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Instytut Organizacji i Zarządzania Wydział Bezpieczeństwa, Logistyki i Zarządzania Wojskowa Akademia Techniczna w Warszawie

Institute of Organization and Management Faculty of Security, Logistics and Management Military University of Technology in Warsaw

Migrations of Ukrainian citizens to Poland between 2022-2025 in terms of the scale, dynamics, process of stay legalization and security

Migracje obywateli Ukrainy do Polski w latach 2022-2025 w kontekście skali, dynamiki, procesu legalizacji pobytu i bezpieczeństwa

Bartosz Kozicki

Military University of Technology, Warsaw, Poland bartosz.kozicki@wat.edu.pl; ORCID: 0000-0001-6089-952X

Abstract:

Research objectives and hypothesis/research questions

The focus was on the following research problem: to what extent the mass nature of migration of people from Ukraine to Poland affected the number of visas issued in Poland. The aim of the research is to conduct a multidimensional analysis of data on the migration of people from Ukraine to Poland between 2022-2025 (until January 2025) and the number of visas issued in Poland. A research hypothesis was also outlined: it is assumed that the increase in migration of people from Ukraine will reduce the number of visas issued to Ukrainians in Poland.

Research methods

Research methods which were used in the article – source analysis, and within it a research technique – observation. As part of the technique, research tools such as an Excel sheet and figures were used.

Main results

The conducted research shows the multifaceted impact of the war in Ukraine on migration phenomena and forms of the stay legalization of Ukrainian citizens in Poland between 2022-2025. The starting point of the analysis was the dynamics of crossing the Polish-Ukrainian border, which in the first quarter of 2022 reached an unprecedented level – culminating in March (1,944,111 people). Such data indicate a direct migration reaction to the escalation of the armed conflict. In subsequent years, border traffic showed a stabilization trend with seasonal peaks in the summer periods, related, among others, to labour migration. At the same time, a systematic increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens with a valid residence permit in Poland was ob-served. Since 2022, their number has increased rapidly, reaching a record 1,55 million in March 2025. The observed trend is the result not only of the war, but also of procedural simplifications and the growing inte-gration of Ukrainians with Polish society. The data also confirm the dominance of that national group among all foreigners legally staying in Poland.

Implications for theory and practice

The research proves that the war in Ukraine caused radical changes in the structure and nature of the migration of citizens of this country to Poland. We observe both the intensification of the influx and the ongoing process of settlement and formal integration of Ukrainians in Poland. The data are crucial for further shaping of the migration, social and integration policy of the Polish state.

Keywords: security, migration, education in Poland, applications for international protection, visas

Abstrakt:

Cel badań i hipotezy/pytania badawcze

Skupiono się na następującym problemie badawczym: w jakim stopniu masowy charakter migracji ludności z Ukrainy do Polski wpłynął na liczbę wydanych wiz w Polsce? Celem badań jest przeprowadzenie wielowymiarowej analizy danych dotyczących migracji ludzi z Ukrainy do Polski w latach 2022-2025 (do stycznia 2025) oraz liczby wydanych wiz w Polsce. Postawiono również hipotezę badawczą: przypuszcza się, że wzrost migracji ludności z Ukrainy wpłynie na zmniejszenie liczby wydanych wiz dla Ukraińców w Polsce. *Metody badawcze*

W artykule zastosowano metody badawcze – analizę źródłową, w tym technikę badawczą w postaci obserwacji. W ramach techniki zastosowano narzędzia badawcze, np. arkusz Excel, rysunki.

Główne wyniki

Przeprowadzone badania pokazują wieloaspektowy wpływ wojny w Ukrainie na zjawiska migracyjne oraz formy legalizacji pobytu obywateli Ukrainy w Polsce w latach 2022-2025. Punktem wyjścia analizy była dynamika przekroczeń granicy polsko-ukraińskiej. W pierwszym kwartale 2022 roku osiągnęła ona bezprecedensowy poziom – z kulminacją w marcu (1944 111 osób). Dane te wskazują na bezpośrednią reakcję migracyjną na eskalację konfliktu zbrojnego. W kolejnych latach ruch graniczny wykazywał tendencję stabilizacji z sezonowymi szczytami w okresach letnich, związanymi m.in. z migracjami zarobkowymi. Równolegle obserwowano systematyczny wzrost liczby obywateli Ukrainy posiadających ważny dokument pobytowy w Polsce. Od 2022 roku ich liczba gwałtownie wzrosła, osiągając w marcu 2025 roku rekordowe 1,55 miliona osób. Obserwowany trend jest wynikiem nie tylko wojny, lecz także uproszczeń proceduralnych oraz rosnącej integracji Ukraińców z polskim społeczeństwem. Dane potwierdzają również dominację tej grupy narodowościowej wśród wszystkich cudzoziemców legalnie przebywających w Polsce. *Implikacje dla teorii i praktyki*

Badania dowodzą, że wojna w Ukrainie wywołała radykalne zmiany w strukturze i charakterze migracji obywateli tego kraju do Polski. Obserwujemy zarówno intensyfikację napływu, jak i postępujący proces osiedlania się oraz formalnej integracji Ukraińców w Polsce. Dane te są kluczowe dla dalszego kształtowania polityki migracyjnej, społecznej i integracyjnej państwa polskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo, migracja, edukacja w Polsce, wnioski o ochrone miedzynarodowa, wizy

Introduction

Nowadays, countries (Kozicki, Mitkow, 2021) are facing profound demographic changes (Latosiewicz, Kozicki, Tomaszewski, 2025; Kozicki, Kalwasiński, 2021, pp. 510-516; Kozicki, Bryczek-Wróbel, 2020, pp. 201-212), which are having an increasingly strong impact on their economies. Aging societies, low birth rates, and growing labour shortages make it necessary to search for new sources of human capital. In this respect, migration is becoming not only a social phenomenon, but also a key factor in economic stabilization and development. Forced and economic migrations are of particular importance, which – as a result of political crises and armed conflicts – are changing the population structure of many countries.

One of the most important examples in recent years is the influx of Ukrainian citizens to Poland in relation to the Russian-Ukrainian war. The scale and pace of

that phenomenon have not only influenced the demographic structure of Poland, but have also become an essential element of its labour market, social welfare system, and integration processes. The article presents an analysis of data showing the scale of Ukrainian migration to Poland between 2022-2025 and the processes of their stay legalization, indicating the broader socio-economic context of those changes (BGK, 2025b).

The focus was on the following research problem: to what extent the mass nature of migration of people from Ukraine to Poland affected the number of visas issued in Poland. The aim of the research is to conduct a multidimensional analysis of data on the migration of people from Ukraine to Poland between 2022-2025 (until January 2025) and the number of visas issued in Poland. A research hypothesis was also outlined: it is assumed that the increase in migration of people from Ukraine will reduce the number of visas issued to Ukrainians in Poland. Research methods which were used in the article – source analysis, and within it a research technique – observation. As part of the technique, research tools such as an Excel sheet and figures were used.

1. Analysis of the literature of the research subject

In recent years, Poland has become one of the most important destination countries for Ukrainian citizens fleeing war, economic crisis and political instability. It is estimated that since 2022, over 5 million war refugees have passed through Poland, a considerable number of whom have decided to stay here. Although initially humanitarian considerations dominated, it is increasingly clear today that the presence of such a large group of Ukrainian citizens has a structural impact on Polish society and the economy (StrazGraniczna.pl, 2025; Parlament Europejski, 2024).

Poland has been struggling with a demographic crisis for decades – the society is aging, the birth rate is falling, and many young people are emigrating. In this respect, the migration of Ukrainians may prove to be one of the main factors stabilizing the demographic situation. Most refugees are people of working age – women with children, but also an increasing number of men who join their families after obtaining the right to reside or completing military service (GUS, 2024).

Many migrants decide to stay in Poland permanently, which increases the number of economically active people and raises the fertility rate. In the long term, that migration can ease the pressure on pension systems and increase the pool of potential employees, which is crucial for maintaining the country's economic dynamics (RynekZdrowia.pl, 2025).

The influx of children and youth from Ukraine has posed a huge challenge to the education system. In the 2022/2023 school year, over 200,000 pupils from Ukraine received education in Polish schools, and that number is constantly growing.

For many institutions – especially in large cities – this meant the need to increase the number of classes quickly, employ translators, intercultural educators and psychologists, as well as introduce adaptation programs (Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej, 2024).

Thanks to these experiences, Polish schools are becoming more open and multicultural. Students learn to cooperate in a diverse environment, and teachers develop competences in intercultural education, which in the future may increase the efficiency of the entire system. Migration also affects program reforms – for example, by increasing the emphasis on language learning, social competences and digital integration (Ellis, 2023).

Ukrainians have been an inseparable element of the Polish labour market for many years. They work in almost all sectors – from agriculture, through construction, catering and health care, to innovative technologies. Their growing number helps to alleviate staff shortages, which are particularly painful for manufacturing companies, logistics centers and the service sector (Bankier.pl, 2025; Zwoliński, 2025).

Importantly, the professional profile of migrants is also changing – more and more often they are people with higher education, language skills and managerial competences, who take up jobs in specialist positions or establish their own companies. Thanks to that, migration is not only a solution to quantitative problems, but also a qualitative impulse for development (Tymińska, 2025; PulsHR.pl, 2025; PARP, 2025).

The increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens in Poland significantly affects the transport system. First of all, the demand for local and interregional transport is increasing – in urban agglomerations, the number of public transport passengers is growing, while in smaller towns new bus lines and minibuses serving the Ukrainian community are appearing (Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców, 2025).

International connections are also developing significantly. Poland has become a transit and communication center for relations with Ukraine – both passenger and freight. Rail traffic is increasing, new transshipment terminals are being built, and transport companies are developing logistics offers aimed at the East. Those factors favor the integration of Poland's infrastructure with Eastern European countries and strengthen its position as a regional transport hub (Departament Badań i Analiz, 2024).

Citizens of Ukraine actively participate in Polish economic life. On one hand, they increase domestic demand – as consumers of housing, goods, services, education and health care. On the other – more and more of them are starting businesses. According to CEIDG (Central Registration and Information on Business) data, in 2023 Ukrainians founded over 25 thousand companies in Poland – mainly in sectors such as gastronomy, logistics, construction, IT services and education (Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej, 2025).

Polish companies are also seeing new opportunities for cooperation – both with Ukrainian partners and with the diaspora living in Poland. Bilingual initiatives are developing, advisory points and organizations supporting economic integration are being established. That phenomenon creates new space for the development of innovations, as well as for building lasting economic relations with Ukraine after the end of the war (BGK, 2025a).

Migration from Ukraine is a phenomenon that shapes contemporary Poland on many levels – social, cultural, demographic, and economic. Although there is no shortage of challenges related to integration, the housing market or the overload of public institutions, if effectively managed, it can bring real benefits (Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny, 2024).

In the long term, the presence of Ukrainians in Poland is not only a consequence of the war, but also a huge opportunity – for economic growth, enrichment of social capital, improvement of demography and firmer preparation of the country for the future. However, the condition for success is an active state policy: supporting education, integration, the labour market and building a civic community.

2. Multidimensional data analysis

In the article, the research began with an analysis of data on the number of Ukrainians crossing the border of the Republic of Poland from January 2022 to January 2025 (see Fig. 1).

The research allows one to observe the impact of the geopolitical situation related to the war between Russia and Ukraine on the increased number of Ukrainians crossing the border between Poland and Ukraine. The highest level of border crossings was recorded in March 2022: 1,944,111 people, which was a direct result of the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. That was a sharp jump compared to January 2022, when 433,609 people crossed the border. In February 2022, the number amounted to 669,042, which indicates the beginning of an intensive refugee movement. In the following months of 2022, the number of crossings remained at an elevated level - from around 610,000 to over 737,000 per month which indicates a continuing influx of refugees. In the second half of the year, there was a slight decrease in the number of people crossing the border, although there were still significantly more of them than before the war. 2023 was characterized by relative stability with moderate fluctuations. The highest values were recorded in the summer months: July (955,077) and August (946,628), which may be related to the intensification of seasonal labour migration. However, in June 2023 there was a sudden drop – only 325,865 people, which is the lowest level during the entire year and may be due to administrative, logistical factors or changes in border policy. In 2024, a renewed increase in the dynamics of border traffic can be observed.

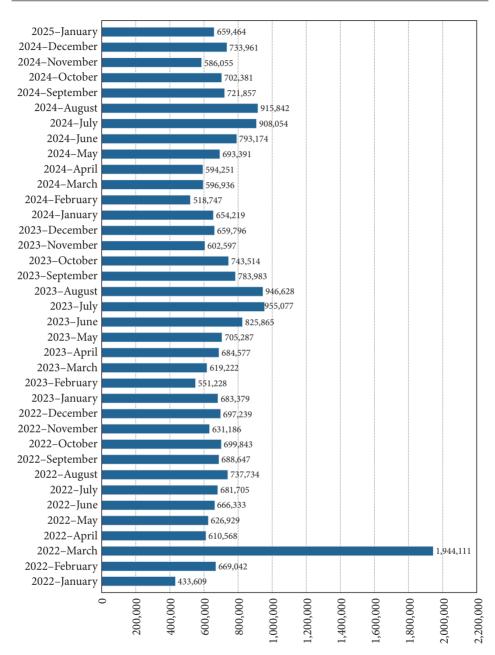


Fig. 1. Bar chart of the number of Ukrainians crossing the border of the Republic of Poland from January 2022 to January 2025

Source: own study based on: gov.pl, 2025

The peaks fall in July (908,054) and August (915,842), which again confirms the seasonality of the phenomenon. The numbers in the remaining months oscillate between 500 and 730 thousand, showing general stability with slight decreases (e.g. February – 518,747 people). In January 2025, the number of Ukrainians crossing the border amounted to 659 464, which is a moderate figure, comparable to the winter months of previous years. This indicates a clear dependence of the number of border crossings on the crisis situation in Ukraine (a sharp increase in Q1 2022), seasonal migration (peaks in the summer of 2023 and 2024) and a gradual stabilization with a persistently prominent level of cross-border traffic.

Next, the number of people with a valid residence permit in Poland as of March 31, 2025 from 2014 to 2025 was examined (see Fig. 2).

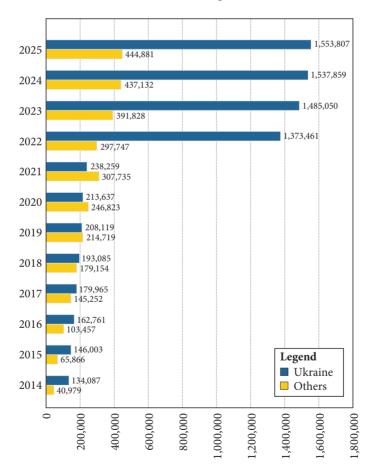


Fig. 2. Bar chart of the number of people with a valid residence permit in Poland as of March 31, 2025 Source: own study based on: gov.pl, 2025

The data presented in Figure 2 show a clear, systematic increase in the number of foreigners with a valid residence permit in Poland, with Ukrainian citizens being the dominant group. In 2014, the number of Ukrainians with a residence permit was 134,087, and other foreigners 40,979. In subsequent years, a gradual but dynamic increase was observed, especially in relation to Ukrainian citizens. In 2021, the number of Ukrainians with a valid document exceeded 238,259, and other foreigners 307,735, which was a peak result for that group in the entire period. The turning point was 2022, when as a result of the war in Ukraine, the number of Ukrainians with the right to legal residence in Poland increased rapidly to 1,373,461 people, exceeding for the first time the total number of foreigners from other countries, which was 297,747. That trend continued in the subsequent analyzed years. In 2023, 1,485,050 Ukrainian citizens and 391,828 other foreigners had a residence permit, and in 2024, 1,537,859 and 437,132 people, respectively. As of March 31, 2025, the number of Ukrainians with a valid residence permit reached 1,553,807, which is a historical maximum. The number of other foreigners increased to 444,881, but the proportion remains clearly tilted in favor of Ukrainian citizens.

To sum up the data compiled in Figure 2, we can observe an increase in the population of foreigners settling in Poland, with a noticeable dominance of Ukrainian citizens since 2022, which is directly related to the consequences of the war, simplified legalization procedures and the growing migration integration of that group in Poland.

The conducted observation allows one to observe the development of the phenomenon of the stay legalization of Ukrainians in Poland in terms of geopolitical and migration changes. The largest number of decisions concerned temporary stay, which each year constituted the vast majority of all permits issued. The number of those decisions has been growing successively since 2015 (37,833), reaching a peak level in 2022 of 213,298. In 2023 and 2024, those numbers remained high (199,848 and 195,904), which indicates the continuous influx of Ukrainian citizens and their need to formally regulate their stay. In 2025 (data for the first quarter), 57,882 decisions on temporary stay were issued. The number of permanent residence permits also increased, although on a much smaller scale. In 2015, there were 6,729 of them, and in 2022 the level reached 7,614. In 2024, that number increased rapidly to 9,653, and in the first quarter of 2025 it already reached 2,049, which may indicate a growing number of Ukrainian citizens deciding to establish long-term ties with Poland.

The long-term EU resident status is the least numerous, but steadily developing category. In 2015, 629 such decisions were issued, while in 2024 as many as 13,256, which shows a significant increase in the interest in obtaining a more permanent residence status under EU law. In the first quarter of 2025, 4,141 such decisions have already been issued.

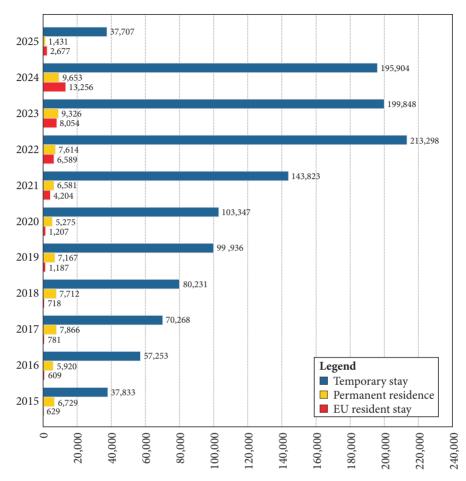


Fig. 3. Bar chart of the number of positive legislative decisions regarding the stay of Ukrainian citizens in Poland between 2015-2025 (as of March 31, 2025)

Source: own study based on: gov.pl, 2025

To sum up, the research conducted on the basis of the data presented in Figure 3 indicates a dynamic development of the processes of legalization of the stay of Ukrainian citizens in Poland over the last ten years, especially since 2022. Most decisions concern temporary stays, but there is also a noticeable growing trend in the area of permanent residence and EU resident decisions, which may indicate the deepening integration of Ukrainian citizens with Polish society.

Next, the data on the number of Ukrainian citizens who applied for international protection in the Republic of Poland between 2015-2025 were analyzed (see Fig. 4).

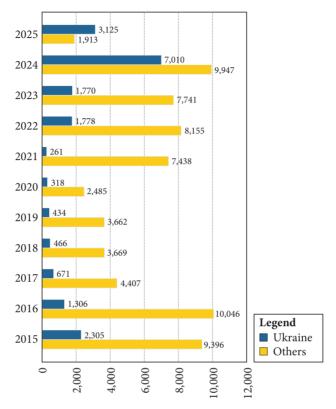


Fig. 4. Bar chart of the number of Ukrainian citizens who filed an application for international protection in the Republic of Poland between 2015-2025

Source: own study based on: gov.pl, 2025

Between 2015-2021, the number of applications submitted by Ukrainians was relatively low and did not exceed 1,306 per year. For comparison, the number of applications from foreigners from other countries during that period remained at a much higher level, e.g. 10,046 applications in 2016 and 7,438 applications in 2021. A significant increase in the number of applications submitted by Ukrainian citizens has occurred since 2022, which was a direct result of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In 2022, this number amounted to 1,778, and in 2023 and 2024, a further increase was noted, 1,770 and 7,010 applications, respectively. In particular, 2024 is distinguished by the highest number of applications from Ukrainian citizens in the analyzed period. Applications from other foreigners also reached a high value at that time: 9,947. In the first quarter of 2025 (until March 31), Ukrainian citizens have already submitted 3,125 applications, which suggests continued increased interest in this form of protection. For comparison, during the same period, citizens of other countries submitted 1913 applications – for the first time in many years, the number of applications from Ukrainians was higher than from all other foreigners combined.

In conclusion, although between 2015-2021 Ukrainians rarely used the institutions of international protection in Poland, since 2022 there has been a significant increase in the number of applications submitted. That trend is directly related to the war situation in Ukraine and shows the growing need to formally secure the stay in Poland for citizens of that country.

The last stage of the research was the analysis of data on the number of visas issued by Polish outposts in Ukraine for Ukrainian citizens (see Fig. 5).

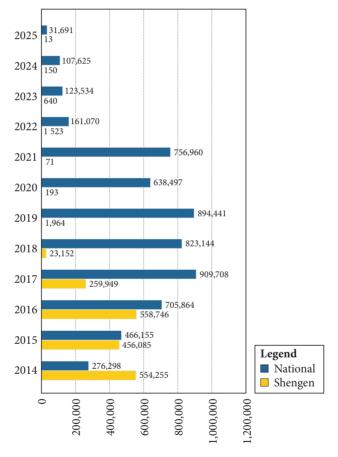


Fig. 5. Bar chart of the number of visas issued by Polish outposts in Ukraine for Ukrainian citizens Source: own study based on: gov.pl, 2025

Between 2014-2016, a really high number of national (type D) and Schengen (type C) visas were issued. In 2016, over 1,26 million visas were issued, of which 706 thousand were national and 559 thousand were Schengen. Since 2017, after the introduction of visa-free travel for Ukrainian citizens, the number of Schengen

visas has fallen sharply, while the high number of national visas has remained, exceeding 800 thousand annually until 2019. During the COVID-19 pandemic (between 2020-2021), the number of issued visas decreased significantly. After the outbreak of the war in 2022, there was a further decrease. In 2024, only 108 thousand national visas and 150 Schengen visas were issued, and in the first quarter of 2025, 32 thousand and only 13 visas, respectively. The data indicate a change in the nature of the legalization of the stay of Ukrainian citizens in Poland – from the visa system to special forms of protection and simplified residence procedures.

Summary

The conducted research shows the multifaceted impact of the war in Ukraine on migration phenomena and forms of the stay legalization of Ukrainian citizens in Poland between 2022-2025. The starting point of the analysis was the dynamics of crossing the Polish-Ukrainian border, which in the first quarter of 2022 reached an unprecedented level – culminating in March (1,944,111 people). Such data indicate a direct migration reaction to the escalation of the armed conflict. In subsequent years, border traffic showed a stabilization trend with seasonal peaks in the summer periods, related, among others, to labour migration.

At the same time, a systematic increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens with a valid residence permit in Poland was observed. Since 2022, their number has increased rapidly, reaching a record 1,55 million in March 2025. The observed trend is the result not only of the war, but also of procedural simplifications and the growing integration of Ukrainians with Polish society. The data also confirm the dominance of that national group among all foreigners legally staying in Poland.

The next element of the study was the analysis of administrative decisions regarding the legalization of stay. The vast majority concerned temporary residence permits, the number of which increased significantly after 2022. At the same time, there is a noticeable systematic increase in decisions on permanent residence and on the status of a long-term EU resident, which may indicate the long-term life and migration plans of Ukrainians.

The following part of the study showed a clear change in the number of applications for international protection submitted by Ukrainian citizens. While between 2015-2021 they were marginal, from 2022 there was a noticeable increase – especially in 2024 and in the first quarter of 2025. For the first time, the number of applications from Ukrainians exceeded the number of applications from citizens of other countries, which confirms the growing need for legal security of stay in Poland.

The last stage of the analysis concerned the number of issued visas. The data reflect the change in migration mechanisms – from the visa system (dominant until 2016) towards alternative forms of legalization, such as protection status, residence permits or simplified procedures after 2022. In recent years, the number of issued visas, especially Schengen visas, has decreased significantly. The article provides the answer to the research problem and verifies the research hypothesis.

To sum up, the research proves that the war in Ukraine caused radical changes in the structure and nature of the migration of citizens of this country to Poland. We observe both the intensification of the influx and the ongoing process of settlement and formal integration of Ukrainians in Poland. The data are crucial for further shaping of the migration, social and integration policy of the Polish state.

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