

Education of Economists and Managers

ISSN: 1734-087X | ICV: 83.85

Volume 54, Issue 4, December 2019

Received 7 December 2018; Revised 25 January 2019; Accepted 31 December 2019

DOI: -

Cierniak-Emerych, A., & Piwowar-Sulej, K. (2019). Changes in the labour market related to immigration from Ukraine and research directions in the area of HRM. *Education of Economists and Managers. Problems. Innovations. Projects*, 54(4), 165-177. Retrieved from <https://econjournals.sgh.waw.pl/EEiM/article/view/1833>

Changes in the labour market related to immigration from Ukraine and research directions in the area of HRM

Anna Cierniak-Emerych, Katarzyna Piwowar-Sulej

Summary

There has been a visible trend of increasing migration from Ukraine to Poland since 2014. Immigrants are becoming a part of the Polish labour market. It is interesting to look at immigrants from the perspective of challenges faced by human resource management processes (HRM) in the enterprises employing them. Thus, the purpose of the study was to answer the questions: What are the characteristics of migration from Ukraine to Poland? Are there any studies in the area of human resource management in relation to the issue of migration of Ukrainians to Poland? What the directions of future research in the area of HRM in the context of migration of Ukrainians to Poland should be? In the pursuit after the above goals, one has used, among others, literature research, analysis of foreign research results, own pilot studies conducted with representatives of employees from Ukraine and their employers.

Keywords: migrants, Ukraine, labour market, human resource management

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ANNA CIERNIAK-EMERYCH

Wrocław University of Economics and Business

KATARZYNA PIWOWAR-SULEJ

Wrocław University of Economics and Business

Abstract

There has been a visible trend of increasing migration from Ukraine to Poland since 2014. Immigrants are becoming a part of the Polish labour market. It is interesting to look at immigrants from the perspective of challenges faced by human resource management processes (HRM) in the enterprises employing them. Thus, the purpose of the study was to answer the questions: What are the characteristics of migration from Ukraine to Poland? Are there any studies in the area of human resource management in relation to the issue of migration of Ukrainians to Poland? What the directions of future research in the area of HRM in the context of migration of Ukrainians to Poland should be? In the pursuit after the above goals, one has used, among others, literature research, analysis of foreign research results, own pilot studies conducted with representatives of employees from Ukraine and their employers.

Keywords: migrants, Ukraine, labour market, human resource management

Introduction

In 2017 labour market was characterised by high demand for employees and a clearly decreasing labour supply. Three main factors were behind such significant staff deficits. The first was low unemployment. The second element was the continuous economic emigration of Poles¹. The third factor, which will gain on visibility in subsequent years, are demographic changes, which in 2017 were additionally supported by decreased retirement age. Record demand for employees translated into growing interest in attracting foreigners. By the end of October, 1.5 million job declarations were issued in Poland, mainly for Ukrainian citizens (Work Service, 2017).

Due to war and the bad economic situation in Ukraine, the number of Ukrainian immigrants in Poland has been growing since 2014 (Koshulko, 2015a: 1, Koshulko, 2015b, p. 71). According to NBP research, before 2013 most immigrants came from western and central Ukraine, and only a few percent from eastern. Since 2014, there has been an increase in immigrants from eastern Ukraine (Chmielewska et al., 2016, p. 4).

In the literature as well as in the reports of organisations such as the International Labour Organization benefits and effects of migration, among others, from the perspective of the labour markets, including their internal competitiveness, level of remuneration, deficit or surplus of individual professions, have been discussed for some years now. It is pointed out that migrant workers mostly work in sectors with a traditionally high number of non-standard jobs (Puzio-Wacławik, 2010, pp. 179–193). Although there are large differences among individual countries, migrant workers seem to be the most widespread in construction, seasonal agriculture, home care, hotel and restaurant services, and the cleaning sector (International Labour Organization, 2016; Szpakowska et al., 2016, pp. 164–183; Brunarska et al., 2012, p. 118; Dąbrowski, 2014; Bińkowski, 2017). Against this background, the issue of ways of implementing broadly understood human resource management (HRM) processes, such as recruitment and selection of job candidates, assessment, remuneration, training and relocation of staff, as well as shaping organisational culture and working conditions seem interesting.

Considering the above, the purpose of the study was set, which is to answer the following research questions:

Q1: What characterises migration from Ukraine to Poland?

Q2: What research is carried out in the area of human resource management in relation to the issue of migration of Ukrainians to Poland?

¹ The CSO data show that over 2.5 million Poles currently live abroad, and in 2016 alone 118 thousand people migrated abroad.

Q3: What directions of future research are revealed in the area of HRM in the context of migration of Ukrainians to Poland?

In order to achieve these goals – with particular emphasis on research questions 1 and 2 – literature studies including statistical reports on the phenomenon of migration from Ukraine to Poland and research on HRM issues in the analysed area were used. The conceptual purpose of the article – related to the answer to the third research question – was also achieved using the method of own pilot research² conducted using the categorised questionnaire and loose interviews conducted with representatives of Ukrainian employees as well as representatives of entrepreneurs employing them.

Characteristics of migration from Ukraine to Poland

First of all, it is difficult to assess the actual number of employees (immigrants from Ukraine) living in our country. Official figures are not necessarily true. For example, data from the Centre for Research on Migration do not include illegal workers. In addition, statistics on new work permits and employment declarations are not fully objective. They do not include employees employed more than once a year or working legally for several employers. Consequently, the same immigrant is counted several times, and the actual number of Ukrainian citizens working in Poland may vary significantly (Szpakowska et al., 2016: 164–183; Brunarska et al. 2012, p. 40).

In this context, particularly interesting is the information included in the NBP report summarising research carried out in 2017 regarding Ukrainian citizens on the Polish labour market. It presented the data provided by State Statistics Service of Ukraine, in which trends regarding migration of Ukrainian citizens to Poland were confirmed. It was pointed out that almost 40% of all emigration came to Poland, and thus Poland was the most important destination for the migration of Ukrainians. According to the data presented in the report, in 2015–2017, 507 thousand Ukrainians came to Poland searching for work, and in the first half of 2017 there were 303 thousand employees from Ukraine in Poland, including 285.6 thousand short-term and 17.4 thousand long-term employees. The report also notes that in the light of the available data estimations of immigration from Ukraine seem to be too low. However, – what is important – the study carried out by the State Statistics Service of Ukraine confirms the importance of the discussed phenomenon of the functioning of immigrants from Ukraine on the Polish labour market (Chmielewska et al., 2018, pp. 8–9). It is also worth noting that estimates of the monetary policy and economic analyses department of the National Bank of Ukraine, show that in the

² The research will be discussed more later in this study.

next 2–3 years the outflow of Ukrainians from the country will be significant, but in the medium term they should begin to return home due to convergence of wages and productivity (Forsal.pl, 2018).

Nevertheless, it is believed that an important feature of all labour migration from Ukraine to Poland is its short-term and circular nature. The average immigrant from Ukraine has already been in Poland nine times, and the average length of his present stay is five months (Chmielewska et al., 2016, p. 4). Against this background, the results of the research published in the 2018 NBP report should be considered interesting. They compare economic immigration from Ukraine in Warsaw and Lublin agglomerations. They prove that immigrants from the Lublin agglomeration have lived in Poland for more than 2 years (25.9 months), similarly as in the case of the Warsaw agglomeration (25.5 months) (Chmielewska et al., 2018, p. 8). In turn, according to the Office for Foreigners (UdSC), the number of Ukrainian citizens who at the end of the first half of 2017 had valid documents confirming the right to reside on Polish territory amounted to 128 thousand. In most cases (about 75.0%) it was a temporary residence permit, issued for a maximum of 3 years. Both ZUS and UdSC data indicate that some Ukrainian citizens are trying to, at least temporarily, bind with the Polish labour market for longer period of time (Chmielewska et al., 2018, p. 8).

Furthermore, the NBP research from 2015 and the report published in 2018 cited earlier show that the vast majority of Ukrainians coming to work in Poland are well-educated people. In total, 37.7% have higher education and 53.94% have secondary education (general or vocational). Only 8.4% have lower education (e.g., junior high school) (Chmielewska et al., 2016; Koshulko, Koshulko, 2016, pp. 256–266). Characteristically, nearly one third of immigrants from Ukraine who came to the Warsaw agglomeration had a master's degree, while in Lublin immigrants with a master's degree constituted 19.0% (Chmielewska et al., 2018, p. 12).

The vast majority of immigrants perform simple, unskilled physical work (70.7%). Migrants most often find employment in households (37.6%), construction and renovation and finishing services (23.6%) and agriculture (19.3%), although in the last two years it has been observed that more and more groups of migrants have taken up work in departments and industries in which they previously occurred occasionally, in particular it concerns industry. However, there is a large structure variation by gender in individual sectors. Renovation and construction services are dominated almost exclusively by men, while women prevail in household services. An important phenomenon in the latter sector is the increase in the importance of care services rendered by Ukrainian women to households (Chmielewska et al., 2016, p. 4; Chmielewska et al., 2018, pp. 16–17; MPiPS, 2015). Only in 5.5% of cases immigrants work as specialists (e.g., IT specialists, teachers or lawyers) and managers (mainly low-level). In the face of the above – good – education of migrants,

it is not surprising that 64.1% of migrants believe that they perform work below their qualifications (Chmielewska et al., 2016, p. 18).

A separate but also important group of migrants from Ukraine are students, whose number at Polish universities is also growing rapidly. According to the results of the NBP survey, half of them are active on the labour market besides studying. They mainly work occasionally and find employment in sectors such as commerce and gastronomy. When asked about plans for the future, they declare that they would like to work in Poland in the future (36.6%) or at least partly be professionally connected with Poland (32.5%) (Chmielewska et al., 2016, p. 5).

Research to date on HRM processes in the context of the work of Ukrainian citizens in Poland

In the process of collecting research results, the author has used electronic publication databases available at the Wrocław University of Economics (including, e.g., Web of Science and Scopus) as well as Google search engine. For the phrase “Ukrainian immigrants” there were no results in the databases of scientific publications. For the phrase “immigrants from Ukraine” one publication was found devoted to the contribution of immigrants from Central Europe to U.S. innovation product. The examples below are the result of an online search.

The NBP reports mentioned before regarding Ukrainian citizens working in Poland refer to certain issues related to HRM processes. They include recruitment, remuneration, or working time (see Table 1). The issues of interest related to HRM processes are included in a manner characteristic of the report. While presenting basic data, we do not discuss advantages, disadvantages, and possibilities of improving activities implemented as part of human resource management processes.

As a result of search on the Internet using the phrase “immigrants from Ukraine”, we found two publications worth considering in the context of achieving the purpose of the article. These are publications on the opinions of Polish employees about immigrants from Ukraine cooperating with them (Kupczyk, Przemysłańska-Włosek, 2017, pp. 13–19) and opinions of employees from Ukraine about work in Poland (Przemysłańska-Włosek, 2017, pp. 87–106). In addition, it was considered worth referring to the results of research conducted by the Business Centre Club (BCC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in March 2018 among employers of immigrants from Ukraine (BCC, 2018).

Research results presented in the indicated publications prove that currently the opinion of Polish employees about workers – immigrants from Ukraine is quite positive. Nearly 40% of Polish employees indicated that they do not see problems

in professional contacts with immigrants, while at the same time some of the respondents pointed to a number of communication problems with immigrants related to the lack of knowledge of Polish. It should be noted that the respondents also indicated the positive attitude of immigrants to work, good work efficiency and positive motivation. Polish employees also referred to the motives of employing immigrants, pointing to lower costs associated with their employment and staff shortages on the Polish labour market (Kupczyk, Przemysłańska- Włosek, 2017, pp. 13–19). We are witnessing an improvement in the image of employees from Ukraine in the perception of Polish employees, compared to the early 2000s (Konieczna, 2001, pp. 32–33).

Table 1. Practice of shaping selected HRM areas for employees from Ukraine – results of NBP reports

Selected areas of HRM	Specificity of actions taken against employees from Ukraine
Recruitment	Ukrainians usually find employment with an employer recommended by someone from their family or friends. Job offers are the second source of recruitment. In total, 10.6% of migrants use intermediaries, whether official or unofficial. Others found employment in yet another way. However, it is clear that direct contacts play the most important role.
Remuneration	Earnings are an important aspect when analysing the situation of immigrants on the Polish labour market. For example, the average net income of Ukrainian citizens in the Warsaw agglomeration in 2015 equalled PLN 2,105. Foreigners working in the renovation and construction sector earned the most (PLN 2,729). In turn, in the Lublin agglomeration, the average income is PLN 1,730. The observed pay gap is partly due to natural pay differences between Polish agglomerations, but it can also be a consequence of a different sectoral employment structure and length of work. The fact of relatively low living expenses in Poland is connected with the common phenomenon of receiving additional benefits by immigrants, e.g., in the form of accommodation, meals or transport to/from work, which facilitates saving a significant part of income. 53.1% of the employed benefit from it, of which two-thirds receive more than one benefit. The most popular benefits provided by the employer are accommodation and meals. 29.5% of employees use both of these benefits, and 47.8% use at least one of them.
Working time	The average working time per week is 54 hours. Both migrants and students in Warsaw declared that they work longer on average than their counterparts from Lublin. The average number of working hours per week in the Mazowieckie province is 54 hours, while in the Lubelskie province it was definitely less – 37 hours. A similar pattern applied to students, although in this case the differences were not so big (31 hours in Warsaw and 26 in Lublin). The longest working week in Warsaw was declared by respondents employed in the home services sector.

Source: own study based on Chmielewska et al. (2016, pp. 4–16), Chmielewska et al. (2018, pp. 16–18).

When analysing the opinions of Ukrainian employees about work in Poland, the available studies show in particular that workers from Ukraine can count on increasing wages in Poland. The vast majority of them are satisfied with almost all aspects of work in our country. At the same time, immigrants are over the last few years, more and more satisfied with their wages, kind of performed work and duties burden. They are slightly less satisfied with the working conditions, and limited development opportunities bring them the least satisfaction (Przemysłańska-Włosek, 2017, pp. 87–106).

Interesting – from the point of view of the purpose of this article – conclusions can also be drawn from the results of research carried out in 2018 by BCC among employers who are BCC members employing Ukrainian citizens (BCC, 2018). All surveyed employers stated that they employ immigrants from Ukraine due to the lack of Polish employees with required qualifications, and they are mainly interested in employing immigrants for longer than a period of 9 months. The biggest barriers to employing foreigners include complicated employment procedures and problems with finding a suitable employee.

Against this background, interesting is the fact that 50% of the surveyed companies would like to be involved in activities related to the exchange of knowledge with other entities employing foreigners regarding the broadly understood employment of migrants, and more than 40% of respondents would be interested in the exchange of knowledge on the ethical ways of recruiting migrants. Nearly 40% of companies are interested in cooperation in creating favourable working environment for migrants (BCC, 2018).

In our opinion, these indications, especially those regarding the need to exchange knowledge, may be pointing to the need for a closer – in the context of scientific research – look at the issue of employing immigrants from Ukraine, i.e., not only – as it was mainly the case so far – from a labour market perspective, including factors affecting migration and the economic consequences of immigrants taking up work. It is about considering the perspective of shaping the company's personnel policy as a result of actions taken in relation to managing a diverse group of employees in terms of nationality. The above research results are mainly of a “reporting” nature. They do not undertake any deeper analyses or scientific discussions focused on the crucial issues of shaping the generic elements of the human resource management process.

Directions for further HRM research

Identifying research problems in the man and work area requires, first and foremost, analysing its realities. Therefore, seeking an answer to the question about the directions of further research on HRM in the context of employing immigrants from Ukraine,

we conducted our own pilot study³. On the one hand, it was aimed at recognising the needs of immigrants related to hiring conditions and the implementation of the human resource management process as well as shaping working conditions, as well as ways of respecting these needs. On the other hand, recognising the interests of employers in the above-mentioned scope and ways of implementing them.

Interviews with immigrants show that among the reasons related to taking up a job, they mention first of all the fact of having a job and the attractiveness of remuneration in relation to earnings obtained in Ukraine. At the same time, their most important work-related needs primarily include: ensuring legality of employment and simplification of procedures related to employing foreigners in Poland (87% of respondents), stability of employment (80% of respondents), adequacy of remuneration to the type and scope of responsibilities (80% of respondents), creating safe and hygienic working conditions (including providing initial training preferably in Ukrainian) (79% of respondents). In addition, respondents emphasised the need to create opportunities for development, promotion and access to training.

In turn, employers covered by the survey drew attention – similarly to the results of foreign studies presented earlier – in particular to the problems in their enterprises related to communication with immigrants, i.e., their lack of knowledge of Polish as well as English language. Employers also pointed to their concerns regarding the turnover of Ukrainian employees. They stated that in the perspective of opening the German labour market from January 1, 2019 they are afraid that investing in training, development of immigrants from Ukraine may be unprofitable for them. As a real problem, they reported the issue of retaining immigrant workers in the long run. This is also related to the problem of creating appropriate remuneration systems, and more generally motivating systems, conducive to retaining Ukrainian employees. Despite recognition of their remuneration as satisfactory, it should be borne in mind that it is largely at the level of the lowest hourly rate in Poland.

Moreover, employers emphasized that potential employees from Ukraine who report to them, even relatively often with higher education, do not have appropriate qualifications to work in the positions they apply for. This leads to a kind of problems not only related to the recruitment process, but also – if they are recruited – e.g., with implementing them to work. Over half of the employers surveyed indicated

³ The research was conducted in the second and third quarter of 2018, using categorised interview with immigrants from Ukraine who work in Poland, as well as their employers who agreed to participate in the study. The study covered 10 companies. The group of respondents consisted of 30 working immigrants and 10 representatives of employers (one from each enterprise). Enterprises included in the research are SMEs, mainly with only Polish capital, from service sector, including construction services, services related to the care of the elderly, hairdressing services. The research was supplemented with an unstructured interview conducted with immigrants and employers who agreed to participate in it.

that when recruiting employees from Ukraine, they use recruitment and temporary employment agencies. This is because, among others, they need to quickly recruit people who provide work and minimise problems related to communication with people who do not speak Polish or English. Employers in unstructured interviews pointed to the known practices of abuses by intermediaries towards immigrants.

Another important issue for employers were the so-called cultural conditions related to the provision of work, slightly different in Poland and Ukraine. They consisted, for example, preferred values, procedures, including, for example, work discipline, specificity of the approach to the way tasks are implemented.

Creating a proper working environment is also a specific problem related to human resource management. And here also the language barrier is revealed, which impedes effective OHS training. It is especially about familiarising employees with instructions and workplace documentation. This is confirmed by the revealed, mainly by National Labour Inspectorate, reasons for accidents at work involving immigrants. It should be added that the number of accidents involving this group of employees has significantly increased over the past two years (Solawa, 2018).

During in-depth interviews, employers were reluctant, but they admitted that sometimes they did not fully secure these conditions in an appropriate manner. What raises even more our doubts, they admitted that they treat Polish employees better in this matter. As a reason, they mentioned, among others, greater awareness of Polish employees when it comes to pursuing claims, e.g., in the event of an accident at work. Another argument was unusual application of civil law forms of employment to immigrants, which in the opinion of some employers “release them” from rigorous care for working conditions, transferring that responsibility to persons performing work.

The presented pilot study results incline to the conclusion that we need further in-depth research aimed in particular at expanding employers’ knowledge about the interests of employees not only from Poland, but also from Ukraine. A question rises about ways to differentiate, or rather vice versa, i.e., to unify actions taken as part of the implementation of individual stages of human resource management in relation to the indicated groups of people providing work. At the same time scientific discussion is lacking that could formulate business recommendations, or guidelines useful in solving problems related to the employment of immigrants from Ukraine. It seems that in the first place further research should be focused mainly on:

- recognition of cultural differences regarding the approach to the provision of work, including its discipline, organisation, etc. (work culture) by Poles and immigrants,
- identification of language barriers related to the use of professional vocabulary necessary for the proper conduct of professional duties,

- recognition of the specifics of recruitment and selection performed by agencies intermediating in recruiting employees from Ukraine and possible abuses in this respect and ways of eliminating them,
- recognition of the possibility of activating Ukrainian employees not only to perform work, but also to professionally cooperate with Polish enterprises in the long run,
- identification of barriers and ways of overcoming them, related to improving work safety of immigrants from Ukraine.

Conclusions

The number of Ukrainians in Poland is growing, which is the result of the difficult economic situation in their country and the ongoing armed conflict. Employees from Ukraine “fill a gap” that employers are unable to manage with employees from Poland.

The article presents the characteristics of labour migration from Ukraine to Poland, noting the lack of indexed literature on the personalised human resource management in relation to this group in the databases of scientific publications. To accomplish the purpose of the work, the authors used research reports available on the Internet, prepared by such institutions as the NBP or BCC. They also conducted pilot studies.

The above-mentioned reports, undertake most often HRM issues such as recruitment, remuneration or working time. The results of the pilot study presented in the article incline to the conclusion that it is important to conduct further in-depth research aimed generally at determining the mechanisms of shaping human resource management processes in the reality of the increasingly culturally complex group of people providing work and institutions participating in HRM processes. The desired directions for further research include recognition of the specifics of recruitment and selection performed by recruitment agencies, as well as possible abuses in this respect and ways to eliminate them. Migration from Ukraine is, as many factors indicate, important, but also in a way an initial stage of economic migration to Poland. It is especially about immigrants from Asian countries so culturally different from Poles.

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Anna Cierniak-Emerych

Associate Professor in the Department of Labour, Capital and Innovation Wrocław University of Economics and Business (Poland); head of Department of Labour, Capital and Innovation; dean for student's affairs, Faculty of Business Wrocław University of Economics and Business; director of post-graduate studies "Occupational Safety and Health". For many accomplishments in the scientific work area she was awarded several times with the prize of Rector of the Wrocław UE. The author of more than 180 publications both in Polish and English, among others, monograph entitled "The participation of employees in the management of potential operating company", ed. Wrocław University of Economics, Wrocław 2012. Anna Cierniak-Emerych's research interests relate mainly to the human and his work in the company, particularly comprising areas such as: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), development of tangible and intangible working conditions (health and safety), employee participation, greater flexibility in employment, human resource management, organisational culture, satisfaction of employees, the interests of employees and employers in the enterprise and their respect, contemporary management concepts (e.g., lean management, TQM, etc.). She participated both as a performer and manager in national and ESF research projects. She was as a trainer and supervisor in training and development projects. e-mail: aemerych@wp.pl

Katarzyna Piwowar-Sulej, Ph.D.

DSc. (management sciences), Associate Professor in the Department of Labour, Capital and Innovation at Wrocław University of Economics and Business, head of postgraduate studies for business trainers and postgraduate managerial studies "Management 3.0". Her research interests focus on human resource management

(including personnel processes, development of innovation-oriented work environment, development of competencies of the future in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, IT tools applied in HR departments, the role of HR departments, the issue of organisational culture). She has proven experience in managing HR departments and leading HR projects in business. The winner of two scholarship competitions organised by PAIP (financed by the European Social Fund). Project manager of a research project financed by the National Science Centre, Poland. Author of more than 120 publications (in Polish and English) and participant of more than 50 conferences (both academic and business ones) as a lecturer or expert. For her individual academic achievements she was honoured nine times with the Award of the Rector of Wrocław University of Economics and Business.
e-mail: katarzyna.piwowar-sulej@ue.wroc.pl