

### **Human capital attraction: return of the diaspora and relocation support programs for internally displaced people**

A key element for Ukraine's sustainable post-war recovery and its integration into the European community is the development and implementation of a state reintegration strategy – a process of returning people to productive activity after a period of possible inactivity in the labour market. This strategy should include measures to attract highly qualified professionals as well as effective support for internally displaced people (IDPs) via their stability in new living conditions, economic, social, psychological integration, and providing related services. The creating of new jobs, ensuring affordable housing, and developing social infrastructure in safe regions are the basis, at the same time the main focus should be on the effectiveness of reintegration programs and monitoring.

The situation with migration and displacement in Ukraine remains quite dynamic (Table 1):

Table 1

External migration and return of diaspora representatives, 2022–2025		
Indicator	Value	Source/Comment
Total number of war-related migrants (those who left after 24.02.2022), including with the temporary protection status	About 6 million people in Europe	UNHCR, IOM (as of 2024–2025), ESA. Majority are women and children.
Estimated number of people who returned to Ukraine (after displacement)	About 4.5–5.5 million people	IOM DTM. Includes multiple border crossings and does not always indicate permanent return.
Frequency of returns	Around 100,000 people every six months	IOM studies. Mostly return from the EU (Poland, Germany).
Main reason for return (70% of respondents)	Desire to be home and reunite with family	Joint CES and AUK study. Employment is secondary.
Intention to leave again	Nearly one in four (24%) of those who returned in the past year are considering leaving again	CES and AUK research. Reasons: economic hardship and reintegration difficulties.

*Based on sources: [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6].*

Among the main reasons of return are social and family factors rather, not only the economic ones. Return migration is accompanied by challenges returnees meet in the labor market, particularly low flexibility of employment conditions, which increases the risk of re-migration. To prevent this, support programs should include the recognition of foreign qualifications and retraining opportunities offering. And, as it was mentioned, to ensure sustainable return and prevent repeated emigration, attention should be focused on solving issues on employment and housing to help families stay.

Among returnees, there are increasing newcomers of golden age persons and persons with disabilities, while the families with children are decreasing. These trends indicate a future reduction in labour potential and create additional pressure in social sphere. Hence, new solutions are needed to motivate reintegrated persons to remain in return/relocation regions.

A significant number of internally displaced persons remain in uncertainty since the beginning of rf's armed aggression against Ukraine, which indicates the long-term nature of their displacement. This requires continued investment in long-term integration initiatives.

**Economic activity:** employment levels among IDPs exceed those of returnees from abroad. The effectiveness of the business relocation program confirms this. Such results demonstrate that IDPs represent a significant economic resource that requires further support in creating new jobs.

**Regional imbalance:** the concentration of IDPs in eastern and central regions increases pressure on local social infrastructure and fosters dynamics on labour markets. This also requires additional investments in the development and expansion of regional capacities (Table 2).

Despite available solutions designed in 2014-2025, security concerns the main obstacle to large returns of both diaspora representatives and internally displaced persons to their permanent places of residence through relocation assistance programs.

Table 2

Internal displacement and relocation		
Indicator	Value	Source/Comment
Total number of registered IDPs	About 3.7–4.7 million people	Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, IOM DTM (2024–2025).
Distribution of IDPs (arrival regions)	Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv (city and region)	Highest concentration in eastern and central regions, as well as in the capital.
Employment among IDPs	About 72% are employed (as of April 2025)	IOM study. Higher rate than among returnees from abroad (61%).
Business relocation (under state program)	About 8,000 enterprises relocated (in the first 8 months of 2025)	Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture; Opendatabot. Around 80% have restarted business.
Employment stimulation for IDPs	Over 57,000 people employed through compensation mechanisms for entrepreneurs (as of 2025)	Number employed under the employer compensation program since it was launched. The total actual number of employed IDPs is higher.

Based on sources: [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6].

The implementation of an effective human capital attraction strategy requires comprehensive harmonisation of policies in key areas: housing (crediting, rental mechanisms), employment (compensation programs, grant funding), education (retraining programs, official recognition of qualifications), and social protection. It also requires the development of relevant national and regional programs based on international experience, namely presented in the MILEstone project, and best practices.

#### References:

1. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Oct 02 2025. DTM Ukraine – Return Report – General Population Survey, Round 20 (April 2025). IOM, Ukraine. URL: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/ukraine-zvit-pro-povernennya-opituvannya-zagalnogo-naselennya-raund-20-kviten-2025-roku?close=true> (accessed: 19.10.2025).
2. Ukraine Situation Flash Update / Operational Data Portal. URL: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations> (accessed: 19.10.2025)
3. Ukrainian Refugees After Three Years Abroad. Fourth Wave Study – Centre for Economic Strategy. URL: [https://ces.org.ua/refugees\\_fourth\\_wave/](https://ces.org.ua/refugees_fourth_wave/) (accessed: 19.10.2025).
4. Adema, Joop; Giesing, Yvonne; Panécenko, T. V.; Poutvaara, Panu (2023) : The role of the diaspora for the recovery of Ukraine, EconPol Forum, ISSN 2752-1184, CESifo GmbH, Munich, Vol. 24, Iss. 2, pp. 41-45 URL: <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/272166/1/1841170062.pdf> (accessed: 19.10.2025).
5. Enterprise Relocation Program | Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine. Just a moment... URL: <https://me.gov.ua/Documents/Detail?lang=uk-UA&id=3e766cf9-f3ca-4121-8679-e4853640a99a&title=ProgramaRelokatsiiPidprimstv> (accessed: 19.10.2025).
6. Official Portal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. URL: <https://www.rada.gov.ua/uploads/documents/75506.pdf> (accessed: 19.10.2025).



The paper "Human Capital Attraction: Return of the Diaspora and Relocation Support Programs for Internally Displaced People" has been developed within the framework of the project "Migrants' Integration in Local Economies / MILEstone" 01C0070 Interreg Europe program. Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. The Interreg Europe programme authorities are not liable for any information contained herein.