



REPORT 2

on digital spaces of migrants

Poland

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M I N T E



This report identifies ways of successful communication with migrants and existing communication gaps. It assesses migrants' digital competencies and points to efficient ways to communicate with migrants. It summarises the research results on the digital skills and competencies of displaced Ukrainians who arrived in Poland as a result of the war in Ukraine that started from Russian aggression on 24 th February 2022. We also analyse how displaced Ukrainians reach the information on Poland, their new country of stay, and how they perceive the accessibility of the information. The analysis is based on data obtained from 20 semi-structured interviews conducted with Ukrainian migrants. In addition, the recommendations are based on insights derived from Report 1, which examined and mapped sources of information and services available to Ukrainian migrants in Poland.

KEY FINDINGS

01.

The surveyed population is heterogeneous in terms of age, family situation and education which impacts their digital skills and time spent in virtual space.

02.

In general, the digital competencies of Ukrainian war refugees are high.

03.

These competencies are complemented by the language skills and resourcefulness to seek and verify information from numerous sources.

04.

The displaced Ukrainians possess the required tools such as smartphones and tablets/laptops along with access to the internet.

05.

They keep in touch with their relatives from Ukraine through phone calls, but they also use applications such as Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp, or Messenger. When they communicate with people from Poland, they rather make phone calls or arrange meetings in person.

06.

They remain transnational - they search for information on Poland while they are up to date with the situation in the home country.

07.

The two key characteristics of this population are: transnationalism and entrepreneurialism.

INTRODUCTION

The description of the migrants' population in Poland and migrants' legal status with a focus on the displaced Ukrainians can be found in Report I.

METHODOLOGY

The research is based on interviews with 20 Ukrainians that arrived in Poland no earlier than 24 th February 2022 and lived in Poland already 3 months at the time of the interview. Since the interviewees belong to the vulnerable group, the approval of the ethics committee of the Social Science Faculty of SWPS University was obtained prior to the study. The sample includes Ukrainians who live in Rzeszow, Krakow, Wroclaw, and Swidnica (5 in each town). The interviews were conducted in Ukrainian and Russian (depending on the preferences of the war refugee) by Ukrainian interviewers between December 2022 and January 2023. Such positionality of the interviewers gave the interviewees the comfort of sharing their ethnic background with the interviewer which was relevant to the topic of the interview.

The sample was constructed with snowball techniques started in each of the 4 cities separately. The interview participants were between 26 and 77 years old. The demographic information of the interviewees is specified in Appendix 1 of this Report. The interview structure can be found in Appendix 2. All the interviews were thematically coded and analysed (Braun and Clarke 2006).

FINDINGS

Digital competencies of Ukrainian migrants

The digital competencies of Ukrainian migrants in our sample are of high level. The interviewees, with the exception of the oldest ones, used to use the internet on their smartphones or computers before in Ukraine before the war started. They transferred these skills to their life in Poland. Currently, while living in Poland they have smartphones with the internet access, sometimes also tablets or laptops. Therefore almost every interviewee can fully take advantage of the Internet tools and find information they need on social media.

The digital skills are combined and supported with language skills. The participants of interviews usually could speak two or three foreign languages, for instance: Ukrainian as a mother tongue, Russian, English, and some Polish. Their language competencies are significant in the context of their digital skills, as the information they receive can be checked in different sources. Combining technology competency with language competency allows Ukrainians to verify information through various sources.

The displaced Ukrainians are interested in the situation in Ukraine but they also search for information on their everyday life in Poland. The sources of information they use include proven Telegram channels, Facebook groups, Viber channels, but also the official governmental website. Their digital skills and language competencies allow them to stay up-to-date with the situation in Ukraine and the world. The searched data is usually divided by them into relevant and irrelevant.

Their life, due to sharing Polish and Ukrainian digital space, can be described as transnational. Contacting people in Ukraine may be difficult due to the problems with electricity and the internet access in their war-torn country. They mostly keep in touch with their relatives from Ukraine through phone calls, but they also use applications such as Viber, Telegram, WhatsApp or Messenger. In terms of communication with people from Poland, they usually make phone calls or arrange meetings in person.

Differences in digital competencies among Ukrainian migrant groups

As the displaced Ukrainians are rather a heterogeneous group (different age, educational levels and family situations, such as possessing children, their number etc.) this impacts how they deal with finding information.

The age of the displaced Ukrainians is a significant diversifying factor. The younger interviewees do not struggle with using digital technologies. Those, who are over 60, do not have developed digital skills. They need assistance not only in obtaining tools to search for information but also later in using these tools. They search for information by asking other people to help. It is often provided by their younger family members (children and grandchildren):

"People helped me to install Facebook. There´s a group there called "Our people in Świdnica". However, I have no idea about how to use it. When I open it, I can only read the feed, but I don´t know how to take full advantage of it". (3 Świdnica, December 3, 2022).

The education level determines how participants receive and perceive data, as some of the participants can speak and write a few languages, hence, this ability gives them the possibility to search for information not only in their mother tongue but also in foreign sources.

“It is important to be able to read between the lines, obviously, journalists do not always write things as they are. Honestly, everything matters to me, especially the information connected to Ukraine. I carefully keep my eye on every piece of news”. (5 Rzeszów. December 11, 2022).

Having children, especially more than one and in preschool age, does not affect interviewees’ competencies but impacts the amount of time they can spend in digital spaces. They struggle for time to check the information, but their digital competencies are at a good level.

“I don’t have a TV set at all. I don’t watch it. I listen to the radio when I drive in the city. Basically, I get information from Facebook and some groups. As I have 3 children, I don’t have much free time to scroll through information there”. (1 Rzeszów, December 5, 2022).

When it comes to people who have adult children or do not have any, they may have a possibility to spend more time checking up-to-date sources.

How do Ukrainian migrants access information?

Considering the management of migration, it is important to know how migrants access information related to their rights and obligations in Poland. Our study participants have used social media, Telegram, Viber channels, Facebook groups, and official websites to access information regarding the support, rights of staying, education, healthcare, accommodation, and the situation in Ukraine. However, at the beginning, it was important for some of the interviewees to be able to talk to somebody and they used volunteers as a source of information as well.

“I know a couple of foundations, which provide such help, so I could apply there. Moreover, there are volunteers near the station, who are willing to help or give some advice”. (4 Wrocław, December 16, 2022)

The important source of information on migrants’ rights are their networks, especially their compatriots both in Ukraine and Poland. The networks are supported through face-to-face meetings and communication technology. Those who have been employed in Poland benefit from the contacts with native speakers and are able to learn the Polish language faster.

Communication with friends, employers, and schools

It has to be highlighted that every interviewee is concerned about the situation in Ukraine, so they keep in touch with their relatives, and friends on a daily basis. Those, who have children continue to be in contact with Ukrainian schools, as children study remotely. Some of the interviewees also work online for Ukrainian companies, so consequently, they do communicate with their co-workers and employers.

Some interviewees looked for a job through the Employment Service.

“My children and I registered with the Employment Service. Moreover, we found out that my children could also study, do technical professions, or be employed in the service sector”. (4 Rzeszów, December 7, 2022)

Others used their networks both virtual (eg. Facebook groups) and offline:

“I was looking for a job on my own, looking through Facebook ads”. (1 Kraków, December 9, 2022) “The owner of the apartment where I live helped me”. (2 Kraków, December 10, 2022)

Part of the respondents faced difficulties in finding job due to their age (70+), their profession (their qualifications were not recognised in Poland) or because of having young children:

“It ´s hard to find a job because I am almost 70 years old. They accept people up to 50 years old. I can ´t go to work in factories or work 12-hour shifts either, as I have problems with my back. I would do part-time work, but it is out of season now”. (3 Świdnica, December 3, 2022)

Local administration and NGOs

In terms of evaluating the local administration, Ukrainian migrants are generally satisfied with the assistance and provided information. The basic information related to their stay legalization such as the need to obtain PESEL number is described by them as just being there. They get them from multiple sources - from other Ukrainians and from volunteers that work with displaced Ukrainians. The government website is also used but rather not as the primary source of information.

“Well, the information was up in the air. First of all, I learned it from my wife. She had already been living here for a month. Moreover, it could be passed by any volunteer. It was obvious that PESEL was necessary according to the Polish law system”. (2 Świdnica, December 3, 2022)

“I got the information from the Internet, I read what is needed to be legalized as a war refugee”. (4 Wrocław, December 16, 2022)

“Through Facebook, I have a lot of groups in Poland and Krakow, and it was said where to go and what to do. Nobody helped me, so I went to Tauron Arena on my own. Since I know the language, it wasn't a problem to register”. (4 Kraków, December 24, 2022)

In general, the Ukrainian displaced people express satisfaction with the support they receive both from the Polish state and individuals:

“I am very grateful to the Polish people, for all Ukrainians, whom they have helped, helped to integrate, and provided shelter, food, warmth and comfort. We express our deep respect and gratitude to all Polish people”. (5 Rzeszów, December 11, 2022)

“I'm very grateful to Poland and Polish people in general for their openness and willingness to help. I have never met anyone in my circle who treats Ukrainians badly”. (1 Rzeszów, December 5, 2022)

“I would like to say that Poland has done a lot for Ukrainians in order to support us, to make our stay as comfortable as possible here, and let us stay until the war is over. Thus, I want to express my gratitude to this country and to all the people involved”. (4 Wrocław, December 16, 2022)

The important obstacle on their way to better functioning in the new reality in Poland is the high-stress level caused by the war in Ukraine, as some interviewees lost their friends, homes, and jobs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

01.

Ensure access to information to all groups of users, Polish and foreigners.

02.

Provide information in 3 main foreign languages, i.e. Ukrainian, Russian, and English.

03.

Ascertain access to information of the same volume in all languages

04.

Ascertain standard information that could be provided by all institutions in all regions. The current diversity may be misleading.

05.

Provide a language assistant in the public institution to the war refugees – in person or in the form of phone application.

06.

Public institutions should be present on social media to provide information relevant to migrants.

07.

The older migrants are the most excluded group in access to digitalized information and should be provided with information through alternative channels e.g. leaflets, and face-to-face meetings.

08.

Migrants shThe older migrants might be accessed through their younger family members. Their children and grandchildren may be provided with information they are to pass on to the seniors.

09.

Some displaced Ukrainians need to be treated due to war trauma before they are able to process the information from the authorities.

10.

Integration through work and education institutions significantly anchors migrants in their new place and increases the number of information channels they can access. It's thus necessary to actively help migrants to enter the Polish labour market and migrants' children to start education in Poland.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1. Table of interviewees with demographic information

Appendix 2. Interview structure in English and other languages used in the interviews



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Appendix 1. Table of interviewees with demographic information

| Nr | Interview name | Age | Gender | Country of birth | Country of migration | Family status | Number of children | Academic degree | Profession in Ukraine | Profession in Poland | Date of interview | Date of arrival to Poland |
|----|---------------------------|-----|--------|------------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------------|---|--|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 1 Rzeszów 5 grudnia 2022 | 38 | female | Ukraine | Poland | married | 3 | higher education | rehabilitator | unemployed | 05.12.2022 | 07.03.2022 |
| 2 | 2 Rzeszów 6 grudnia 2022 | 39 | female | Ukraine | Poland | married | 2 | higher education | doctor | doctor | 06.12.2022 | 02.03.2022 |
| 3 | 3 Rzeszów 7 grudnia 2022 | 29 | female | Ukraine | Poland | single | 0 | higher education | children otolaryngologist | web-designer | 07.12.2022 | March 2022 |
| 4 | 4 Rzeszów 7 grudnia 2022 | 48 | female | Ukraine | Poland | divorced | 2 | specialised secondary medical education, higher education, candidate of medical sciences, PhD | nurse | nurse | 07.12.2022 | 07.03.2022 |
| 5 | 5 Rzeszów 11 grudnia 2022 | 53 | female | Ukraine | Poland | married | 1 | incomplete higher education | dentist | dentist | 11.12.2022 | 11.03.2022 |
| 6 | 1 Świdnica 1 grudnia 2022 | 26 | female | Ukraine | Poland | married | 1 | higher education | manager | unemployed | 01.12.2022 | 08.03.2022 |
| 7 | 2 Świdnica 3 grudnia 2022 | 77 | male | Ukraine | Poland | married | 0 | higher education | engineer | unemployed | 03.12.2022 | 18.03.2022 |
| 8 | 3 Świdnica 3 grudnia 2022 | 69 | female | Ukraine | Poland | divorced | 2 | higher education | economist | unemployed | 03.12.2022 | 09.03.2022 |
| 9 | 4 Świdnica 3 grudnia 2022 | 32 | female | Ukraine | Poland | divorced | 1 | secondary education | unknown | worker in the pool | 03.12.2022 | 05.03.2022 |
| 10 | 5 Świdnica 4 grudnia 2022 | 44 | female | Ukraine | Poland | married | 2 | secondary special education | seller | employed | 04.12.2022 | 07.03.2022 |
| 11 | 1 Kraków 9 grudnia 2022 | 32 | female | Ukraine | Poland | divorced | 1 | higher education | social worker- psychologist, specializing in children with disabilities and ex-prisoners | shop assistant | 09.12.2022 | 12.03.2022 |
| 12 | 2 Kraków 10 grudnia 2022 | 31 | female | Ukraine | Poland | single | 0 | secondary education | cook | cook | 02.12.2022 | 12.03.2022 |
| 13 | 3 Kraków 22 grudnia 2022 | 43 | female | Ukraine | Poland | married | 2 | culinary college | pastry cook | unemployed | 22.12.2022 | 12.05.2022 |
| 14 | 4 Kraków 24 grudnia 2022 | 40 | female | Ukraine | Poland | divorced | 1 | higher education | social worker | cook | 24.12.2022 | June 2022 |
| 15 | 5 Kraków 24 grudnia 2022 | 24 | female | Ukraine | Poland | married | 1 | higher incomplete education | cashier | unemployed | 24.12.2022 | 04.03.2022 |
| 16 | 1 Wrocław 5 grudnia 2022 | 40 | female | Ukraine | Poland | married | 1 | higher education | IT recruiter | IT recruiter | 05.12.2022 | 04.03.2022 |
| 17 | 2 Wrocław 11 grudnia 2022 | 40 | female | Ukraine | Poland | married | 2 | higher education | manager | florist | 11.12.2022 | 04.03.2022 |
| 18 | 3 Wrocław 14 grudnia 2022 | 60 | female | Ukraine | Poland | widow | 2 | secondary education | florist | unemployed | 14.12.2022 | April 2022 |
| 19 | 4 Wrocław 16 grudnia 2022 | 38 | female | Ukraine | Poland | divorced | 1 | higher education | freelancer, lawyer | unemployed | 16.12.2022 | 08.03.2022 |
| 20 | 5 Wrocław 28 grudnia 2022 | 46 | female | Ukraine | Poland | married | 1 | higher education | HR Director | employed | 28.12.2022 | 05.03.2022 |

Appendix 2. Interview structure in English and other languages used in the interviews

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research introduction

Thank you for your willingness to participate in our research. We plan to interview several Ukrainian migrants to get a better view of their life in Poland, what works out well, whether are there any obstacles, and what should or could be changed. These interviews are part of our broader research within a project called MINTE.

Oral consent form

The research is anonymous. We will never mention your name or other identifying information in our research, apart from general information such as age, and city of origin, which is used for categorization purposes. We will make some quotes from the interview in the subsequent reports of the results of the research, such as the article, but all information that could lead to your identification will be changed.

Your participation in the research is voluntary and you can withdraw from participation at any stage of the study. The interview will be recorded but only for the subsequent transcription of the text. Do you agree with recording and with participation in the research?

Interview structure

Could we start with some basic information?

(Note: If we know these questions, we do not have to ask them)

- 1) Destination place (country, city)
- 2) Place of origin (county, city)
- 3) Age
- 4) Sex
- 5) Citizenship
- 6) Education level
- 7) Family status (married? Or children?)
- 8) Languages (ability to speak and read)

I. Migration experience

- 1) When did you leave your country?
- 2) It must have been a difficult decision. Was there some specific impulse that made you leave?
- 3) How did you decide where to go when you left Ukraine? Why did you choose Poland?
- 4) How did you come here?
- 5) Did you travel alone?
- 6) Is your family here? (Note: Ideally a short chat about his/her close family)

II. Life in Poland

- 7) What did you know about the conditions for Ukrainian refugees in Poland before you came here?
- 8) How did you gather this information?
- 9) I guess that you had to arrange several things after your arrival....how was it? Where did you look for information? How did you get the information?
- 10) **Permit of stay** (information, assistance)
- 11) **Accommodation** (information, assistance)
- 12) Did you have to register with the employment office?
- 13) What was your job in Ukraine? Did you work in Ukraine?
- 14) How (if) did you find **work (study)** in Poland? (How was it? Who helped you?)
- 15) Did you need a **doctor**? (If so, how was it, how did you know where to go...)
- 16) Did you open a **bank account** in Poland? How did you manage to choose a bank? How was it? (Were they helpful there?)
- 17) If applicable - did you look for a **school or kindergarten** for your children? How did you look? Was it easy? Did you find it? Do your children attend school in Ukraine online?
- 18) Is there some **information you miss**? Which?
- 19) Is something regarding your stay in Poland that is troubling you?
- 20) Do you know where to turn to get help (e.g. regarding accommodation, job, labor office, etc.)?
- 21) Do you receive any help while you live here, which you have not mentioned yet? (What kind of assistance? Who provides it? How? How did you learn about it?)

III Digital skills/ information transmission

Thank you for all the information provided, I ask a lot, don't I? But we're getting to the last part, where I still need to ask more detailed questions about how you acquire information. And then we'll be done with the interview.

- 22) Which languages do you speak? Read?
- 23) Do you have a computer? Laptop? Tablet? Smartphone with internet access?
- 24) Did you have a computer, laptop, or smartphone with the internet before you left Ukraine?
- 25) Do you watch TV? Listen to the radio? (which –Polish, Ukrainian channels or English channels?)
- 26) When you need information about life in Poland, where do you look for it? (And are there any fora you follow regularly?)
 - Mainly some friends (Poles, Ukrainians? and Ukrainians living longer in Poland)
 - chat-bot
 - FB group,
 - news
 - useful websites (governmental, NGOs...)
 - NGOs
 - Other (which?)
- 27) Do you follow some (mentioned FB group, news etc.) regularly? If so, which? For which reasons?
- 28) If you could think about it, where (from what sources) is the information most useful to you?

29) How do you communicate with your family? Friends? Those in Ukraine and those who are here?

30) Do you use any social media? If yes, which ones? Could you explain what you use it (mainly) for *(ask for each one they listed and then ask again if something was missed, especially ask if they use WhatsApp, FB, Instagram, Telegram, Twitter, V Kontakte, Odnoklassniki, LinkedIn, and TikTok if it was not mentioned by interviewee)*?

IV Future

31) I know that it is difficult to make any plans, but do you have some plans to stay here, return or move to some other place/country?

32) Would you like to add something that was important for your life in Poland and what has not been said yet?

V Concluding questions:

Thank you for the interview. I hope it was ok for you, was it? ... It was helpful for us. *(And in case the person mentions some issues in the interview, please, show the person the card "Information on life in Poland", which provides contact information on organization that provide social and legal counseling to migrants, psychological help etc.. If the person needs some information on life in Poland or asks for help, please, pass the questions to dr Agnieszka Bielewska).*