed (by changing the operating mode to remote) and froze operations of individual state offices (Szyja, 2020). Temporary closure placed the foreign workers at an unprecedented deadlock between the will to remain in the receiving country and continue working vs. e.g., a formal and legal problem related to the deadline of their legal stay and work. Uncertainty and absence of procedures related to the economic emigrants from countries outside the EU that stayed in Poland during the pandemic and also lack of a Polish, general migration policy resulted in 938,014 foreign nationals leaving Poland between 1st March and 30th April 2020. The largest group (about 60.1%) being the citizens of Ukraine 567 828 departures.

As a result of quick pandemic departures of foreigners, as well as the projected long-term consequences of emigration projected for the national labour market, on 31st March 2020 the Act on amending the Act on special solutions related to prevention, counteracting and combating COVID–19, other infectious diseases and crisis situations caused by them (Journal of Laws of 2020 item 568 as amended). Pursuant to the provisions of the Act, the deadlines for relevant documents confirming both the legality of work and residence have been extended to 30 days after the epidemic alert (UDSC, 2021). Data obtained from the Ministry for Development, Labour and Technology in a year on year comparison shows that the biggest fall on the Polish labour market was noted for long-term work permits (–56.1%). The short-term documents fall, i.e., declaration to employ a foreign national or seasonal work permits, was not significant. It seems that despite the pandemic, Polish entrepreneurs were still looking for labour supply among (mostly) the citizens of Ukraine.

Nevertheless, due to the imbalance and uncertainty of tomorrow, they preferred short-term employment. On the other hand, it generated uncertainty about the future among economic migrants who had to quickly decide whether to come to work in Poland or stay with their family in Ukraine. What is more, at the beginning of the pandemic, each crossing of the border was associated with a e.g. a 14-day quarantine. Despite the fall in the general number of registered documents, in accordance with the Social Insurance Institution (pl. ZUS), in 2020 the number of employees from Ukraine reported to the social insurance system in Poland rose by 11.1% in comparison to 2019 (International Migration Outlook, 2020). Furthermore, despite the temporary but short-term closure of borders, over 433,000 Ukrainian migrants worked in Poland in the first half of the 2020 (June), which means that they were again the predominant nationality among all working foreign nationals (Mrugała, 2020).

What is more important, these data show that the scale of Ukrainian labour migration (related to economic pressure) to Poland has not slowed down, despite the outbreak of the COVID–19 pandemic. The COVID–19 restrictions, exposed the sectors experiencing a deep workforce deficit. In Poland the dominating enterprises in this category were companies operating in the so-called industrial processing (25% of all sectors), construction (12%), and retail and vehicle repair (16%). Those sectors, even in 2020, gave employment mainly to economic immigrants from Ukraine. According to Central Statistical Office Poland and Ministry for Family, Labour and Social Policy of Poland the largest share of vacancies in 2020 fell on the sector of industrial processing (22%) and construction (14%) and also in these sectors the citizens of Ukraine were most often employed (in industrial processing: 38% of all declaration to employ, 24% of work permits; in construction: 18% of declaration to employ and 23% of work permits).

Polish entrepreneurs continued to be willing to employ the citizens of Ukraine in the sectors with pronounced staff shortages (pull factors). These were sectors in which remote work could not be successfully implemented (such as construction, transport). Furthermore, one of the main factor pushing migrants from Ukraine was a financial issue. In 2020 the difference between the minimum hourly wage in Ukraine and an analogous factor in Poland was over 453%. Thus, economic emigration from Ukraine to Poland underlying the entrepreneurial behaviour of emigrants (considered the risk related to uncertainty, no possibility to return to their country etc.). Notably, most economic emigrants from Ukraine work in Poland on the secondary market, which still is an unrivalled alternative to a stay in their home country (Barwińska-Małajowicz and Tęcza, 2018). The COVID–19 pandemic did not change the impact of push-pull factors in emigration from Ukraine to Poland. It is still economic emigration in line with the direction shown in Everett Lee's push pull theory.

In Germany, a significant group of Polish immigrants was and still is involved in physical labour which does not require high professional qualifications (e.g., production staff, home helpers, construction site helpers, etc.). At the same time, it should be emphasised that while at the beginning of the 21st century Poles were very eager to operate on the secondary labour market, according to the local German media "Poles no longer want to work in 'sweat shops"(Ratajczak, 2018). In the year of 2019 and 2020 most Poles in Germany find employment in professions with a clear deficit of workers, i.e. the construction sector, industry etc. Nevertheless, the growing number of Poles also find work in the professions and sectors, which in accordance with the dual labour market theory should be classified in the first sector such as doctors, IT engineers, engineering jobs (KFW, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic strengthened the demand for the above-mentioned professions, pulling Poles with an attractive salary and social sphere. Despite the pandemic, in 2020 the minimum wage per hour in Germany was higher by 254% than in Poland, while an average remuneration was higher by about 240%. The economic emigration from Poland to Germany displayed a similar character with respect to the pull factors: "higher remuneration", as the emigration from Ukraine to Poland. Proximity of the border as well as pronounced differences in remuneration levels caused some emigrants from Poland undertake emigration to Germany regardless of the restrictions. The clearly unsatisfied staff deficit was a driving wheel behind the introduction in Germany on the 1st May 2020 of additional potential to employ non EU foreign nationals as qualified workforce (BKT, 2020). Nonetheless, the requirements for the citizens from outside of the EU are not fully attractive e.g., for the Ukrainian citizens (certificate of professional qualification equivalence, labour market test or command of the German language). Bearing in mind the above, labour emigration from Poland to Germany just like emigration from Ukraine to Poland, is directly related to the economic pressure of emigrants.

The economic pressure has been and is far greater than the inconvenience and uncertainty associated with the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic. That is why, the COVID–19 pandemic also in this case had only a short-term inhibitory effect on emigrants decision, because the impact of push and pull factors was stronger than the indirect obstacles caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Data from International Migrant Stock 2020 from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, that show that in the mid-year of 2020, Germany was the destination country for over 1.09 million Poles (830,260 in 2019) confirm that interpretation.

As in 2019, in 2020 (the year of the COVID–19 pandemic), economic emigration from Germany to the USA was somewhat inconsistent with the nature of the migration of Everett Lee's theory. German emigrants chose a destination country with a higher unemployment rate and a lower minimum hourly wage (Figure 4, section 2). Only one factor fitting the Lee’s theory - the host country's degree of development. Nevertheless, taking into account the nature of the discussed emigration (economic but towards a more effective allocation of equity), the dimension of emigration from Germany to the USA seems to be consistent.

Estimates show that in the mid-year of 2020 over 2.0 million of Germans emigrated from country for various reasons. The majority of them, over 13.3%, chose USA as their a destination country. The different nature of the emigration from Germany to the USA resulted in a drop of the scale of German citizens’ emigration because of the COVID-19. According to United Nations, in 2020 about 530,000 of German citizens resided in the USA (it is noteworthy that this number covers all emigrants and not only economic emigrants). In the case, bearing in mind the above, the COVID–19 pandemic has clearly limited the scale of emigration. As a result of not treating emigration as a "must have" of the migrant's existence but more as the development of own capital, most emigrants (both as a result of restrictions and the development of the pandemic situation) chose their home country and stay.

5. Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new indirect obstacles for economic emigrants, i.e. closing borders, restrictions on crossing them or the situation of a “pandemic” legalization of work in the host country. The visible impact of the pandemic on selected indicators was noticed only in a very short term period and it had a shock nature, which was in retreat already at the beginning of the second half of 2020.

As a result of the evaluation of the trajectory of economic emigration from Ukraine to Poland, from Poland to Germany and from Germany to USA during the COVID–19 pandemic, a visible division of economic emigration of European emigrants due to the aim and priority was observed. Both economic emigration from Ukraine to Poland and from Poland to Germany were motivated by the economic pressure. Push and pull factors, i.e. remuneration gap had a stronger impact on the decision to emigrate than the indirect obstacles created by the COVID–19 pandemic.

The inability to find a job in the home country in times of and also visible differences between wages or working conditions between the both sending and hosting country increased the willingness to go abroad even with knowledge of lack of possibility of a quick return to the home country. Economic emigration from Germany to the USA was of a different nature, mainly related to the strategy of better allocation of human capital. In their situation, the indirect obstacles created by the COVID–19 pandemic turned out to have a stronger impact on migration decisions than the potential push and pull factors. The COVID-19 pandemic has only temporary made the perturbations to the situation of economic immigrants.

On the one hand, "thanks to" the pandemic, more economic immigrants received life insurance (as it was in Poland). On the other hand, however, it forced migrants to make drastic decisions related to e.g., the inability to return to their home country or family. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 situation has highlighted the nature of migration **-** in this case (Ukraine – Poland – Germany) mainly economic. Despite the deterioration of the financial situation (reduction of salaries), the differences between the sending and receiving countries were so significant that despite the dangers of the pandemic, economic migration in the long term was and still is a remedy for both the migrants and the national labour markets. Thus, the hypothesis posed in this article was confirmed.

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