

CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN MIGRATION

Research Resources Report 1/3: Country Profile

Ukraine – Europe’s Mexico?

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Ukraine is a country of emigration, of transit migration, and is increasingly receiving migrants and refugees from many parts of the world. According to a World Bank report (2007) Ukraine ranks third on the list of sending countries, before India and China, fourth on the list of receiving countries, just after Germany. Ten percent of the entire Ukrainian population, or up to a fifth of the population of working age, works abroad, though mainly on a temporary basis. That is up to 5 million, some even say 7 million people, less in winter, more in summer. Most Ukrainian migration is irregular, and Ukrainian illegal immigrants seem to take over from the now legalized EU-8 nationals the jobs at the bottom of EU labour markets, including those in EU-8 countries. Thus, Ukraine not only is *the* major supplier of migrant labour to Europe, but also the major sending country of irregular immigrant workers. Nevertheless, from a European Union perspective, most concerns relate to transit migration through this country.

Ukraine lacks a coherent immigration and asylum policy, it's authorities are often inefficient, ill-equipped and corrupt. In particular the eastern borders are relatively porous and visa-free entry arrangements with many countries, such as Russia and China facilitate migration. Furthermore, frequent violations of human rights of migrants and refugees, as well as of Ukrainian migrants abroad are causes for concerns.

Despite Ukraine's unique migration dimensions there are similarities to Mexican migration flows (a cause of considerable concern in the US), however it hasn't yet triggered research interest or policy responses on the same scale. It might be argued that is because migrants are dispersed over several countries, with Russia as the major receiving country, or perhaps because they are not as visible in receiving states because they are 'white'. This report paper summarises data, issues and concerns; identifies research gaps and resources; and offers quick access to the key aspects of Ukrainian migration.

Background Information

Ukraine, in Slavic, means Borderland. Whilst this is an over-stretched metaphor, this term nevertheless is perfectly catching its unique geographic and cultural, but also its political position. From the perspective of Russia it was its south-eastern borderland, from the perspective of Europe it represents its eastern fringe, and from across the Black Sea it could be perceived the southern border of EurAsia. Geo-strategically, Ukraine's position is at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. This explains why it is torn between the two principle players in this region, EU and Russia.

Geography

Ukraine is Europe's second largest country. Geographically, it is the centre of Europe (right in the middle between Atlantic and Ural), politically it is thought of as Eastern Europe and one of the Newly Independent States (NIS). To the east and north east it is bordering Russia, to the north it is bordering Belarus, to the south it is bordering the Black Sea, and to the south west and west it is bordering Moldova, respectively the autonomous region of Transnistria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland.

Across the Black Sea it also faces Georgia to the East, Turkey to the south and Bulgaria to the south west.

The capital is Kyiv with officially 2.6 inhabitants but due to a high level of internal migration the actual populations is thought of as high is 5 million. Other major cities are Kharkov (1.47 mio.), Dnepropetrovsk (1 mio.), Donetsk (1 mio.), Odessa (1 mio.) and Lviv (715,000). The country is divided into 25 administrative counties (oblasts).

Population

The country has a population of 47.4 million, decreasing from 52.2 million in 1992, due to emigration and low birth rates. The birth rate coefficient (7.8) is amongst the lowest in Europe (only Russia, Latvia and Bulgaria have lower rates) (Shanghina 2002). The population decrease does affect all major cities except Kiev. 77.8 per cent are Ukrainian, 17.3 per cent are Russian, 0.5 per cent each are Belarusian, Moldovan, and Crimean Tatar, 0.3 per cent each are Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian or Polish and 0.1 per cent are Jewish (2001) (ibid.). Further minorities are Armenians, Azerbaijani, Chuvashes, Czechs, Gagauz, Georgians, Germans, Greeks, Gypsies, Kazakhs, Lithuanians, Mordvins, Slovaks and Uzbeks. Out of hundred minorities twenty count a population of more than ten thousand persons. On the other hand, Ukrainian minorities can be found in several countries (see below).

Socio-Economic Parameters

Historically, Ukraine, though a relatively resource-poor country, was amongst the most prosperous countries within the Eastern block. After 1991, it suffered a collapse, from which it is only slowly recovering since 1997. GDP is \$ 65.1 bn. (2004), growth averages at 6.5 per cent (since 2000); GDP per capita was \$ 54.9 bn. (2003) (rank 90), trend increasing. Inflation is down from 25.8 per cent (2000) to 8,2 (2003). FDIs are low, \$ 1,7 bn, 2.6 per cent of GDP in 2004, trend increasing (IER 2005, Commission of the European Communities 2003, 2004). Whilst EU is the most important destination for exports, Russia is the most important partner in import (IER 2005). Overall UN Human Development Index (HDI) is 70 (2004, 32 in 1991), which is still amongst the top in the medium human development group. According to World Bank sources Ukraine is classified a lower Middle Income country, contradictory figures are given for monthly average income, ranging from \$ 30 to \$ 165, 2003 but in 2007, average salaries are \$ 221 (State Statistics Committee). Unemployment rate stands at about 10 per cent, those who are in employment often work only half-time and because wages are low, a large proportion of those in employment are actually working poor. As a result, a quarter of the population (decreasing) lives in poverty (\$ 5/day), in some regions this is as high as 38 per cent (UKUHC 2004: 11). Culturally and politically, Ukraine seems to be divided into a pro-EU East and a pro-Russian South and East.

Table 1: GDP and GNI, comparison with neighbouring and destination countries, 2002 (UNDP 2004: WB 2005)

| | <i>Ukraine</i> | <i>Belarus</i> | <i>Romania</i> | <i>Turkey</i> | <i>Russia</i> | <i>Poland</i> | <i>Slovakia</i> | <i>Czech R.</i> | <i>Port.</i> | <i>Greece</i> | <i>Spain</i> | <i>Italy</i> |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| <i>HDI rank</i> | 70 | 62 | 69 | 88 | 57 | 37 | 42 | 32 | 26 | 24 | 20 | 21 |
| <i>GDP</i> | 4,870 | 5,520 | 6,560 | 6,390 | 8,230 | 10560 | 12,840 | 15,780 | 18,280 | 18,720 | 21,460 | 26,430 |
| <i>GNI</i> | 1,260 | 2,120 | 2,920 | 3,750 | 3,410 | 6,090 | 6,480 | 9,150 | 14,350 | 16,610 | 21,210 | 26,120 |

Migration

Ukraine because of its geographical situation is characterized by an active exchange of people with its neighboring countries. Among the most frequented countries in 2002 were *Russia* (6.1 million), *Poland* (4.2 million), *Hungary* (1.8 million), *Moldova* (1.3 million), *Belarus* (0.9 million), *Slovakia* (262,000), *Turkey* (177,000), *Romania* (116,000) *Czech Republic* (97,000), *Germany* (96,000) (UPCHR 2004: 14), in the latter case with increasing tendency (1999: 115,000, 2004: 330,000) and UK (34,000 in 2005/6). It has to be noted, however, that often these countries have not been the final destination but have only been transited. For example, it has been found that 50 per cent of the irregular migrants in Portugal had a Schengen visa from either the German or Austrian embassy (Baganha et al. 2004).

Ukrainian emigrants are estimated to be up to 7 million individuals annually (World Bank 2006). Because illegal migration is widespread (up to 95 per cent) and because 70 per cent is temporary, accurate figures are difficult to establish. According to other sources, an average of 5 million emigrants living and working abroad at any time, more so in summer, less in winter, seems a realistic estimation. In other words, 4 to 15 per cent of the entire population, or 20 per cent of the population of working age is engaged in migration. The major destination countries of immigrants are *Russia* (1-3 million), *Poland* (300,000-800,000), *Italy* (200,000), *Portugal* (150,000), *Czech Republic* (250,000), *Germany* (128,000 legal immigrants), *Spain* (100,000), *Turkey* (35,000), *Greece* (13,000), *Hungary* (13,000), *UK* (12,000 legal immigrants in 2001), *Slovakia* (5,000), *Netherlands* (5,000), *Belgium* and *Belarus* (4,000). The main overseas and non-European destinations are the *US* (21,000) and *Argentina* (4,000). Ukrainians are also found in *United Arab Emirates*, *Liberia*, *Libya*, *South Korea* and *Thailand*. Of all migrants only 20,617 have been registered as migrant workers with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy during the first six month of 2002, in the same period 200,806 Ukrainians have been registered with their embassies in 69 countries, most of them in the *US*, in *Germany* and in *Israel*. It is concluded, that only five percent of all Ukrainian emigration is irregular, hence 95 per cent is irregular (UPCHR 2004: 5).

As regards remittances no accurate figures are available. The World Bank (2006: table 6.14) puts the figure at \$ 411 million (2004). This is implausible considering that the figure for just one oblast, *Ternopil*, is U\$ 100 million annually. In contrast, *Myroslava* (2004) suggests the figure could be Euro 7 billion annually (state budget: 6.9 billion), calculating that migrants send an average of \$ 100/month. That would place Ukraine third amongst remittances receiving countries, just after *India* and *Mexico*, but before the *Philippines*.

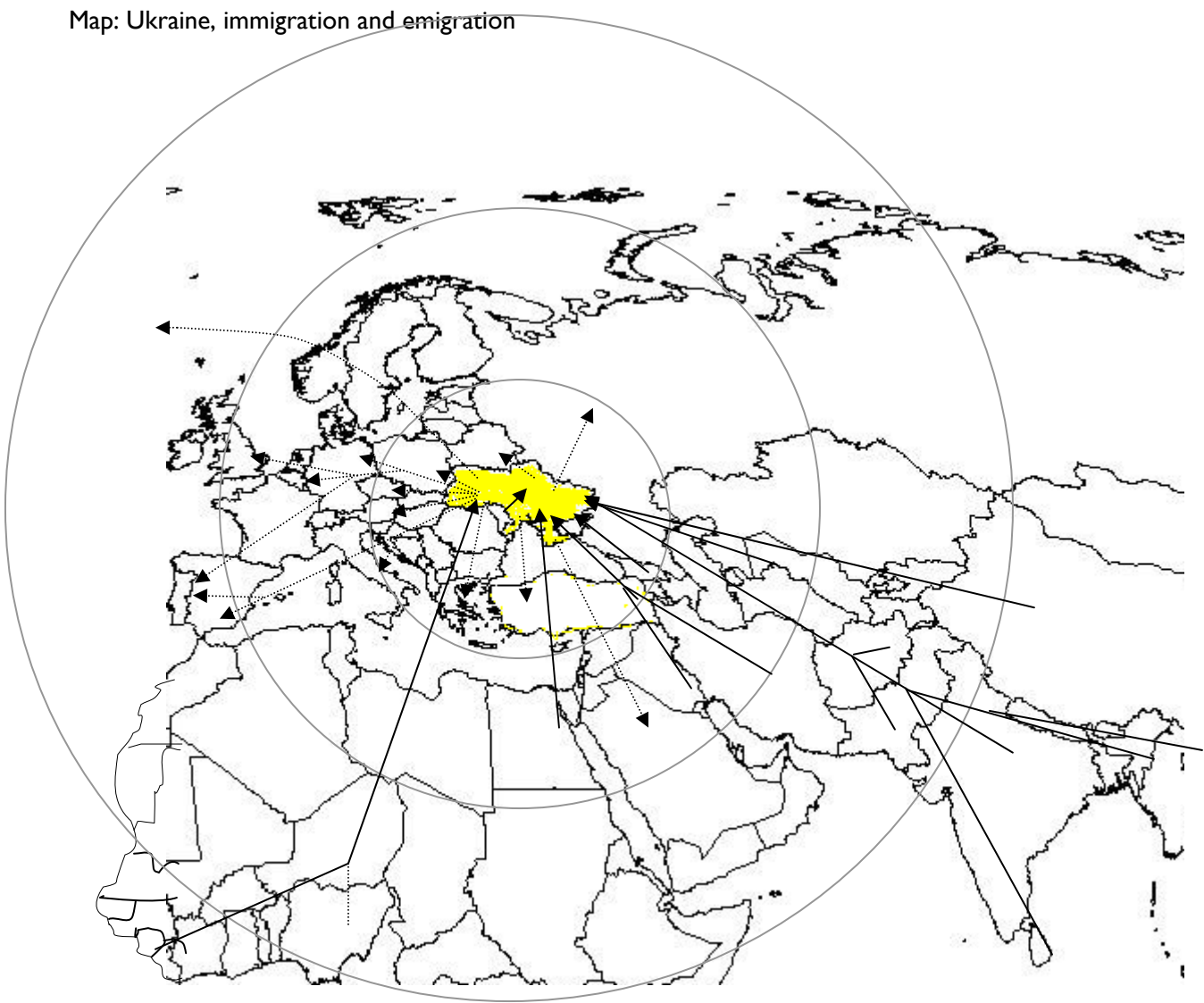
In 1998, the Ukrainian Ministry of Interior estimated that 400,000 or more Ukrainian women were trafficked during the previous decade. But because no distinction seems to be made between trafficking and smuggling, and no attention seems to be paid to the question to which extend women may act with consent, these figures may be grossly overestimated and misleading. Popular destination countries for women from Ukraine include: *Turkey*, *Greece*, *Cyprus*, *Italy*, *Spain*, *Yugoslavia*, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, *Hungary*, *Czech Republic*, *Croatia*, *Germany*, *United Arab Emirates*, *Syria*, *China*, the *Netherlands*, *Canada* and *Japan* (see *Hughes* 2000: 627).

The large discrepancy of available migration figures is to some extent owed to the often temporary nature of migration. In *Russia*, for example, the number of Ukrainian immigrants fluctuates between 1 million and 3 million during summer peaks. There are also cross-border commuters, in particular between *Ukraine* and *Belarus*. More difficult to calculate are cross-border petty trade activities namely between *Ukraine* and *Poland*, but also between *Ukraine* and *Turkey*. These cannot simply be interpreted as migration, in fact, because one trip may generate 14 to 40 times more income the average per capita income in the same family (*Pirozhkov* 1996: 75), petty cross-border trade may be understood as a strategy to instead avoid longer-term migration.

Ukraine simultaneously is a country of immigration, for ethnic and labour migrants as well as for refugees. In 2006, 44,000 immigrants arrived in *Ukraine*; since 2005, and according to official date net

migration is positive (State Statistics Committee 2007). Estimations on the number of immigrants range from 60,000 to 1.6 million, though a figure of half a million is considered realistic (HRW 2005: 5). Amongst those immigrants are also victims of trafficking, namely from Moldova and from Georgia. After 1991, 250,000 Crimean Tatars, but also Bulgarians, Greeks and Armenians returned to Crimea (Malinovska 2005). Since 1994, 41,454 refugees and asylum seekers have been recorded, plus an additional 768,975 individuals of concern to the UNHCR (UNHCR 2004: 352). The recognition rate for asylum seekers is only 4 per cent (ibid.). In 1992, the first refugees from Abkhazia (Georgia) and Transdnistria (Moldova) did arrive in Ukraine (HRW 2005: 5). From 1999, Chechnyans came to seek refuge and in 2005, Uzbeks sought asylum in Ukraine. Between 1996 and 2004, only 5,300 refugees have been granted asylum, though over half have meanwhile left the country (ibid.: 65). Refugees are from Russia, China, Georgia, Afghanistan, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Somalia, Uzbekistan and numerous other countries (see below).

Map: Ukraine, immigration and emigration



This map showing the geographic situation of Ukraine simultaneously reveals the centrality of Ukraine within the EurAsian-African region. It emphasises Ukraine position at the centre of East, West, North and South. The circles shall illustrate the distance to sending and receiving countries, and highlight the cross-road character of Ukraine, hence the geographic logic of transit migrations.

Even though exact figures are difficult to establish, a considerable proportion of migrants are considered transit migrants. Thereafter, Chinese, Vietnamese, Bengalis, Indians, Iranians, Pakistanis, Tamils, Iraqis, Afghans, Kurds and Palestinians, Belarusians, Georgians, Moldovans and citizens from various CIS countries, as well as Somalis, West Africans and Egyptians are using Ukraine as a transit country on their way to Western Europe. Transit migrants may either come from visa-free countries in which case their stay in Ukraine is neither recorded nor illegal, or they may come from visa countries, in which case their entry and stay in Ukraine may be illegal. Considering the low number of refugees being resettled under UNHCR provisions, 56 since 1994, this does not provide an option for would-be transit migrants. On the other hand, Between January and June 2005, 4,343 migrants have been refused entry to Ukraine and 6,481 irregular migrants have been apprehended in Ukraine, mostly at its western borders (HRW 2005: 18).

Deportations might be considered a specific version of forced migration. In 2000, 9,006 Ukrainians have been returned to their country, 8,296 in 2001 and 6,318 in 2002. In 2004, 4,013 migrants were deported from Poland to Ukraine, of which 3,397 were Ukrainians whilst 616 were third country nationals, mostly Moldovans, Chinese and Georgians, returned under readmission agreements (HRW 2005: 15). In the same year, 22 Ukrainians and 832 migrants from other countries were returned to Ukraine (ibid.: 13). In 2004, 8,000 foreigners have been detained and more than 5,000 people were deported from Ukraine, and a similar number in 2005 (ibid.: 34 and 66).

Migration History

Ukraine, before becoming an independent state after dissolution from the Soviet Union in 1991, was for thousand years with some short intervals ruled by colonial powers, first Lithuania and Poland, some parts of today's Ukraine were ruled by the Ottoman Empire, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, later Tsarist Russia became the dominant ruler and subsequently the Soviet Union. The country has a long history of population movements, which today is reflected in its multi-ethnic and multi-religious population, and an equally complex history of emigration. First, there was a period of overseas emigration, in particular to the United States, to Canada and to a lesser extent to South America. Later, and as a consequence of communist rigidities, emigrants have been moving within the Eastern block, to Russia and the oil producing Soviet Republics to the east, such as Kazakhstan. The Stalin period was also characterised by deportations of, for example, Crimean Tatars. During the late 1980s, migrations changed direction again and Western Europe became another major destination. Simultaneously, Ukraine has been a traditional country of immigration, first from Germany during the 18th century, and in particular from Russia during the communist era. Furthermore, it was not only people that moved, but borders that moved across people. For both reasons Ukrainian minorities can be found in several countries such as Russia (4.3 mio. in 1989), Canada (400,000 single Ukrainian ancestry and 650,000 partial ancestry), Belarus, Poland (up to 300,000), Slovakia (35,000), Lithuania (22,500), Hungary (10,000), Czech Republic (5,000) Croatia (4,000), Moldova and Rumania (see OSCE 2001; EU 2005; Swyripa, undated). The Ukrainian World Congress (2003) claims that the Ukrainian Diaspora comprises 20 million people, which may be grossly exaggerated, it may only be half that many; these figures illustrate the past migratory activity of Ukrainians.

Migration Patterns and Trends

The first decades of the 20th century saw migration flows dominated by forced movements; during post-war Soviet years, until 1970, migration was mainly internal. International migration between 1970 and 1990 was mostly of ethnic nature (Jews, Germans, Greeks, Poles). Immediately after independence, 1991 to 1993, migration was mostly reverse and return migration, Russians and Belarusians left, Ukrainians, Tatars and others returned. The same period witnessed the arrival of refugees. By tradition, Russia was

the major destination country, but whilst east Ukrainians tend to move east, west Ukrainians with the exception of Zakarpattya rather move west. Meanwhile, most migration is to the West and South. All these movements are characterised by their irregular and temporary nature; petty trade, which initially dominated East-West movements lost its relevance after 1994 (see Pirozhkov et al. 2003, Malynovska 2004).

International Relations

Ukraine has for long time been integrated into the Soviet Union, and until today, Russia has specific interests in Ukraine, for strategic reasons as well as because of the considerable Russian minority in Ukraine. On the other hand, Ukraine, as an immediate external neighbour of the European Union, is of considerable interest to the European Union, in particular with respect to stability and migration. In 2005, the Ukrainian president expressed the aspiration to join the EU. As yet, the EU did not respond to that aspiration and instead includes Ukraine in its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) framework, confirmed by an EU-Ukraine Action Plan (2004) and an EU-Ukraine Action Plan on Justice and Home Affairs (2001). Furthermore, Ukraine is integrated into the Söderköping process on border control. Readmission agreements are in power with Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Russia and between Ukraine and the EU (given that it will be ratified); nevertheless, UNHCR perceives Ukraine unfit for such an agreement. Further axes are the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, pro-European GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) cooperation and Ukraine-US relations, in particular aiming at WTO and NATO membership. Labour migration agreements are in place or in preparation with Czech Republic, Spain, Denmark (seasonal agricultural workers only), UK (seasonal agricultural; workers scheme is expiring in 2007) and Portugal implements a simplified immigration policy.

Policy and Human Rights Implications

With respect to migration and migration control, it is the Ukrainian borders which are of major concern. Meanwhile, the western borders are to some extent protected, most border guards and detention facilities are situated in the south west, along the borders with Hungary and Slovakia. Ukraine seems to make some efforts to protect the external borders of the European Union from intruders. On the other hand, its long borders with Belarus and Russia are less controlled. This imbalance, combined with visa-free arrangements with many countries makes it comparably easy to enter Ukraine from the East whilst creating considerable difficulties for migrants to exit Ukraine towards the west. As a consequence, would-be transit migrants may well be stuck and either remain in Ukraine, or drift along the EU's eastern external border up and down Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Turkey. On the other hand, multiple-entry visa between Ukraine and Poland and simplified regulations for populations of the border regions have already been introduced; visa free travel between Ukraine and the EU, as already been suggested, seems not likely to become reality in near future.

Ukrainian migrants seem to suffer threefold from crime and human rights violations. They fall victim of corrupt border guards in their destination countries and of the border guards of their own country at their return, and they fall victim of criminal gangs. All are after money and goods migrants have accumulated or purchased whilst abroad. Women are particular prone to trafficking and subsequent sexual exploitation (UPUHRC 2005; Hughes 2000).

Meanwhile, Ukraine's human rights record with respect to migrants and refugees are cause of concerns (HRW 2005). For instance, readmission to Ukraine, chain deportation and *refoulement*, in violation of the Geneva convention, arbitrary detention and conditions in detention centres as well as insufficient access to refugee status determination procedures and lack social services to asylum seekers have been recorded. Finally racial police harassment, unlawful arrests, confiscation of money and more recently skinhead violence seems to be a cause of concern for migrants.

Research Gaps

There is a diverse range of migration experts working in this area. Despite many publications being available in English, language remains a serious barrier and efforts are required to overcome this. Most research is quantitative and on emigration and migration potential. Nevertheless, data is incomplete and sometimes conflicting. There are gaps in research on circular migration, on immigration and notably on transit migration and (forced) migration into Ukraine, and on remittances and generally in qualitative research. Ukraine has only recently developed a migration policy; simultaneously it is playing an increasing role in EU migration control considerations, a process dubbed the externalisation of EU migration policy. This calls for research on various types of migration policy, the integration into the European migration agenda and enforcement matters.

Conclusion

Ukraine, along with Poland, Romania, Turkey and Morocco, is one of the most migration relevant countries in the EurAsian-Mediterranean migration region. It equals Mexico with respect to numbers, migration from Ukraine outnumbers Poland, even Turkey. Ukraine migration is characterised by temporariness, irregularity and circularity. Remittances seem to play a major role in developing the country or simply to survive after a massive slump from one of the wealthiest part of the Soviet Union to one of the poorest countries in Europe. Its closeness, both culturally and geographically, and its integration into various European policy framework underlines the countries specific relevance for European migration affairs. Considerable research is required to throw light on Ukraine's position on the European and global migration map.

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