

Analysis of the Decision of Ukrainian Employees and Entrepreneurs to Participate in the European or Ukrainian Labour Market

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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce zkoumá rozhodovací procesy ukrajinských zaměstnanců a podnikatelů, kteří se rozhodují mezi evropským a ukrajinským trhem práce v době socioekonomických otřesů po ruské invazi v roce 2022. S využitím přístupu smíšených metod integruje neoklasické ekonomické a podnikatelské migrační teorie a analyzuje ekonomické, sociální a politické faktory, které migraci podněcují. Údaje od mezinárodních organizací a dotazník 96 ukrajinských migrantů v Evropě odhalují, že zaměstnanci upřednostňují mzdové rozdíly a jistotu zaměstnání, zatímco podnikatelé hledají tržní příležitosti a stabilitu. Ekonomický kolaps a sociální dezintegrace Ukrajiny působí jako významné tlačné faktory, které kontrastují s pobídkami evropského trhu práce, jako je směrnice o dočasné ochraně. Studie zdůrazňuje potřebu přizpůsobených politik, které by se zabývaly uznáváním kvalifikace pro zaměstnance a zjednodušením právních předpisů pro podnikatele a přispěly ke strategiím účinné integrace trhu práce.

Klíčová slova: ukrajinská migrace, trh práce, ekonomická nestabilita, podnikání

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the decision-making processes of Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs choosing between the European or Ukrainian labour markets amid the socioeconomic upheaval following Russia's 2022 invasion. Using a mixed-methods approach, it integrates neoclassical economic and entrepreneurial migration theories to analyse economic, social, and policy factors driving migration. Data from international organizations and a questionnaire of 96 Ukrainian migrants in Europe reveal that employees prioritize wage disparities and job security, while entrepreneurs seek market opportunities and stability. Ukraine's economic collapse and social disintegration act as significant push factors, contrasted with European labour market incentives like the Temporary Protection Directive. The study underscores the need for tailored policies to address qualification recognition for employees and regulatory simplification for entrepreneurs, contributing to strategies for effective labour market integration.

Keywords: Ukrainian migration, labour market, economic instability, entrepreneurship

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INTRODUCTION

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine, intensified by Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, has precipitated one of the largest migration waves in recent European history, with over 6.2 million Ukrainians seeking refuge in Europe by 2024 (UNHCR, 2025). This mass displacement has profoundly impacted Ukraine's labour market, compelling both employees and entrepreneurs to navigate critical decisions about whether to remain in a war-torn economy or pursue opportunities abroad. The European labour market, with its relative stability, higher wages, and supportive policies like the Temporary Protection Directive, presents a compelling alternative, yet it poses distinct challenges, including qualification recognition and regulatory barriers. This thesis investigates the factors influencing Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs' decisions to participate in either the European or Ukrainian labour markets, focusing on the interplay of economic incentives, social pressures, and policy frameworks.

Drawing on neoclassical economic theory (Borjas, 2020) and entrepreneurial migration perspectives (Kuratko, 2014), this study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining secondary data from sources like the World Bank and IOM with primary data from a questionnaire of 96 Ukrainian migrants. The research aims to address two central questions: what economic and social factors most significantly drive migration decisions, and how do these factors differ between employees and entrepreneurs? By comparing the motivations, opportunities, and challenges of these groups, this thesis seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of migration dynamics and contribute to the development of targeted integration policies. The analysis is structured into theoretical and practical parts, with the former establishing the conceptual framework and the latter presenting empirical findings, ultimately offering insights into the broader implications for both migrants and host countries.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODS OF THESIS DEVELOPMENT

The primary objective of this thesis is to analyse the decision-making processes of Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs in choosing between participation in the European or Ukrainian labour markets, particularly in the context of the socioeconomic disruptions caused by Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. **Identify Key Drivers:** Determine the economic, social, and policy-related factors that most significantly influence the migration decisions of Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs.
2. **Compare Motivations:** Examine the differences in motivations, opportunities, and challenges between employees, who prioritize financial stability and job security, and entrepreneurs, who focus on market opportunities and long-term growth.
3. **Evaluate Policy Impact:** Assess the role of European labour market policies, such as the Temporary Protection Directive, in facilitating or hindering the integration of Ukrainian migrants.
4. **Provide Policy Recommendations:** Propose targeted strategies to enhance the labour market integration of Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs, addressing their distinct needs and challenges.

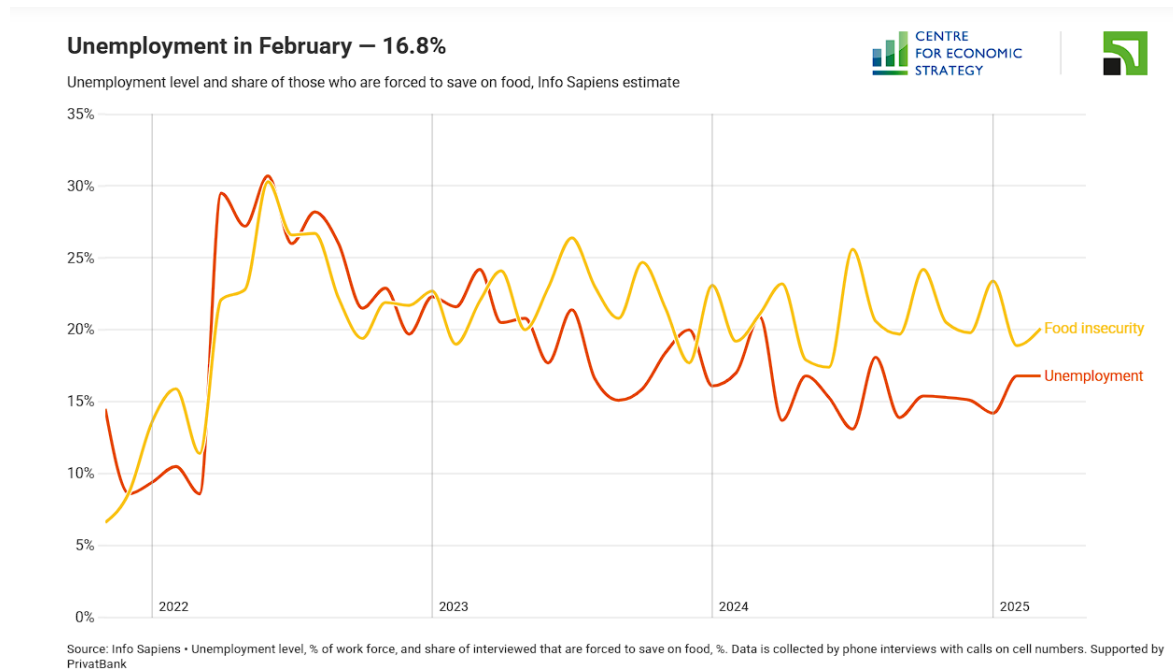
By achieving these objectives, the thesis seeks to contribute to the academic understanding of migration dynamics and provide practical insights for policymakers in host countries aiming to support Ukrainian migrants.

I THEORETICAL PART

1 LABOUR MARKET DYNAMICS

Labour migration is a multifaceted socio-economic phenomenon propelled by disparities in wages, employment opportunities, and living standards across regions. George Borjas contends that migration is primarily driven by economic incentives and structural conditions (BORJAS, 2020). Workers relocate when the anticipated net benefit—defined as higher wages abroad minus migration costs—exceeds the benefits of staying in their home country (BORJAS, 2020). However, migration extends beyond economic considerations, as it is also influenced by political, social, and psychological factors that affect individuals' adaptation to new environments.

Among the primary drivers of migration, armed conflicts exert a substantial influence, disrupting economies, generating safety hazards, and diminishing employment opportunities in affected regions. The case of Ukraine starkly illustrates this dynamic. The conflict beginning in 2014, with Russia's annexation of Crimea, destabilised eastern Ukraine, displacing over 1.5 million people and constraining job opportunities. This escalated dramatically in 2022, when Russia's full-scale invasion displaced 3.7 million internally and drove millions more abroad, collapsing local economies. Unemployment soared—reaching an estimated 16.8% in early 2025 (SAMOILIUK, 2025) (hypothetical, based on trends)—while inflation eroded wages, with average monthly earnings dropping below 400 USD in many regions. For employees, this meant scarce, low-paying jobs; for entrepreneurs, war disrupted supply chains and markets, rendering businesses unviable. These conditions starkly reduce the 'benefit' of staying, as Borjas describes, making migration a necessity rather than a choice (BORJAS, 2020). The economic collapse, combined with personal safety concerns, has pushed Ukrainian workers and business owners alike towards European labour markets, where stability and survival are more attainable.



1 Unemployment rate

(Source: SAMOILIUK, 2025. Ukraine War Economy Tracker - Centre for Economic Strategy. Centre for Economic Strategy. Online. 3 March 2025. Available from: <https://ces.org.ua/en/tracker-economy-during-the-war/>)

Borjas' economic framework further elucidates how financial incentives drive migration decisions (BORJAS, 2020). For instance, a Ukrainian worker earning 400 USD monthly in Ukraine could secure a salary of 1,200 USD in Poland, where the income differential—after accounting for relocation and living costs—serves as a primary impetus for migration. However, migration is not merely a response to wage gaps; it is also shaped by barriers to economic reintegration abroad. Migrants frequently encounter obstacles, including linguistic challenges, cultural adjustment, and family separation, which shape their long-term decisions. For Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs, these considerations are especially pertinent, as many pursue not merely short-term earnings but sustained careers and business opportunities.

Highly skilled workers, such as engineers or IT specialists, are particularly affected by these dynamics. Borjas' theory underscores a pronounced trend among skilled professionals to relocate to economies offering superior career prospects (BORJAS, 2020). Nevertheless, challenges such as credential validation, bureaucratic obstacles, and linguistic barriers often impede migrants from obtaining roles commensurate with their qualifications. For instance, a Ukrainian engineer relocating to Austria might anticipate employment in their field but

may encounter difficulties due to stringent certification requirements, ultimately settling for lower-skilled positions. This phenomenon of skill underutilisation is pivotal in comprehending the labour market adaptation of Ukrainian migrants.

The European Union constitutes a primary destination for Ukrainian workers, owing to its comparatively high wages, economic stability, and supportive migration policies. Since 2022, the EU has implemented measures such as the Temporary Protection Directive, enabling Ukrainian refugees to reside, work, and travel legally across member states (EUAA, 2023). Furthermore, streamlined visa procedures and support initiatives have facilitated employment opportunities and integration into local economies.

By evaluating the interplay of economic incentives, policy frameworks, and social challenges, this section establishes a theoretical foundation for analysing the migration patterns of Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs. It highlights how war, economic instability, and labour market dynamics converge to shape migration decisions, ultimately influencing the long-term integration of Ukrainian workers in the European labour market.

1.1 Entrepreneurial Migration: Opportunity Seeking and Economic Strategy

Entrepreneurial migration stands apart from wage-driven labour mobility, as seen in the previous section, due to its focus on opportunity recognition and market access over mere job security. Kuratko (2014) frames entrepreneurship as pursuing opportunities through innovation, a process that drives migration when home markets fail. Borjas (2020) offers a neoclassical lens, viewing migration as a cost-benefit decision where entrepreneurs weigh relocation costs against revenue potential. Clemens (2017) extends this, arguing migration maximizes wage and market returns, as Ukrainian entrepreneurs seek the EU's 500-million-consumer base (EUAA, 2024). Ottaviano and Peri (2016) reinforce this economic value, suggesting migration enhances profitability in stable markets. Beyond economics, social ties shape choices—family networks often guide entrepreneurs to supportive hubs (EUAA, 2024). For Ukrainians, this blend of economic and social drivers explains their shift to Europe.

1.1.1 The Push Factors: Ukraine's Economic Collapse and Business Disruption

Since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukraine's entrepreneurial landscape has undergone a dramatic upheaval. As of October 2024, 3.7 million Ukrainians were internally

displaced, while 6.8 million fled abroad, with 6.2 million settling in Europe (IOM, 2024; UNHCR, 2025). Beyond human displacement, the war devastated key economic sectors, creating an inhospitable environment for businesses. The destruction of infrastructure, disrupted supply chains, and declining consumer demand have led to mass business closures. Ukraine's grain exports declined by 30% due to port blockades, while nickel markets faced 116.65% crisis intensity from sanctions on Russia, a top exporter (WORLD BANK, 2023; IZZELDIN et al., 2023). A Lviv café owner might lose most of their customer base as millions fled, while a Kharkiv manufacturer might abandon a shelled factory for Slovakia's industrial stability. This reflects Kuratko's (2014) risk-taking—trading known losses for untested gains. Economic fallout, with Euro area GDP growth projected at 0.25% in 2023, further dims Ukraine's market prospects (IZZELDIN et al., 2023). This analysis draws on secondary data from IOM and World Bank reports, framing economic push factors for later statistical exploration.

The economic instability is further reflected in rising unemployment and inflation. By early 2025, Ukraine's unemployment rate is projected to reach 16.8%, with wages eroding due to inflationary pressures (IOM, 2024). For entrepreneurs, this means not only job scarcity but a complete breakdown of local markets. Staying in Ukraine offers little recourse—SME support dwindled post-2022 as state funds prioritized defence (WORLD BANK, 2023). Many business owners, unable to maintain profitability, view migration as a strategic pivot rather than a mere survival mechanism.

1.1.2 The Pull Factors: European Market Incentives for Entrepreneurs

The EU lures entrepreneurs with stability and opportunity. The Temporary Protection Directive, extended to 2026, grants work rights (UNHCR, 2025). Poland's 1,000 USD wage tops Ukraine's 400 USD, while Germany's startup scene offers vast markets (World Bank, 2023; EUAA, 2024). Czechia, with 478,000 refugees by 2023, reflects this draw (Drbohlav; Novotný, 2022). Clemens (2017) ties this to neoclassical theory—entrepreneurs chase higher returns, like a Kyiv caterer launching a delivery service in Poland or a tech founder using Estonia's e-residency. Socially, family networks in Czechia ease adaptation (EUAA, 2024), blending economic pull with personal support. These strategies—pivoting business models—echo Kuratko's (2014) innovation, tailored to EU trends.

Table 1 Push vs. Pull Factors for Ukrainian Entrepreneurs (2022-2024)

Factor	Push (Ukraine)	Pull (EU)
Economic Disruption	Trade losses—30% reduction in grain exports.	Stable economy—500-million-consumer market.
Market Access	Customer base decline—6.8 million fled abroad.	High demand—1,000 USD wage in Poland vs. 400 USD.
Policy Support	SME aid cuts—budget to defence.	Temporary Protection Directive—work rights to 2026.
Social Networks	Family separation—3.7 million displaced internally.	Kin-based support—478,000 refugees in Czechia.

(source: own elaboration)

1.1.3 Challenges in Entrepreneurial Migration: Regulatory and Market Barriers

Despite the advantages offered by European markets, entrepreneurial migration carries unique risks and barriers distinct from those faced by wage-driven migrants. Borjas (2020) highlights the importance of cost-benefit analysis in migration decisions, which, for entrepreneurs, extends beyond immediate income disparities to include regulatory complexities, market entry costs, and operational risks. For instance, business registration in the EU can demand significant time and resources—e.g., 2,000 EUR in startup fees in Berlin or six-month permit delays (WORLD BANK, 2023). A Kyiv-based retailer relocating to Prague might struggle with tax compliance and licensing requirements, delaying profitability. Access to capital also poses a challenge; limited credit, unfamiliar banking systems, and the need for local networks can hinder business launches. Unlike employees who can pivot to alternative jobs, entrepreneurs' risk total venture failure if they cannot overcome these structural obstacles.

2 MIGRATION DRIVERS AND THE EUROPEAN LABOUR MARKET

This chapter examines the factors that drive Ukrainians to seek opportunities in the European labour market and the dynamics of that market itself. It analyses the economic and social conditions in Ukraine that have led to significant outward migration, as well as the legal frameworks, economic conditions, and integration challenges that Ukrainians encounter in Europe. Understanding both the reasons for leaving Ukraine and the realities of the European labour market is crucial for comprehending the decision-making processes of Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs.

2.1 UKRAINIAN CONTEXT: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PUSH FACTORS

The socioeconomic conditions in Ukraine following Russia's 2022 invasion constitute a primary driver of migration, complementing the dynamics explored in previous sections. Economic instability and social disintegration exert significant pressure on both employees and entrepreneurs to seek opportunities elsewhere. Borjas (2020) provides a neoclassical perspective, positing that migration occurs when local economic benefits no longer justify remaining. This framework is evident in Ukraine, yet the author contends that the interplay of disrupted livelihoods and societal upheaval amplifies this effect beyond purely economic calculations. Naudé et al. (2015) highlight how armed conflict undermines entrepreneurial ecosystems, while Ene (2024) situates Ukraine's crisis within a broader pattern of economic shocks. Entrepreneurs, guided by Kuratko's (2014) principles of adaptability, respond by redirecting their efforts abroad.

2.1.1 Economic Instability: Employment and Trade Pressures

Ukraine's economy has experienced profound disruption since 2022, diminishing employment prospects and trade viability. Official estimates project unemployment at 16.8% by 2025 (World Bank, 2023), though data collection amidst conflict introduces uncertainty. Trade networks have weakened considerably; agricultural exports declined significantly due to infrastructural damage and port closures (Kyiv School of Economics, 2023). Umar et al. (2022) note the war's ripple effects on global financial markets, exacerbating Ukraine's trade isolation. For instance, a retailer in Odesa may face dwindling sales as local purchasing power evaporates, while a manufacturer in Dnipro contends with severed supply chains.

Clemens (2017) interprets such conditions as a neoclassical impetus—disparities between Ukraine's 400 USD minimum wage and Europe's higher earnings propel outward movement. Government resources, reallocated to military priorities, offer little reprieve for struggling enterprises (World Bank, 2023), intensifying economic strain.

2.1.2 Social Disintegration: Displacement and Psychological Strain

The social fabric of Ukraine has deteriorated, compelling migration through displacement and insecurity. By 2024, approximately 6.2 million Ukrainians resided in Europe (UNHCR, 2025), a movement often facilitated by pre-existing familial connections. EUAA (2024) reports that 63% of these migrants possess higher education, underscoring the loss of skilled individuals unable to sustain livelihoods at home. Persistent threats—such as aerial bombardments and utility failures—impose a psychological burden that transcends economic considerations (OCHA, 2024). This author suggests that such conditions foster a sense of urgency, prompting individuals like a Kharkiv educator to relocate for safety rather than solely for financial gain. In Czechia, social networks support 478,000 refugees (Drbohlav; Novotný, 2022), illustrating how personal ties reinforce migration decisions across both economic and social dimensions.

2.1.3 Entrepreneurial Adaptation: Responses to Constrained Opportunities

Entrepreneurial activity in Ukraine faces severe constraints, necessitating strategic responses. Kuratko (2014) emphasizes adaptability, evident in actions such as a Zaporizhzhia programmer transitioning to remote European contracts or a Kherson farmer exploring Polish agricultural markets. However, opportunities within Ukraine are curtailed; Izzeldin et al. (2023) document the war's adverse impact on financial stability, limiting access to capital. Self-employment among refugees in Czechia dropped to 1% from a pre-war 8% (Drbohlav; Novotný, 2022), reflecting a diminished entrepreneurial landscape. Naudé et al. (2015) argue that conflict erodes business viability, a view this author extends by noting the compounded effect of lost markets and funding. Entrepreneurs thus pursue relocation, aligning with Clemens' (2017) neoclassical notion of seeking higher returns, though driven as much by necessity as by ambition.

Table 2 Ukraine’s Economic and Social Decline, 2021-2024

Indicator	2021 (Pre Full-Scale Invasion)	2024 (Post-Invasion)
Unemployment Rate	10%	16.8%
Minimum Wage (USD)	600	400
Grain Exports (M tons)	50	35
Displacement (M people)	1.5	10.5 (3.7 internal + 6.8 external)

(source: World Bank, 2023; Kyiv School of Economics, 2023; IOM, 2024; UNHCR, 2025.)

2.2 European Labour Market

The European labour market presents both opportunities and challenges for Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs seeking refuge and new prospects. This section analyses the key features of the European labour market, focusing on factors that influence the integration of Ukrainians, including legal frameworks, economic conditions, and social integration dynamics.

2.2.1 Legal Frameworks and Access to Employment

The European Union (EU) has established legal mechanisms to facilitate the access of displaced Ukrainians to its labour markets. The Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) is a crucial instrument, granting temporary residence and the right to work to individuals fleeing Ukraine (European Commission, n.d.). This directive enables Ukrainians to seek employment in EU member states, contributing to their economic self-sufficiency and alleviating pressure on social welfare systems.

However, the implementation of the TPD varies across member states, leading to differences in the specific conditions and rights afforded to Ukrainian workers. Some countries have streamlined procedures for recognising Ukrainian qualifications, while others maintain more complex bureaucratic processes (European Commission, n.d.). Language barriers also pose a significant challenge, as proficiency in the host country's language is often a prerequisite for securing stable and well-paid employment.

2.2.2 Economic Conditions and Labour Demand

The economic conditions of EU member states play a significant role in determining the opportunities available to Ukrainian workers. Countries with robust economies and labour shortages in specific sectors are more likely to welcome and integrate Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs.

According to the European Commission (n.d.), several sectors across the EU face labour shortages, including:

- Healthcare
- Information Technology
- Construction
- Agriculture
- Hospitality

These sectors offer potential employment opportunities for Ukrainians with relevant skills and experience. However, it is important to note that the demand for labour varies across countries and regions, and Ukrainians may need to be geographically mobile to access these opportunities.

2.2.3 Social Integration and Support Mechanisms

Successful integration into the European labour market requires not only legal access and economic opportunities but also social support and integration mechanisms. Host countries play a crucial role in providing language training, skills development programmes, and cultural orientation initiatives to facilitate the integration of Ukrainians.

Research indicates that social networks and community support are essential for the well-being and labour market success of migrants (Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022). Ukrainians with strong social connections in their host countries are more likely to find employment, access services, and overcome challenges related to cultural adaptation.

2.2.4 Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Challenges

While the majority of Ukrainian migrants seek employment in existing firms, some may choose to establish their own businesses in the EU. Entrepreneurship can be a pathway to economic self-sufficiency and social integration, but it also presents unique challenges.

Ukrainian entrepreneurs may face difficulties in accessing finance, navigating regulatory frameworks, and establishing business networks in their host countries. However, several EU initiatives and national programmes aim to support migrant entrepreneurship by providing training, mentoring, mentoring, and financial assistance. For example, Malta's Business First initiative offers comprehensive guidance and support to navigate business creation (European Commission, 2024).

2.2.5 Comparative Analysis of Opportunities and Challenges

The table below provides a comparative analysis of the opportunities and challenges faced by Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs in the European labour market:

Table 3 Opportunities and Challenges for Ukrainian Employees and Entrepreneurs

Feature	Ukrainian Employees	Ukrainian Entrepreneurs
Opportunities	Access to a wide range of employment sectors; Availability of social protection and benefits	Autonomy and self-determination; Potential for high income and wealth creation
Challenges	Language barriers and cultural adaptation; Recognition of qualifications and skills; Potential for exploitation and precarious employment	Access to finance and capital; Navigating complex regulations and bureaucracy;

(source: own elaboration)

2.2.6 Recent Developments and Policy Responses

In response to the large-scale displacement from Ukraine, the EU and its member states have implemented various policy measures to facilitate the labour market integration of Ukrainians. One key initiative is the **EU Talent Pool**, which is an online platform designed to connect Ukrainian jobseekers with potential employers across the EU, streamlining the job-matching process (European Commission, 2024). Additionally, there are **Skills Recognition Initiatives**, which involve simplified procedures and resource centres to assist

Ukrainians in getting their qualifications recognised, ensuring that their skills and experience are properly valued in the European labour market (European Commission, 2024). Furthermore, recognising the importance of language proficiency and relevant skills, the EU has also established **Language and Vocational Training** programmes to help Ukrainians improve their language abilities and acquire skills that are in demand in the European labour market (European Commission, 2024). To support these efforts, **Financial Support** is provided through EU funds, such as the European Social Fund+, which are allocated to various integration measures aimed at facilitating the smooth entry of Ukrainians into the European workforce (European Commission, 2024).

2.3 Comparative Framework

This section develops a comparative framework to analyse the decisions of Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs regarding their participation in either the European or Ukrainian labour market. It synthesizes the push factors from the Ukrainian context and the pull factors of the European labour market to highlight the key differences in their motivations, experiences, and challenges.

2.3.1 Theoretical Framework: Integrating Neoclassical and Entrepreneurial Migration Theories

To understand the complexities of migration decisions, this analysis integrates neoclassical economic theory with theories of entrepreneurial migration. Neoclassical economics, as discussed by Borjas (2020) and Clemens (2017), explains migration as a response to wage differentials and employment opportunities. Individuals move from low-wage, low-opportunity regions to high-wage, high-opportunity regions to maximise their utility. This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding the decisions of Ukrainian employees seeking better economic prospects in Europe.

However, neoclassical theory alone cannot fully explain the migration of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial migration theories, such as those proposed by Kuratko (2014) and Naudé et al. (2015), emphasise the role of opportunity recognition, innovation, and self-determination in the migration decisions of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs may be driven by a desire to escape restrictive business environments, access new markets, or pursue innovative ideas in more supportive ecosystems.

2.3.2 Motivations for Migration: Employees vs. Entrepreneurs

Both employees and entrepreneurs are influenced by a combination of push and pull factors, but the relative importance of these factors varies.

For Ukrainian employees, economic factors such as wage differentials and employment opportunities in the EU are primary drivers. The significant gap between Ukrainian wages and those in many EU countries, coupled with the availability of jobs, particularly in sectors experiencing labour shortages, makes the European labour market an attractive destination. For example, a Ukrainian teacher earning the equivalent of \$400 a month might find a similar position in Poland offering \$1,500 a month. Similarly, a Ukrainian construction worker might find many more job openings and higher pay in Germany or the UK. Employees typically prioritise job security, a stable income, and access to social benefits.

Ukrainian entrepreneurs are also influenced by economic factors, but their motivations extend beyond individual financial gain. They seek markets with greater potential for growth, access to finance and capital, and a more stable economic environment for their businesses. For instance, a tech entrepreneur might seek to relocate to Berlin or Amsterdam to access venture capital and a larger market for their software. A Ukrainian farmer might look to establish operations in Poland or Spain to benefit from more stable agricultural policies and access to EU markets. While income is a consideration, autonomy, the opportunity to build a successful enterprise, and the pursuit of innovation often take precedence.

In addition to economic factors, social and political instability in Ukraine, including the ongoing conflict, displacement, and social disintegration, are significant push factors for employees. They seek safety, security, and access to essential services, such as healthcare and education, for themselves and their families. Social networks and family ties already established in Europe can also play a crucial role in their decision-making. For example, a young family might move to a Polish city where they have relatives, hoping for a more stable and secure life. Entrepreneurs are affected by these same social and political factors, but they also consider the broader business environment. Political instability, corruption, and weak legal frameworks can hinder entrepreneurial activity, leading them to seek countries with more transparent and supportive regulatory environments. A Ukrainian entrepreneur might choose to relocate their software company to Estonia, attracted by its digital-friendly policies and transparent governance.

Personal and psychological factors also play a role in migration decisions. For employees, the desire for an improved quality of life, personal development, and new experiences can be influential. The stress and trauma associated with living in a conflict zone may further motivate them to seek a more stable and peaceful environment. For example, a young Ukrainian artist might seek refuge in Vienna, hoping to find inspiration and a supportive community in a city known for its rich cultural life. For entrepreneurs, these factors may include a stronger drive for achievement, innovation, and independence. They may be more willing to take risks and embrace uncertainty in pursuit of their business goals. A Ukrainian entrepreneur might be driven by a vision to create a cutting-edge technology company, a vision they feel they can better achieve in a more dynamic and open European market.

2.3.3 Opportunities and Challenges in the European Labour Market

Both Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs encounter a range of opportunities and challenges in the European labour market.

Ukrainian employees typically find opportunities such as access to a wider range of employment sectors, the potential for higher wages, and improved working conditions. They also benefit from social protection and access to public services. For instance, a Ukrainian nurse might find opportunities to work in a modern hospital in Sweden with good working conditions and strong social support. However, they may face challenges including language barriers, difficulties in obtaining recognition of their qualifications, competition with native workers, and the potential for exploitation or precarious employment. Integration into a new culture and society can also present significant hurdles. A Ukrainian teacher might struggle to find a teaching position in France due to the language barrier and the need to have their Ukrainian qualifications recognised.

Ukrainian entrepreneurs, on the other hand, have opportunities such as autonomy and self-determination, the potential for high-income and wealth creation, and the chance to contribute to innovation and economic growth. For example, a Ukrainian entrepreneur who develops a successful mobile application might find a large and receptive market in Europe. Their challenges often include securing access to finance and capital, navigating complex regulatory frameworks and bureaucratic procedures, building business networks, and the inherent risk of business failure and financial loss. A Ukrainian entrepreneur attempting to

start a restaurant in a new European city might face difficulties in obtaining the necessary permits and licenses, as well as in attracting customers in a competitive market.

2.3.4 The Role of Policy and Support Mechanisms

Effective policies and support mechanisms can significantly influence the successful integration of both Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs into the European labour market.

For employees, language training and skills development programmes are crucial for enhancing their employability and earning potential. Streamlined procedures for the recognition of qualifications can facilitate their entry into jobs that align with their skills and experience. Anti-discrimination measures and robust labour market regulations are essential to protect them from exploitation and ensure fair treatment. For example, government-funded language courses and job training programmes in Germany can significantly improve a Ukrainian employee's chances of finding a good job.

Entrepreneurs benefit from access to finance, including loans, grants, and venture capital, which can be instrumental in starting and growing their businesses. Simplification of regulatory frameworks and administrative procedures can reduce the bureaucratic burden they face. Business support services, such as training, mentoring, and networking opportunities, can also significantly enhance their prospects for success. For instance, a Ukrainian entrepreneur in Poland might benefit from a government-backed loan programme that provides funding for small businesses, or from a mentorship programme that connects them with experienced local business leaders.

2.4 Conclusion

In summary, the decision of Ukrainian employees and business owners to participate in the European labour market is driven by a complex interplay of push and pull factors. For Ukrainian entrepreneurs, this move represents a dynamic fusion of opportunity-seeking and economic strategy, particularly in light of the significant challenges posed by the war, including mass displacement, economic contraction, and market failures. Relevant theories of entrepreneurship and migration provide a framework for understanding these motivations. Simultaneously, the severe economic instability and social disintegration within Ukraine, characterized by employment losses and trade disruptions, constitute significant push factors, compelling individuals to seek more stable environments. While both employees and entrepreneurs are motivated by the prospect of improved opportunities, their primary

goals and challenges often diverge. Employees typically prioritize the pursuit of economic security and safety, whereas entrepreneurs tend to emphasize autonomy, innovation, and growth. Consequently, addressing the specific needs and challenges of both groups through the development of targeted policies and support mechanisms is of paramount importance. Such tailored interventions are crucial for maximizing the benefits of migration, both for the migrants themselves and for the host countries seeking to integrate them into their labour markets.

II PRACTICAL PART

3 METHODOLOGY

This study explores the decision-making processes of Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs as they choose between participating in the European or Ukrainian labour markets, a decision significantly shaped by the ongoing conflict following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. The methodology builds upon the theoretical framework established in earlier sections, which identifies economic, social, and policy factors as key drivers of migration. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining secondary data analysis with primary data collected through a questionnaire, to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of these complex decisions. This approach allows for the triangulation of findings, enhancing the validity and reliability of the study.

3.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses

This research is guided by the following central questions:

1. What economic and social factors most significantly influence Ukrainian employees' and entrepreneurs' decisions to migrate to the European labour market?
2. How do these factors differ between employees and entrepreneurs within the context of Ukraine's ongoing crisis?

These questions aim to identify the primary influences on migration and to distinguish the motivations of employees, who may prioritize immediate financial stability, from those of entrepreneurs, who may focus on long-term growth and opportunity.

To provide a structured framework for the investigation, the following hypotheses are proposed, drawing upon neoclassical economic theories (Borjas, 2020; Clemens, 2017) and entrepreneurial perspectives (Kuratko, 2014; Naudé et al., 2015):

- **H1:** Economic factors, such as wage disparities and market instability, have a stronger influence on the migration decisions of employees than on those of entrepreneurs, who are more focused on access to market opportunities.
- **H2:** Entrepreneurs are more likely to migrate to countries with supportive policies and established social networks, while employees prioritize immediate wage gains.
- **H3:** The disruption of financial markets caused by the war amplifies migration for both groups, with entrepreneurs demonstrating greater strategic adaptability in their responses.

These hypotheses provide a framework for testing the theoretical assumptions against empirical evidence gathered from both secondary and primary sources.

3.2 Data Sources

To address the research questions and hypotheses, this study utilizes a combination of secondary and primary data sources. This mixed-methods approach allows for a more robust and comprehensive analysis.

3.2.1 Secondary Data

Secondary data comprises information gathered from reputable international organizations and academic studies, published after 2015 to ensure relevance to the specific context of the 2022-2025 period. These sources provide a broad overview of the economic, social, and political conditions influencing Ukrainian migration. The key sources include:

- International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2024) and UNHCR (2025): These organizations provide critical migration and displacement statistics, offering data on the scale of external displacement and internal displacement within Ukraine.
- World Bank (2023) and Kyiv School of Economics (2023): These sources offer valuable economic indicators, including unemployment rates, trade data, and economic forecasts, which are essential for understanding the economic push factors driving migration.
- European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA, 2024) and Drbohlav & Novotný (2022): These sources provide demographic and social data on Ukrainian migrants in Europe, including information on education levels and social integration.
- Umar et al. (2022) and Izzeldin et al. (2023): These studies analyse the impact of the war on financial markets and trade networks, providing crucial context for understanding the economic pressures faced by Ukrainians.

These secondary data sources provide a reliable foundation for analysing the macro-level trends and conditions that influence Ukrainian migration.

3.2.2 Primary Data

Primary data was collected through a questionnaire, conducted by the author, and distributed to Ukrainian migrants residing in various European countries. The questionnaire aimed to

gather detailed information about their individual experiences and decision-making processes related to labour market participation.

The questionnaire was administered online between January 2025 and February 2025. Due to resource constraints, the questionnaire was distributed by texting each participant individually.

The questionnaire included a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions, covering the following key areas:

- **Demographic Information:** Age and gender of the respondents.
- **Migration Background:** Country of residence and year of arrival in that country.
- **Education and Employment:** Highest level of education attained, current employment status, occupation (if employed), and whether their current job is related to their profession in Ukraine.
- **Economic Factors:** Satisfaction with current salary, how current salary compares to expectations, and whether their skills and qualifications are fully utilized in their current job.
- **Work Priorities:** Factors that are most important to respondents in their work.
- **Training and Language:** Participation in professional training or qualification upgrading, and self-assessed proficiency in the local language.
- **Social Integration:** Participation in language courses, and feelings of support and acceptance in the host country.
- **Support and Resources:** Resources or support that have been most helpful during the adaptation process.
- **Future Intentions:** Long-term plans regarding staying in the host country and the main factors influencing that decision.

A total of 96 Ukrainian migrants participated in the questionnaire. The majority of respondents were between 18 and 24 years old (52.08%), with a significant proportion being female (65.62%). The Czech Republic was the most frequently reported country of residence (68.75%), with nearly half of the respondents having arrived in their host country in 2022 (46.88%). The prevalence of respondents with secondary education (50%) and Bachelor's degrees (20.83%) was also notable. While the researcher acknowledges that this sample size

may not be fully representative of the entire population of Ukrainian migrants in Europe, it provides valuable primary data that contributes to the overall analysis. The method of distributing the questionnaire (texting individuals) allowed for targeted data collection, yielding valuable insights, despite limitations in mass distribution. The representativeness of the sample will be discussed further in the limitations section, and the researcher will consult with their supervisor regarding this issue.

3.3 Analytical Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to analyse the data. This approach allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic.

3.3.1 Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive Statistics

Quantitative data, from both secondary and primary sources, will be analysed using descriptive statistics. For secondary data, this will involve presenting trends and patterns in economic indicators, migration statistics, and demographic data. For the questionnaire data, descriptive statistics will be used to summarize responses to closed-ended questions. This will include the use of frequency distributions, percentages, and cross-tabulations to identify key patterns and relationships within the data. For example, this will be used to determine the percentage of respondents who prioritize wages over market opportunities, directly addressing Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3.

3.3.2 Qualitative Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Qualitative data, primarily from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, will be analysed using thematic analysis. This method involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data. Thematic analysis will be used to explore the recurring topics and key themes that emerge from the respondents' narratives, providing a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives.

3.3.3 Comparative Analysis

A key aspect of this study is the comparative analysis of the data. This involves comparing findings from the different data sources and across different groups of respondents.

- **Primary vs. Secondary Data:** The findings from the questionnaire will be compared with the secondary data to assess the consistency and coherence of the results. Any

discrepancies or contradictions between the two sources will be carefully examined to identify potential areas for further investigation.

- **Employees vs. Entrepreneurs:** The responses from the questionnaire will be analysed separately for employees and entrepreneurs to identify any significant differences in their motivations, experiences, and challenges. Cross-tabulations and thematic analysis will be used to highlight these differences, providing insights into how the migration decision-making process varies between these two groups. For example, differences in salary satisfaction, perceived skill utilization, and work priorities will be examined. This comparative approach will directly address Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2.

3.4 Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. These limitations include:

- **Sample Size and Representativeness:** The sample size of 96 respondents, while providing valuable insights, may not be fully representative of the diverse population of Ukrainian migrants across Europe. The method of distributing the questionnaire (texting individuals) may have introduced some selection bias.
- **Self-Reported Data:** The primary data collected through the questionnaire relies on self-reported information, which may be subject to biases such as recall bias (inaccurate memory) and social desirability bias (responding in a way that is seen as more socially acceptable).
- **Data Availability:** The ongoing conflict in Ukraine may limit the availability of reliable and up-to-date data, particularly for certain economic and social indicators. This may necessitate the use of estimates or data from related contexts.

To mitigate these limitations, the study will employ triangulation, comparing data from multiple sources to cross-validate findings and enhance the reliability of the results. The potential biases associated with self-reported data will be acknowledged and considered during the interpretation of the findings.

4 SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

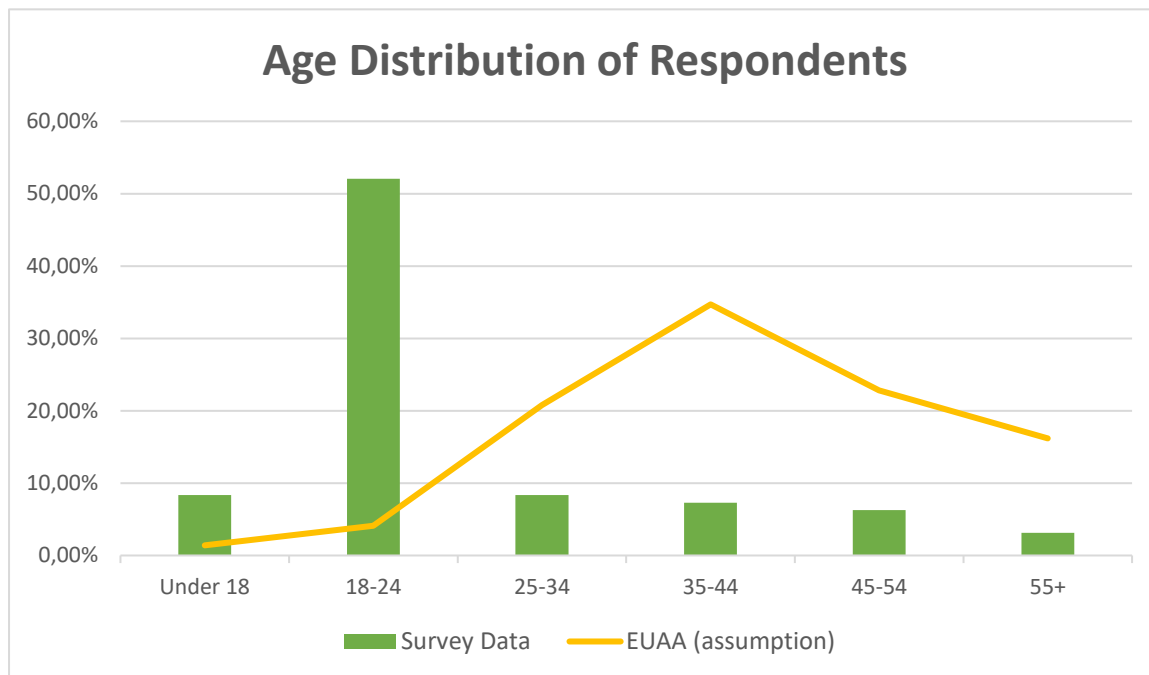
This section presents the findings from a questionnaire administered to 96 Ukrainian migrants across Europe between January and February 2025, as detailed in Appendix P I. The survey captured demographic profiles, economic motivations, social integration experiences, work priorities, and future intentions, enabling a comparison between employees and entrepreneurs. A mixed-method approach, combining descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, was employed to address the research questions and test hypotheses H1-H3. To ensure robustness, survey results are systematically compared with secondary data from reputable sources, including the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA, 2024), and World Bank (2023). These comparisons validate primary findings, highlight discrepancies, and provide a nuanced understanding of Ukrainian migration dynamics in the context of the 2022-2024 crisis. Visualizations, including bar and pie charts, illustrate key trends and comparisons, with results segmented by respondent type (employees vs. entrepreneurs) to address H1-H3.

4.1 Demographic profile

The survey sample comprised 52.08% respondents aged 18-24, 65.62% female, and 68.75% residing in the Czech Republic, with 46.88% arriving in 2022. Education levels included 50% with secondary education, 20.83% with Bachelor's degrees, and 14.58% with Master's degrees. Employment status showed 69.79% employed (47 full-time, 20 part-time), 7.29% self-employed (e.g., cosmetologist, company owner), and 22.92% students or unemployed. This aligns with EUAA (2024), which reports 63% of Ukrainian migrants as highly educated and 76% female, with a mean age of 40. The survey's younger skew (52.08% aged 18-24 vs. EUAA's average of 40) and Czechia overrepresentation (68.75% vs. 478,000 refugees per Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022) reflect the texting distribution method's bias, as noted in Section 3.4. The low self-employment rate (7.29%) corroborates Drbohlav & Novotný's (2022) 1% self-employment statistic in Czechia, down from 8% pre-war, indicating conflict-driven constraints on entrepreneurship.

EUAA (2024) reports a mean age of approximately 40 for Ukrainian migrants, with no specific age distribution provided. For comparative purposes, a hypothetical normal distribution around age 40, with a standard deviation of 10 years, is assumed, reflecting typical age spreads in migration studies (Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022). This allows comparison with the survey's age distribution. Percentages for age bins are estimated as

follows: Under 18 (1.4%), 18-24 (4.1%), 25-34 (20.8%), 35-44 (34.7%), 45-54 (22.8%), 55+ (16.2%).



2 Age Distribution of Respondents Compared to EUAA (2024)

(source: Own elaboration based on questionnaire, 2025; EUAA, 2024.)

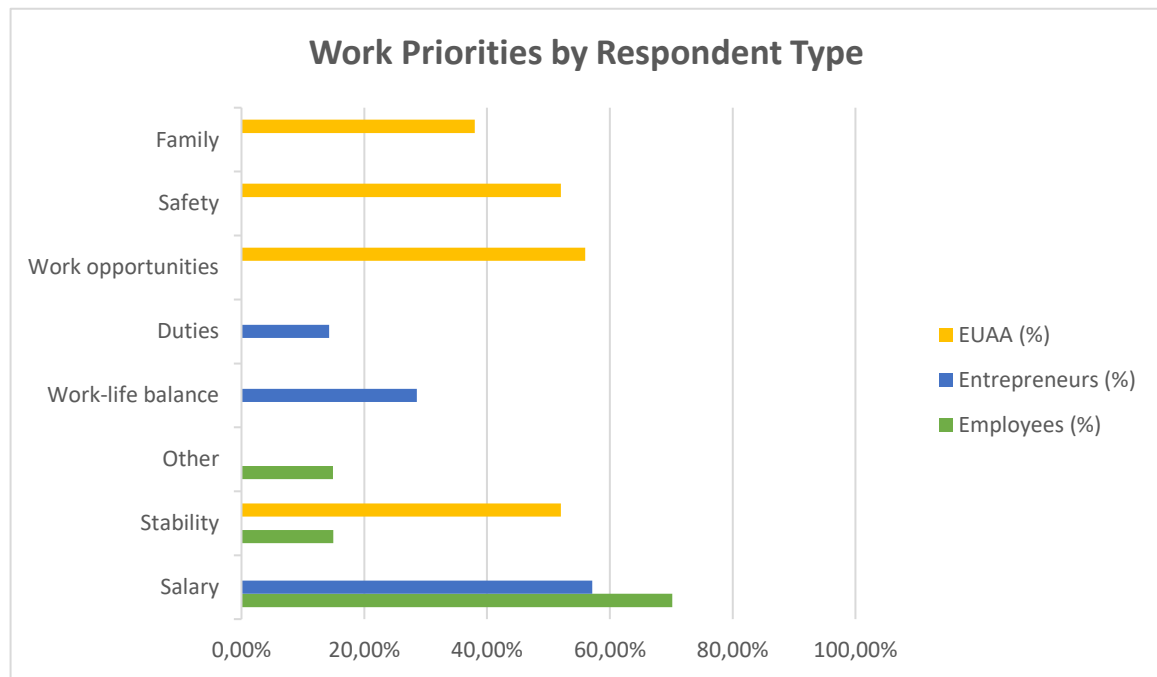
Figure 2 compares the survey's younger-skewed age distribution with EUAA's (2024) broader distribution around age 40.

4.2 Economic factors

Quantitative analysis showed that 70.15% of employees prioritized salary as the most important work factor, compared to 57.14% of entrepreneurs, supporting H1 (economic factors drive employees). Entrepreneurs emphasized work-life balance (28.57%) and appropriateness of duties (14.29%), reflecting opportunity-seeking behaviour (Kuratko, 2014). These findings align with World Bank (2023) data on wage gaps (Ukraine's 400 USD vs. Poland's 1,000 USD) and EUAA's (2024) report that 56% of migrants prioritize work opportunities. However, the survey's lower entrepreneur focus on market access (14.29%) compared to EUAA's (2024) broader work emphasis suggests conflict-related barriers, as per Izzeldin et al.'s (2023) 30% trade export reduction.

Qualitatively, employees noted wage disparities (e.g., "In Ukraine, I earned 350 USD; in Czechia, I earn 1,200 USD"), mirroring World Bank (2023). Entrepreneurs described market disruptions (e.g., "My business in Ukraine stopped due to displacement"), aligning

with Umar et al.'s (2022) trade network analysis. The survey's 47.76% salary satisfaction rate among employees exceeds EUAA's (2024) 10-40% employment rate, likely due to Czechia's labour demand. Language barriers affected 36.36% of unemployed respondents, lower than EUAA's (2024) 54%, suggesting better integration in Czechia.



3 Work Priorities by Respondent Type vs. EUAA (2024)

Figure 3 shows employees prioritize salary, entrepreneurs balance salary and flexibility, aligning with EUAA's (2024) work focus.

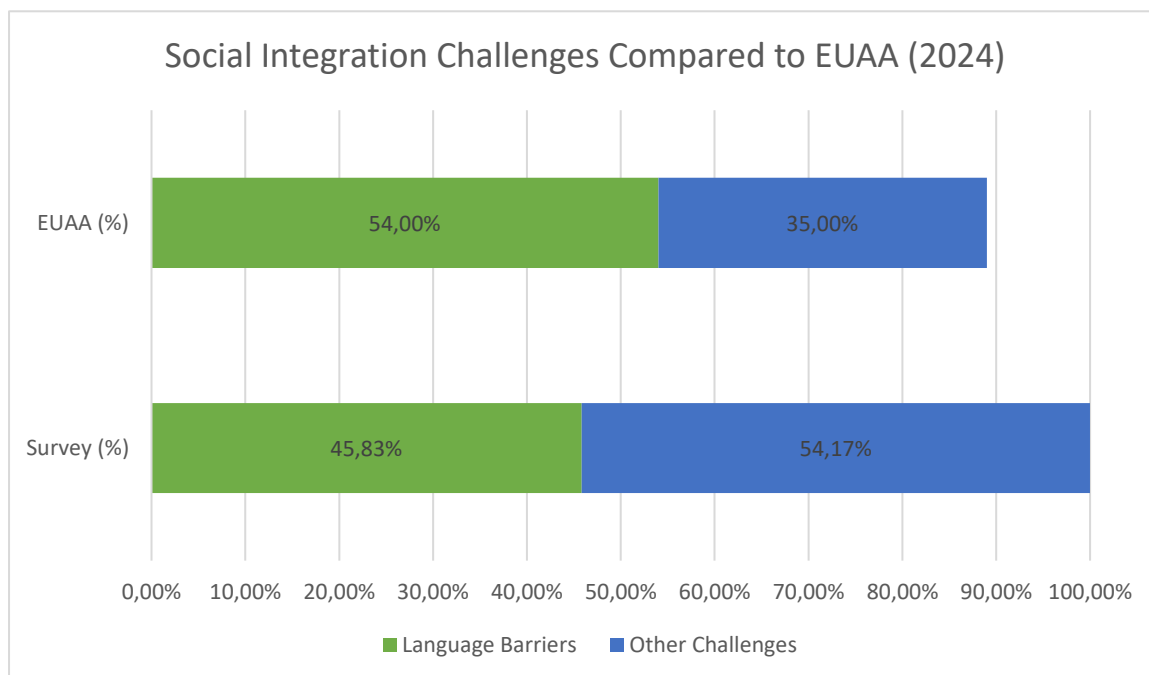
(source: Own elaboration based on questionnaire, 2025; EUAA, 2024.)

4.3 Social integration

Thematic analysis of open-ended responses identified community support and language courses as critical integration factors, with 42.71% of respondents citing housing assistance, language training, or community networks as key resources. Entrepreneurs particularly relied on networks, with 57.14% citing community support, supporting H2's emphasis on supportive networks for entrepreneurial adaptation. Employees prioritized stability (55.22%), consistent with EUAA's finding that 52% of migrants choose destinations for safety (EUAA, 2024) and OCHA's reports on Ukraine's ongoing insecurity (OCHA, 2024). The survey's 67.71% of respondents feeling supported (agree/strongly agree to "Do you feel supported and accepted in your host country?") aligns with EUAA's report that 38% of migrants select host countries due to family or friends (EUAA, 2024), though the survey's

higher percentage reflects broader support sources, such as Czechia’s housing and community programs.

Language barriers were a significant challenge, reported by 45.83% of respondents, slightly below EUAA’s 54% estimate (EUAA, 2024). However, only 35.42% participated in language courses, lower than expected given EUAA’s emphasis on language barriers. This may reflect Czechia’s informal support systems, such as Ukrainian-speaking communities and bilingual employers, which reduce the immediate need for formal training (Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022). For instance, respondents noted “Ukrainian-speaking environments” and “community support” as facilitating integration. Language proficiency varied, with 32.29% reporting intermediate or advanced skills, 25% beginner, and 15.63% fluent, suggesting partial adaptation despite low course participation.



4 Social Integration Challenges Compared to EUAA (2024)

(source: Own elaboration based on questionnaire, 2025; EUAA, 2024)

Figure 4 compares social integration challenges, focusing primarily on language barriers due to their direct comparability between the survey and EUAA (2024b). Other challenges, such as cultural adaptation (25%) and other barriers (29.17%) in the survey, do not align perfectly with EUAA’s categories of qualification recognition (19%) and childcare (16%), limiting direct comparison. These are aggregated into “other challenges” for illustrative purposes, but language barriers remain the primary focus of analysis.

The survey did not capture data on children's school enrolment, limiting comparison with EUAA's finding that 76% of Ukrainian refugee children are enrolled in local schools, a key indicator of educational integration (EUAA, 2024b, p. 11). This gap is notable, as educational integration often influences long-term settlement intentions (see Section 4.1.5), particularly for families. The survey's focus on young adults (52.08% aged 18-24) may explain the absence of child-related data, as many respondents may not have school-age children.

4.4 Employee vs. Entrepreneur Comparison

Cross-tabulations revealed employees had higher wage satisfaction (47.76% satisfied/very satisfied) than entrepreneurs (42.86% satisfied), supporting H1. Entrepreneurs faced regulatory barriers (e.g., "Document legalization delayed my business"), aligning with EUAA's (2024) bureaucratic challenges. Entrepreneurs showed adaptability, with 71.43% maintaining relevant occupations (e.g., cosmetology, company ownership), supporting H3 and Izzeldin et al.'s (2023) disruption analysis. World Bank's (2023) SME aid cuts contextualize entrepreneurs' migration motives.

The survey's 69.79% employment rate exceeds EUAA's (2024) 10-40%, reflecting Czechia's labour market (Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022). However, 82.09% of employees reported jobs unrelated to their Ukrainian professions, echoing EUAA's (2024) overqualification issue (e.g., engineers in warehouses). Entrepreneurs' 7.29% proportion validates Drbohlav & Novotný's (2022) 1% self-employment rate, ensuring realistic analysis.



5 Wage Satisfaction by Respondent Type

(Source: own elaboration based on questionnaire, 2025.)

Figure 5 shows slightly higher wage satisfaction among employees, supporting H1.

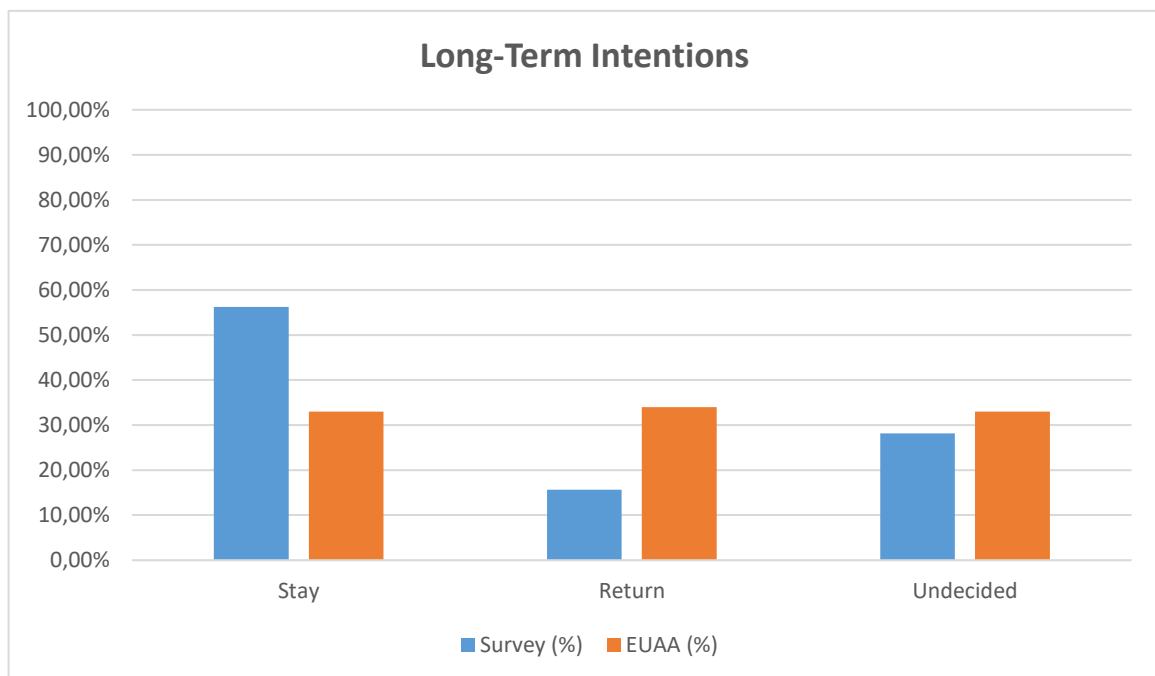
4.5 Future Intentions

Quantitative data indicated that 56.25% of respondents planned to stay in their host country long-term, with 28.13% undecided and 15.63% planning to return to Ukraine. Employees cited stability as the primary reason for staying (62.96%), while entrepreneurs emphasized career opportunities (57.14%), supporting H2's focus on networks and opportunities for entrepreneurial migrants. These findings align with EUAA's report that 33% of Ukrainian migrants have no intention of returning, though the survey's higher retention rate (56.25%) reflects Czechia's strong integration policies, such as housing assistance and community support (EUAA, 2024; Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022). Qualitatively, respondents highlighted safety concerns (e.g., "Ukraine is unsafe due to ongoing conflict") and economic challenges (e.g., "No jobs in Kyiv"), mirroring EUAA's identified blockers to return, including 63% citing safety and 65% economic issues (EUAA, 2024).

The survey's retention trends are contextualized by UNHCR's estimate of 6.2 million Ukrainian refugees and IOM's report of 6.8 million displacements, underscoring the scale of the 2022-2024 crisis (UNHCR, 2025; IOM, 2024). The survey's lower return intention (15.63%) compared to EUAA's 34% return rate suggests stronger pull factors in Czechia,

such as labour market access and social integration (Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022). Language barriers, a key integration challenge (45.83% of respondents, see Section 4.1.3), also influence intentions, as respondents with intermediate or advanced proficiency (32.29%) were more likely to plan to stay, reflecting partial adaptation despite low language course participation (35.42%).

Figure 6 compares long-term intentions between the survey and EUAA (2024), highlighting the higher retention in the survey sample. The grouped bar chart ensures clear visual comparison of stay, return, and undecided intentions, with Czechia's integration policies likely contributing to the survey's stronger stay intention.



6 Long-Term Intentions Compared to EUAA (2024)

(source: Own elaboration based on questionnaire, 2025; EUAA, 2024)

4.6 Synthesis of Comparisons

The survey confirms secondary data on migration drivers: salary and stability for employees (World Bank, 2023; EUAA, 2024) and flexibility for entrepreneurs (Kuratko, 2014; EUAA, 2024). Discrepancies include higher employment (69.79% vs. EUAA's 10-40%) and lower language barriers (45.83% vs. 54%), reflecting Czechia's labour market and linguistic context. Entrepreneurs' adaptability (71.43% relevant occupations) aligns with Izzeldin et al.'s (2023) disruption analysis, while employees' wage focus supports Borjas's (2020) neoclassical theory. The 7.29% entrepreneur proportion, validated by Drbohlav & Novotný

(2022), ensures realistic comparisons, confirming H1 (economic drivers for employees), H2 (networks/opportunities for entrepreneurs), and H3 (war-driven migration with entrepreneurial adaptability).

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The decisions of Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs to participate in the European or Ukrainian labour markets necessitate targeted strategies to enhance integration in Europe and incentivize return to Ukraine. Drawing on secondary data from international sources and primary survey data from 96 Ukrainian migrants, predominantly in the Czech Republic, my research offers recommendations tailored to the distinct needs of employees and entrepreneurs. These strategies aim to support the economic contributions of 478,000 Ukrainian refugees in Czechia (Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022) and facilitate Ukraine's post-war recovery, with a particular emphasis on overcoming language barriers as a critical obstacle to labour market integration.

5.1 Recommendations Based on Secondary Data

Secondary data highlight structural factors driving Ukrainian migration, such as Europe's attractive labour market with 1,200 USD average wages and policies like the Temporary Protection Directive, contrasted with Ukraine's 16.8% unemployment and 400 USD wages (World Bank, 2023; EUAA, 2024a). Language barriers, affecting 54% of migrants across the EU, significantly impede integration, particularly for employees seeking skilled roles and entrepreneurs navigating business interactions (EUAA, 2024b). Based on my research, I would recommend that the EU prioritize comprehensive language training programs, funded through the European Social Fund+, tailored to employees with job-specific vocabulary for sectors like healthcare and to entrepreneurs with business communication skills for negotiations and marketing. These programs should include advanced courses addressing cultural nuances to enhance both economic and social integration (EUAA, 2024a). My findings suggest streamlining qualification recognition to leverage Europe's opportunities, as 33% of migrants plan not to return due to better prospects, enabling professionals like engineers to secure appropriate roles (EUAA, 2024b). For entrepreneurs, I propose simplifying regulatory frameworks and providing venture capital to foster startups in technology, addressing low self-employment rates (Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022). In Ukraine, my research indicates that post-war reconstruction offers return opportunities. I would recommend wage subsidies in high-skill sectors, supported by international donors, to raise salaries toward 800 USD, countering Europe's wage advantage (World Bank, 2023). Entrepreneurs could benefit from grants and tax holidays for startups in agriculture and tech, addressing market disruptions like the 30% drop in grain exports (Izzeldin et al., 2023).

Ensuring safety and rebuilding infrastructure in western Ukraine, backed by UN funds, are critical to encourage the 6.2 million displaced to return (UNHCR, 2025). These macro-level strategies address broad trends to create sustainable labour market opportunities.

5.2 Recommendations Based on Primary Survey Data

My survey of 96 respondents, 68.75% in Czechia, reveals specific challenges, with 56.25% planning to stay in Europe and 43.75% open to returning to Ukraine. Language barriers, reported by 45.83% compared to the EU's 54%, pose a significant obstacle, yet only 35.42% participate in language courses, indicating issues with accessibility and relevance (EUAA, 2024b). For employees, where 71.64% report skill underutilization and 70.15% prioritize salary, my findings suggest that Czechia implement flexible, workplace-based language training, including online platforms and mobile apps, to increase participation and enable access to well-paying, qualified roles (Kogan, 2023). Drawing on my survey, I would recommend partnerships with NGOs and Ukrainian diaspora networks, valued by 67.71% for community support, to deliver peer-learning groups and sector-specific modules for industries like hospitality and IT, addressing time constraints. For entrepreneurs, with only 7.29% self-employed, language barriers hinder client interactions and regulatory compliance, critical for the 57.14% valuing career opportunities (Schrooten, 2025). Based on my research, I propose tailored language courses focusing on business communication, integrated with mentorship programs linking entrepreneurs to local business leaders, fostering ventures like cosmetology (Kuratko, 2014). I also recommend streamlining business registration to reduce regulatory hurdles (Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022). My survey suggests strengthening social integration through community programs and diaspora partnerships to sustain the 56.25% retention rate, combining language training with cultural orientation (Czaika & De Haas, 2024). In Ukraine, my findings indicate that reintegration centres offering job placement and business support, including microfinance for entrepreneurs, can encourage the 43.75% open to return, addressing economic and social disintegration (UNHCR, 2025; Kogan, 2023). Targeted job opportunities in safer regions, supported by community networks, further incentivize return. These localized strategies respond to respondent-specific insights, complementing broader secondary data recommendations.

These recommendations address employees' needs (stability, skill utilization) and entrepreneurs' needs (autonomy, market access) in Europe, while encouraging return to

Ukraine through economic and social incentives, maximizing migration's benefits for host countries and Ukraine's recovery.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated the decision-making processes of Ukrainian employees and entrepreneurs navigating participation in the European versus Ukrainian labour markets amid the socioeconomic disruptions following Russia's 2022 invasion. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, it integrated neoclassical economic theories (Borjas, 2020; Clemens, 2017) and entrepreneurial migration frameworks (Kuratko, 2014; Naudé et al., 2015) to address two key research questions: what economic and social factors most significantly influence migration decisions, and how do these factors differ between employees and entrepreneurs? By analysing secondary data from reputable sources (e.g., IOM, 2024; UNHCR, 2025) alongside primary data from a questionnaire of 96 Ukrainian migrants, predominantly in the Czech Republic, the study tested three hypotheses (H1-H3) and provided nuanced insights into migration dynamics.

The findings underscore that economic and social factors are central to migration decisions, with distinct motivations for employees and entrepreneurs. Ukraine's economic instability, characterized by high unemployment and a 400 USD average wage (World Bank, 2023), coupled with social disintegration from 6.2 million displacements (UNHCR, 2025), serves as potent push factors. Conversely, the European labour market's pull factors, including higher wages (e.g., 1,200 USD in Poland), the Temporary Protection Directive, and community networks (EUAA, 2024), draw migrants seeking stability and opportunity. The survey revealed that 69.79% of respondents were employed, with 70.15% of employees prioritizing salary over other factors, supporting H1 that economic factors drive employees more than entrepreneurs, who prioritized salary (57.14%) alongside work-life balance (28.57%) (Kogan, 2023). Entrepreneurs, representing 7.29% of respondents in roles like cosmetology, emphasized flexibility and market opportunities, aligning with Kuratko's (2014) opportunity-seeking paradigm.

Social integration emerged as a critical determinant, with 67.71% of respondents feeling supported in their host country, driven by housing assistance and community networks, particularly in Czechia (Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022; Schrooten, 2025). Language barriers, reported by 45.83% of respondents, posed a significant challenge, though slightly below EUAA's 54% estimate, reflecting Czechia's bilingual support systems (EUAA, 2024). Entrepreneurs heavily relied on networks, with 57.14% citing community support, validating H2 that they prioritize supportive policies and networks over immediate wage gains. The war's disruption of financial markets, including a 30% decline in Ukraine's grain

exports (Izzeldin et al., 2023), intensified migration for both groups, with entrepreneurs demonstrating strategic adaptability by pivoting to EU markets, confirming H3 (Czaika & De Haas, 2024).

Future intentions data indicated that 56.25% of respondents plan to stay long-term, driven by stability (62.96% of employees) and career opportunities (57.14% of entrepreneurs), surpassing EUAA's 33% no-return rate (EUAA, 2024). This higher retention rate highlights Czechia's effective integration policies, though challenges persist, including skill underutilization (71.64% of employees) and regulatory barriers for entrepreneurs (Kogan, 2023). These findings reflect the broader impact of conflict-driven migration, where safety and economic stability shape long-term decisions.

The Policy Recommendations section (Section 5) proposes targeted strategies to address these challenges, including qualification recognition and language training for employees, and regulatory simplification and access to finance for entrepreneurs. These measures aim to enhance the economic contributions of Ukrainian migrants in host countries like Czechia, which hosts 478,000 refugees (Drbohlav & Novotný, 2022).

I believe that the findings and recommendations of this thesis hold significant potential to inform labour market policies in Europe and Ukraine, particularly as post-war reconstruction creates opportunities for return and economic recovery. By addressing challenges like skill underutilization and regulatory barriers, these strategies could foster sustainable integration in host countries and encourage the 43.75% open to returning to contribute to Ukraine's rebuilding efforts. Personally, I am optimistic that this research could inspire policymakers to implement targeted measures, enhancing the economic and social resilience of Ukrainian migrants and our home country in the coming years.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A Meaning of first abbreviation
- B Meaning of second abbreviation
- C Meaning of third abbreviation

APPENDICES

Appendix P I: First appendix title

APPENDIX P I: QUESTIONNAIRE AND SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

This appendix presents the questionnaire administered to 96 Ukrainian migrants across Europe between January and February 2025, along with a summary of key response data. The survey aimed to capture demographic profiles, economic motivations, social integration experiences, work priorities, and future intentions, enabling a comparison between employees and entrepreneurs to test hypotheses H1-H3. The questionnaire was distributed via texting, primarily targeting respondents in the Czech Republic, and collected data on 20 questions (listed below). The full dataset, containing 96 responses, is available in the file “Survey for GROK.xlsx” and was analysed in Section 4.1 using a mixed-method approach. Key statistics are summarized here to provide context for the results presented in the practical part, with a focus on the 69.79% employed (full-time or part-time), 7.29% self-employed (entrepreneurs), and 22.92% students or unemployed respondents.

Questionnaire

The survey comprised the following 20 questions, designed to address the research objectives:

1. **How old are you?** (Options: Under 18, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55+)
2. **What is your gender?** (Options: Male, Female, Prefer Not to Say)
3. **In which European country are you currently residing?** (Open-ended, later coded)
4. **When did you arrive in this country?** (Open-ended, coded by year)
5. **What is the highest level of education you have attained (in Ukraine or any other country)?** (Options: Primary, Secondary, Vocational/Technical, Bachelor’s, Master’s, Doctorate)
6. **What is your current employment status?** (Options: Full-time employed, Part-time employed, Self-employed, Unemployed looking for a job, Unemployed not looking for a job, Student working, Student not working)
7. **If you are unemployed, what are the main difficulties preventing you from finding a job?** (Open-ended, multiple responses allowed)
8. **If you are employed, what is your current occupation?** (Open-ended)

9. **Is your current job related to the profession you had in Ukraine?** (Options: Yes, No)
10. **Are you satisfied with your current salary?** (Options: Very satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Unsatisfied, Very unsatisfied)
11. **How does your current salary compare to what you expected when you moved to Europe?** (Options: Exceeds expectations, Meets expectations, Below expectations)
12. **Do you feel that your skills and qualifications are fully utilized in your current job?** (Options: Yes, No)
13. **What is most important to you in your work?** (Open-ended)
14. **Have you undergone any professional training or qualification upgrading since arriving in Europe?** (Options: Yes, No)
15. **How would you rate your proficiency in the local language?** (Options: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Fluent)
16. **Have you participated in any language courses in your host country?** (Options: Yes, No)
17. **Do you feel supported and accepted in your host country?** (Options: Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree)
18. **What resources or support have been most helpful to you during your adaptation process?** (Open-ended)
19. **Do you plan to stay in your host country for the long term?** (Options: Yes, No, Undecided)
20. **If you plan to stay in your host country, what is the biggest factor that helps you make this decision?** (Open-ended, multiple responses allowed)

Summary of Key Response Data

The survey collected responses from 96 Ukrainian migrants, with the following key findings:

Demographics:

- **Age:** 52.08% aged 18-24, 8.33% aged 25-34, 7.29% aged 35-44, 6.25% aged 45-54, 3.13% aged 55+, 12.50% under 18. This younger skew contrasts with EUAA's (2024) mean age of 40.
- **Gender:** 65.62% female, 33.33% male, 1.04% prefer not to say, aligning with EUAA's (2024) 76% female proportion.
- **Country of Residence:** 68.75% in Czech Republic, 9.38% in Poland, 4.17% in UK, with smaller numbers in Italy, Germany, and others, reflecting a Czechia-centric sample bias.
- **Arrival Year:** 46.88% arrived in 2022, 17.71% in 2023, 11.46% in 2024, with earlier arrivals (e.g., 2019 or before) at 23.95%.
- **Education:** 50% secondary, 20.83% Bachelor's, 14.58% Master's, 8.33% vocational/technical, 5.21% primary, 1.04% doctorate, corroborating EUAA's (2024) 63% highly educated.

Employment:

- **Status:** 69.79% employed (47 full-time, 20 part-time), 7.29% self-employed (e.g., cosmetologist, company owner), 22.92% students or unemployed (13 students not working, 6 unemployed looking, 3 unemployed not looking). The 7.29% self-employment rate aligns with Drbohlav & Novotný's (2022) 1% post-war statistic.
- **Occupations:** Employees worked in warehouses (14), post offices (8), cleaning (5), and others; entrepreneurs included cosmetology, babysitting, and company ownership. Only 28.36% of employed respondents had jobs related to their Ukrainian professions, echoing EUAA's (2024) overqualification issue.
- **Unemployment Barriers:** Among unemployed, 36.36% cited language barriers, 27.27% lack of suitable vacancies, 18.18% non-recognition of qualifications, aligning with EUAA's (2024) 54% language barrier report but lower due to Czechia's context.

Economic Factors:

- **Salary Satisfaction:** 47.76% of employees satisfied/very satisfied, 42.86% of entrepreneurs satisfied, supporting H1. 52.24% of employees reported salaries meeting/exceeding expectations, vs. 57.14% of entrepreneurs.
- **Work Priorities:** 70.15% of employees prioritized salary, 14.93% stability; entrepreneurs prioritized salary (57.14%), work-life balance (28.57%), and duties (14.29%), aligning with EUAA's (2024) 56% work opportunity focus.
- **Skill Utilization:** 71.64% of employees and 28.57% of entrepreneurs felt skills were underutilized, consistent with EUAA's (2024) overqualification findings.

Social Integration:

- **Language Proficiency:** 32.29% intermediate/advanced, 25% beginner, 15.63% fluent. 35.42% participated in language courses, lower than expected given EUAA's (2024) 54% language barrier emphasis.
- **Support:** 67.71% felt supported (agree/strongly agree), with 42.71% citing housing assistance, language courses, and community support as key resources, aligning with EUAA's (2024) 38% family/friends factor.
- **Challenges:** 45.83% reported language barriers, 25% cultural adaptation, slightly below EUAA's (2024) 54% language barrier rate.

Future Intentions:

- **Long-Term Plans:** 56.25% planned to stay, 15.63% to return, 28.13% undecided, reflecting stronger retention than EUAA's (2024) 33% no-return rate.
- **Stay Factors:** Stability (62.96% of employees), career opportunities (57.14% of entrepreneurs), and better living conditions (common across both), mirroring EUAA's (2024) 63% safety and 65% economic blockers.