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VETERANS OF UKRAINE AS A FACTOR OF ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION: HUMAN CAPITAL, EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The transformation of Ukraine's socio-economic system under the conditions of war and economic uncertainty is accompanied by profound changes in the labour market, human capital and social relations. One of the most significant processes is the formation and development of a large veteran community, which is becoming an important component of Ukraine's socio-economic structure. According to the National Institute for Strategic Studies, as of 1 May 2026, 2,014,623 persons in Ukraine had veteran status. Among them, 1,471,193 were combatants and 159,132 had a war-related disability [1]. The scale of the veteran community demonstrates that veterans should be considered not only within the framework of social protection policy but also as an important factor in economic transformation.

The growing number of veterans creates new challenges for the labour market and human capital development while simultaneously generating opportunities for economic recovery. Veterans possess professional, organizational and leadership competencies acquired during military service that can be valuable for enterprises, public administration and entrepreneurial activity. Therefore, their economic integration should be considered an integral part of Ukraine's broader structural transformation.

The economic integration of veterans is taking place under conditions of high economic turbulence caused by the consequences of the full-scale war, destruction of production and social infrastructure, migration, labour shortages, structural changes in employment and uncertainty regarding economic recovery. Under these conditions, veteran reintegration cannot be limited to social benefits and services. It should include employment, professional adaptation, human capital development, entrepreneurship and access to financial resources.

One of the key challenges is the mismatch between competencies acquired during military service and the requirements of the civilian labour market. Military experience develops the ability to make decisions under uncertainty, operate in crisis situations, coordinate teams, manage resources and assume responsibility. However, these competencies are not always adequately reflected in traditional systems of professional qualifications. Their recognition and transfer to civilian employment can therefore become an important direction of labour market policy.

The external environment significantly influences the economic integration of veterans. The dual PEST/PESTLE model developed for the analysis of the veteran community makes it possible to consider veterans simultaneously as an object affected by external factors and as active subjects capable of influencing socio-economic processes [2]. In this context, political, economic, social and technological factors are particularly important.

Political factors include national veteran policy, regulatory mechanisms, institutional capacity and accessibility of public support programs. Economic factors encompass labour market conditions, employment opportunities, income levels, access to financial resources and opportunities for veteran entrepreneurship. Social factors include community reintegration, social attitudes and access to social services. Technological factors involve digital platforms, remote employment, digital public services and modern professional training opportunities [2].

A particularly important direction of economic integration is veteran entrepreneurship. It can contribute to veterans' economic self-realization, job creation and local economic development. However, its development requires access to financing, business education, consulting and mentoring support, as well as a favourable regulatory environment.

Another important element is the assessment of the effectiveness of veteran policy. Veteran well-being should be considered a multidimensional category that includes economic, social and other components of quality of life [3]. Therefore, assessment should take into account not only social payments and services but also employment, income, professional adaptation, entrepreneurial activity, access to social and healthcare services and participation in community life [3].

A promising approach is to combine PEST/PESTLE monitoring of the external environment with an index-based assessment of veteran well-being [2; 3]. The first component makes it possible to identify factors, opportunities and risks affecting veteran integration, while the second allows the actual outcomes of relevant policies to be assessed. Such a

combination can provide an analytical basis for an adaptive model of veteran economic policy.

The transition from a predominantly compensatory model of veteran support to a development-oriented model is therefore becoming increasingly important. In this approach, veterans are viewed not only as recipients of social assistance but also as economic actors possessing human capital, professional competencies and entrepreneurial potential.

Thus, the effective integration of veterans can contribute to strengthening human capital, increasing employment, stimulating entrepreneurship and supporting Ukraine's sustainable economic recovery. The development of coherent employment, entrepreneurship and professional adaptation policies, combined with comprehensive assessment of integration outcomes, can become an important component of Ukraine's economic transformation.

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