

# POLICY BRIEF

## From temporariness to stability: a holistic approach to the employment of women covered by the special law in Poland<sup>1</sup>

### Executive summary

- Introduce fast-track recognition of diplomas and other qualifications
- Implement labour market activation programmes with long-term career path planning and mentoring
- Promote labour market activation through strengthening entrepreneurship and fostering new entrepreneurial intentions

This policy brief is based on the findings of the project [Accessing migration infrastructure and employment strategies in a time of crisis: Ukraine female war refugees and migrants in Poland and Italy](#) concerning the situation of migrant women in the labour market in Poland. The recommendations from this policy brief can be used in developing the law on the employment of foreigners, which plans to streamline

---

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: The work on this policy brief was supported by a project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 893032, and the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange under the Urgency Grants.



Issue 2024/17  
August 2024

### Authors

**Olena Fedyuk**, MSCA “RightsLab”, University of Padua; **Kseniya Homel**, Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw; **Ignacy Józwiak**, Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw; **Marta Kindler**, Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw; **Kamila Kowalska**, Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw, University of Gdańsk; **Ivanna Kyliushyk**, Kozminski University; **Iuliia Lashchuk**, EUI; **Kamil Matuszczyk**, Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw; **Maciej Tygielski**, Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw.

Consulted with **Benjamin Cope** of [Ukrainian House](#), Poland.

procedures relating to entrusting work to foreigners, reducing the backlog of cases being handled by the offices and eliminating the occurrence of abuses. This law is part of the [Recovery Plan for Poland](#).

## State-of-the-art: “trapped” in low-wage sectors

Due to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Poland, based on the special law on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of the country, activated a collective status for Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war. A practical role was played by giving Ukrainian citizens an identification number (PESEL UKR). This status has granted them access to Polish social security, health care, and the labour market.

### Contextual data from polish public statistics:

- 1, 5 million Ukrainian migrants lived in Poland before the escalation of the war.
- 952,950 Ukrainians had UKR PESEL in Poland in early 2024. The majority of them were women with a higher level of education.
- 65% employment rate of Ukrainians with PESEL UKR is the highest among Ukrainian TPD holders in OECD countries.
- 762 227 Ukrainians registered at the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) in early 2024.
- In 2023, 784,545 Ukrainians (both labour and forced migrants) were registered in the labour market, and in early 2024, the number rose to 1,078,041.

Given the need to support professional activation and rapid entry into the Polish labour market of Ukrainian citizens, local administrations of large Polish cities have taken several measures, including enabling remote work and supporting women’s economic activities. Labour offices in cities launched places where Ukrainians could register as unem-

ployed and receive support in finding job offers. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy has created a [green line](#) linking labour offices with Ukrainians holding a PESEL UKR status. Also, the local labour offices cooperated with intermediary agencies and career counselling. However, as we know from [research](#), cooperation between them rarely went smoothly. [Studies](#) reveal that Ukrainians’ access to the labour market is characterised by deskilling and entry into low-wage sectors, temporary, flexible contracts, and even irregular work. This reinforces particular intersections of vulnerabilities in the case of women fleeing from war and can generate severe long-term barriers to their integration.

The main reason for this has been a drastic change that occurred in the demographic profile of this group, as well as in the context of their arrival. While previous labour migrants moved alone and often preferred temporal and seasonal work arrangements combined with stays in their home country, the newly arrived people are women with children and other caring obligations. Additionally, recent studies on the situation of Ukrainians who experienced forced displacement show that the majority of them were active in the labour market in Ukraine before the full-scale invasion ([IOM](#)) or possessed a university or higher education degree ([UNHCR](#)). Our study observed a similar situation, as most research participants who moved to Poland in 2022 or later had either higher education or previous working experience in high-skilled sectors. On the one hand, temporary employment or informal work served as a coping strategy to enter the labour market, secure financial resources, and rebuild social networks. However, it is worth noting that many of them experienced occupational downgrading.

## Recommendations

**To facilitate the possibility for women with UKR PESEL status to be employed in the Polish labour market according to their qualifications and work experience, we recommend the following:**

1. **Introduce a fast-track recognition of diplomas and other qualifications.** Legal measures, programmes, and mechanisms can be adopted to create shortcuts to recognising ex-

expertise and diplomas in certain professions. An example of a good practice is [The European Commission's Initiative to compare the European Qualifications Framework with the Ukrainian National Qualification Framework](#) (European Commission, 2023). **Introduce clear and simple steps to identify proper professional qualifications and ensure access to employment in relevant industries and levels.** We recommend that relevant ministries cooperate with employers, based on financial and tax incentives, in identifying skill mismatches of migrant workers and redirect them to other sectors/jobs.

This recommendation can be implemented by the Ministry of Education.

**To facilitate the occupational mobility of PESEL UKR holders in the Polish labour market we recommend the following:**

**2. Introduce labour market activation programmes with long-term career path planning and mentoring.** Introduce labour market activation programmes, including professional training organised by the regional institutions and labour offices to ensure the occupational mobility of migrants trapped in low-wage sectors. Such programmes for women from Ukraine, for instance, could include a) mapping of previous similar support programmes, b) evaluation of such programmes, and c) examination of the needs of the target group. Additionally, it's important to focus on the evaluation and implementation of programmes addressing the training needs of forced migrant women, including the demand to learn the reception country's official language with a focus on profession-linked vocabulary, writing CVs, and taxation regulations.

This recommendation can be implemented by local and regional labour offices, specialised NGOs and universities or other higher academic institutions, local trade unions, and employer organisations.

**3. Involve migrants in integration programmes.** The municipal and local authorities could involve more Ukrainian female professionals in the adaptation processes of integration; e.g. psychologists, teachers, translators, health and

legal professionals, or social workers. Experts and professionals, - PESEL UKR holders, - can provide invaluable targeted assistance to the infrastructures that feel pressure because of the arrival of people fleeing the war. See also for similar recommendations [the report of the Polish School of Assistance](#).

This recommendation can be implemented by municipalities, local governments and migrant organisations.

**To facilitate the possibility of developing entrepreneurial activity among women with UKR PESEL in the Polish labour market, we recommend the following:**

**4. Promote labour market activation through strengthening entrepreneurship and fostering new entrepreneurial intentions.** This can be based on the cooperation between local labour offices and small and medium-sized business support organisations and could include informational support, gender-sensitive mentoring programs and individual consultations (such as taxes and marketing consultations) tailored to various aspects of business activities in Poland. These programs could provide comprehensive guidance on navigating the legal, financial, and cultural aspects of starting and managing a business in the country. Additionally, it's essential to facilitate access to relevant resources and networks to support entrepreneurial activities in a long-term perspective.

This recommendation can be implemented by The National Chamber of Commerce with its network of regional Chambers, bilateral Chambers and other business and industry organisations, associations and foundations.

In summary, despite the demand in the low-wage sectors, we recommend that Poland does not shut down the option of other forms of forced female migrants' professional labour inclusion. With a more nuanced approach, research into what such people have to offer, and eliminating stereotypes about "typical immigrant jobs", Poland might discover that among others, Ukrainians fleeing the war can contribute in many more ways to the national labour market.

## Migration Policy Centre

*The Migration Policy Centre (MPC) conducts advanced policy-oriented research on global migration, asylum and mobility. It serves governance needs at European and global levels, from developing, implementing and monitoring migration-related policies to assessing their impact on the wider economy and society.*

## Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

*The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS), created in 1992 and directed by Professor Erik Jones, aims to develop inter-disciplinary and comparative research on the major issues facing the process of European integration, European societies and Europe's place in 21<sup>st</sup> century global politics. The Centre is home to a large post-doctoral programme and hosts major research programmes, projects and data sets, in addition to a range of working groups and ad hoc initiatives. The research agenda is organised around a set of core themes and is continuously evolving, reflecting the changing agenda of European integration, the expanding membership of the European Union, developments in Europe's neighbourhood and the wider world.*

[www.eui/rsc](http://www.eui/rsc)



Co-funded by  
the European Union

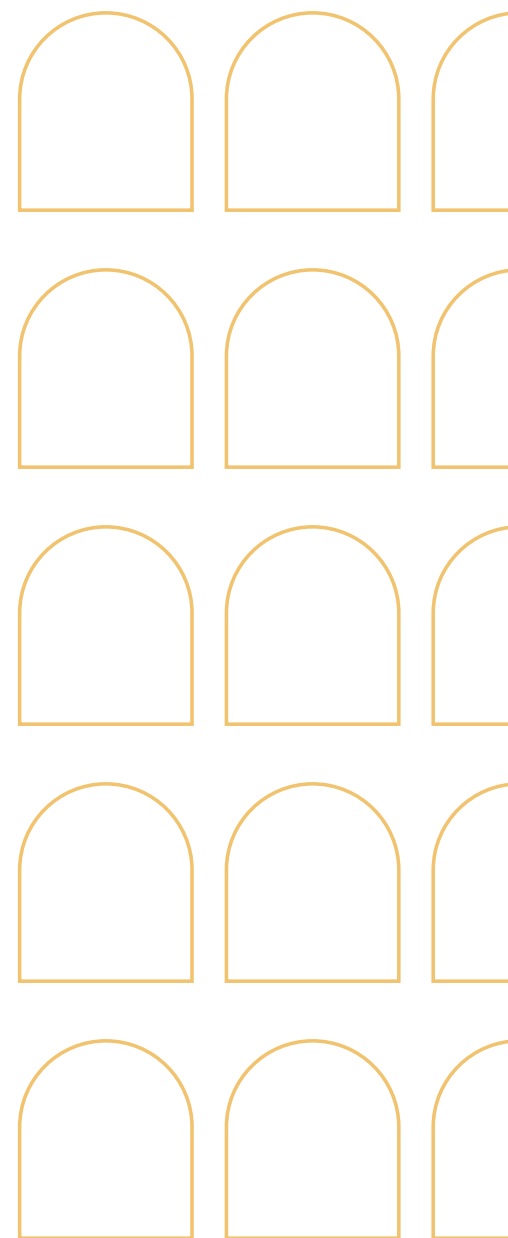
© European University Institute, 2024

Editorial matter and selection © Olena Fedyuk, Kseniya Homel, Ignacy Józwiak, Marta Kindler, Kamila Kowalska, Ivanna Kyliushyk, Iuliia Lashchuk, Kamil Matuszczyk, Maciej Tygielski, 2024

This work is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 \(CC-BY 4.0\) International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which governs the terms of access and reuse for this work. If cited or quoted, reference should be made to the full name of the author(s), editor(s), the title, the series and number, the year and the publisher.

Views expressed in this publication reflect the opinion of individual authors and not those of the European University Institute.

Published by  
European University Institute (EUI)  
Via dei Roccettini 9, I-50014  
San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)  
Italy



doi:10.2870/677237  
ISBN:978-92-9466-538-6  
ISSN:2467-4540  
QM-AX-24-017-EN-N