

Analysis of prospects and problems in the development of human resources for the employment of Ukrainian refugees

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Abstract: An influx of workers who have accumulated knowledge in labor markets other than the current one can have particularly large effects on the development of the host country's human resources. Other things being equal, a region with higher fluctuations in the number of highly skilled workers should be in a better position than a region with low mobility. Refugee laws are in constant evolution, reflecting the changing political, economic, and legal environments. This paper examines the situation that has developed in the Czech Republic after the arrival of a large number of refugees from Ukraine, in terms of their opportunities and prospects, as well as their ability to enter the labor market in accordance with their education and previous professional activities. The purpose of this study is to analyse the potential and obstacles to the labor integration of Ukrainian refugees, given the situation of uncertainty and the measures taken by the Czech government and state structures to receive refugees. The article considers the objective and subjective prerequisites for the labor integration of refugees, taking into account their socio-demographic characteristics and subjective intentions for the future.

Keywords: Human capital, Human resource management, Migrant integration, Migration, Refugees.

1. Introduction

There is a broad consensus among economists that the quality and quantity of the labour force in a country play a key role in its economic development. Therefore, an increase in the share of highly skilled workers in the total labour force tends to stimulate economic performance in that location, while a decrease discourages it. Until recently, there was a naïve belief that “nothing can happen in today's Europe”. But the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the aggressive war it started changed the usual order of life in modern European society, formed over decades, and became the cause of the largest number of refugees since the Second World War. As of 15 July 2024, according to the European Commissioner for Refugees, 6,021,400 refugees from Ukraine were registered in Europe, and most of whom had received temporary protection visas or were registered in similar national protection schemes in European countries [1]. It should be noted that this was an unprecedented example of reception refugees. Providing a special status for so many people, opening up access to the labour market for them at the same time as obtaining a temporary protection visa, and providing an opportunity to receive education and medical care are fundamentally different from previously adopted schemes, when citizens of other countries, for example, Syria, Afghanistan, or Iran had to wait for years for asylum applications and only then gain access to the labour market. This is a big challenge for all of Europe as a whole and for each individual country in particular, due to the inevitable emergence of global socio-economic risks, as well as the inevitable financial and institutional difficulties that need to be addressed. One of the most pressing issues is the work aimed at the employment and integration of refugees. In many European countries, there are approximately the same rules — when in the first few months a refugee is provided with everything, and after a few months, they already need to look for work and find their place in the

labour market. At the same time, the huge problem is that today no one knows how long the war will last, whether there will be new flows of refugees, how many of them will want to return to Ukraine in the near future or after the end of the war, how many will remain and will be integrated into the host country or whether they will leave further, and where their families, which have now been torn apart, will be reunited. To date, the Czech Republic has issued temporary protection visas to more than 600 thousand Ukrainian refugees, which is the largest number in terms of the share of the population [1].

More than 800,000 Ukrainian refugees would choose to stay in the Czech Republic if it were solely up to them, according to a study based on data on migratory preferences from the Gallup World Poll (GWP). The situation is rapidly changing, and uncertainty makes forecasting difficult, but given that even before the start of the war, 26% of the working-age population, or almost one in four Ukrainians, wanted to move permanently to another country, it is likely they will move now. So, 12 million refugees are a reasonable estimate [2].

2. Literature Review

The literature review is limited to examples and scientific studies on refugees from Europe (both inside and outside) with an emphasis on the scientific results obtained, which are the subject of the presented study.

In Central Europe, forced migrations constitute a significant, and in some countries, the main part of all migratory movements throughout the history of mankind. Deportations and evacuations, expulsions and forced repatriation, forced displacements and stampedes are an integral part of European history. The people most affected by forced migration lived on the territories of Poland, the Baltic countries, Germany, the Balkans, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, the former republics of the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. At the same time, many movements have never been recorded, important primary sources have been lost or are still inaccessible, important data are often only estimates, rough approximations, or guesses. We can definitely say that the First World War generated millions of refugees in Europe. The movements caused by post-war transformations and revolutions contributed to new waves of refugees from totalitarian regimes. Forced resettlement peaked during the years of World War II and its aftermath, when uprooted refugees numbered in the tens of millions. Since the late 1940s, the refugee population has remained relatively low, except during the dramatic years of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising, the Prague Spring, and the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 [3].

The issues of forced migration and the analysis of various problems that arise during the integration of refugees, have been a subject of discussion since the middle of the 19th century. Thus, since 1849, the London quarterly journal *Notes and Queries*, since 1851, regularly published notes on refugees and their problems, and in 1914, in the article "The education in London of refugees from foreign universities" in *Nature* magazine, there was a story published which told of what is being done at Oxford and Cambridge Universities to educate and integrate refugee students. Namely, about "...[the]... generous hospitality on a large scale to both staff and students,"; and also, about: "... providing them with every opportunity for peaceful learning,"; and: "... the right to enrol in continuing education courses and receive degrees on exceptionally favourable terms,"; as well as: "...permission for partial or total exemption from the payment of fees,". The said article continued to talk about: "...special concessions regarding both entrance and intermediate examinations and the opportunity to prove their knowledge in French, since none of these refugee students knew English,"; and what is especially interesting: "... creating special courses for learning English." It was also specifically noted that the study programmes at foreign universities were very different from those at English universities, and that it was necessary to carry out a huge amount of additional work and make significant efforts to determine the level of knowledge of each subject that a given student had achieved. The time spent per refugee student had to correspond to the time spent on ten English students. In addition to academic work, the provision of common rooms for the accommodation of those students who found themselves without funds, as well as providing them with other necessary material support. It is noteworthy that the leadership of both

universities did not at all hide the fact that such efforts and costs are not only of humanitarian and political significance - "to fill the depleted ranks of doctors and engineers in the respective allied countries," but will also contribute to the spread of knowledge about English university education on the continent, and London universities, already being imperial centres of university education, will further strengthen their position as international ones [4].

After the end of the Second World War, between 200,000 and 300,000 refugees were admitted to Britain under various schemes, and their absorption into the British economy was quite satisfactory. On the one hand, their determination to become completely independent participants in the economy was supported, and this contributed to the establishment of almost full employment. But at the same time, the refugees could not feel like fully fledged members of society, even after 10 years of residence, as they were officially discriminated against in terms of promotion, opportunities for professional development, and were priority redundancies in the event of layoffs. All this contributed to the desire of refugees to emigrate further to the United States, where there was greater hope of gaining complete equality and freedom. The situation was aggravated by an acute shortage of housing, so until 1954 it was not possible to close the Polish family hostels, which were only equipped to be temporary accommodation. In addition, one can note the insufficient efforts of the British government to inform the indigenous population of its refugee policy, which, combined with their poor integration due to living in enclaves, made mutual understanding and recognition almost impossible. And despite the fact that the situation was changing very slowly; albeit for the better; in the mid-60s the opinion prevailed that only the children of today's emigrants who grew up in England could become full members of British society, prompting some of the refugees to leave England, and become part of the New World [5].

Australia has extensive experience in receiving post-war refugees from Europe, having received about 4 million migrants from more than 100 countries between 1947 and 1987 [6]. Australia, by September 1950, had legally accepted 155,500 Europeans under a government contract for a period of two years. And despite the fact that they had adjusted well to the country's economy, learning English was much slower than expected, reflecting the failure of social adjustment. Native-born Australians did not accept migrants, and so the necessary personal contacts with Australians were not established. It was noted that the neuroses and mental problems of refugees, as a result of their past suffering, do not disappear by themselves over time. And the state policy in the field of migration, while positive from an economic point of view, was completely insufficient from a social point of view. It transpired that social assimilation requires much more significant costs and support methods, as well as the training of a sufficient number of personnel in the rudiments of psychological and social work skills [7].

In 1973, Australia conducted a major study of Eastern European refugees who arrived in Australia before 1955 and were patients in any psychiatric medical institution (including those who had a one-off consultation) between 1961 and 1968. All of them were carefully interviewed to evaluate their military experience, socio-cultural background, family background, education, and work experience. Simultaneously, control samples of refugees who had never been patients of these institutions were interviewed. As a result of the study, a clear correlation emerged between the strength of the psychotraumatic experience during the Second World War and the incidence of paranoid schizophrenia (except for the group of Jewish survivors, which is probably due to the fact that the most mentally resistant survived in concentration camps). In addition, a group of refugees was identified whose main cause of their mental illness was stress associated with migration and the loss of social status, rather than wartime experiences. This is the group in which the highest rates of schizophrenia, depression, and alcoholism were noted among professionals and semi-professionals who were unable to use their professional qualifications in their new homeland [8, 9].

It is estimated that more than 200,000 people fled Hungary after the 1956 Hungarian uprising. They only had two weeks to take advantage of the opportunity to escape to the free world. Most people made their decision overnight and left the next day. Most of the refugees sought asylum in Austria, others in Yugoslavia. The Austrian government asked for international help since it was beyond the power of one country to cope with an influx of such magnitude and intensity, and it was decided to help

the Hungarians start a new life in free countries as soon as possible. Within two months, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM 1956–1963) transported 89,000 refugees, and in November 1957, that is, a year after the start of the emergency, almost 163,000 people from among those who fled initially to Austria [10]. About 40,000 Hungarians went to the United States, 38,000 to Canada, 20,000 to England, 15,000 to Australia and Germany, and 12,000 each to France and Switzerland [11].

From November 1956, about 35,000 to 40,000 Hungarians who became refugees from the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 were admitted to Canada as permanent residents. T. Cnossen, in his 1964 article, states that most of them found work and more or less integrated into Canadian society. But many also proved unable to adapt and integrate and asked to be returned to their homeland as soon as possible after the amnesty in 1963. The same article describes that even after eight years, the process of integration of the Hungarians who remained in Canada is far from complete. The experience of Canada and other host countries has shown that refugees admitted under special circumstances beyond their control are much less prepared to integrate and are much more in need of assistance. Under normal circumstances, an independent decision to emigrate is made after much deliberation, careful planning, and weighing all the pros and cons and one's own possibilities - everything that refugees from wars and revolutions are deprived of [12].

In 1996, an interesting study was published on the change in perception when Italy received more than 40,000 Albanians who fled to the country after the dramatic events of 1991. The study was based on Italian media discourses and anthropological field studies carried out in southern Italy, in the area where most of the arrivals settled. A striking rhetorical shift was revealed in Italian discourses from the initial enthusiastic portrayal of Albanian migrants as "Adriatic brothers" and "noble savages" who embodied the ideal of Western democracy against communism, to "simply savages" and "non-Europeans." "This shift coincided with a change in the definition of Albanians from "political refugees" to "economic migrants from developing countries whose presence has become a source of tension in Italy" [13]. Another 2008 study, based on 97 interviews with Albanians, confirms the development and perpetuation of an initially emerging negative trend in the perception of Albanian refugees by native Italians, who began to be perceived negatively, and often stereotyped as "criminals", "prostitutes" and "uncivilized people" [14].

After the Prague Spring and the subsequent Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, 12,000 refugees were officially invited to Canada under the guise of an act of humanitarianism. Later, analyzing the actions of the government, archival data and memories of the participants in the decision to create a special program to help Czech refugees, it was proved that the Canadian government was guided rather by selfish interests. "Czech refugees were portrayed as victims of Soviet violence, when in fact Canadian officials were not so much concerned about the behavior of the Soviet Union as how they could provide themselves with skilled migrants. The success of the movement was not measured by how many lives were saved or how many families were reunited, but rather by employment and income levels. The Canadian government hoped that the Czechs and Slovaks would stay in Canada for a long time and make an important contribution to the economic and social life of the country, as they had a high level of professional qualifications and education. It must be admitted that this is one of the most successful examples of the reception and integration of refugees, since, firstly, only 600 people out of 12,000 subsequently expressed a desire to return, and secondly, a year later, the unemployment rate among refugees was only slightly higher than the unemployment rate local population. Most of the refugees got jobs according to their education and skill level. As history, has shown, this pragmatic approach, despite its slyness, undoubtedly made a positive contribution to the development of Canada's labor resources, and its officials were probably quite satisfied with the economic effect achieved and the return on their investments [15].

In addition to a direct contribution to the development of labor resources and human capital in the regional labor market, the infusion of highly skilled migrants has several secondary effects. This is the dissemination of new knowledge, and the effect associated with the development of multiculturalism and

diversity, the creation of diversification teams. A recent large-scale study by two German scientists finds a correlation between the influx of migrants and the entry of highly skilled workers into the labor market with a significant increase in wages in the corresponding region. In turn, the outflow and departure from the labor market of highly qualified workers has the opposite effect. However, the effect of the influx of highly skilled labor increases gradually over time. In addition, the same study confirms the hypothesis that the increase in diversity due to the import of knowledge of highly skilled workers from other regions enhances the externalities of human capital [16].

3. Methodology

The work presented here is an analysis of data obtained during the survey and in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in the Czech Republic among Ukrainian refugees who received a protection visa. The coverage was 228 respondents through questionnaires and 14 in-depth interviews conducted from September 2022 to February 2023, with elements of narrative analysis. In addition, the method of participant observation was used, with special attention paid to rumours, everyday discourse and narratives, which together created an objective picture of the attitude of the refugees and the change in the mood of the native Czechs towards the current situation.

The stages include compiling a questionnaire, which the respondents had to answer in the prescribed format, interpreting the answers received and preparing questions for an in-depth interview, where the non-obvious problems of employment of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech labour market were worked out in more detail. The questionnaire includes ordinal-polytomous and dichotomous closed questions with open-ended options in some of them. The questions were divided into six parts in accordance with the logic of the problem under study: intentions and opportunities to return to Ukraine (1); action taken for integration in the Czech Republic (2); work experience while on a temporary protection visa and previous work experience in EU countries before the start of the war (3); work and education in Ukraine before the start of the war (4); personal data of the respondent and children in their care (5); where is help and support required in the field of employment(6).

The majority of respondents have higher education (69.6%), in second place in terms of number are respondents with secondary vocational education (17.2%). Most of the respondents (89.8%) received refugee status and free access to the labour market after May 2022. The majority of respondents are women (99.1%), aged 30 to 50 years (66.67%); who have one or two minor children (55.2%), and who worked and have an education in the field of accounting, economics, finance, education or hold an engineering and technical qualification (57.4%). 10.9% of respondents worked in the sphere of services, trade and public catering in Ukraine, while 8.9% of respondents have medical qualifications [doctor or pharmacist] and diplomas in nursing.

The statements in this research are based on the use of descriptive statistical models (frequency, distribution, average) and detailed stochastic cross-tab and correlation analysis, supported by VORTEX software.

The interview methodology involved systematically asking the respondents to answer the following questions posed by the interviewer, which served as a narrative prompt: 1) "Please tell us where, and in what capacity, you worked in Ukraine, and about your work and job search experience in the Czech Republic during the war"; 2) "Please describe your emotional state during the job search process"; 3) "Do you plan to remain in the Czech Republic after the war?".

4. Results

4.1. Survey Results

The main objectives of the survey were identified as follows: Analysis of the qualitative characteristics of the refugees who participated in the survey as a potential labour resource for the Czech labour market.

Examination of whether these refugees intend to return to Ukraine after the end of the war (or earlier) or stay in the Czech Republic (or another country). Study of the main motives influencing this intention.

Table 1.
Distribution of education level by age, 2022-23, %.

Education of respondents	Age of respondents. %						Total
	Up to 20 years	21-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	61-65 years	
Elementary education	16.67	0.00	0.00	1.39	0.00	0.00	0.91
Secondary education	33.33	11.11	4.05	0.00	5.56	0.00	4.57
Secondary vocational education	16.67	25.93	14.86	9.72	33.33	0.00	17.35
Incomplete higher education	33.33	14.81	10.81	1.39	2.78	0.00	7.31
Higher education	0.00	48.15	70.27	87.50	58.33	100.00	69.86
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Note: * Missing: 2 out of 221 (0.90%)

** Cramer's V coefficient [0.1]: 0.280, Probability of error (Significance): 0.000.

Analysing the data obtained during the survey, it was revealed that in all age categories; except for young people under 20 years old; the vast majority of respondents have higher education, or incomplete higher or secondary specialized education. This is an indicator of the high quality of the qualifications of those refugees who participated in the survey (Tab. 1).

When analysing the distribution of respondents by profession and education, it was found that the greatest number of them are employees of the financial and economic sphere with higher education - 32.88%; teachers and teacher assistants with higher and secondary special education - 20.55% and 14, 29%, respectively; mid-level specialists in the field of services, trade, restaurant service and public catering - 34.29%; engineers and technical specialists - with incomplete higher education - 18.75%; doctors, nurses and pharmacists with secondary specialized and incomplete higher education - 14.29% and 25% respectively; managers with higher education - 10.96%. It should be especially noted that almost every fourth person has two different types of education in different fields of activity (Tab.2).

Table 2.
Distribution of respondents by level of education and profession, 2022-23, %

Professions	Education. %			
	Secondary vocational education	Incomplete higher education	Higher education	Total
Accountant. economist. financial specialist	14.29	12.50	32.88	27.23
Education	14.29	6.25	20.55	17.82
Services. trade. restaurants. catering. etc.	34.29	25.00	3.42	10.89
Engineer. technical specialist	11.43	18.75	10.96	12.38
Doctor. nurse. pharmacist	14.29	25.00	6.16	8.91
Manager	2.86	6.25	10.96	8.91
Creative professions	11.43	6.25	2.74	4.46
Marketer. sociologist	0.00	0.00	6.16	4.46

Professions	Education. %			
	Secondary vocational education	Incomplete higher education	Higher education	Total
Travel agent. tourism manager	0.00	0.00	4.11	2.97
IT specialist. programmer	2.86	0.00	5.48	4.46
Lawyer	0.00	0.00	4.11	2.97
Beautician	2.86	6.25	2.05	2.48
Designer	0.00	0.00	2.74	1.98
Philologist. linguist. translator	0.00	6.25	3.42	2.97
Librarianship and archives	0.00	0.00	1.37	0.99
Other	8.57	0.00	8.90	8.91
Total	117.14	112.50	126.03	122.77

Note: * Missing: 19 out of 221 (8.60%)

** Since each respondent could give several answers at the same time, the sum of % in Total may be more than 100%.

*** Cramer's V coefficient [0.1]: 0.336, Probability of error (Significance): 0.000.

Comparing the data obtained with forecasts of changes in the labour market until 2026 in the Czech Republic, according to the project "Labour Market Forecast" from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic (CZ.03.1.54/0.0/0.0/15_122/0006097), these specialists will be in demand on the Czech labour market and will be able to find work directly in their respective areas of specialization, or in related areas of employment. And despite the fact that, for example, the demand for professional workers in the economic and related fields is expected to decrease significantly (-6% by 2026). At the same time, the need for business administration managers, as well as for administrative and support specialists will increase (+3% by 2026) and in finance and insurance professionals (+2% by 2026). The professions in demand will be primary school teachers as well as teachers in the preschool education area (+2% by 2026); general specialists in the field of education and training (+4% by 2026); teachers of secondary schools and primary schools of the second level (+5% by 2026); and especially childcare workers and teacher assistants (+6% by 2026). Healthcare professionals at all levels will continue to be in high demand, with significant growth projected in the need for general nurses (+5% by 2026). New engineers and technicians will be required in significant numbers in almost all areas of production and industry. Managers, lawyers, sociologists, sales specialists will also be in demand and will be able to find a job [17].

Table 3.
Distribution of respondents by age and number of children, 2022-23, %.

Number of children	Age of respondents. %						Total
	Up to 20 years	21-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	61-65 years	
No children	100.00	70.37	25.68	16.67	75.00	100.00	39.73
1 children	0.00	22.22	39.19	33.33	11.11	0.00	28.77
2 children	0.00	7.41	28.38	43.06	8.33	0.00	26.03
3 children	0.00	0.00	6.76	4.17	2.78	0.00	4.11
4 children	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.78	2.78	0.00	1.37
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Note: * Missing: 2 out of 221 (0.90%)

** Cramer's V coefficient [0.1]: 0.293, probability of error (Significance): 0.000.

We can say that the group of refugees surveyed is promising not only in terms of their qualifications, education, and profession for the Czech labour market but also and most importantly, the presence of children in almost 80% of respondents, who can become the very “second generation of immigrants” fully integrated into Czech society and the country's economy (Tab. 3).

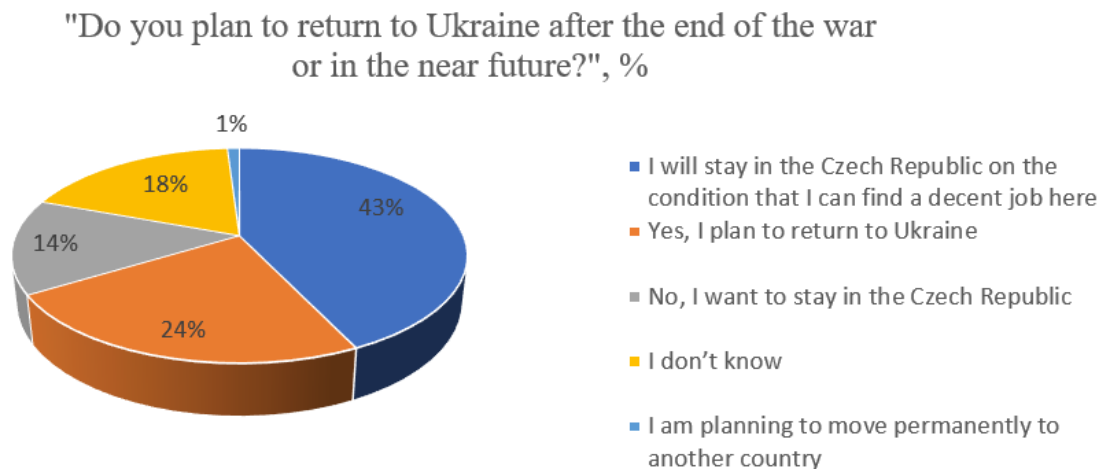


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by answer to the question “Do you plan to return to Ukraine after the end of the war or in the near future?”, 2022-23, %.

Almost a quarter of respondents intend to stay in the Czech Republic; in addition, 43% of respondents expressed their desire to stay, provided that they can find a decent job. Thus, almost 70% of respondents, under favourable circumstances, could stay and integrate into the Czech labour market, contributing to the development of the labour capital of the region of residence. When answering the second question, which is also an indirect characteristic of the intentions to stay in the Czech Republic, formulated somewhat differently — “What goals are closest to you when looking for a job in the Czech Republic?”— almost 55% of respondents with higher education plan to learn the Czech language and continue working in their speciality; 32% of respondents who also have higher education strive to learn the language and are ready for retraining for a new profession. Another 20% are unable to plan their future now and are rather inclined to return to Ukraine, but use the opportunities to learn the Czech language in order to have a chance to find a long-term job with a good knowledge of the Czech language (Figure 1, Table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of respondents who answered the question “Which goals are closest to you when looking for a job in the Czech Republic?” by level of education, 2022-23, %.

Which goals are closest to you when looking for a job in the Czech Republic?	Education of respondents. %			
	Secondary vocational education	Incomplete higher education	Higher education	Total
Learn a language and get a new profession	34.21	31.25	32.03	32.27
Find a part-time job before returning to Ukraine	7.89	6.25	11.11	10.45
Learn the language and continue working in your specialty/professional activity in the Czech Republic	26.32	43.75	54.90	46.82

Which goals are closest to you when looking for a job in the Czech Republic?	Education of respondents. %			
	Secondary vocational education	Incomplete higher education	Higher education	Total
Learn the language. find a part-time job. and then we'll see	23.68	18.75	19.61	19.55
Find any job before returning to Ukraine	21.05	18.75	9.80	14.09
Other	0.00	0.00	4.58	3.18
Total	113.16	118.75	132.03	126.36

Note: * Missing: 1 in 221 (0.45%)

** Since each respondent could give several answers at the same time, the sum of % in total may be more than 100%.

*** Cramer's V coefficient [0.1]: 0.167, Probability of error (significance): 0.057.

Almost 50% of the respondents are enrolled in a Czech language course, 14.16% have recently completed one of the Czech language courses, and 12.79% are actively looking for a language course. Thus, we can say that these women with children, despite the fact that the vast majority of them are placed in very difficult living conditions, have experienced deep psychological trauma, and are in constant stress, still find strength and opportunities in themselves to actively act and even learn (Tab. 5).

Table 5.

Distribution of respondents by age when answering the question "Do you take Czech courses?", 2022-23, %.

Distribution of respondents by age when answering the question "Do you take Czech courses?"	Age of respondents. %						Total
	Up to 20 years	21-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	61-65 years	
Yes. I study Czech	33.33	37.04	48.65	54.17	52.78	50.00	49.32
I have recently completed a beginner/Advance course in Czech	0.00	14.81	13.51	18.06	11.11	0.00	14.16
I am currently actively looking for/choosing Czech courses	0.00	14.81	14.86	13.89	5.56	25.00	12.79
No. I don't. but I plan to start	0.00	3.70	5.41	2.78	8.33	0.00	4.57
I don't study because I don't plan / Don't have the opportunity at the moment to start seriously studying the Czech language	0.00	0.00	1.35	1.39	0.00	0.00	0.91
No	66.67	44.44	29.73	18.06	30.56	25.00	28.77
Total	100.00	114.81	113.51	108.33	108.33	100.00	110.50

Note: * Missing: 2 out of 221 (0.90%)

** Since each respondent could give several answers at the same time, the sum of % in TOTAL may be more than 100%.

*** Cramer's V coefficient [0.1]: 0.126, Probability of error (Significance): 0.793.

Very sad results were revealed when answering the question "Do you work in the Czech Republic at the moment and how?" It is not so terrible that only 7.14% of respondents have a permanent job corresponding to their education or qualifications, which is undoubtedly due to knowledge of the Czech language at the proper level, but the fact that up to 25% of respondents are in the grey zone of the labour market and have a job that does not guarantee them any rights, and from which the Czech

Republic does not receive any taxes. In addition, almost 50% of respondents do not have any job but would like to work and are looking for one, and 11.5% of respondents with higher education had a negative experience of working in the Czech Republic during the war (Tab. 6).

Table 6.

Distribution of respondents who answered the question: "Do you work in the Czech Republic at the moment and how?", 2022-23, %.

Do you work in the Czech Republic at the moment and how?	Education of respondents. %			
	Secondary vocational education	Incomplete higher education	Higher education	Total
I have a formal. full-time job that suits my level of education and qualifications	6.67	0.00	7.69	7.14
I have a formal full-time job that does not match my level of education and qualifications	6.67	0.00	8.97	8.16
I work directly for a Czech employer or in an international company	0.00	0.00	15.38	12.24
I have an official part-time job. or one-time contracts for the performance of work	20.00	25.00	12.82	15.31
I have informal job	20.00	25.00	10.26	13.27
I have a telecommuting job in Ukraine	6.67	0.00	5.13	5.10
I had a negative experience of working in the Czech Republic during the war (I was deceived. I was not paid the promised salary. I had to work much more than the established time. the work was physically too hard. there were very bad working conditions. etc.)	0.00	0.00	11.54	9.18
I don't have any job at the moment and I'm looking for one	40.00	50.00	48.72	46.94
I don't have a job and I'm not looking for one	0.00	0.00	7.69	6.12
Other	6.67	25.00	0.00	2.04
Total	106.67	125.00	128.21	125.51

Note: * Missing: 123 out of 221 (55.66%).

** Since each respondent could give several answers at the same time, the sum of % in TOTAL may be more than 100%.

*** Cramer's V coefficient [0..1]: 0.290, Probability of error (Significance): 0.268.

When analysing the answers to the question "What non-material assistance is most relevant for you at the moment?" and comparing them with the age of the respondents, we can conclude that the vast majority of respondents need help finding a job. It is significant that from a quarter to one-third of all respondents aged 30 to 60 would like to receive training in entrepreneurship and opportunities for starting their own business (Table 7).

Table 7.

Distribution of respondents who answered the question “What non-material assistance is most relevant for you at the moment?” by age, 2022-23, %.

What non-material assistance is most relevant for you at the moment?	Age of respondents. %					Total
	Up to 30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	61-65 years	
Help in finding a job	83.33	59.38	58.14	81.25	0.00	63.27
Czech language courses	83.33	68.75	53.49	37.50	100.00	58.16
Activities for children	33.33	37.50	46.51	6.25	0.00	35.71
Assistance in finding housing	16.67	25.00	30.23	31.25	100.00	28.57
Seminars on the basics of Czech labor legislation and types of employment contracts	33.33	28.13	25.58	25.00	0.00	26.53
Czech tax law seminars	0.00	34.38	34.88	25.00	0.00	30.61
Assistance in interaction with the state authorities of the Czech Republic	33.33	37.50	48.84	50.00	0.00	43.88
Seminars on entrepreneurship and starting your own business	0.00	28.13	25.58	31.25	0.00	25.51
Assistance in interaction with medical institutions	33.33	28.13	44.19	43.75	0.00	37.76
Other	0.00	3.13	2.33	6.25	0.00	3.06
Total	316.67	350.00	369.77	337.50	200.00	353.06

Note: * Since each respondent could give several answers at the same time, the sum of % in TOTAL may be more than 100%.

** Cramer's V coefficient [0..1]: 0.134.

Thus, as a result of the analysis of the survey, it can be argued that the group of respondents included in the sample has a high level of human capital. They are active, ready to learn the Czech language, and undergo possible retraining. Most of them are ready to stay in the Czech Republic after the end of the war; about a quarter of the interviewed refugees are interested in the possibility of starting their own business. Half of the respondents do not have a job and are looking for one, but currently have problems finding a job, and also need various types of counselling about the labour sphere. The second section of the results of this article is devoted to the reasons why refugees could not find jobs and problems related to employment, as well as intentions to stay in the Czech Republic or return to Ukraine.

4.2. In-Depth Interview Results

The in-depth interviews involved 14 participants, all of whom were women aged between 30 and 50, with higher education, and one or two children (the most common group among the respondents of the aforementioned survey). At the time of the interviews, each respondent had been in the Czech Republic for over nine months and had already gained sufficient experience in job searching. The purpose of the interviews was to identify the employment challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees and their plans for integration in the Czech Republic when the war ends.

First, it should be noted that nearly all the refugees spoke of the positive attitude of the Czech state towards refugees and their great gratitude to the Czech Republic for how well they were received. However, this was always followed by a description of some negative experience with work, or attempts to find employment. Almost all respondents repeated phrases such as “we are not important to anyone here”, “I can only count on getting a job as a dishwasher or cleaner here”, “I am a second-class person

here”, and similar sentiments. More than 90% of respondents stated that they understood Czech well enough but could not speak it fluently and had encountered some form of unfair accusations/assumptions about their lack of language skills; the latter were expressed rudely.

For example, there are typical quotes from the testimony of Svetlana (aged 32, married, university-educated, one child - a younger schoolchild; who worked as an assistant to a chief accountant in Ukraine). Svetlana currently works in the Czech Republic as a helper and cleaner in a café-bakery but does not have any formal employment contract: “...It hurts me a lot that he (the bakery owner) keeps shouting at me for not understanding Czech, even though I understand almost everything now. But sometimes I cannot respond quickly. ...I work very hard, I try, but I have not heard a single kind word from him. He always makes the same remark that he employed me out of pity and that I am ungrateful and that I do my job poorly, even though I do everything well. ...The others (employees) hardly communicate with me; only one is nice to me and occasionally helps me with Czech. ...But he pays me, and I cannot leave this job now; I have a child, and we could not survive on just one benefit. ...I attended basic Czech courses, now I am learning on my own, watching lessons online. If I could, I would attend good Czech courses and then accounting courses, but they are expensive... Then I could work as an accountant... I am not needed here by anyone, ...Almost every evening, I cry... Once the war ends, I will probably return home; I have no prospects here. ...If I found a decent job here, we would certainly stay... My husband has nothing against moving to the Czech Republic, and our child is already getting used to school and no longer wants to go home every day”.

When responding to the question “Please tell us about where you worked in Ukraine and your work experience and job search in the Czech Republic during the war”, all the respondents began recounting traumatic experiences from the start of the war (even though this question was not asked) – “We woke up because of explosions; they were very frightening explosions, and I didn’t understand at all what was happening”, and described the long and difficult journey – “I hardly slept for six days and travelled mostly standing in the train, packed like sardines in a can. A woman let me sit when she saw I was collapsing from exhaustion. The train moved very slowly, often stopped, and travelled at night without lights because we feared bombing”. They mentioned examples of the excellent approach by volunteers and refugee reception centres – “Everyone was kind, polite, caring; they welcomed us like family, “I was surprised at how well everything was organised”, “Throughout the journey, volunteers fed us, all for free”, “I thank the Czech Republic; I cried—I was so moved by how we were received here”, with almost all of them starting to cry during these recollections. Such behaviour indirectly indicates that they still need psychological help, that the traumatic experience is very painful, and their mental state is far from normal.

After this; in 100% of the interviews; they provided examples of poor treatment by potential employers and ordinary citizens of the Czech Republic – “She told me to go back to Ukraine, that I could have learned Czech by now. It was so insulting I started to cry”, “Nobody likes us here because the Czechs think that I will be a burden on their state, but I don’t want to be a burden to anyone; I want to work normally”, “We are needed by no one; Czechs are tired of us, we irritate them”, “Sometimes I don’t understand something and ask again; I see it annoys the Czechs, but it’s not my fault I don’t know Czech so well”, “Now everything is being done deliberately (by state authorities) for us to go back; we are needed by no one here”.

The vast majority (12 out of 14) reported that they had good jobs in Ukraine, but after arriving in the Czech Republic, they struggled to find employment that was at least somewhat related to their area of professional expertise; however, without success. Nine out of 14 people had negative experiences with work or communication with employment agents: “everyone exploits us and profits from us like landlords”; “they promised me one thing, but when I came and started working, it was completely different”; “it is very physically demanding work; no normal person can work under such conditions for long”. Ten people reported that they sent their CVs over 100 times for positions marked as “suitable for Ukrainian refugees”; or, “without knowledge of the Czech language”, but in the end, it turned out that Czech was essential.

When responding to the question “Please describe your emotional state during the job search process”, everyone spoke of their condition, which can be characterised as “depression”, “sadness”, “feeling lost”, “fear”. A typical account in response to this question was: “It was very humiliating (describing a situation where they were rudely rejected as unsuitable for a job vacancy), and for several days afterwards, I lay in bed and couldn't force myself to do anything”; “I've never felt so terrible in my life”. “If it weren't for the fear for my child's life, I would have returned long ago”, “I cry continuously, I feel very unwell”, “I can't enjoy life”, “I suffer from frequent insomnia”. Seven out of 14 people used the possibility of consultation with a free psychologist at various psychological help centres.

When responding to the question “Do you plan to stay in the Czech Republic after the war?” three people said they planned to return to Ukraine as soon as the war is over, four expressed an intention to try to stay in the Czech Republic, and seven said they would stay if they found a job matching their qualifications – “I would definitely stay if I found a decent job (as a physics and mathematics teacher in a school), and my husband agrees to come here after the war; in fact, one of his acquaintances has already offered him a good job in construction (as an electrician). However, with the current attitude towards us (Ukrainians), I am not sure we will be able to live here normally”. All eleven people who plan to stay or are willing to stay for a good job expressed their readiness to continue studying Czech and attending language courses. More than 78.6% of respondents (11 women out of 14) had unofficial side jobs without employment contracts at the time of the interview.

4.3. Narrative Analysis

The semantic analysis of narratives allows for the identification of the key words that respondents use to characterise the most important aspects of the examined issue (Table 8).

Table 8.

Semantic Core of the Narrative Text File from the Refugees who participated in the survey, 2022-23.

Phrase/Word	Number of mentions
To work/Work	57
Czech language	52
I am needed by no one here / We are needed by no one here. Lack of prospects	32
It is difficult for me/I feel very unwell	29
War	23
Czech Republic	21
Fear/ I am afraid	21
Child/I have children/I must look after children	18
Ukraine	18
Stress/Constant stress	18
Cleaner/To clean/Wash the floor/ Washing dishes.	17
Contribution	14
I am very grateful to the Czech Republic/ We were very warmly welcomed/ I thank the Czechs very much	13
Accommodation/home/I have no home/ We were left homeless/ We have nowhere to live	13
No one likes us here/ No one likes me here	13
Crying/Tears	12
Future [Unknown]/ Fear about the future	10
I don't want to be dependent on anyone/I don't need charity	9
Bombardment/We ran away from the bombs	8
I can/I could/ I would like [to]	7
Employment agency	7
Study/I could study/I want to study	7

Based on this semantic core of the responses from the study group of Ukrainian refugees, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. **Employment and Czech Language:** The primary issues for Ukrainian refugees are employment and language skills. Women express a desire to work and study Czech to improve their prospects for decent employment.
2. **Lack of Prospects and Difficult Lives:** Ukrainian refugees describe their situation as bleak and challenging. They feel redundant, struggling with the difficulties and stress related to the war and fleeing their country.
3. **Concern for Children:** The women surveyed express concerns about their children and the need to care for them in the new conditions.
4. **Gratitude to the Czech Republic:** The women express gratitude to the Czech Republic for welcoming them warmly.
5. **Housing Problems:** Ukrainian refugees face issues with a lack of accommodation and the difficulties associated with losing their homes.
6. **Negative Attitudes:** The women mention experiencing hostility from some people in the Czech Republic.
7. **Emotional State:** The women express emotions such as fear and anxiety about the uncertainty of their future. They are constantly under stress and often cry.
8. **Desire for Independence and Education:** The women express a desire to be independent, work, and pursue further education.
9. **Danger and Refugee Experience:** The refugees frequently recall the dangers they experienced and their escape from their country due to bombings.
10. **Need for Support:** Ukrainian refugees require assistance with employment and education.

These conclusions reflect the main themes, problems, and needs identified in the responses of Ukrainian refugees and can serve as a basis for understanding and developing the appropriate support measures.

5. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of our research, statistical data, and the study of current and past experiences of other countries in hosting refugees, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The Czech Republic needs labour migrants, as the country's population increased by 73,000 in 2023 solely due to Ukrainian migrants [18].
2. Migrants, particularly those who are highly skilled, offer opportunities for mutual enrichment, where both the migrants and the host society discover new values and opportunities for development. Migrants not only contribute to the development of the region's workforce but also bring numerous other positive secondary effects, which, however, tend to manifest over time.
3. The majority of Ukrainian migrants are employed in the Czech Republic in those positions which are below their level of education, and are significantly lower than those they held in Ukraine.
4. Refugees accepted as a result of armed conflicts require much more attention, assistance, and support than do ordinary migrants. Having lost their social status, these migrants are at an increased risk of developing severe depression and mental health disorders. Based on in-depth interviews, it can be stated that the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic are under constant stress and require psychological support.
5. Most of the refugees who participated in the study are highly qualified professionals and represent an important asset for the development of the Czech Republic's labour resources.
6. The majority of respondents are willing to remain in the Czech Republic if suitable job opportunities arise, and/or if the attitude of the Czech people towards them becomes more favourable.

7. Most of the arriving women have children of primary and secondary school age, who could become “second-generation migrants” and fully integrate into Czech society.
8. Most of the arriving women have husbands, many of whom also possess high qualifications and in-demand professional skills on the Czech labour market, and who will reunite with their families once the war ends. The decision as to where the family will reunite depends on the level of integration and the family's satisfaction with their new location.

It should be noted that the qualitative characteristics of respondents as a source of labour identified in our research cannot be accurately projected or generalised to encompass the entire group of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic, as individuals with the lowest levels of education and qualifications were likely excluded from the study for objective reasons. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the value of the results obtained, as the aim of the research was to identify the barriers to successful integration and the retention and development of human capital, specifically among highly skilled refugees into the Czech labour market.

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