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Poland more attractive for Ukrainian economic immigrants

Marta Jaroszewicz

On 5 June the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine and the Academy of Science published data from the second all-Ukrainian survey on labour migrants, conducted with financial support from the EU. The survey, which covers the period from the beginning of 2010 until mid-2012, is of a representative character (27,000 households were surveyed). The data shows that the economic migration of Ukrainians is on the decline. In the period covered by the survey, 1.2 million Ukrainians worked abroad, which is 4.4% of the population of working age. According to an analogous survey conducted between 2005 and 2008, 1.5 million Ukrainians (5.1%) in of working age worked abroad.

Commentary

- The results of the survey should be seen as reliable, although the actual number of labour migrants may be slightly higher if people who left for work before the period covered by the survey and have not come back are taken into account as well as whole families living abroad. On the other hand, the research debunks the myth perpetuated by the Ukrainian and Western media and politicians that three to five million Ukrainians work abroad since in this context one should not mention the 2.5 million former inhabitants of Ukraine (mainly Jews and Russians) who left Ukraine permanently at the beginning of the 1990s and then went to Russia, Western European countries or Israel and obtained citizenship in the countries where they settled.

- The most interesting conclusions from the survey concern Poland, which is mentioned as the second country for Ukrainian labour migrants after Russia (ahead of former leaders such as Italy and the Czech Republic). Between 2005 and 2008 there were 118,000 Ukrainians in Poland. Between 2010 and 2012 this figure had risen to 168,000. Ukrainian labour migrants in Poland are quite well-educated with 60% of them declaring they have full secondary school education and 12% of them having higher education (in Germany this figure is as high as 90%). They are mainly women, as opposed to Russia, where the majority are men who work in construction and services.

- The reasons for Poland's increased popularity with Ukrainian labour migrants can be found in the world's economic crisis and the decreasing opportunities for employment in the EU, particularly in the southern countries of the EU (where Ukrainian migrants used to

work) and a more restrictive immigration policy adopted by most EU countries. In the period covered by the survey, Poland was not affected by these phenomena. Well-developed networks of Ukrainian immigrants in Poland also play an important role –the survey indicates that Ukrainian workers in general come only from five western districts. Poland has undoubtedly succeeded in creating a reputation for itself as a country which provides economic opportunities and which is at the same time accessible. According to the survey conducted by the Ukrainian human resources holding ANCOR and the internet website Robota.ua in April 2013 as much as 23% of specialists and managers surveyed were ready to come to Poland for work. In comparison, 63% wanted to go to Russia, 14% to Canada, 13% to Germany and 11% to the Czech Republic.