

# **FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF EUROPE AND MIGRATION POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SPREAD: REGIONAL AND DIASPORAL DISCOURSES**

**TSIVATYI Viacheslav G.,**

PhD (History), Professor of History, the Honored Worker of Ukraine

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1505-7483

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv,

Full member of the board of the Non-governmental organization

«Scientific Society of History of Diplomacy

and International Relations» (SSHDIR)

**MARTSYNIUK Maryna P.,**

PhD (History)

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4406-9056

National Institute for Strategic Studies

## **Abstract**

*The article investigates Ukrainian migration policy features and Ukrainian labor migration to Europe in the polycentric world order of the XXI century. In the article reviews the network of a social assistance programs implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to help Ukrainian citizens who are «stuck» abroad due to restrictions that have been imposed to localize the spread of COVID-19. The purpose of this article is to perform system analysis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine activity with Ukrainian citizens and Ukrainian migrants abroad, including a range of programs implemented by the Ministry and their impact on migration management during the spread of COVID-19.*

*The methodological basis of the study is a systematic approach, the principles of logic and multifactoriality, as well as a set of general and special research methods. To perform the tasks, were used the following methods: comparative, systemic, problem-chronological, descriptive-narrative, structural-functional analysis, critique of sources. These scientific methods allowed studying the work of ministerial programs as a part of a comprehensive process of managing migration processes. Reflect their efficiency in working with Ukrainian citizens and migrants abroad as a part of a comprehensive process of institutional management of migration processes; show the importance of a particular governmental institution in the system of state structures for working with migrants.*

*The study examines constructed network of a social assistance programs, which help Ukrainian citizens who are «stuck» abroad during the spread of the COVID-19 and the main forms of interaction of the Ministry with Ukrainian citizens abroad. Authors of the article make emphasis on the effectiveness of the implementation of network programs in terms of mondialization; give recommendations on their possible adaptation and using the experience of diaspora politics and diaspora.*

*The study revealed that in the context of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, the system of work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine with Ukrainian citizens abroad has shown its high efficiency, dynamic development and adaptability to the rapidly changing situation. It is worth noting that the system is dynamic and innovative and could be perceptively used working with Ukrainian migrants abroad and the diaspora.*

**Keywords:** *migration processes, migration policy, diaspora, foreign policy, diplomacy, institutionalization, mondialization, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, COVID-19.*

The issue of formation and strategic institutional development of the post-soviet space in the XXI century requires the study and generalization its institutional experience. In the most post-Soviet states, democratization preceded very complex and dramatic processes of rational bureaucratic modernization of the state and national consolidation. Unfortunately, today a significant number of Ukrainians work for the development of foreign economies and labor migration has become a common socio-political phenomenon in Ukraine and a very important issue for modern Ukraine.

That is why Ukrainian labor migration requires, firstly, a detailed analysis, which in the context of globalization is gaining momentum, and, secondly, improving managing migration processes and working with Ukrainian migrants to regulate the state's policies to reduce migration [1].

An important component of this process should be the diaspora policy of Europe and Ukraine in response to new challenges and threats to the mondialization world of the XXI century. Today, the world diaspora is a powerful institution for the realization of important foreign policy tasks of states in a polycentric world.

In the fields of foreign and security policy integration, becomes one of the most ambitious and, at the same time, contradictory dimensions of integration processes in the European Union, which has its own historical institutional traditions and strategic directions, in particular in the field of migration policy. At the same time, it has faced significant challenges due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world, which has forced European countries to take sometimes extremely unpopular but necessary steps in the field of migration.

Despite various challenges related to domestic and foreign policy changes, Ukraine managed to preserve its state traditions in the field of migration policy and its institutions. The main driving force of the evolution of Ukrainian migration policy in the zero years of the XXI century was a need to bring the legislation of Ukraine in line with the international obligations of the state. The implementation of this task

resulted in the adoption of a number of important legislative acts in the field of migration.

Throughout the period of independence, migration, in particular labor migration started to attract more and more attention from the authorities and society, and became a prominent element of political life. There was a real breakthrough in improving the migration legislation of Ukraine, intensifying international cooperation. At the same time, management functions in the field of migration remained fragmented, and a specially authorized executive body was not established. The priorities of the state in the management of migration processes were mainly and almost exclusively in the legal field and in fact did not include socio-economic aspects of population movements, which are decisive for this phenomenon.

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced all countries of the world and Ukraine, in particular, promptly and comprehensively review approaches to the implementation of their migration policies both at the legislative and institutional level, and in terms of its practical implementation. The broad context of the COVID-19 pandemic has created drivers for the development of tools to spread «positive virility» in the image of the Ukrainian state, in particular in its work with Ukrainian citizens and migrant workers abroad.

One of them was the advanced technologies of social networks, which been used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to carry out effective communication with Ukrainian citizens abroad. Wide public coverage was provided by the tools of the social network Facebook (program «Protection») [2], Twitter and Telegram messaging platforms (telegram channel «Coronavirus-Info» [3], other network resources (project «FRIEND») [4].

The multifunctionality of social networks and platforms for structuring the communication space allowed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to provide information to Ukrainians abroad about the current situation in connection with COVID-19 and the possibility to obtain an emergency assistance. The network

programs of social assistance to Ukrainian citizens abroad and their families introduced by the Ministry have shown their efficiency, adaptability and dynamism.

The regular refraction of one's present life through a prism of counterpoint – or «contrapuntal» – lives realizable elsewhere is an important feature of the social life of mondial processes such as international migration. It employs the concepts of «transnationalism» and «diaspora» as ways to think through different types of relationships people form with their contrapuntal lives – where the former entails the construction of a sense of simultaneity and accessibility and the latter entails the construction of a barrier between the life one can realize and the life one feels an obligation to possess.

Having in mind that the coronavirus pandemic is far from over and given the need to ensure the establishment of constant accessible and prompt feedback between the Ukrainian state and its citizens abroad, the network programs established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have to develop.

During the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, the system of work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine with Ukrainian citizens abroad showed that it was effective, dynamic and innovative and in the future had to be used for permanent work with Ukrainian migrants. In conditions of growing social tension, the problem of regulating migration processes is exacerbated.

After all, ineffective migration policy not only causes a number of socio-economic and cultural problems, but also leads to real threats to the national security of the state.

Due to weak border controls, illegal migration, inability to ensure the return of their own citizens due to the spread of the pandemic and proper conditions for preventive isolation, forced quarantine measures and mandatory testing for COVID-19, most countries had negative social consequences: social protests to the rapid spread of the pandemic among the population and, consequently, mortality.

Despite the quarantine measures, the outflow of Ukrainian labor migrants abroad leads to the leaching of the most valuable human potential outside the country, leading to demographic losses, intellectual losses and the economic crisis. All these problems are relevant today for Ukraine, and their solution exacerbates the need to increase the effectiveness of migration policy of our state.

The urgency and severity of migration issues led to a wide range of investigations in 2016-2021. In domestic historiography, the works of O. Malinovska, M. Martsyniuk, A. Nadtochiy, A. Zubyk, and I. Temirova are devoted to the study of migration policy.

A. Zubyk, Y. Makar, V. Makar, I. Patryliak, A. Popok, V. Serhiychuk, V. Troshchynsky, V. Tsivatyi – belong to the group of scientists who study migration processes and Ukrainian migrants in the context of studying of foreign Ukrainians and the Ukrainian diaspora.

O. Vlasyuk, I. Hnybidenko, N. Horodnya, V. Kopyyka, O. Kyslytsyna, A. Kudryachenko, E. Libanova, M. Martsyniuk, I. Matiash, O. Mashevsky, O. Parkhomchuk, S. Pyrozhkov, M. Romanyuk, V. Tsivatyi – focused mainly on general trends in migration processes in the European Union or related social development issues. Migration policy during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is a relevant and new topic for researchers. In addition, we believe that an important task of Ukraine's migration policy today is also to prevent mass emigration of Ukrainians abroad by influencing the factors that become its causes.

It is about the need to improve employment opportunities in the Ukrainian labor market, increase wages and ensure proper working conditions and living conditions of the population of our country. National and patriotic upbringing of young people is also important. These and other tasks of migration policy perform only in close cooperation with other areas of public policy and international partners [5].

In terms of innovative economic development, labor resources are one of the key factors which determining the competitive advantages of countries in the world markets. The exacerbation of the shortage of national scientific and technical personnel, which is observed in almost all developed countries at the beginning of the XXI century, and the intensification of their struggle for foreign labor resources have made the problem of labor migration extremely relevant.

Against the general background of international population movements, in general, the flows of intellectual migration, which characterized by special dynamism, have significantly intensified. Particularly impressive are the indicators of emigration from developing countries and post-Soviet countries [6].

High and rapidly growing demand of European economies for labor resources, which is not significant to meet local labor markets, necessitates the widespread involvement of foreign labor resources [7, p. 66-75].

The experience of developed countries shows that immigrants play a significant role in their scientific and technological progress. The most striking example of this is the United States, which has reached the forefront of global technological development, ahead of its European competitors in many areas. At the level of individual countries, a set of migration and scientific and technical policy measures implemented to optimize the management of labor migration flows [8, p. 154-163].

To attract foreign professionals and students and stimulate the return of those who left earlier, developed countries propose a wide range of migration and other programs to their compatriots, competing in their attractiveness [9, p. 26-31; 10, p. 142-147].

In general, migration policy of a growing number of countries characterized by a set of various benefits and opportunities that increase the attractiveness of training, work in the area, and stimulate the influx of foreign workers. That is why such programs, which were introduced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to

work with Ukrainian citizens abroad during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, should be supported. Means and methods of social work of Ukrainian consuls with citizens of Ukraine show their high efficiency and can be used in the future to work with Ukrainian migrants. In the case of using the system of programs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to work with migrants, it is considered promising:

- preservation of the program «Protection» with its subsequent re-profiling to work with Ukrainian migrants, as well as providing appropriate staffing and budget funding for the work of its social groups;

- preservation of the telegram-channel «Coronavirus-Info» and its further transformation into the channel of informing Ukrainian migrants «Migrant-Info», creation of a single information portal for Ukrainian migrants;

- transformation of the operational headquarters to coordinate the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, relevant authorities and international organizations in order to protect citizens abroad and provide up-to-date information on the spread of Covid-19 in the world into a Coordination Center for Migrants. It is also important to provide funding for the training of consular officers and employees of the central executive bodies involved in modern methods of social work with migrants, with the involvement of Ukrainian and foreign sociologists, psychologists, and migration scientists.

In a global context, we may give the following recommendations:

- continue further reformation of executive bodies in the field of migration and to ensure coordinated activities of various agencies and authorities in the field of migration policy, in particular to establish a central executive body on migration and diaspora;

- create a database of qualified Ukrainian specialists who are abroad (representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora, labor migrants, their children studying in free economic zones abroad, Ukrainian students who have gone to study abroad) and

want to provide advisory and other assistance to Ukraine, with a clear breakdown by host country, qualifications, degrees, academic titles, etc.

- develop programs for repatriation and reintegration of Ukrainian migrants, which will provide assistance to re-emigrants in finding a suitable job, providing access to vocational training / retraining, business courses for those who want to start their own business;

- intensify the potential of regional statistical services in terms of migration statistics, to establish a single methodological, organizational, terminological, financial, technical, informational approach to the creation of databases at the territorial level;

- strengthen the coordination of cooperation of state institutions with the Ukrainian diaspora in the context of institutional and intercultural effectiveness of the state's diaspora policy in a pandemic;

- introduce regular monitoring of migration processes in Ukraine and support research projects aimed at studying the peculiarities of migration of qualified specialists.

International cooperation is an integral part of migration policy. Although the interests of Ukraine as a country of origin and the interests of the countries of destination of Ukrainian migrants differ significantly, both sides are interested in organized, legal and safe migration, which opens up real opportunities for cooperation.

In response to the risks of population loss because of migration, Ukraine should seek agreements with other countries on the introduction of circular, temporary relocation programs, which is in their interests, as it exempts migrants from integration costs and reduces dissatisfaction with the arrival of foreigners.

Returns and assistance programs for the reintegration of re-emigrants into Ukrainian society could also be the subject of joint action.

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