

## ANALYSIS OF MODERN TRENDS IN LABOUR MARKET TRANSFORMATION IN UKRAINE

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**Abstract:** The article examines the main aspects of transforming the labor market in Ukraine in the context of the destructive impact of the war and the associated economic instability. The primary factors affecting the labor market, such as migration processes, changes in the structure of employment, digitization of the economy, and the introduction of the latest technologies, are considered. The consequences of military operations on the transformation of the labor market are analyzed. Current trends in the demand for new professions, demographic changes, and the impact of state regulatory policy on employment support are explored. The prospects for developing the labor market in the context of Ukraine's European integration and the potential for increasing the competitiveness of Ukrainian workers in the European labor market are determined. The necessity of enhancing the adaptability of the workforce to modern challenges and optimizing state employment programs to ensure sustainable economic development of the country in the future has been demonstrated.

**Keywords:** labor market; migration; workforce; rural population; market transformation; management; employment structure; state employment support; reintegration into the economy; globalization; inclusive labor market; reintegration into civil society; veterans.

### 1 Introduction

The modern labor market in Ukraine is undergoing significant transformation due to several internal and external factors. One critical aspect that has significantly impacted the development of the labor market is the war, which has led to mass migration, job losses, and a general decrease in economic activity. The destructive impact of military operations creates new challenges for the working population, necessitating the development of effective strategies to overcome these consequences and restore stability.

Migration processes caused by war and economic instability affect the demographic structure of the population, which, in turn, is reflected in the labor market. A significant portion of the working population has been forced to relocate to other regions of the country or abroad in search of safe living and working conditions, resulting in a shortage of qualified personnel in specific sectors of economic activity. This complicates economic recovery and development opportunities at both national and local levels.

Simultaneously, the digitalization of the economy and the introduction of the latest technologies have a tangible impact on the labor market, presenting both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, automation and innovative technologies contribute to increased labor productivity and the creation of new jobs. On the other hand, they can lead to a decline in traditional professions and higher qualification requirements for workers. Consequently, the workforce must adapt to new market conditions, which necessitates retraining and upgrading employees' skills.

Furthermore, military operations have significantly altered the employment structure. Many businesses have shut down or been destroyed, causing mass layoffs. This is especially noticeable in industrial regions, where there was previously a high

concentration of jobs. Concurrently, there is currently intensive development of new industries related to information technologies, drone production, remote work, and other modern activities, which requires new approaches to labor management.

In such conditions, state regulatory policy to support employment becomes a key factor in stabilizing the labor market. It is essential to investigate the effectiveness of existing employment support and social protection programs and develop new mechanisms that consider the specifics of modern challenges. Additionally, Ukraine's integration into the European economic space opens up additional opportunities for increasing the competitiveness of Ukrainian workers in the international labor market. However, developing comprehensive strategies to adapt the national education and professional training systems to European standards is necessary.

In general, the aforementioned problems underscore the relevance of studying approaches to developing effective strategies for the national labor market to ensure Ukraine's sustainable economic development in the face of modern challenges.

### 2 Literature Review

The analysis of the transformation of the labor market in Ukraine in the context of economic instability, digitalization, and demographic changes requires a comprehensive approach to studying scientific sources. Modern approaches to studying these aspects are characterized by various views on overcoming negative consequences and leveraging new opportunities for labor market development.

In particular, it is worth noting the research of I. Britchenko [3-12], T. Kulinich [16], V. Sarioglu [20], N. Turlo [31], and O. Vovchak [34], who demonstrate that military actions have caused significant changes in the employment structure of Ukraine's population, leading to job reductions and increased unemployment rates. Concurrently, in the context of increased migration flows, the importance of supporting migrants and their integration into new labor markets is emphasized. An important aspect of this research is the study of the impact of demographic changes on the labor market, analyzing the possibilities of attracting young people to economic activity and creating conditions for the return of emigrants.

Scientists such as N. Antonyuk [1], Y. Danshina [13], M. Masl'an [17], R. Sodoma [27], A. Verzun [33], and V. Zhuk [35] actively investigate issues related to the digitalization of the economy and the introduction of the latest technologies in the labor field. They argue that digital transformation can significantly increase labor productivity and create new jobs, while also highlighting the need for substantial investments in personnel training and retraining. These studies focus on developing digital skills among the population and adapting the education system to new labor market requirements.

Currently, state regulatory policy in the labor field is also the object of numerous studies. In particular, authors such as I. Arakelova [2], Y. Drobotia [14], N. Khomiuk [15], J. Reitšpís [19], and T. Shmatkovska [21-26] emphasize the importance of effective state policy in employment, especially in times of crisis. Research shows that active measures to support employment, such as retraining programs and stimulating entrepreneurship, can significantly improve the labor market situation. Additionally, in the context of Ukraine's European integration, there is a need to harmonize Ukrainian legislation and standards with European ones to facilitate worker mobility and increase competitiveness in the European labor market. The integration into the European space is asserted as a means of developing the labor market and raising the population's standard of living.

Existing scientific work highlights the multifaceted nature of labor market transformation in Ukraine and underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to address it. This necessitates deepening research to determine effective ways to develop the labor market and ensure the country's sustainable economic development.

### 3 Materials and Methods

In the study of the transformation of the labor market in Ukraine, various materials and research methods were used to ensure a comprehensive analysis and obtain reliable results. Statistical reports from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine and international organizations served as the primary data sources. Additional information was obtained from specialized scientific publications, research reports, and analytical reviews covering various aspects of labor market transformation.

The research methodology was based on the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. Quantitative analysis included processing statistical data on employment, unemployment, migration processes, demographic changes, and other critical labor market indicators. Descriptive statistics and analytical methods were employed to identify the main trends and relationships between various indicators.

Qualitative analysis aimed to deepen the understanding of the impact of digitization, technological changes, and government policy on the labor market. Expert assessments from professionals in economics, sociology, and management were considered, providing insights into the current state and future prospects of the labor market. Additionally, content analysis methods for scientific publications and analytical reports were utilized to identify key trends and challenges.

Forecasting methods included assessing possible scenarios for the labor market's development under European integration and the introduction of the latest technologies. Specific approaches were developed to evaluate the impact of digitalization on employment and the emergence of new professions. This enabled an assessment of the directions for implementing state policies and adapting the education system.

The method of logical generalization allowed for the summarization of the obtained results and the formulation of several recommendations to enhance the workforce's adaptability to modern conditions and support the country's economic development amid contemporary challenges.

### 4 Results and Discussion

The main aspects of the transformation of the labor market in Ukraine, in the context of the destructive impact of the war and economic instability, primarily involve changes in the structure of employment. A direct consequence of the military operations was the closure of many enterprises in the war zone, significantly reducing the number of jobs. This led to the redistribution of labor resources through migration flows to relatively safer regions, causing substantial regional imbalances in the labor market. Additionally, forced internal and external migration resulted in a significant outflow of labor, particularly qualified personnel, exacerbating the shortage of specialists in specific industries and regions.

Moreover, these problems were intensified by demographic changes. The war and migration processes altered the demographic structure of the population, significantly impacting the labor market. Concurrently, existing trends of population aging and declining birth rates have long posed additional challenges to ensuring the stable development of the labor market in Ukraine. In such conditions, the effectiveness of state employment support measures becomes critical. The state should develop programs to retrain workers, support small and medium-sized businesses, and stimulate the return of migrants and their integration into the national labor market. These measures underscore the need for an integrated approach to overcome the

negative consequences of the war and ensure the sustainable development of the labor market in Ukraine.

Labor market problems in Ukraine have a long history, rooted in the economic crisis of the transition economy of the 1990s. Even before the onset of Russian military aggression in 2022, the national labor market was characterized as an unbalanced system, marked by high levels of structural and long-term unemployment (Table 1).

Table 1: Main indicators of the labor market of Ukraine for 2017-2021.

Indicator	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Unemployment rate of the population (according to the ILO methodology), %	9.9	9.1	8.6	9.9	10.3
Load of registered unemployed for ten vacancies, persons	7.0	6.0	9.0	11.0	7.0
The level of long-term unemployment of the population aged 15-70, %	26.7	21.6	13.1	21.2	25.1
Level of structural unemployment, in % of registered unemployment	12.0	12.7	12.9	13.0	13.5
Unemployment rate at age:					
25-29 years old	8.8	7.8	8.4	8.7	9.4
30-34 years old	8.1	7.4	7.3	8.2	8.4

Source: [29]

The discrepancy between labor demand and supply, influenced by numerous multidirectional factors, has led to various forms of unemployment, including structural unemployment. This mismatch between the structure of labor supply and demand results from the obsolescence of certain professions and the emergence of new occupations due to the digitalization of the economy. Structural unemployment indicates a low level of workforce adaptability and decreases labor resource efficiency. Consequently, even before the full-scale war, Ukraine's labor market exhibited several functional imbalances formed during large-scale transformations in previous crisis periods. These imbalances were observed in both quantitative and qualitative labor market indicators.

After the onset of the war, significant changes occurred in the labor market, particularly concerning the volume of labor supply. A notable feature of the Ukrainian national labor market in wartime is that the imbalance between labor demand and supply remains significant. This can be quantitatively analyzed through the ratio of unemployed individuals to vacant positions. Increased mortality rates among the working population, along with significant migration flows, relocation, and an increase in labor supply from women and youth, have substantially altered the structure of labor supply in various regions. For instance, at the beginning of 2022, the number of job offers decreased by more than tenfold, and the number of applicants per vacancy increased more than sevenfold. However, after stabilizing the situation in the country and businesses adapting to new challenges, the labor market underwent relative stabilization. By June 2024, competition for one vacancy had decreased, reaching an indicator of two persons per position (Figure 1).

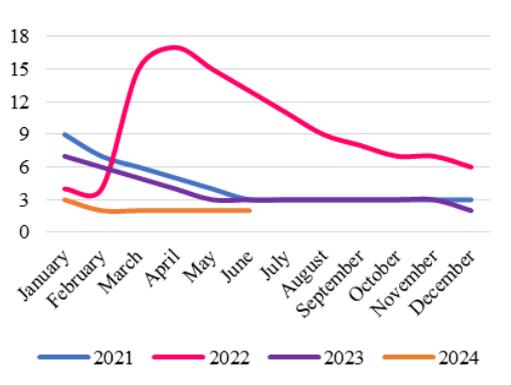


Figure 1. Dynamics of the number of applicants for one vacancy in the labor market of Ukraine for 2021-2024. Source: [30]

Thus, a specific positive trend can be identified, recognized as an intermediate result of the economic revival and partial recovery of business activity in Ukraine during 2023-2024. This occurs against the backdrop of a decrease in registered unemployment levels, which only partially reflect the true picture of employment under martial law. However, in 2024, the dynamics of population employment reveal several critical challenges for the Ukrainian labor market. Experts have noted the following issues: a lack of talented specialists, a preference for remote work, staff exhaustion and fatigue, the continuation of “grey” business practices that hinder the return of emigrants, age discrimination and gender stereotypes in personnel services, the departure of qualified workers abroad, low wages, a discrepancy between candidates’ salary expectations and companies’ financial capabilities, and a shortage of specialists proficient in English [31]. The unemployment rate dynamics show a sharp reduction as of 2024 (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Dynamics of changes in the unemployment rate in Ukraine (according to the ILO methodology) for 2019-2024, %. Source: [18]

As we can see, since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the level of unemployment has increased significantly. However, with the stabilization of the situation in 2023, the unemployment rate has gradually decreased. The parameters of the linear trend indicate that the unemployment rate during the analyzed period had a clear upward trend, with an absolute increase of 2.54%. In contrast, the analysis of the polynomial trend shows an actual annual change in the unemployment rate of 12.64% following an initial reduction of 1.44%.

It should also be noted that after the beginning of the war, specific changes occurred in Ukraine’s labor market, particularly in the professional structure of the registered unemployed (Figure 3).

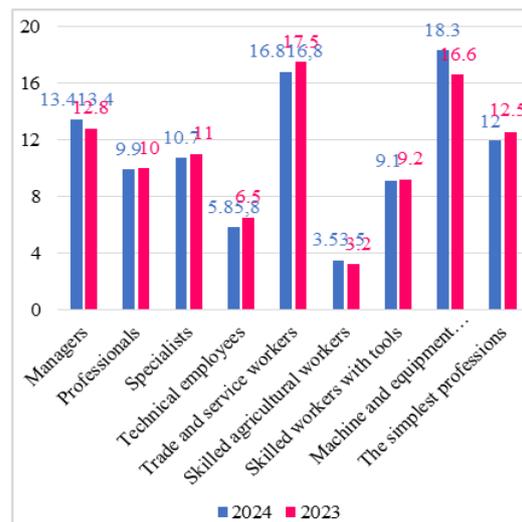


Figure 3. Changes in the professional structure of the registered unemployed in Ukraine in 2021-2023, %. Source: [28]

As we can see, the market has seen a significant reduction in the share of machinery and equipment maintenance workers in the total number of unemployed - from 18.3% in 2021 to 16.6% in 2023. The main reason for such transformations in the professional structure of the unemployed is the increase in the focus of the relevant equipment workers on self-employment job search. At the same time, the share of trade and service workers in the total number of unemployed increased from 16.8 to 17.5%. This was a consequence of the general reduction of employment opportunities in retail and wholesale trade due to the strengthening of crisis phenomena in this field and the decrease in the population’s purchasing power. In addition, in the professional structure of the registered unemployed, the share of managers decreased (from 13.4 to 12.8%) with an almost unchanged share of professionals and specialists, the value of which fluctuated between 10–11%. Structural changes in other professional groups were not significant enough. In general, the professional structure of the registered unemployed did not show significant deviations from the previously formed structure of 2021.

In general, we can see that during the war, the labor market of Ukraine underwent significant transformational influences, which significantly changed its structure and dynamics. It is characterized by instability and uncertainty, rising unemployment, changes in its sectoral structure, and labor migration from Ukraine abroad. To further stabilize the labor market, ensuring the rapid restoration of facilities destroyed due to hostilities, creating new jobs, and increasing state support for the unemployed and internally displaced persons is essential.

The problem of work motivation is critical in such conditions. At the same time, it is advisable to use the motivational models used in the countries of the European Union, taking into account the development of the information society and digital economy, as well as work in stressful situations, as a basis for the formation of personnel motivation systems. Thus, stabilizing the labor market and increasing labor motivation in martial law conditions can ensure economic stability in Ukraine.

It should be noted that technological changes and digitalization increase the importance of skills as an economic tool. In particular, the need for more qualified skills among labor market workers is one of the main barriers to introducing new technologies and innovative development of the national economy. Therefore, countries whose education and labor systems effectively combat this problem can benefit the most from the digital transformation of the labor market while reducing its negative consequences.

At the same time, since digitalization leads to a general reduction in the need for labor, its intensification is a way out of the crisis in Ukraine, where there is a shortage of specific categories of workers. At the same time, according to UN estimates, the number of internally displaced persons as of August 1, 2023, was 6,262,900. According to expert forecasts, the share of people remaining abroad may vary from 40 to 60%. According to the Ministry of Economy, over the next ten years, Ukraine will have to attract an additional 4.5 million employees to the labor market [32]. All this gives reason to consider digitization as a factor that will help reduce the need for the labor force by replacing human labor with digital technologies.

Therefore, to effectively develop the labor market in Ukraine in the context of the digitalization of the labor relations system, it is necessary to implement its state stimulation programs by using administrative and financial levers to create new types of jobs related to digital technologies. It is also necessary to use the institutional mechanisms of state regulation to ensure budgetary financing of retraining programs for employees most susceptible to digitalization. In addition, in our opinion, it is necessary to accelerate the acceleration of social adaptation of the population to the challenges of the digital economy, which consists of the mandatory constant improvement of the level of qualifications and the promotion of new skills in the interactive space of the digital ecosystem.

## 5 Conclusion

Thus, we conclude that the onset of Russian aggression against Ukraine has led to a significant reduction in employment due to decreased business activity, the closure of numerous enterprises, and the economic constraints faced by those that remained operational. The most substantial job losses occurred in 2022, driven by decreased production volumes, disrupted industrial relations, and the destruction of enterprises in conflict zones.

From 2022 to 2023, the employment structure shifted, with an increased share of managers, specialists, technical employees, and machinery maintenance workers. Conversely, the shares of trade workers and skilled workers using tools declined, with the most significant decrease observed in lower-level professions. These changes align with the professional structure of registered unemployed individuals, where there was a noted reduction in machinery maintenance workers and an increase in trade and service workers among the unemployed. This shift is likely due to reduced employment opportunities in retail and wholesale trade, exacerbated by the war's destructive impact.

Addressing these challenges requires systemic solutions to stabilize Ukraine's labor market. Adapting to European Union requirements, which can boost employee motivation and reduce migration, is currently seen as a primary approach to solving these issues. Additionally, state-driven economic digitalization is essential to mitigate future labor shortages by introducing new forms and types of economic activity into Ukraine's national economy.

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