

# FFVT/IMIS Workshop

## “Ukraine: 21 months of displacement – what do we know so far?”

27–28 Nov 2023

### Report

#### Introduction

It is now 24 months ago that Russia attacked Ukraine. The beginning of the Russian aggression not only dates back to 2014 but the war is already dragging on longer than many initially assumed and, unfortunately, there is little hope it will end soon. The war needs to be understood in the context of previous Russian aggressions, notably in Moldova, Chechnya, Georgia and the Russian support to the Lukashenko regime in Belarus and the colonial and imperial history of the region.

As a result of the invasion, several million Ukrainians and several hundred thousand foreign residents in Ukraine were displaced internally and internationally, including a large number who were deported to Russia of whom several hundred thousand have been trying to move on to other countries or back to government-controlled Ukraine. So far, the EU and its member states managed receiving and hosting several million Ukrainians; nevertheless, a crisis or moral panic, as in case of other refugee movements, was avoided. Also, some of the displaced persons meanwhile moved on from the EU to other countries, such as Canada, whereas others even return home. However, the ongoing war could well result in a protracted refugee situation and thus prolongs the period of uncertainty for displaced persons who are still compelled to make plans, at least for their near future.

Initially, in 2022 and into early 2023, research and policy rather relied on assumptions and scenarios, ad hoc observations, provisional and often flawed statistics and few usually non-representative surveys. In the meantime, however, more and more studies and surveys are coming out that are scientifically sound and thus represent reliable evidence for policy making. And still, given the gravity of the crisis, there seems to be surprisingly little research and theorisation.

Therefore, on 27 and 28 November 2023 we held a hybrid workshop to gather what has been known so far about forced displacement within and from Ukraine. The workshop was structured along two lines, research conducted in (but not necessarily on) Germany and research conducted on other host countries of Ukrainians. The aim was to establish the state of research in Germany and Europe on forced migration within and from Ukraine, to inform academia and wider public about what is known so far and to identify research and knowledge gaps and thus future research needs.

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## Panel 1.1: State of Research: Comparative Perspective (1): EU

**Poland**, as Marta Jaroszewicz highlighted, has been the main country of arrival and the population of some cities grew by 20% within just three months. Nevertheless, migration has been also circular. In summer 2022, the government introduced a new rule whereby Ukrainians would lose their temporary protection (TP) status upon return; this was related to the reception of benefits. In 2022, 547,000 Ukrainians lost their status, 600,000 by 2023. However, Ukrainians could also regain their TP status upon re-entry to Poland. The employment rate is high, 80-90% which is partly related to large-scale labour migration before 2022. Overall, Poland is characterised by a weak migration bureaucracy, notably, there is no integration policy. Existing crises plans anticipated much smaller numbers. Cities took on a crucial role in governing reception. Overall, migration governance could be described as experimentalist. In the **Czech Republic**, Dušan Drbohlav et al. reported 530,000 Ukrainians were granted temporary protection which is fluctuating and decreasing to 366,000 by November. 2023. He emphasised that matters are volatile, for example, explaining that in course of a re-registration procedure 100,000 persons were dropped from the registry. The total number is equivalent to 3.4% of the population, they are concentrated around Prague and in the west while there is still some absorption capacity in the East in terms of housing. Some 50% had rented flats or houses, while one fifth was still living in hotels or hostels in summer 2023. Around 50% are in full-time employment, 27% work part-time, of all workers 65% experience de-skilling. 45% sent money home highlighting high transnational activities. In **Sweden**, policy sounded the alarm bell, Bernd Parusel reported, and suggested up to

212,000 could come to Sweden. In fact, according to Eurostat 42,000 Ukrainian refugees were living in Sweden by summer 2023. Early migration was driven by networks, later arrivals not. Arrivals have been offered the same social benefits as asylum seekers, €180/month, not as refugees. Change of status is not legally possible. So far, 56% are in employment. Overall, Sweden's response was restrictive, described as "reluctant benevolence". This may in part explain why one quarter did not extend their permit in Sweden and why there was some onward migration to Norway. **Portugal** received around 50,000 Ukrainians and 10,000 non-Ukrainians, according to Lucinda Fonseca; so far, only around 5,000 left so that there were still about 55,000 in the country. Migration was partly facilitated by humanitarian actors who went all the way to the Polish border to collect people. The government introduced a dedicated programme and a platform, arrivals were offered often free accommodation, recognition of education and driving licenses was simplified. Meanwhile, only 35% children attend Portuguese schools whereas most attend Ukrainian schools online.

### Panel 1.2: State of Research: Comparative Perspective (2): Non-EU

In **Moldova**, as Zeynep Sahin Mencutec and Osman Bahadır Dincer demonstrated, 974,000 border crossings from and 681,000 crossings to Ukraine were recorded whereas 113,183 are registered in the country, predominantly women, older and handicapped people. The war was for some a window of opportunity to leave Ukraine. Roma face discrimination and are particularly vulnerable. Of all Ukrainians, only 21% have a TP status; hence, the majority is in limbo. Ukrainians in Moldova have high return aspirations and generally circulate on a weekly or monthly basis. With regards to **Turkey** Nasir Bülbül explained that the government applied an open door policy and that from Ukrainians no passports were required for entering the country. However, the expectation was that Ukrainians would only stay short-term. Ukrainians entered from Ukraine, arrived via Georgia but also from Russia. In public discourse, Ukrainians are not portrayed as victims. Their status is still precarious, facilitates mobility but prevents public resentment. Overall, 400,000 are said to have entered Turkey whereas only 38,000 are still in the country, many of these Tatars or Meshketians. 26,000 are only on short-term visa, only 7,000 who have no means have applied for international protection. Ukrainians were treated preferential as compared to Russians who were no longer granted short-term visa from mid-2023. This is because Russia is no longer a Council of Europe member and thus no longer qualify as Europeans. Also, Russia possible requested to end permits to Russians as to end evading mobilisation. Bulbul highlighted that there is a general lack of evidence and knowledge and suggested that "academia was large indifferent" to the matter. Initially, **Canada**, even though Ukrainians are the second-largest diaspora, was not an attractive destination, as Juanita Molano and Dagmar Soennecken pointed out. Although a temporary emergency permit, CUAET, was easily accessible, there was no travel and settlement support, no rent subsidies or benefits of any kind; therefore, it was quite difficult to actually go: While over one million applied for a temporary residence permit, of which 900,000 applications were approved whereas only around 200,000 subsequently entered the country. The temporary residence permit is easier convertible into a permanent residence permit. Meanwhile, fast-track permanent residence permits are offered to Ukrainians. Ukrainians do not want to be categorised as refugees, as opposed, for example, to Afghans who aspire a refugee status.

### Panel 2: Stay or Return? Options, Interests and Policy Responses (public event)

The public online panel debate gathered representatives from the Ukrainian and German government, two international organisations and an umbrella organisation of the Ukrainian diaspora in Germany. The aim was to carve out the key trends and challenges and current affairs, as perceived by these

actors, for forced migration and its management due to the Russian war against Ukraine. The full summary of the public panel debate can be found here: <https://ffvt.net/files/02/90/FFVT-Panel-Debate-Ukraine-Summary.pdf>

### Panel 3: State of Research: Recent Empirical Research Findings: Germany (1)

Manuel Siegert and Kerstin Tanis presented a paper on **housing and mobility**. They discovered a spatial concentration of Ukrainians in the East, North-East, in the West specifically around Hanover whereas Ukrainians are less likely found in the South of Germany. No correlation was found with employment or rent levels, instead, mobility was driven by social networks. 20% had changed their residential address but mostly within a municipality. A **comparison of Germany and Poland** conducted by Steffen Pötzschke found that in spring 2022 Ukrainians in Germany were more likely from Kiev or Charkiv those in Poland were more likely from western Ukraine. Whereas in Poland 25% Ukrainians have a lower education this is only 12% in Germany. In Poland 35% stayed with family and 16% in hotels whereas in Germany 42% stayed with family and only 6% in hotels [this suggests that Ukrainians staying in Germany before the war had better resources than those in Poland]. Nora Ratzmann studied **integration of women**, identifying drivers of migration and integration trajectories. Notably she found that some of those who do not work in Germany still continue remote work in Ukraine and also identified pressure from kin in Ukraine to return. From her research on **IDPs in Ukraine**, Oksana Mikheieva highlighted, first, a general pattern of people unwilling or unable to move. Second, she found significant levels of translocal strategies between occupied and government controlled areas and third she explained return migration even to occupied territories with lack of access to affordable rental accommodation: The need to return to property was attached not at least to the fact that then no rent was needed to be paid as well as the access to pension rights.

### Panel 4: State of Research: Recent Empirical Research Findings: Germany (2)

A contribution by Aleksandra Jolkinia focussed on the fate of **mixed Ukrainian and Russian families**, partly also separated, the different entry/exit rights under conditions of war and martial law and the barriers to travel and reunite they face. She pointed to a general lack of empirical data on the topic. Research on **employment in Germany** conducted by Mariella Falkenhain found on the one hand very high levels of work motivation, 93%. On the other hand, Ukrainians are distracted by the war, still often maintain return aspiration, are frustrated by the bureaucracy of job centres and qualification recognition, and endure a language barrier while enjoying benefits. A “JobTurbo” by the German Employment Agency aims to address some these obstacles. Another study presented by Yuliya Kosyakova on **education, employment and migration aspirations** of 18-70 year old Ukrainians found that of the surveyed Ukrainians 80% were female, that 48% of the women have under-aged children in Germany with 36% were single mothers in Germany. 72% of the surveyed Ukrainians in Germany have tertiary education (in comparison to 58% of all Ukrainians) demonstrating that individuals with a higher education were more like to migrate. 85% were employed before the war. It turned out that 44% aspire staying longer, 33% only short or mid-term while return depends on a stable situation in Ukraine. With regards to employment only 2% admit working remotely in Ukraine but whether answers were honest is questionable. Children were identified another barrier to employment given that only 44% of the 3-year old are in child care. Finally, pre-war Ukrainian **diasporas**, as Iryna Lapshyna argued, are an important resource when it comes to hosting and supporting and integrating Ukrainian refugees. They form a strategically important bridge between newcomers and host society. While being a source of empowerment having political influence and power they are also found to be overworked and underfunded.

## Discussion

Overall, participants suggested that whilst there is increasing empirical evidence there is surprisingly little conceptualisation and theorisation. Others felt that there still is not much research and what there is is very descriptive. Topics that require more theorisation are related to the mixed drivers in forced migration (safety, economy, diaspora), the forced migration of women, the role of the highly skilled in forced migration, and the role of diaspora in refugee reception. However, one participant argued the problem lies less so in a lack of research but a lack of few publications of research results. What has been missing have been funds for surveys, notably quickly accessible emergency research funds, and accessible data pools as well as funds for documentation and cleaning of data. He also pled for.

While a general lack of research on cultural issues was detected, workshop participants suggested that there are three types of resentment at play vis a vis Ukrainians in the EU: that Ukrainians are treated favourably, that there is already a growing fatigue with regards to Ukraine and that Ukrainians are claimed to experience less victimhood than other refugees and are thus less victimised.

Resentments were also found within Ukraine, first, with regards to IDPs in other parts of the country as well with regards to returnees. Taking up the discussion of the public panel debate on the first day, participants argued that the Ukrainian government has been ill-prepared, even sometimes acting irrationally and thereby rather alienating refugees and discouraging their return. Instead Ukraine would need both, a return and reintegration policy to attract people back as well as a labour migration policy.

Among the desiderata determined in the discussion, methodological and ethical perspectives played a major role. Further issues raised were the return and/or a-mobility of the rather immobile (older people, disabled, men...), as well as studying forced migration against the backdrop of immobility and tracking the financial flows from, to and inside Ukraine in context of migration.