

ARTICLES IN ENGLISH

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'WE CAN ONLY DREAM ABOUT EUROPE': PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL POLICY AS A DRIVER OF MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS. THE CASE OF UKRAINE

Ukraine is a country of significant emigration, mostly to the EU and Russia. Our 2012 survey (N=2,000) found that 49.3 % of the population covered in four selected areas aimed to live and/or work abroad for some time. Subsequent studies confirm that this has not changed. The first key analytical concept applied to our analysis is that of 'perceptions'; rather than focusing on 'realities' as objective drivers of migration, we examine how individuals perceive realities and thereupon develop their 'aspirations', which is the second key analytical concept. Hence, instead of focussing on the conventional macro-level drivers we aim to understand the micro-level drivers in migration processes. This paper specifically investigates empirically the nexus between individual perceptions of social policy and migration aspirations among Ukrainians. Firstly, we explore how Ukrainians perceive social policies in Ukraine and how they compare these with conditions in Europe. Secondly, we analyse the correlation between these individual perceptions and their migration aspirations. Thirdly, we investigate how people perceive migration, in terms of its consequences, advantages and disadvantages. Fourthly, we describe the subsequent emergence of migration motives and aspirations. Our research finds that dissatisfaction with social policy in the sending country as well as positive perceptions of social policy in the destination countries

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are important contributors to the emergence of migration aspirations. This largely confirms the often-rejected welfare-magnet-hypothesis of neoclassical economic thinking.

Key words: Determinants of migration, individual perceptions, social policy, migration aspirations, welfare magnet theory

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Ukraine only became an independent country in 1991. The transition period entailed a significant economic downturn and a drop in the UN human development index in the early 1990s. Before the country could recover from this, it was hit hard again by the global economic crises of 2008. As a consequence of delayed maintenance and modernisation, almost the entire country – including infrastructure and industries – is in an evident state of decay. The country has also been plagued by troubled politics, including the rise and influence of infamous oligarchs (Matuszak 2012), the 2004 Orange revolution (Kuzio, Hamilton 2011) and the 2014 pro-EU uprising, which was followed by a pro-Russian insurrection and Russian military intervention in some eastern provinces. Social policy reform has been ongoing for over ten years but so far policies are often not implemented and remain inadequate (Onufryk 2016). Finally, there is the problem of endemic corruption. Transparency International (2016) ranks Ukraine 131 out of 176 countries on its Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption continues to undermine the rule of law and thus holds back investment and the development of the country (Vitvitsky 2011; Lapshyna 2014).

Considering these macro-economic and political determinants, it comes as no surprise that Ukraine is a country of significant out-migration – both temporary and permanent – to Russia, the EU and other destinations. Over one million Schengen and UK visas, as well as around 77,000 US visa are issued annually to Ukrainians, facilitating travel and regular and irregular migration.¹ In 2017, Ukraine was exempted from visa requirements by the EU and Ukrainians now enjoy visa-free travel to the EU and, for economic and demographic reasons, various EU countries do appreciate Ukrainians migrants. In combination, it seems plausible to assume that the relaxation of visa restrictions will fuel further migration. In addition, there have been similar levels of migration to Russia. As of February 2014, there were 1.6 million Ukrainian citizens living in Russia, two thirds of whom were labour migrants (Mukomel 2017). From 2014, the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine drove another 0.9 million Ukrainians to Russia; consequently, by 2017, total numbers increased to 2.3–2.5 million (Mukomel 2017).

¹ Whilst most visas are issued for purposes of tourism, business or other types of visits they also facilitate irregular employment or self-employment. Thus, the type and number of visas issued does not allow to clearly establish the actual purposes of travel.

Our research (N=2,000) revealed that in 2012, 49.3 % of the population in the selected areas covered in this article wanted to live and/or work abroad for some time. This has since not changed but remained relatively stable. Notably, in 2017, another study (N=1,200) found that, despite the change of government and intensified European integration, 44 % of Ukrainians still aspired to work abroad; among people aged 18–35 as many as 54 % wanted to live abroad permanently (Reityng 2017).

Research on the drivers of international migration typically focuses on macro-level economic, demographic and political drivers (Pedersen et al. 2008), meso-level factors, such as migration networks (Massey et al. 1998), or micro-level factors such as rational economic considerations (Borjas 1987). Meanwhile, individual perceptions, for instance, of such factors remain understudied. However, some older research in Canada found that the public perception of social policy does matter and shapes individual actions (Dobell, Mansbridge 1986: 35). But with regards to social policy and specifically welfare as a driver of migration, there is a controversy between political economists like Gary Freeman (1986), who argued that welfare states increase demand for migrant labour and encourage long-term over temporary settlement, and neo-classical theories, which suggest that there is a welfare magnet effect (Borjas 1999; Brueckner 2000), and empirical studies claiming that the latter assumption cannot be verified (Giulietta 2014).

The concept of individual perceptions (IPs) has been widely applied in the social sciences, for instance, in studies into how quality of life and inequality are perceived (Plagnol, Scott 2011: 116; Bishop et al. 2014: 27), IPs and behaviour (Lochner 2007: 445) or risk perceptions (Slovic 2000). IPs are defined by Stephen Robbins and Tim Judge (2008: 166) as 'processes by which individuals organise and interpret their impressions of reality in order to give meaning to their environment'; they also identify the factors that influence perceptions like expectations, experiences, values etc. IPs are important element in understanding decision-making processes, particularly as to why individuals in similar situations behave differently (Bratton et al. 2007). So far, this has rarely been applied to migration studies. Everett S. Lee (1966: 51) is an exception to this. He argued 'it is not so much the actual factors at origin and destination as the perception of these that factors which result in migration'. Jørgen Carling (2002) agrees that the IPs of structural conditions in sending countries explain in important ways the emergence of migration ambitions and subsequent decision-making, even if it is actual capabilities that determine the subsequent moves made in reality. More recently Namrata Chindarkar (2014: 160) and Iryna Lapshyna and Franck Düvell (2015: 305) have made the argument that negative perceptions of the quality of life – economic, social and political parameters – are associated with intentions to emigrate and are thus important drivers of migration.

Further, this article is inspired by James S. Coleman's (1987: 154) model of the nexus between the macro-, meso- and micro-level determinants. It considers

first, the micro-level processes of individual perceptions of social policies in Ukraine in comparison to perceptions of social policies in other European countries. Second, it explores to what extent this leads to the emergence of migration aspirations. Third, it studies people's perceptions of migration as a potential solution to their predicament.

The paper is based on the findings of quantitative and qualitative research conducted in Ukraine in 2011/2012 in course of the EU-funded FP7-project Eumagine. Data was conducted in four research areas (RAs): (a) a high emigration area in the West, Zbarazh rayon in Ternopilska Oblast, western Ukraine; (b) a high emigration area in the East, Novovodolaz'ky rayon in Kharkivska Oblast, eastern Ukraine; (c) a low emigration area with comparable socio-economic conditions, Znamyansky rayon in Kirovogradska Oblast, central Ukraine; and (d) a high immigration area, Solomyansky rayon, Kyiv, northern Ukraine. We only studied the age group 18–39, known for being most likely to migrate (e.g. UNO 2011). We conducted a survey of 2,000 people, and 80 in-depth interviews per RA (for methodology and sampling see Ersanili et al. 2011). The findings are thus not representative for Ukraine but only for the respective areas, although certain conclusions can be drawn for the country as a whole.

Perceptions of socio-economic conditions in Ukraine in comparison to 'Europe'

This section focuses on the perceptions Ukrainians have of the socio-economic and social-political conditions in their own country in comparison to the perceptions they have of 'Europe' (figure 1).

In the qualitative interviews our informants stated: '*in Ukraine*] there is no stability' (41118¹, Zbarazh RA). In contrast to perceptions of socio-economic conditions in Ukraine they said that:

The first that comes to my mind [when I hear the word 'Europe'] is economic stability, good opportunities for education, job perspectives and all you need for life. A European level of life sounds nice! (42101, Znamyanska RA);

We can only dream about Europe, [conditions here] are completely outrageous compared to their life (43116, Solomyansky RA).

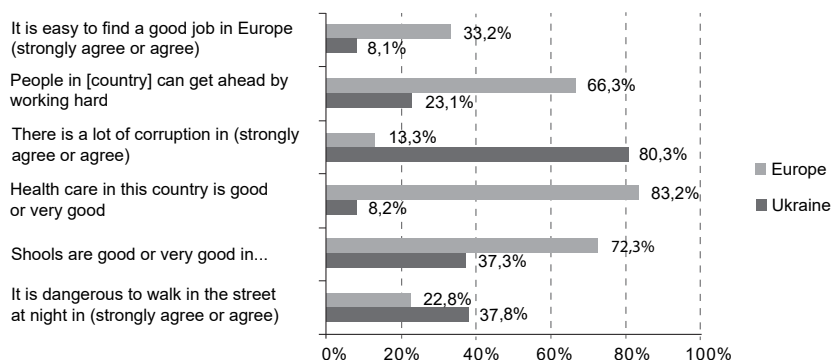
Further to this, several respondents were rather pessimistic about the future of Ukraine: '*no-one sees any development for the better*' (41118, Zbarazh RA).

Our respondents considered economic opportunities ('*finding a good job*') considerably better in Europe than in Ukraine. Less than ten10% believed that it is easy to find a good job in Ukraine whilst 33.2% believed this is the case

¹ 41118 is a code for the respondent, where 41 refers to Zbarazh rayon in Ternopilska Oblast, 118 is the number of the respondent; 42 refers to Znamyansky rayon in Kirovogradska Oblast; 43 refers to Solomyansky RA in Kyiv; 44 refers to Novovodolaz'ky rayon in Kharkivska Oblast.

in Europe: *'wages are low or none; employment is a big problem; isn't that appalling? Besides, the second wave of unemployment is oncoming. This is all dreadful'* (43114, Solomyansky RA). In addition, the suggestion that it is possible 'getting ahead by working hard' was rejected by the majority, 53.8% of the respondents. Narratives reinforce that not finding a job was considered the main problem and finding a good job meant a job that generates sufficient revenues. Not unemployment but insufficient salaries were the main theme running through our interviews: *'You can find a job, it's possible, but again, the salary is low. I really work hard, hellish I would say and people work there just for UAH 800, 1,000–1,200 [then €80, 100–120] and this is very little'* (42104, Znamyanska RA).

Figure 1: Ukraine and Europe in the perceptions of Ukrainians



One area people held strong opinions about was social policy and specifically public services. For instance, health care was depicted as insufficient in Ukraine; 69.7% of the respondents stated that it was bad or very bad: *'Here health service is bad'* (42109, Znamyanska RA). In contrast, 83.2% believed that health care in Europe was good or very good. This was partly based on first-hand information circulating within social networks:

my cousin lives and works in Germany, <...> he told me [the health system] is on a higher level, dentists' service is cheaper there, <...> he has his medical insurance included in his contract (44118, Novovodolaz'ka RA).

Peoples' perceptions of the education system were more mixed. In total, 37.3% stated that schools were good or very good in Ukraine but 27% thought that they were bad or very bad. This diversity can partly be explained with differences between rural and urban schools: *'if we compare a village and a district school, the latter is on a higher level. Kharkov and a village – it is just like heaven and earth'* (44211, Novovodolaz'ka RA). In contrast, 72.3% perceived schools in Europe as good or very good. It was, for instance, felt that, in

Ukraine, *'most of the educational institutions have not yet reached international level'* (41130, Zbarazh RA). Some respondents were particularly concerned with the future of the younger generation:

young people don't have a place in Zbarazh, there is no work for young people; our children hardly see their future in Zbarazh; there is no place in education, in schools, no vacancies in hospitals... it is a problem of the country in general; <...> young people who have just graduated universities cannot get a job (41116, Zbarazh RA).

Also, the fate of the elderly raised similar concerns – old age poverty is common in Ukraine – and thus implicitly relates to their own prospects: *'pensions can cover expenses for medicines, heating, <...> but how to eat, I think it is already a very big issue, pensioners cannot afford any extras'* (41116, Zbarazh RA).

Generally, conditions in Europe were perceived considerably better. Notably, 69.2% of women believed that *'life of women in Europe is good or very good'*, whilst only 16% believed this is the case in Ukraine. However, due to the recent economic troubles and issues related to discrimination of immigrants a more balanced discourse has emerged and perceptions of Europe were getting more realistic. For instance, 30.6% believed that *'people from Ukraine who live in Europe are treated badly there'*. The younger generation had more nuanced ideas of what to expect, whilst it seems that some of the older generation still had a rather 'rosy image' of the EU, partly stemming from and glorifying past migration experiences. Nevertheless, the following narrative seems to best depict the result of Ukrainians' comparison of their own country with Europe: *'I think it is comfortable for Europeans to live there. <...> They have much higher level and quality of life... The standard of living is much higher there than here. As for Ukrainians, I think it is better there than here'* (41240, Zbarazh RA).

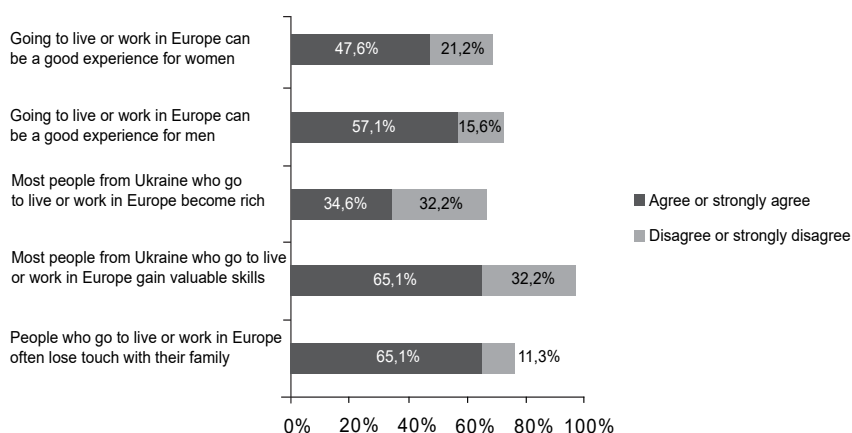
The respondents in our sample were also extremely critical about their government, local administrations and the state of democracy in Ukraine. Over 70% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that *'politicians in Ukraine do what is best for the people'*. Simultaneously, they held much higher views of politicians in Europe; only 7.5% disagreed with the above statement. When we asked for peoples' views on the government's support of poor people, our study revealed that 82.3% considered that *'the help from the government for poor people'* is bad or very bad in Ukraine, compared to only 2% with regards to Europe.

Finally, the quality of social policy is shaped by corruption and, indeed, the single most widely voiced criticism referred to corruption in Ukraine (see Lapshyna, 2014: 116): 80.3% of our respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that *'there is a lot of corruption in Ukraine'*. In the view of our respondents: *'there is not a single sphere which would not be infected with corruption'* (43111, Solomyansky RA); *'it <...> is all over Ukraine'* (41244, Zbarazh RA). In our qualitative interviews, corruption in Ukraine was described as

a widespread, omnipresent, significant and growing problem. In contrast, people considered the level of corruption in Europe as low (figure 1); only 13.3% agreed or strongly agreed that '*there is a lot of corruption in Europe*'. They suggest that in general '*the first impression [of Europe is] ...order, [and] ...a minimum of bribery*' (42107, Znamyanska RA).

In all areas, Ukrainians perceived conditions in their own country as rather problematic, a view that was further aggravated by a certain level of hopelessness. Our findings thus illustrate a high level of alienation among our respondents from the social policies of the government (figure 2).

Figure 2. Migration related perceptions of Europe



Relation between individual perceptions and migration aspirations

In this part, we analyse whether and how largely negative perceptions of Ukraine are related to the respondents' aspiration to migrate. To test our first hypothesis (that migration aspirations to Europe are associated with people's perceptions of social policies, notably education, health care and benefits) we run a logistic regression analysis. The main response variable in our model is migration aspiration to Europe and the control variables are gender, age, marital status and education. This confirms that all variables are significant and that there are correlations between perceptions of education, health care and benefits in Ukraine and the likelihood to have positive migration aspirations (Table 1a). Those who believed that education and health care were bad in Ukraine were 1.83 and 1.86 times more likely to have positive migration aspirations. Our findings reveal that those who believed that education was good in Europe were 0.614 times more likely to have positive migration aspirations.

Table 1a

**Logistic regression for perceptions on education and health services
in Ukraine and migration aspirations**

<i>Variables: Migration Aspiration</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Gender	0.740**
Age	0.953***
Education	1.059**
Marital status	0.910*
Think schools are bad and very bad in Ukraine	1.836***
Think health care is bad and very bad in Ukraine	1.865***
Chi2	80.062***
Observations	2000

Standard errors in parentheses *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Source: Eumagine data set for Ukraine, 2011. Authors' calculations.

For comparison, we ran a logistic regression for people's views on education and healthcare in Europe. This shows that the variable 'perceptions of education in Europe' is significant and there is a correlation between perceptions of education in Europe and the likelihood of positive migration aspirations. However, the variable 'perceptions of health care in Europe' turned out to be not significant, meaning that there is no correlation between perceptions of healthcare in Europe and the likelihood of positive migration aspirations. This is probably not surprising given that our respondents were at the age where healthcare is given much consideration (Table 1b).

Table 1b

**Logistic regression for perceptions on education
and health services in Europe and migration aspiration**

<i>Variables: Migration Aspiration</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Gender	0.731***
Age	0.962***
Education	1.056**
Marital status	0.929
Think schools are good and very good in Europe	0.614***
Think health care is good and very good in Europe	0.893
Chi2	52.364***
Observations	2000

Standard errors in parentheses *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Source: Eumagine data set for Ukraine, 2011. Authors' calculations.

Another comparative logistic regression for people's views on the government help for poor people in Ukraine and Europe, in other words for social benefits, found that both variables are significant and that there is a correlation between perceptions of such benefits and positive migration aspirations. Those who believed that 'the help from the government for poor people who need it in Ukraine is bad and very bad' were 1.79 times more likely to have positive migration aspirations (table 2a). Those who believed that 'the help from the government for poor people who need it in Europe' is good and very good were 2.47 times more likely to have positive migration aspirations (table 2b).

Table 2a

**Logistic regression for perceptions of the help from the government
of Ukraine for poor people and migration aspirations**

<i>Variables: Migration Aspiration</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Gender	0.727**
Age	0.959***
Education	1.061*
Marital status	1.016
The help from the government for poor people who need it in Ukraine is bad and very bad	1.790*
Chi2	91863***
Observations	1999

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Eumagine data set for Ukraine, 2011. Authors' calculations.

Table 2b

**Logistic regression for perceptions of the help from the government of Europe
for poor people and migration aspirations**

<i>Variables: Migration Aspiration</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Gender	0.738**
Age	0.961***
Education	1.052*
Marital status	1.014
The help from the government for poor people who need it in Europe is good and very good	2.473*
Chi2	69524***
Observations	1969

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Eumagine Data Set for Ukraine, 2011. Authors' calculations.

Besides, because economic considerations are usually the strongest driver of migration (apart from political conditions in forced migration) we also test whether aspirations to migrate to Europe are related to negative perceptions of the individual financial situation in Ukraine and to positive perceptions of economic opportunities in Europe (table 3). This also puts into perspective the importance of social policy considerations. Our findings revealed that those who were dissatisfied with their financial situation in Ukraine were 2.64 times more likely to have positive migration aspirations.

Table 3

**Logistic regression for dissatisfaction with financial situation
in Ukraine and migration aspiration**

<i>Variables: Migration Aspiration</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Gender	0.734**
Age	0.956***
Education	1.523***
Marital status	0.892**
Dissatisfaction with financial situation in Ukraine	2.646***
Logistic Regression Information	
Chi2	132.588***
Observations	1874

Standard errors in parentheses *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Source: Eumagine data set for Ukraine, 2011. Authors' calculations.

Table 4a

**Logistic regression for perceptions on corruption in Ukraine
and migration aspirations**

<i>Variables: Migration Aspiration</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Gender	0.730**
Age	0.957***
Education	1.054*
Marital status	1.019
Think there is a lot of corruption in Ukraine	1.630*
Logistic Regression Information	
Chi2	84.136***
Observations	1,966

Standard errors in parentheses *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Source: Eumagine data set for Ukraine, 2011. Authors' calculations.

Table 4b

**Logistic regression for perceptions on corruption
in Europe and migration aspirations**

<i>Variables: Migration Aspiration</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Gender	0.737**
Age	0.965***
Education	1.052*
Marital status	1.019
Disagree that think there is a lot of corruption in Europe	2.040***
Logistic Regression Information	
Chi2	88.739***
Observations	1,938

Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Eumagine data set for Ukraine, 2011. Authors' calculations.

Our third hypothesis is that migration aspirations to Europe are also associated with perceptions of corruption in Ukraine compared to Europe. According to our findings those people who believe that 'there is a lot of corruption in Ukraine' were 1.6 times more likely to have positive migration aspirations compared to those who disagree with this (Table 4a). Another comparative logistic regression for perceptions on corruption in Europe showed that the odds ratio for those people who disagree that there is a lot corruption in Europe is 2.0; this means that this group is twice as likely to have a positive migration aspiration (Table 4b).

Perceptions of migration

Having found that our respondents held rather negative perceptions of conditions in Ukraine and positive perceptions of Europe and having confirmed that these result in a higher propensity to aspiring to migration we still wanted to cross-check how people think about and perceive migration, how they juggle the advantages and disadvantages and whether they believe it is or can be a good or bad strategy to escape their predicament and improve their situation (figure 2). Generally, people have positive perceptions about living and working in Europe. For instance, 57% agree that it is a good experience for men and 48% agree that is a good experience for women, whilst only 15.6% and 21.2%, respectively, disagree. Therefore, 65.1% agree that through migration people can improve their human and cultural capital and apply this back home where appropriate. One respondent confirms:

I think everything they do there might be useful in future life. What I know for sure is that if a man goes to work in construction he can later use it, <...> my friend's father went to work in Russia, ...he got experience, skills and now he knows how to build (41244, Zbarazh RA).

However, respondents also acknowledge some negative social consequences of migration, notably the impact on family life. A significant proportion, 46.3 %, agrees that 'people who go to live or work in Europe often lose touch with their family' but still 28.2 % of the respondents disagree or strongly disagree. For instance, it was explained that *'it is very often that <...> one goes abroad and leaves a family here, families break up'* (41118, Zbarazh RA). Others perceive short-distance and short-term migration as less disruptive to family life and thus preferable: *'A lot of people want to go to Poland. It is good there because it is not far away. You work there for three months, three at home, for example. <...> As if you don't go away from the family for a long time and you have a job'* (41121, Zbarazh RA).

It is remarkable that in Zbarazh, even though the majority of the respondents thought that people who go to live or work in Europe often lose touch with their family (52 %), 62.2 % would nevertheless go. This implies that perceptions of the benefits of migration outweigh perceptions of the negative consequences.

Finally, we note that some of these beliefs are as much perceptions as they are factors that influence perceptions based on expectations (welfare services), values and attitudes (attached to family). In any case, this section shows that perceptions of the impact of migration on family life are an important factor counter-balancing social conditions and social policies as drivers of migration.

Subsequent aspirations to migrate

Having analysed the respondents' perceptions of conditions in Ukraine, conditions in Europe and of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of migration and the responses of other family members, we finally analyse in this section the respondents' subsequent aspirations to migrate or stay put. Notably, we asked our respondents whether they 'would go to Europe if somebody gave them the necessary papers'. They were almost equally divided over the question; just under half of the respondents – 49.3 % – were positive and would go whilst 50.7 % were negative and would stay.

There are, however, again significant variations within the total: (1) almost 90 % of the people with migration aspirations would go to Europe and the rest somewhere else, mostly America; (2) even of those people with no migration aspirations 13.8 % would accept to migrate if the opportunity arise, i.e. 'give them the necessary papers', hence, the proportion of those who would go to Europe is even higher, 63.1 %; (3) over 60 % of all respondents in Zbarazh – the high emigration area – would go and thus display an above-average aspiration to migrate; (4) in Znamyanska, the low emigration area, an above-average proportion

of 62.2% would stay, although 39.1% would go. In general, people affirmed that they would go abroad if an opportunity arose: *'I think that anyone of my age, 20 years old, if one could get an opportunity, would go abroad'* (41125, Zbarazh RA). Others, however, were more careful and rather risk averse and would only migrate under favourable conditions, like if there was a concrete offer: *'if there were such conditions: here you have your documents, money, we have already made arrangements for you, you would have a job there which suits you well, you can do it'* (42206, Znamyanska RA).

Thus, the response to our survey question was rather reactive, whilst the qualitative interviews illustrate that people would not necessarily take proactive measures. It is, however, relevant to note that 13.8% of those who do not have any initial migration aspirations – as many as 27% in Zbarazh – would nevertheless migrate if a concrete offer was made.

Conclusion

Our research identified a complex interplay between (a) the socio-political and economic conditions on the macro-level, (b) peoples' individual perceptions of these conditions, (c) perceptions of migration as a possible response to dissatisfying conditions and (d) the subsequent emergence of people's aspirations to migrate. Our research also found an intricate hierarchy of the significance of individuals' perceptions. In particular, our findings suggest that migration aspirations are determined not by mere economic considerations, as conventional theories and analyses often suggest, but by a mix of social political and economic motivations. These combine negative motivations, meaning migrating out of certain critical conditions and positive motivations into certain better conditions. Whereas negative perceptions of economic factors in Ukraine turned out to be the strongest driver of migration aspirations, positive perceptions of benefits in Europe came second, positive perceptions of economic factors in Europe third, positive perceptions of the corruption situation in Europe fourth, negative perceptions of healthcare in Ukraine came fifth followed by negative perceptions of education in Ukraine.

Notably, we found that a combination of negative perceptions of social policy in the country of origin and positive perceptions of social policy in the prospective destination countries – with the exception of healthcare – are a powerful driver of emigration. Whilst this challenges older claims (Piore 1979; Sassen 1988) that it is mainly the demand for labour that drives migration and instead suggests the intertwined effect of distraction and attraction, it also rather confirms the often-contested welfare magnet migration hypothesis (e.g. Brueckner 2000). However, our research implies that the picture is more nuanced in that not all benefits matter equally to all people of any age in any country and that family considerations are a powerful set-off, which can hold people back from migration.

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