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CURRENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EMPLOYMENT OF UKRAINIANS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The unprecedented influx of war migrants from Ukraine since the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion has had a profound impact not only on the labour resource situation within Ukraine and its regions, but also on labour markets and employment dynamics in those European countries that have received the largest numbers of refugees from the war. Among these states, the Czech Republic occupies a particularly notable position. It currently ranks third in absolute terms of Ukrainians registered under temporary protection, while simultaneously belonging to the group of European countries with one of the highest proportions of such war migrants relative to the total population (3.4%).

As a result of this wartime migration, Ukrainian citizens now constitute more than half of all registered foreigners in the Czech Republic [1, p. 29]. Consequently, the impact of war-related migration from Ukraine on the economy of this relatively small Central European country is far more significant than in larger EU member states such as Germany or even Poland.

The Czech Republic is characterised by a comparatively high level of labour market participation among Ukrainian war migrants, which distinguishes it, for instance, from Germany. Although Germany currently hosts the largest number of individuals displaced by the war in Ukraine, their economic activity remains relatively limited. In the Czech case, the necessity of employment and the need for an independent source of income among adult Ukrainian migrants is largely driven by the relatively lower volume and narrower scope of financial support available, especially when compared with Germany – an aspect that has become increasingly evident over time and in light of legislative changes in this area. At the same time, the search for and access to employment for Ukrainians under temporary protection in the Czech Republic (and similarly in Poland) is facilitated by greater linguistic and cultural proximity to Ukraine than in Western European countries.

Foreign workers play a significant role in the Czech labour market, particularly in specific sectors of the economy. As of the end of 2023, more than 942.300 foreigners were employed in the Czech Republic, including both wage employees and entrepreneurs. This figure increased notably during 2022–2023 (employees by almost 4%, entrepreneurs by 6%). Overall,

foreigners accounted for 18.6% of the total number of employees in the Czech national economy [2]. The largest groups of employed foreigners in Czechia are Slovaks and Ukrainians. However, beginning in 2022, the number of Ukrainians employed in the Czech economy (285.545 in 2023) – both men and women – surpassed that of Slovaks.

In absolute terms, the largest increase in 2023 compared to 2022 was observed among Ukrainian employees, who grew by 15,643 individuals – most likely representing war migrants who are adapting to life in the host country and integrating into the labour market. In relative terms, according to the Czech Information System on Average Earnings (Informační systém o průměrném výdělků, ISPV), the number of records of wage employees with Ukrainian citizenship increased by 86% over 2022–2023.

The dynamics of the number of Ukrainian citizens employed in the Czech Republic (Fig.1) illustrate both the overall quantitative contribution of the wartime migration wave since 2022 and its structural impact, reflected in the outpacing growth of women, who constitute the majority among war migrants. The share of women among employed Ukrainian citizens in the Czech Republic was higher, at 52.4%, whereas among the total foreign workforce, men remained predominant, representing 58.8% at the end of 2023.

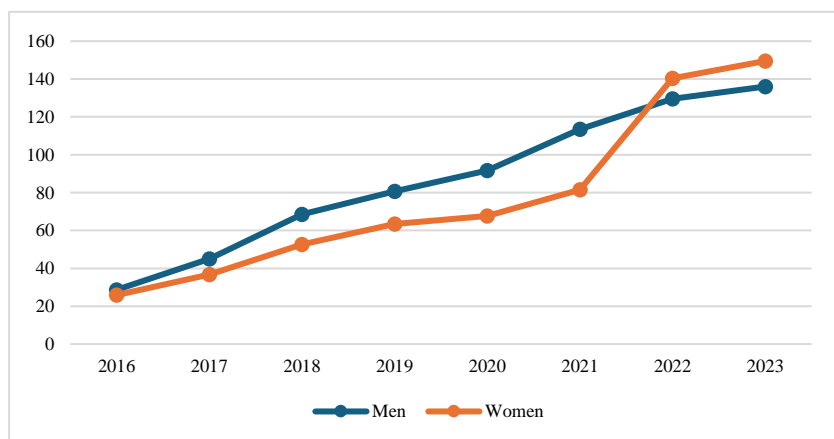


Figure 1. Ukrainian Wage Employees in the Czech National Economy, by Sex, 2016–2023 (thousands)

Source: compiled based on data of the Czech Statistical Office

Another distinctive feature of Ukrainian wage employees in Czechia is that, at present, they are on average younger than employees with Czech citizenship.

A notable feature of wage employment among foreigners (including Ukrainians) in the Czech Republic is its predominant concentration in industry, personal services, landscape maintenance, trade, and food services.

Regarding the occupational composition of employed Ukrainians in 2023, 63% of all Ukrainian employees were concentrated in two occupational

categories: machine and equipment operators and assemblers, and auxiliary and unskilled occupations (Fig.2). The high proportion of employees (especially women) in auxiliary and low-skilled occupations indicates the largely involuntary nature of such employment for a considerable share of Ukrainian war migrants.

Concurrently, there has been an upward trend in the share of Ukrainian doctors, nurses, software developers, accountants, and administrators, although their absolute numbers remain relatively small. Far more significant in absolute terms is the increase in the number of Ukrainians employed in the Czech Republic as cooks, shop assistants, bricklayers, assemblers, drivers, and related occupations.

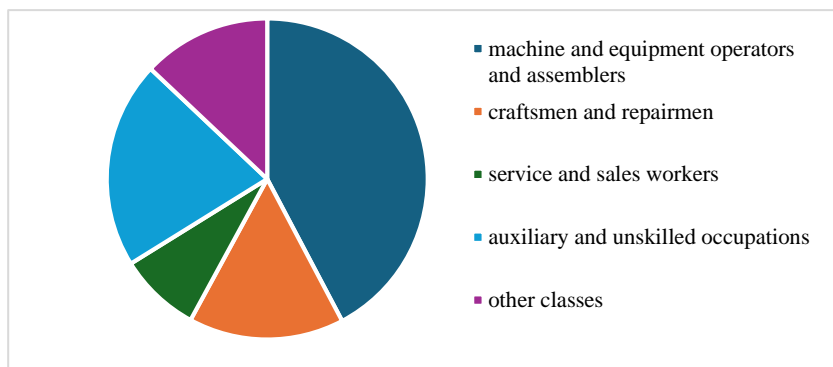


Figure 2. Ukrainian Wage Employees in Czechia, by Occupational Class, 2023 (%)

Source: compiled from ISPV, special data processing

In 2023, Ukrainians were also the largest group among those obtaining licenses for entrepreneurial activity in the Czech Republic when considering entrepreneurs from non-EU countries. The growth rate of the number of Ukrainians holding such licenses was ahead of that of other foreigners. The number of men-entrepreneurs from Ukraine is nearly twice that of women.

The prospects for changes in the employment of Ukrainians (and war migrants in particular) in the Czech economy should be assessed both in light of the influence of geopolitical and socio-economic factors that will shape labour market conditions, and in the context of shifts in the socio-demographic composition of migrants (such as the gradual increase in the share of men and older persons). Equally important is the role of state policy, depending on whether it is oriented toward the integration of forced migrants or, conversely, toward encouraging their return to the homeland. Monitoring and analysing of recent developments in the economic activity and employment of Ukrainians abroad remain essential, providing a foundation for forecasting corresponding changes.

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