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Available to work, but facing challenges: Latest survey results highlight barriers to employment of displaced Ukrainians in the EU



Based on the latest findings of a continuing Europe-wide online-survey, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) reports on the challenges forcibly displaced persons from Ukraine face in Europe, with regards to Education and Employment. While most respondents are highly educated and employed in their host country, employment outcomes varied considerably by language ability, education, and previous field of work. Language skills, insufficient access to childcare and qualification recognition are cited as the most prominent barriers to employment.

The EUAA has published a thematic fact sheet based on the Survey of Arriving Migrants from Ukraine (SAM-UKR). Replies from 4 265 eligible respondents, 98 % of whom were Ukrainian nationals, were received since February 2023. The fact sheet reflects the experiences of displaced persons from Ukraine and the challenges with regards to education and employment as EU+ countries continue to implement the Temporary Protection Directive or similar arrangements.

Most respondents were highly educated, while host country language training remains in demand

More than two-fifths of the respondents to the survey held a Master's degree or equivalent, one-fifth held a Bachelor's degree and 4 % a Doctorate (PhD). Around a third had lower levels of education, in contrast with other asylum-related migrants and non-EU citizens currently living in the EU, with a tertiary educational attainment of 26 %. Respondents with higher education levels were more likely to speak the host country's language.

The main languages spoken by respondents were Ukrainian (98 %), Russian (88 %) and English (50 %), followed at a distance by German (16 %) and Polish (15 %). The languages spoken weighed heavily in their choice of host country in the EU, with more than a third of respondents (37 %) being able to speak the local language and a quarter indicating language skills as one of the reasons to choose the host country.

The ability to communicate and speak the host country's language represented a significant challenge for more than two-thirds of the respondents who require it to meet their basic needs. Accordingly, language training courses were identified as a pressing need by three-fifths of the respondents. Education for children was a pressing need for 43 % of the respondents with children. In three of four families, however, children were already enrolled in education and attending school in the host country.

More than half of respondents were satisfied with the education being offered for their children, while a quarter remained unsatisfied with language training in the host country.

Access to labour market central to respondents' wellbeing; while barriers to entry remain

Some three in five respondents who were eligible to work were employed, as opposed to 90 % of them in Ukraine before the war. For 6-in-10 respondents currently unemployed, finding a job remained a pressing need, mainly to "provide for their family, give back to the host country" and to "cope with the difficult situation".

Not speaking the local language was indicated as a barrier to entry in the labour market for 53 % of the respondents, while lack of childcare and qualification recognition were mentioned by 20 % and 16 %, respectively. It is worth noting that 3-in-10 unemployed respondents were simultaneously facing multiple barriers, further compounding their access to employment opportunities.

Employment outcomes varied considerably by language ability, education, and previous field of work. Respondents with technical degrees or with a higher level of education were more likely to be employed, while older respondents who did not speak the local language, nor English, or had worked in low skilled or language-dependent sectors before their displacement, were at increased risk of unemployment.

Background

The EUAA, in partnership with the OECD, launched the Survey of Arriving Migrants from Ukraine on 11 April 2022. For the first time, the EUAA is collecting standardised data across EU+ countries directly from displaced persons who have sought shelter in Europe.

Both anonymous and voluntary, the survey aims to learn more about the journey of Ukrainians into the EU, their vulnerability, needs and future aspirations. It also seeks information on issues encountered with registration, as well as their current and family situations.

The survey is available in Ukrainian, Russian and English and is accessible here: Tell us your story

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