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PERCEPTION PRISM OF STATE AUTHORITIES AND NGOs ON MIGRATION IN UKRAINE

ABSTRACT. This paper does not pursue the goal of providing a profound analysis of the migration situation in Ukraine but rather presents the views of two sets of actors on the issue: Ukrainian migration authorities and leading NGOs. This paper provides a valuable insight in that the opinions of both of these groups of actors are combined in a single work. This is a perspective that is not frequently examined, partly due to the difficulty of accessing state authorities in Ukraine. Using a qualitative interviewing method, this article highlights migration aspirations in Ukraine in the scope and to the extent that they have been perceived as relevant by Ukrainian state authorities and NGO leaders. To provide context to this issue, new developments in the state migration policy are detailed here. Additionally, perceived policy implications on migration tendencies as well as some migration outcomes are given particular attention. This article also explores how media discourse on migration in the country is articulated by the considered actors and more importantly, whether any change in the discourse is evident for the time being, what this change is about and what are respective explanations.

JEL Classification: R23, P25 **Keywords:** labour migration, migration discourse, Ukraine, EU, Russia

Introduction

Present day Ukraine is the country of origin, and simultaneously a transit and destination country for, international migration flows. Labour migration remains the most prevalent migration pattern in Ukraine, with the largest part of its labour migrants going to the Russian Federation. Many Ukrainian nationals also migrate to EU countries for work. Ukraine is considered to be unique in this respect, having significant migration flows both to the EU and to resource-rich CIS countries (Mansoor & Quillin (ed.), 2006, pp. 35-36).

Due to its close geographical proximity to the EU, Ukraine continues to be a transit country for mainly irregular migrants moving westward – to the EU. This country therefore becomes a beneficiary of “unintended” immigration from international migrants who failed to penetrate the EU countries. Or, they were readmitted from the EU to Ukraine as third

country nationals. Often unwilling to return back to home countries and be financially not capable of doing so, they have no other option but to stay in Ukraine.

Ukraine has also become an attractive destination country for labour migrants. Immigration statistics show that labour migrants in Ukraine from Asia have increased in number (Building Migration Partnerships 2011, p. 13). However, recent data do not support the story that immigrants from Africa, South-Eastern and Central Asia compose a major share of irregular immigrants in this country. As an illustration, 88 per cent of irregular immigrants, apprehended in Ukraine between January and September 2011, were citizens of CIS states, who treat Ukraine as a destination country (Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, 2012).

Prior to 1999, irregular immigrants took advantage of the relatively open immigration system in Ukraine as the study of the Kennan Institute in 2004 revealed (Braichevska *et al.*, 2003), or, to put it better, took advantage of the migration system before its review. The redesigned migration framework started in 2010, as a part of wider administrative reform. The State Migration Service was established under the Ministry of Interior. This reform process continues. Many, however, particularly from the non-governmental sector, have voiced criticism of Ukraine's migration policy and its process for implementation. (Chumak, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2011). These criticisms mostly focus on implementation shortcomings, unlinked to the policymakers themselves, or perceptions of them.

This paper attempts to analyse migration perceptions and presents the views of leading Ukrainian state migration authorities and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This will lead to an understanding of the state's priorities and logic of action, and to disparities of vision between the state and non-state actors. This contribution cannot be regarded as comprehensive, but will lend direction for further research.

This paper begins with a short overview of the theoretical and methodological framework. Then it will focus on recent progress in migration policy, and make clear the biggest concerns and remaining problems, as perceived by those interviewed. It will detail perceptions of incentives to migrate, broken down by age and gender of migrants. It will lay out the differences in perceptions of the motivations behind emigration to both the EU and Russia, leading recipients of Ukrainian labour. It will explore how media discourse on migration is articulated by actors and, more importantly, any changes in discourse, including analysis of those changes.

Theoretical and Methodological Overview

A great portion of researches generally place migrant-sending countries in a rather passive position, compared to the scientific attention which receiving countries gained (Alcid, 2003). Lately, this has been changed with sending countries being at the fore of scientific interest (Ratha, 2003). More recent studies for instance have focused on the effects of migration and remittances, on development in countries-of-origin (De Haas, 2007), and on the economic potential of diasporas (De Haas & Plug, 2006; Gamlen, 2006). These studies reflect a trend toward livelihood approaches, emerged in the 1970s – migration is seen either as a means of risk sharing to overcome constraints of local development, or as an investment opportunity through access to better earning opportunities (Lucas & Stark, 1985, p. 902). Some scholars (Taylor, 1999) questioned investment purposes of migration when investment is not calculated as favourable in sending societies. In this case, remittances are used merely for consumption and survival purposes. As empirical evidence reveals, migrants from Ukraine developed characteristics which correspond with Portes' characteristics of transnational migrants (Portes *et al.*, 1999), having been embedded in more than one society (Nina Glick Schiller, 2005, p. 29). This is because they “forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch *et al.*, 1994, p. 7).

Migration research has challenged the push-pull theory of migration, which asserts that the economic performance of sending and receiving countries is the main factor influencing migration flows, and impacts their size and pace (Appleyard, 1989, pp. 486-499). However, this theory ignores contextual factors such as state restrictions of emigration and immigration (Castles and Miller, 1993, pp. 20-21) or migration perception issue. This very contextual factor, placed in a transnational paradigm, is at core of this paper. Views of state authorities and NGOs (particularly of the former) may not be free from ideological influence, however not necessarily (Verba and Orren, 1985; McWilliams 1995). That is why the respond given to different policy domains (and in this regard migration policy) varies (Kriesi *et al.*, 1995). Their perceptions may be also shaped, based on what they believe wide segments of the society perceive with regard to migration (Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000).

This article is based on findings, obtained from fieldwork in Ukraine in January and February 2012 as a part of the EUImagine project¹. Methodology includes qualitative interviewing and process tracing. The latter was applied to verify information obtained during interviews and to corroborate primary and secondary source material.

Qualitative interviewing method was applied to understand the perspective of the country of origin, including the interpretations of state authorities and NGOs of migrants' motivations and characteristics of migration-related media discourse. Interviews were conducted in particular with the representatives of the State Migration Service (SMS), – the main state body in charge of migration issues – and with the Ministry of Social Policy ("the Ministry"), which deals in particular with labour migration.

Leading NGOs constituted the second set of interviewees. They included representatives of particularly Caritas (Lviv), Europe without Barriers (Kyiv) and La Strada (Kyiv). Refugee and migration advice is an essential component of Caritas' activity in Lviv. This is German-based Catholic welfare organization with international outreach. This organization also deals in Ukraine with transit migration and implements EU-funded projects on return programs. Civic initiative "Europe without Barriers" (EWB) is an umbrella organisation of various small NGOs², aimed at fostering visa free regime and promote abolishment of administrative barriers to people-to-people contacts in Europe. An important component of its migration-related activity is monitoring of visa practices at the EU embassies in Ukraine. La Strada (a European NGO network) with its headquarters in Amsterdam (the Netherlands) pursues a goal to fight trafficking in human beings in Europe, in particular trafficking of women.

Initially, it was an understanding that quantitative parameters may produce, to some extent, biased findings, but the objective was to pick up exclusively decision makers with regard to state authorities and the most experienced and reputed NGOs, familiar with migration issues profoundly who may also represent opinions of smaller local NGOs with expertise in a migration field. All interviews were conducted according to the project interview guides (designed for state and non state actors). Interview format was the same in terms of the questionnaire and interviewing strategy. Interview details contain the interview dates, but the identity of informants is not revealed in this paper in line with the project commitment to confidentiality.

State Migration Policy. The Latest Progress and Major Problematic Issues

Discussing the state migration policy, state officials presented a more detailed account on the state migration policy, mentioning the current achievements in their migration agenda.

¹ For further details visit - www.eumagine.org

² They are Center for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine, Regional Branch of National Institute for Strategic Studies in Uzhgorod or the Institute for Social Studies and Political Analysis in Donetsk.

In particular, they dwelled on issues which are to be discussed with the EU. They include signing of bilateral labour agreements, return of illegal workers from Ukraine, regularization programs of illegal migrants, technical assistance for border management and maintenance of refugee detention centres. Also considered as topical were issues of labour and sexual exploitation of Ukrainian migrants and trafficking in human beings. Of note was that the issue of the ratification process of the readmission agreement with the Russian Federation was not mentioned at all. Similarly, they were reluctant to cover other topics, specified below, which relate to Russia. NGOs described the state migration policy as generally being one in progress; however the overall evaluation was negative. La Strada concluded that “there is no good migration policy in Ukraine, no good policies to help people find themselves here in Ukraine, without going somewhere” (Iryna M., 2012, pers. comm., 2 February). La Strada added that, whilst several ministries, including the Ministry of Interior, had cooperated with NGOs, “there are basically things they are responsible for and which they should do”. They are the same as those, which state authorities articulated themselves above.

State officials emphasised their primary dilemma as one of balancing pursuit of the national interests of Ukraine with meeting Ukraine’s international commitments. This task was voiced as the difficult one – “to find a balance between national interests of Ukraine in particular with regard to migration flow regulation and to meet basic human rights of people who seek asylum in Ukraine”, the State Migration Service representative remarked (Natalia N. 2012, pers. comm., 27 January).

Other topical issues were named by the Ministry. They are those of integration of immigrants in Ukraine, and reintegration of Ukrainians who are returning migrants. A recent development was reported: the start of the National Integration Program, which will run until 2020. Limited funding, named as a primary reason, hampers implementation of these state-run programs (Taras S., 2012, pers. comm., 3 February).

Other state priorities include the improvement of licensing conditions and better social protection of labour migrants. The Ministry reported being presently busy finalizing new licensing conditions for intermediary firms who provide assistance for migrants seeking employment abroad. The conditions have been revised because of numerous and widespread claims from potential labour migrants, alleging violation the conditions.

Ukraine’s demographic decline is linked to emigration from Ukraine. The state should introduce some compensatory mechanisms, encouraging qualified migrants to stay in the home country. This opinion expressed, in particular, the representative of the State Migration Service. In contrast, the situation is seen differently by another representative of SMS. He does not perceive the present day migration situation in Ukraine and more concretely the situation with regard to immigration, as catastrophic as for example the situation in Moscow. He argued “where, pardon me, the street cleaners are mostly foreigners and not Russians” (Gennadiy P., 2012, pers. comm., 27 January).

With regard to the EU-Ukraine agenda, views expressed on liberalization of the visa regime with the EU were highly similar. Interviewees jointly agreed that the liberalization of the visa regime would not change the migration situation considerably. In this context, the informant at SMS went even further and advocated a visa-free regime with the EU. She pointed out benefits which the EU might have in this case. First and foremost, an increase of the flow of tourists from Ukraine to the EU. She emphasized that Ukrainian people “would like to travel to the EU when they are willing to do so but not when their visas are ready” (Natalia N., 2012, pers. comm., 27 January). She touched upon the visa issue saying that “to get a visa to the EU is a quite complicated process. Sometimes people simply do not want to apply for a visa as it is a quite time consuming process” (Ibid.).

State officials attributed the issue of the visa-free travel within the EU as impetus for their current action. They are seeking bilateral labour agreements with receiving countries

(and, through these, to enable legal employment of people from Ukraine and improve their social protection in those countries). The Ministry said at present eight bilateral labour agreements had been concluded³. There were several more being prepared – with Poland, Germany and Greece. The Ministry drew attention to the receiving countries' interests in signing such agreements. Only governmental re-shuffles – for example in Spain – or severe effects of the economic crisis – in Greece – have hindered the negotiation process.

Border management and maintenance of refugee detention centres rank high on the Ukraine-EU bilateral agenda. Ukraine's porous borders with Russia and Belarus, and budgetary burden maintaining it and providing for irregular migrants subject to expulsion, made Ukraine dependent on the EU for technical assistance. SMS representative stated "Ukraine is threatening to become a kind of the EU buffer zone" (Gennadiy P., 2012, pers. comm., 27 January). The EU knows this, he argued further, so provides funding for and strengthened border controls in Ukraine. The EU, the Director implied, citing his previous experience, gives money to increase the number of refugee detention centres, provide allowance for illegal migrants, and support infrastructure in refugee detention centres. This furthers the EU's own interests. As he put it "at least this tendency can be followed up rather clearly. I know these things from my previous experience as well as I learn them from the way they control us, the spheres they provide funding for. They give money to increase the number of refugee detention centres; provide allowance for illegal migrants, they support infrastructure in refugee detention centres" (Ibid.).

State officials pointed to the scarcity of available statistical data on labour emigration from Ukraine. In particular, no statistical data are available to trace the connection between migration and ruin of family ties with regard to Ukraine, state officials noted. Though, the Ministry does not tend to believe this interdependence exists, because as was stated "when people who are living in Ukraine are jobless with no means to maintain their living, it also leads to ruin of family ties" (Taras S., 2012, pers. comm., 3 February).

Key Aspects of Migration Aspirations in Ukraine

Turning specifically to emigration from Ukraine, experts first emphasized changed migration patterns. They differ from those of the 1990s, when people left Ukraine predominantly for good. Changed visa policies of receiving countries, and more accessible visas than before, made it easier for Ukrainians to migrate.

However, visa policies have been regarded as complicated. Potential migrants have been enjoined to "find other routes. It is only strict for people who want to do everything legal", La Strada concluded (Iryna M., 2012, pers. comm., 2 February). These "other routes" La Strada explained as the EU-based fake companies and unofficial service providers in Ukraine, which are involved in visa business (Ibid.). Visa regulations were not pictured as an obstacle which is impossible to overcome. In the account of EWB, "visa regulations do not hold people back [...] they just 'pay extra money' for the visa and that's it [...] if you have the money you can go everywhere" (Maryana K., 2012, pers. comm., 2 February).

Illegal border crossing is not practiced at all, even with regard to Ukrainians who work abroad illegally. Tourist visas are argued as enabling visitors to penetrate EU countries – "channels of illegal migration" (Natalia N., 2012, pers. comm., 27 January). The Ministry shares this opinion, observing, of countries which have visa regime with Ukraine, that "one could get there having a short-term tourist visa issued or having different kinds of invitations and then stay there" (Taras S., 2012, pers. comm., 3 February).

³ Named were Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Baltic States.

- *Age and gender profile of migrants. Migration incentives*

In terms of the age criterion, state officials pictured Ukrainian emigrants as people predominantly between the ages of 25 and 40. Their professional background falls into two main groups – well-educated, high-qualified specialists who are competitive in the international labour market (clearly, the minority) and skilled workers. NGOs were more definitive about age ranges, grouping Ukrainian migrants as young people in the age of 18-35 and older people aged 35-55. They are two major groups with highly diverting aspirations.

Those aged between 18 and 35 have a variety of motivations: to travel, to get new experiences and to learn about other cultures. Unlike young people, Ukrainians aged 35-55 go abroad with one purpose only and namely – to earn money. Being more ambitious and more demanding, but having scarce chances to progress in Ukraine, young people start looking for a solution abroad. As WB remarked “more clear plans to leave the country are wider spread among the younger generation since they do not see prospects, prospects of development, to realise themselves here. [...] Young people think one has more opportunities there [EU]” (Maryana K., 2012, pers. comm., 2 February).

Women in their mid-40s constitute the second group. They are females who face discrimination because of their gender but, first and foremost because of their age. It results in their lower salaries compared to males. “A widespread feature is high-educated women doing three or four jobs at once” (Ibid.) In addition, La Strada refers to aspirations among women, and especially young ones, to leave Ukraine by marrying a foreigner or they plan to go to the EU in order to look for a husband there. “They do not want to marry our guys, but they want to marry foreigners in order to find better living there” (Iryna M., 2012, pers. comm., 2 February).

Gender trends of migration can be broken down regionally. More women go abroad from the Western regions of Ukraine than from Eastern regions. They are mainly skilled workers with no higher education, for instance medical personnel who take care of elderly people abroad. Men seek work in the construction sector. Western regions produce more labour migrants, all informants believe, as those regions have lower standards of living. Working conditions for numerous people are difficult and even if people do unskilled labour abroad they receive higher salaries than in Ukraine.

Of all people legally employed abroad, seventy per cent of Ukrainians are employed as salespeople by intermediary firms in Ukraine to perform a job abroad. They are mostly men and predominantly from the South of Ukraine. Altogether women constitute only nine per cent of those employed officially in Ukraine to do a job abroad, according to the Ministry.

More widely, economic incentives were jointly voiced as a driving force for Ukrainian people to go abroad. Citizens of Ukraine who seek employment abroad are motivated by higher salaries and potential for professional development. Labour migrants were pictured by state officials as people who failed to establish themselves professionally in Ukraine because they believe their skills are of no use in Ukraine. “First of all the EU and Russia are places to earn money”, according to an NGO “Caritas” (Rostyslav K., 2012, pers. comm., 10 February). Notably, state officials concluded jointly that this perception is not about to change in the near future.

State authorities emphasized the positive impact of labour migration from Ukraine on the Ukrainian economy, through a lower unemployment rate. The Ukrainian unemployment rate “would be much higher if all unemployed people got registered at the State Employment Service”, the Ministry noted and “paying unemployment benefits would represent a substantial extra burden for the state” (Oleg P., 2012, pers. comm., 3 February). Furthermore, migrants support Ukrainian economy through remittances, as they remain citizens of Ukraine. Less unemployment helps also lower a crime rate that could increase otherwise, as SMS

representative observed. If unemployed people are stayed in the home country, they “would look around in the streets in order to find something, and might wish to improve their financial condition through some illegal means” (Gennadiy P., 2012, pers. comm., 27 January).

- *Destination countries and spheres of employment*

In terms of the EU, popular countries for Ukrainian people to go to are immediate neighbours like Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. However, people also go to Italy, Portugal, Czech Republic and Spain. They mainly work in the construction industry and in housekeeping. Female migrants, especially, seek housekeeping jobs in Italy, while men work in the agricultural and construction sector, mainly in Poland and in the Czech Republic. Portugal employs seasonal workers in agriculture, but also in trade, state officials remarked. The US was only once mentioned, as an occasional migration destination in the context of the Green Card representing another channel of legal employment abroad.

NGOs gave a more detailed account of destination priorities and claimed that a potential migrant’s decision is often taken based on the visa regulations of European countries and the migrant’s networks in this or that country. Poland is a great priority because it is “easier to be there, easier to get there, and easier to return” (Iryna M. 2012, pers. comm., 2 February). Other countries like Greece, Italy and Spain “are not that strict” compared to the immigration rules and migration polices of such countries as “the UK or Sweden” (Ibid.).

Overall, NGOs expressed the same view as state authorities, stressing the very high expectations of Ukrainian migrants of opportunities in the EU. La Strada emphasised that the “golden image of the EU has changed a bit because of the economic crisis,” but has not changed the view of all people. Generally, those younger than 30 have a more realistic image of the EU and their goals, unlike older people, who still harbour the “same dream image of the EU” (Ibid.).

Upon arrival in the EU, Ukrainians see that the reality is different from what they had expected to find. They “start feeling a bit excluded and feel like strangers; [...] they cannot find themselves” (Ibid.) In parallel, this reveals to be not only a matter of money which one can earn, but of social status, fostering further failed expectation. At some point migrants realize that “you can earn more money but you will never gain the social status that you could gain in Ukraine” (Maryana K., 2012, pers. comm., 2 February).

Besides visa regulations and personal networks, prospective migrants can weigh a destination country’s legal culture as a factor in their decision on whether and where to migrate. NGO “Caritas” compared Italy and Germany. Italy “is regarded as a country with minor legal standards [...] some kind of dark water where everybody can catch anything without being caught [...] Italy became somehow a part of Ukraine; for western Ukrainians some regions in Italy became a region of Ukraine; people are so closely related and they know so much about everybody [...]; they see some Italian village as Ukrainian village” (Rostyslav K., 2012 pers. comm., 10 February).

Problem solving in Italy might be approached in the same way as in Ukraine; migrants from Ukraine tend to believe. When there are “some problems you can bribe somebody, so everything is possible. [...] Italians are quite similar to Ukrainians when it comes to solving things” (Ibid.). By contrast, migrants perceive Germany as a “country of strict laws [...] and the last country in which they would like to stay”, NGO “Caritas” says. This perception is a legacy from Soviet times, Caritas representative believes – Germany as “a country of strict rule of law and enforcement” (Ibid.).

Employment in Russia – Moscow and St. Petersburg are considered to be the most attractive cities for employment – was touched upon as a target of people from the Eastern

Ukraine. In particular, one of SMS representatives said they go to Russia “where they also can apply their knowledge more effectively” (Natalia N., 2012, pers. comm., 27 January). The 90 days visa-free travel to Russia has enabled the widespread practice of seeking employment in Russia.

Perception of Russia by Ukrainians was one of the questions the state officials refused to elaborate upon, except for the representatives of the Ministry. This is clear evidence that this issue and Ukrainian-Russian relations more generally, have a certain sensitive dimension.

Representatives of the Ministry informed that people in Ukraine do not perceive the Russian Federation with respect to employment “as something separate”. Besides, living and working conditions are more or less the same in both countries. Culture, language and mentality form a basis of motivation to migrate. The informant at SMS noted only that some people might find it easier to get established professionally in Russia “due to language knowledge, common features of mentality and worldviews” (Natalia N., 2012, pers. comm., 27 January). State officials also referred to common historical background and family ties. It was underlined by the Ministry that “historically the Russian Federation is very close to us. We are all Slavic people. Many people have relatives in Russia. Old people do not distinguish between Russia and Ukraine at all” (Oleg P., 2012, pers. comm., 3 February).

Migration Discourse in Ukrainian Media. A Changed Viewpoint

Media report about Ukraine as about a migrants’ country of origin and a transit country, but they seldom go beyond these general statements. Mostly, media remain silent about why Ukraine might be regarded as EU’s buffer zone for migration. Much in the same vein, social impact of migration remains largely uncovered. In particular, EWB and La Strada dwelled on negative connotations of migration media coverage. As a priority issue, media highlight, for instance, “how unwell Ukrainians are treated sometimes abroad; e.g. how Ukrainians were rejected residence permit in Italy” (Maryana K. 2012, pers. comm., 2 February). EWB adds that “When there is a scandal [negative ones] then the TV and print media are full of it” (Ibid.).

A publication in one of the most reputed Ukrainian newspaper about Ukrainian labour migrants in Spain is a vivid illustration that confirms the tendency to pick up only the most outrageous issues. This is a story about labour migrants, who experienced abuses for the German police on the way back to Ukraine (Sylina, 2008). This publication provoked a massive reaction and numerous reprints of this article in other media.

NGOs attribute position of media towards migration aspects, which gain some kind of media’s attention, to media owners. Most of media are owned by, in words of EWB, “oligarchs, who are also in the ruling party” (Maryana K., 2012, pers. comm., 2 February). This explains, in view of this NGO, biased coverage of migration topics in media. Unlike the third sector representatives, state authorities made no mentioning of the role of ownership on the media coverage and its tonality.

Similarly, NGOs attribute media coverage and particularly the image of the EU and Russia in Ukrainian media to the political situation in Ukraine and argue that media image both of the EU and Russia is dependent upon the political party in power⁴. Self-image of Ukrainian people being Europeans dilutes the image of the EU in Ukrainian media, was a general conclusion. Ukrainian people “perceive themselves as Europeans” EWB

⁴ For example, reaction of Ukrainian media on discussions about visa free regime for citizens of Bulgaria and Romania was rather harsh. Similarly, media reacted negatively, while abolition of Ukrainian export duties as a part of WTO accession process was discussed (November – December, 2007). Media perceived this fact as the EU-orchestrated pressure on Ukraine. These are facts highlighted in a report “Monitoring of Ukrainian media on EU issues: September 2007 - February 2008”. Online available at: <http://eu.prostir.ua/library/10339.html>.

representative noted, expressing the doubt that “[...] Ukrainians think they belong to Russia” (Maryana K., 2012, pers. comm., 2 February).

Generally seen, state officials argue that the EU related political issues dominate media coverage in Ukraine. Liberalization of the EU visa regime for Ukraine is a major topic in Ukrainian media when it comes to reporting about migration issues⁵. NGO “Caritas”, in particular, noted that major interest of media is how migration affects the Ukrainian economy. This conclusion has been drawn, because “media always ask about numbers”, according to NGO “Caritas” “and people read this and also get influenced by this oversimplification of money” (Rostyslav. K., 2012, pers. comm., 10 February).

Both state officials and representatives of the third sector agree that media discourse with regard to migration became more realistic in recent years. As NGO “Caritas” formulated it “the perception is getting healthier” (Ibid). Unlike previously, the degree of strictness of migration policies of the EU counties (e.g. Italy or Denmark etc.) has been already a common knowledge. Because of the economic crisis the EU is exposed to, present day media coverage is more balanced, state officials emphasized. As one of SMS representatives remarked “quite many EU countries suffer from economic difficulties and this is being reported in media” (Natalia N., 2012, pers. comm., 27 January). Conversely, the Ministry representative stated that he has “never come across any negative information”. He stressed that “Europe is being presented nowadays as an example for us in terms of legislative system and so on” (Taras S., 2012, pers. comm., 3 February).

Nevertheless, problems the EU is confronted with are still not given enough space in Ukrainian media. Still, often “the EU is pictured to have a sound democracy level, no housing and social problems” (Natalia N., 2012, pers. comm., 27 January). In many aspects, however, the existent problems are the same as those Ukrainians suffer from. They are more topical in “young EU member states”, the interviewees argued. Those countries demonstrate successful performance because they are supported by the EU, SMS representative made a point. However, this is not touched upon in Ukrainian media in a way that is comprehensible for ordinary citizens. As a result, the latter interviewee argued, “Ukrainian people imagine the EU in a rather ideal way” (Ibid).

This disproportion between the real state of affairs in the EU and media coverage in Ukraine was observed before. One of media experts noticed “the mounting number of critical and sceptical publications about the EU” in 2007 (Yermolenko, 2008, p. 19). This tendency was explained as being less attributed to economic or political reasons, but be more connected to intensified contacts between Ukraine and the EU. They are “[...] contacts which do not justify somewhat utopic imaginations of the Ukrainian society about the content and speed of the European integration” (Ibid).

State authorities conclude jointly that migration risks are not covered sufficiently in media. Risks are attached in media to the issue of trafficking in human being, as the Ministry reported. SMS representative argues that people get informed sporadically about risks they might run into while being abroad. She commented that “[...] people are informed from time to time, not systematically, but in a situation-dependent way about what awaits them abroad in case of illegal travel or illegal employment abroad” (Natalia N., 2012, pers. comm., 27 January). Ukrainian media touch upon migration issues not on a regularly basis, but only after sensational or special events occur.

The issue of risks revealed another dimension and namely – return and re-integration of migrants. This is now a part of the media discourse, which makes potential migrants be aware of the true state of affairs and what living abroad means. For instance, La Strada

⁵ Frequent consideration finds also the topic of foreign passport issuance in Ukraine and why a private enterprise is in charge of this business, e.g. (Tymoshchuk, 2012).

informed that returnees from the EU “find themselves in a difficult ‘identity situation’” (Iryna M., 2012, pers. comm., 2 February). Their condition might be even better termed as “identity crisis.” This concerns migrants who have been out of Ukraine for a significantly long time (about ten years). Identity is, as defined by Castells, constructed “on the basis of a cultural attribute or a set of cultural attributes ...” (Castells, 1997, p. 6). With regard to migrants, even being geographically disconnected from their communities they consider them being part of it through collective memory, history etc. Migrants preserve a sense of identity through “struggle for recognition with every other conscious being” demarcating the own self as “the essential subject” from all others as “inessential object” (Tolan 2006, p. 321). The recognition is important. In this regard the tendency was observed to hide unsuccessful migration experience in order not “to be perceived as losers” in Ukraine (Iryna M., 2012, pers. comm., 2 February).

Once having returned, Ukrainian migrants have found the others (“inessential object”) – their former colleagues and friends advanced in their careers and, as a result, in social status. Remarkably, as NGOs’ interviewees explained this is a driving force for many returnees to return back to their employers abroad as a result of lost struggle for recognition with their communities in the home country.

Conclusion

Rather than to learn more about migration tendencies in Ukraine, this paper explored migration perceptions of state authorities and of the nongovernmental sector, – consistencies and disparities of their views. As clearly revealed, existent lacunas in statistic data gathering impede the ability of the state authorities not only to develop a sound migration policy but also to have a clear understanding of the scope of the issue and closely related concerns and problems.

NGOs are obviously more familiar with the situation, as they presented more facts and demonstrated a more profound view on many migration aspects (like migrant’s age stratification, age bound migration aspirations and profiles of destination countries etc.). It is of a note, NGOs maintain more pro-European profile (or maybe Russia is not just a part of their project activity). Despite the fact that state officials were reluctant to touch upon any serious aspect of migration to Russia, greater portion of information was received from them.

Rather surprisingly, the migration situation in Ukraine was not generally perceived by state officials as a very problematic issue for the state for the time being. This perception of the situation as not being critical, impacts the state migration policy (generally assessed by NGOs as negative) and the pace of the reforming process.

Speaking about migration-driven outcomes for the Ukrainian state, notably, brain drain aspect was not touched upon at all. Unlike this aspect, demographic decline was mentioned, however, in a very limited manner. On the contrary, positive impacts of labour migration on the Ukrainian economy (e.g. lower unemployment rate and remittances sent to Ukraine) were remarked. The second named positive moment is lower criminal rate as unemployed people seek employment abroad, instead of, as assumed by state authorities, being engaged in any kind of law breaking activity in Ukraine with a purpose to provide for their living.

NGOs appeared to be also better informed about factors which drive Ukrainian migrants to go abroad. In particular, next to language and mentality as factors influencing the final decision of potential migrants (noted also by state authorities), legal culture of destination countries was mentioned as an important factor.

Expectations were considered only by NGOs and namely very high expectations of Ukrainian migrants towards the EU. None of informants dwelled on this issue with regard to

Russia. Thus, the issue of expectations in Russian context remains to be a subject of a separate research. NGOs pointed that the EU provides financial stability but no advancement in social status. This is what migrants obviously did not count for before arrival to the Union.

Both state and non-state actors turned to share the same views about media reporting on migration issues as being not regular and not profound in Ukraine. Migration is relevant for media only in case of any sensational event or scandal. Migration risks are also articulated superficially and, partly, that is why Ukrainians keep having rather idealistic image about the EU. All informants point out changes of the EU image in Ukrainian media. They attribute those changes to the economic crisis in the Euro zone. However, state authorities believe that these changes in media image will not have a noticeable effect on migration aspirations soon.

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