

Youth migration aspirations:

imagining the EU from the outside

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**Youth migration aspirations: imagining the EU
from the outside**

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The monograph is devoted to the problem of youth migration into the EU, providing the authors' findings on how young people construct migration intentions in light of current challenges. Integrating bibliometric, statistical, and content analyses of policies related to youth migration, the study situates youth migration tendencies and aspirations in the context of economic and demographic changes within the EU. The current state and problems of youth migration to the EU, along with its reasons and personal and macroeconomic consequences, are analysed. The study reveals that migration aspirations are linked to imagination of the EU as both a space of opportunity and a site of varied strategies for migrants' integration. By linking aspiration and capabilities, the monograph offers a view on youth migration and calls for policies that transform mobility from crisis response into a foundation for inclusive and sustainable European development. For professionals in economics, social policy, business management, and public administration, scientists, researchers, and anyone interested in migration studies

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INTRODUCTION

Migration has always been seen as a typical demographic process important for the analysis of societal changes. However, nowadays, youth migration has acquired new meanings that transcend traditional demographic or economic categories. It embodies the aspirations, anxieties, and adaptive strategies that foster social and economic transformations in hosting countries, which became especially obvious due to the unprecedented migration growth caused by the war in Ukraine. The profound influence of youth migration on educational, labour, and related social and economic spheres requires understanding the patterns, reasons, and expectations that reflect youth aspirations in one of the most difficult and important choices in their lives. Considering this, the study aims to investigate the theoretical background, policies, and specific characteristics related to decisions on youth migration into the EU.

This monograph, *Youth Migration Aspirations: Imagining the EU from the Outside*, explores how young people act upon their migration intentions in a context where Europe is simultaneously imagined as a space of opportunity, security, and social justice, and experienced as a complex, stratified, and heterogeneous system where national policies regarding migrants are very different.

The study provides an intersection of youth studies, migration research, and policy-making. For young Ukrainians and their peers in neighbouring regions, the war has intensified pre-existing mobility trends while transforming their motivations. What had once been primarily educational or economic migration increasingly reflects a search for safety, recognition, and a future that feels reliable and comfortable. In this sense, the war has not merely increased the volume of migration. It has exposed the strength of human-oriented strategies of the European Union. For those imagining the EU “from the outside,” the European Union is both a protector, a source of hope, and a mirror of inequality. This duality derives the frameworks through which young people build their future in nowadays decisions.

The research employs a mixed-methods design, combining bibliometric and content analysis for theoretical generalizations and refining the policies' peculiarities. The

empirical part of the research covers the use of demographic statistics methods and specific approaches for labor market analyses, combining qualitative and comparative assessments. Besides, the migration intentions and drivers for the decisions are identified using the surveys of key migration reasons available in the Eurostat data and the authors' survey of the youth (exemplified by Ukrainian high-school youth aspirations).

Based on these approaches and available data, the monograph advances view on migration aspirations as a multidimensional construct that emerges from a dynamic interplay between:

- ✓ perceived opportunities (education, employability, mobility rights),
- ✓ socio-political imaginaries (Europe as a space of justice and progress), and
- ✓ personal capabilities (skills, resilience, and digital capital).

These dimensions reflect aspirations ranging from pragmatic mobility for employment and other personal benefits to transformative migration motivated by values and identity. The study seeks to bridge quantitative patterns with the experience of migration intention, offering an empirically grounded understanding of how youth imagine and navigate the EU in times of crisis.

The book is organised as follows. The first chapter presents the global and European research landscape, mapping how scholarly attention to youth migration has evolved. The second presents comparative statistical analyses of youth migration peculiarities, focusing on temporary protection, residence, integration issues, and identifying regional asymmetries and the rise of new mobility patterns. Besides, the factors of labour market participation and employability among young migrants, linking education, skills, and resilience, are analysed. The final chapter examines the possibilities of integrating young migrants through labour perspectives, humanitarian, and policy regulations.

The authors believe that *Youth Migration Aspirations: Imagining the EU from the Outside* contributes to an emerging scientific conversation about the future of human mobility, education, and belonging in a post-war Europe where human capital is not merely a resource but a shared source of resilience and renewal.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL DISCOURSE ON YOUTH MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS: THE IMPACT OF WAR AND THE POLICIES OF HOST COUNTRIES

1.1. Migration aspirations of young people in light of educational and career prospects in the EU: expectations and opportunities

Youth migration aspirations have become one of the central topics of contemporary social sciences, particularly in the context of EU enlargement, labour mobility, and global inequalities. One of the largest migrant groups with strong intentions to join the EU labour and educational market is Ukrainian youth. They, along with peers from other non-EU countries, often view the EU as a space of opportunity, security, and prosperity, particularly since 2022, when increased threats arose from the war. Therefore, there is a need to synthesize the current state of the art to compare the pre-war and war periods and appropriate recent findings (2020–2024), focusing on how young people outside the EU imagine its labour and educational markets.

Migration aspirations are increasingly studied through the lens of aspiration-capability frameworks (Carling & Schewel, 2018), human capital theory, and transnational opportunity structures. Recent works (Brooks, 2021; Vasylytsiv et al., 2024) highlight the interplay of structural constraints and subjective imaginaries shaping youth mobility. In light of current changes, for many young people, the EU represents a space of high wages, modern workplaces, and transparent recruitment systems. War circumstances affect new waves of migration, but among the important drivers of youth migration remains the opportunities arising in the European surroundings.

From an educational perspective, European universities are seen as gateways to international careers. This is especially evident for students participating in mobility programs like Erasmus+. The positive impacts of these programs are evident not only for students, their careers, and cross-cultural dissemination but also in the sharing of European values (Oborune, 2015) and social capital within and between countries. Besides, the currently growing intense of international

migration shapes the career and educational intentions of the youth (Brooks, 2021). Studies on students from Ukraine, Moldova, and the Western Balkans underline the symbolic value of EU certificates and the expectation of meritocratic advancement (Oborune, 2015).

The new threats that appeared due to the war in Ukraine have shifted the intensity of youth migration to the EU significantly. Before Russia's full-scale invasion, surveys revealed strong but ambivalent migration aspirations among Ukrainian youth. While many considered temporary education or work-related mobility, the intentions for permanent migration were lower. In Boichuk's (2023) research, which focuses on Ukrainian students in Poland, important insights were found for labour and educational market regulation. Thus, the analysis has revealed that host countries with the most significant student inflows (including Poland), particularly governments, the business sector, and academic institutions, may anticipate beneficial outcomes stemming from the growing influx of foreign students. These include the enrichment of the local labour market through the acquisition of qualified human capital and potential improvements in demographic dynamics -provided that international students choose to remain in the host country and establish their families there (Boichuk, 2023). The EU labour market was seen as attractive primarily due to income differentials, but strong social ties often restrained permanent migration.

The war has dramatically reshaped Ukrainian youth migration patterns. Displacement flows have blurred the line between forced and voluntary migration. This was typical for the overall migrant flows from Ukraine (Luczaj, 2024). Regarding youth, including student migrants, the study by Kichurchak et al. (2024) demonstrates that these flows can be predicted with stable or increasing intensity. Other studies highlight the support for aspirations to remain in the EU among displaced youth, attributed to proactive state policies that provide privileged access to education in some EU countries (Samoliuk et al., 2024). The students' intentions to stay are supported by the growing demand for young professionals with a tertiary education (Roshchyk et al., 2024). Citizenship is not

a significant obstacle to realizing professional ambitions, as many countries have active migrant policies aiming at attracting intellectual migrants to develop the knowledge economy. Students are one of four groups of intellectual migrants who typically have support in their migration aspirations (Bilan et al., 2025; Mishchuk et al., 2024; Oliinyk et al., 2022). However, in many cases, temporary protection policies facilitated entry; long-term integration remains contested.

Compared to migrants from other countries, Ukrainian youth migration is distinguished by its sudden scale and humanitarian framing due to the impact of the war. However, the imaginaries of the EU as a land of opportunity and fairness are shared across contexts, except for safety concerns.

Among other opportunities, youth often have the chance to enter the labour market of the hosting country, combining the benefits of receiving education abroad with further employment prospects. Therefore, the scientific literature places a special focus on student migration, including academic mobility. In the case of academic mobility, short-term migration can lead to the formation of strong links with the hosting country and affect future migration decisions. Particularly, some host countries have proactive policies that offer pathways for students to gain work experience while studying. This, in turn, can facilitate a willingness to get the permanent residency (Beine et al., 2013). Some studies suggest that international student mobility is based on intentions for permanent migration, which is especially typical for students coming from the Global South. This trend is evidenced by the experience of migration to Canada and New Zealand (King et al., 2024). Similar findings were obtained by Marcu (2015) in an analysis of student migration to the UK and Spain. The current unsafe situation only strengthens these behavioural patterns.

Therefore, student migration is an essential focus of youth migration research because it is not always solely linked to educational intentions. Student mobility, as a specific form of migration, is frequently examined through the lens of the push–pull framework. Since Lee’s (1966) seminal study, this framework has been both widely adopted and extensively critiqued, yet it remains one of the

prevailing approaches for explaining migration decisions. Such decisions are typically analysed in relation to their consequences for the migrants themselves. In turn, the migrants' expectations are aligned with the set of migration drivers and supported by evidence of the importance of push and pull factors related to economic and non-economic relations in hosting societies (Mishchuk & Grishnova, 2015; Vasylieva et al, 2023; Zatonatskiy et al., 2024). These links became especially obvious in the post-pandemic period (Kuzior et al., 2024; Saher et al., 2024; Vysochyna et al., 2024). In this regard, research often highlights the influence of one's personal environment, including family influence, behavioural orientations, and subjective assessments of quality-of-life disparities between origin and destination contexts (Jin et al., 2022). While these investigations, focused on personal motivations and individual outcomes, maintain a strong humanitarian orientation, they remain insufficient for understanding broader patterns of migration dynamics and the capacity to address associated risks.

From a macroeconomic perspective, a contemporary application of the push-pull approach to student migration lies in distinguishing between economic and non-economic determinants of large-scale mobility. Economic reasons, such as choosing a country with a higher standard of living, are always relevant. In this regard, empirical studies confirm robust connections between migration flows and indicators of national economic development, such as GNI, which correlate with better standards of living and higher remuneration (Aliyev et al., 2023; Benček & Schneiderheinze, 2024; Berde & Remsei, 2025; Hrynkevych & Lutchyn, 2017; Tutar et al., 2024). These relationships are most evident when migration is analysed in connection with labour market conditions, where lower unemployment rates (especially youth unemployment) are associated with higher attractiveness for potential migrants (Potuzakova & Bilkova, 2022).

At the same time, different migrants may prioritize distinct factors: for instance, international students in Germany highlight academic quality, career opportunities, and financial considerations as crucial pull factors, while in the UK, social interaction also plays a significant role (Abbas et al., 2021). A high-quality

education serves as an essential career-related incentive strengthening employability prospects (Potuzakova & Bilkova, 2022; Radu et al., 2023). Similar conclusions with an explicit emphasis on post-graduation employment are presented by Mozolová and Tupá (2024), Streimikis et al. (2024), and Tran et al. (2020). No less important for many migrants are reasons linked to the quality of societal relations in their home and host countries, including trust and transparency (Aliyev & Gasimov, 2023), as well as the cultural surroundings (Zhuk et al., 2023).

Consequently, investigations of countries' attractiveness to student migrants emphasize a multidimensionality of factors. While economic determinants (developed labour markets, wider employment opportunities, and competitive wages) remain dominant in scientific literature, non-economic factors are increasingly incorporated into the analysis. Nevertheless, economic factors remain the focus of contemporary research on youth migration.

Beyond economic rationales, studies often highlight the significance of diaspora networks, family-related circumstances, and other aspects of the social environment that facilitate integration and adaptation in host countries (Chugaievska & Wisła, 2023; Hrynkevych, 2017; Mishchuk et al., 2025; Tavares, 2024). These findings align with the premises of migration network theory (Blumenstock et al., 2023; Giulietti et al., 2018; Munshi, 2020). Non-economic motivations also extend to such dimensions as language acquisition, cultural affinity (Bai & Wang, 2024), socio-economic stability and safety (Vasylytsiv et al., 2024), spatial security and social interactions (Mozolová & Tupá, 2024), as well as concerns about inequality, social justice, and the safeguarding of individual rights (Mishchuk et al., 2018; Xie, 2023). In the case of student migration, the reputation of universities is equally important, with well-established institutions representing both academic excellence and pathways to promising careers (Abbas et al., 2021; Fakunle, 2021; Wojciechowski & Korjonen-Kuusipuro, 2023).

Career prospects are important drivers for migration decisions. They may affect decision-making both for youth planning to study abroad and for graduates.

Regarding the latter ones, it is worth mentioning that positive expectations are often inaccurate. Particularly, if to analyses employability even in the most qualified group of migrants, the current dynamics is not always favourable for the migrants. Particularly, there is compelling evidence of the positive effects of international scientific mobility on aspects of scientific career, including international networks of scholars, scientific productivity, professional situation, scientific impact, skills development, scientific knowledge, access to research infrastructure, and funding opportunities (Netz et al., 2020). However, only 58% of emigrant scientists became affiliated with an overseas academic host institution, and a mere 14% of migrant scientists have secured long-term contracts since relocation (De Rassenfosse et al., 2023). So, it is worth assuming that education obtained abroad can strengthen the employment perspectives compared to even a high degree obtained outside the EU. This explains the aspirations of the youth to pursue education abroad, which is more appealing to EU labour markets.

However, if to analyse migration outcomes from the per across diverse contexts employ well-established instruments aimed at reducing barriers to adaptation, including housing support, access to essential services (e.g., healthcare and transportation) at scientific achievements, this value creates in different perspectives: employment opportunities in sending countries after leaving the hosting country (position at home university, position abroad or combined, different types of positions, including PhD or postdoc), etc.; task-oriented goals (doing research, working on publications, teaching, working on the double degree programs, diploma recognition, etc.); and professional and personal development (e.g. developing language skills, project management skills, learning new skills or changing qualifications, etc.) (Maryl et al., 2022). Therefore, the internationalisation of higher education can provide valuable benefits for migrants, hosting and receiving countries (Hrynkevych et al., 2022). However, in the light of personal perspectives, current war threats, and changing migration policies in hosting countries, force the youth, like other migrant cohorts, to seek new opportunities aligned with safety and working prospects (Kochaniak et al.,

2024; Karolyi et al., 2025). Besides, under the pressure of the new challenge, behavioural patterns reflect the ability for flexible behaviour and readiness to use technologies similar to those used during pandemic threats (Jackson & Konczos Szombathelyi, 2022; Zhumbei et al., 2025).

The war in Ukraine has dramatically shaped migration intentions and dynamics. Ukrainian young migrants have become one of the most numerous groups among other migrants to the EU. Accordingly, under relatively secure pre-war conditions, the migration patterns of Ukrainian students would have been expected to align with global trends, being shaped by analogous pull factors. However, the specificities of Ukrainian migration necessitate acknowledging the role of established migration networks, which had been significantly developed even before the war due to the country's long-standing migration intensity.

Since 2022, a substantial share of youth migration has become forced in nature. Ukrainian students now represent a group directly confronted with one of the most acute global challenges: involuntary migration, which the WEF (2024) consistently ranks among the top ten global risks in both short-term (two-year) and long-term (ten-year) outlooks. Consequently, drivers of refugee displacement, including armed conflict, have likewise shaped the migration decisions of student populations.

Given the magnitude of this risk, scholarly discourse emphasizes the importance of supporting access to education for displaced youth abroad, framing it as a critical component of national migrant policies (Fedorchuk et al., 2022; Herbst & Sitek, 2023). The development of appropriate support tools creates a background for positive expectations among youth regarding their migration plans. At the same time, international student recruitment has evolved into a significant driver of institutional development for universities, becoming an integral part of business models and advancing through marketing strategies, recruitment agents, and managerial practices (Marom, 2023). These institutional efforts are typically complemented by policies that ensure favourable living and study conditions. However, a more consequential level of analysis concerns

national policies, as the rapid outflow of talented Ukrainian youth reflects not only individual uncertainty regarding the duration of the conflict but also structural risks. While domestic displacement and online learning partially alleviate these threats, the war has simultaneously expanded opportunities for academic mobility, with some host states interpreting this as an avenue for strategically reshaping human capital through education policy.

Educational policies, across diverse contexts, employ well-established instruments aimed at reducing barriers to adaptation: housing support, access to essential services (e.g., healthcare and transport), and financial measures, particularly tuition subsidies (Herbst & Sitek, 2023). Welfare states, such as Sweden, emphasize publicly funded higher education to minimize tuition burdens for international students (Lundin & Geschwind, 2023). Hong et al. (2023) further emphasize the importance of protecting the rights of international students as both consumers and potential future citizens. Such strategies illustrate host states' ambitions not only to stabilize their educational systems in the short term but also to cultivate conditions conducive to permanent settlement.

Despite this, youth migration is significantly affected by governmental and educational policies regarding international student mobility, likely reflecting substantial national divergences in migration governance. For instance, a comparative review of Nordic regulations over two decades reveals increasingly divergent frameworks. The only common feature for all countries is the predominance of educational instruments related to the quality of education and the development of international programs (Elken et al., 2023).

These national discrepancies suggest that instruments designed to attract and support international students are not uniformly implemented across host countries. Nevertheless, systematizing the range of tools employed remains crucial for shaping effective educational strategies. Typically, such tools encompass adaptation measures, such as language and financial support, and help with access to services essential for staying in a new country (Elken et al., 2023; Herbst & Sitek, 2023; Lundin & Geschwind, 2023). Specific practices focused on

the capabilities and interests of a particular host country can be summarized from the materials of educational agencies and information portals that provide information and organizational support to potential students (VisitUkraine, 2024; Osvita, n.d.; Global Study, n.d.; Edusteps, n.d.).

Particularly, students' imaginations regarding educational prospects in the EU are supported by offers from universities and special national programs focused on attracting international students.

When comparing educational migrant inflows to the EU, the most significant increase was typically observed for Ukrainian students. To better understand the imagery of students forming their intentions, the experience of educational policies for foreigners in the most attractive countries can be used as a reference. According to Samoliuk et al. (2024), the choice of study destination among Ukrainians largely depends on national policies toward international students, language proficiency requirements, tuition and living costs, access to tuition-free opportunities, work rights, and geographical proximity to Ukraine. Universities in Poland, Slovakia, and the Netherlands permit students to combine their studies with employment, enabling them to support themselves financially while studying abroad. Moreover, graduates in these countries are typically given a transition period to seek employment and obtain a work permit. In the Netherlands, a one-year post-study visa is available after both Bachelor's and Master's degrees, also with potential extensions, and in Poland, graduates have three months to obtain a work visa for continued residence (Samoliuk et al., 2024).

Governmental support programs for international students, particularly for Ukrainian refugees, have contributed to a marked rise in academic migration from Ukraine. However, this development has elicited a mixed response from both the Ukrainian authorities and the public, prompting the Lithuanian government to introduce new regulations, effective September 2024, requiring Ukrainians to apply to higher education institutions under the same rules as Lithuanian citizens. Therefore, there are notable national differences in educational policy frameworks regarding foreigners. However, the experience of the most attractive countries

demonstrates that youth aspirations can be effectively managed by proper means, thereby distributing talented youth inflows between countries according to national priorities.

Considering the mentioned approaches and practices for attracting and supporting student youth, it can be concluded that the pivotal drivers are not isolated university initiatives designed for marketing purposes, but rather coordinated national education policies. State-level instruments exert broader influence through informational and financial mechanisms, while university practices serve a complementary role. Thus, examining migration tendencies necessitates attention to the interplay of economic well-being, social environments, and education policies in shaping students' decisions.

Combining the state-of-the-art in youth migration studies with the current war threats affecting the EU, it is clear that youth aspirations reflect broader global trends, but are intensified by war-related disruptions. While the EU labour and education markets remain highly attractive, migration imaginaries are fluid and shaped by policies, social networks, and individual biographies.

Understanding migration aspirations is critical for both the EU and sending countries. For Ukraine and other sending countries, supporting circular mobility, educational partnerships, and diaspora engagement could prevent permanent loss of human capital. For the EU, addressing concerns about brain drain while ensuring fair treatment of migrants is crucial.

1.2. Youth migration under the war threats: a bibliometric literature review

To identify research gaps and highlight uncertainties in established knowledge regarding youth migration, it is necessary to understand the current patterns arising from the war's impact, as this threat has changed migration tendencies within the EU the most significantly over the last few decades. The bibliometric analysis via VOSviewer was employed to display the research status of youth migration under military threats in scientific publications indexed in the

Web of Science Core Collection and Scopus databases. In supplementing the traditional literature review, which is often biased and qualitative in scope, bibliometric analysis enables the gathering and visualization of data to identify trends and perspectives in the field.

In line with the scope of youth migration analysis, the following keywords were used for data gathering: “youth”, “migration”, “European Union”, and “war”. The logic of ‘OR’ was used to connect all of the research terms in order to maximize the coverage of relevant research-related publications. The period of publications spans 2019-2025, covering the most obvious migration patterns caused by military threats. The flowchart illustrating the steps of the academic literature search and the process of selecting criteria for the bibliometric analysis, using sources from the Web of Science database, is depicted in Figure 1.1.

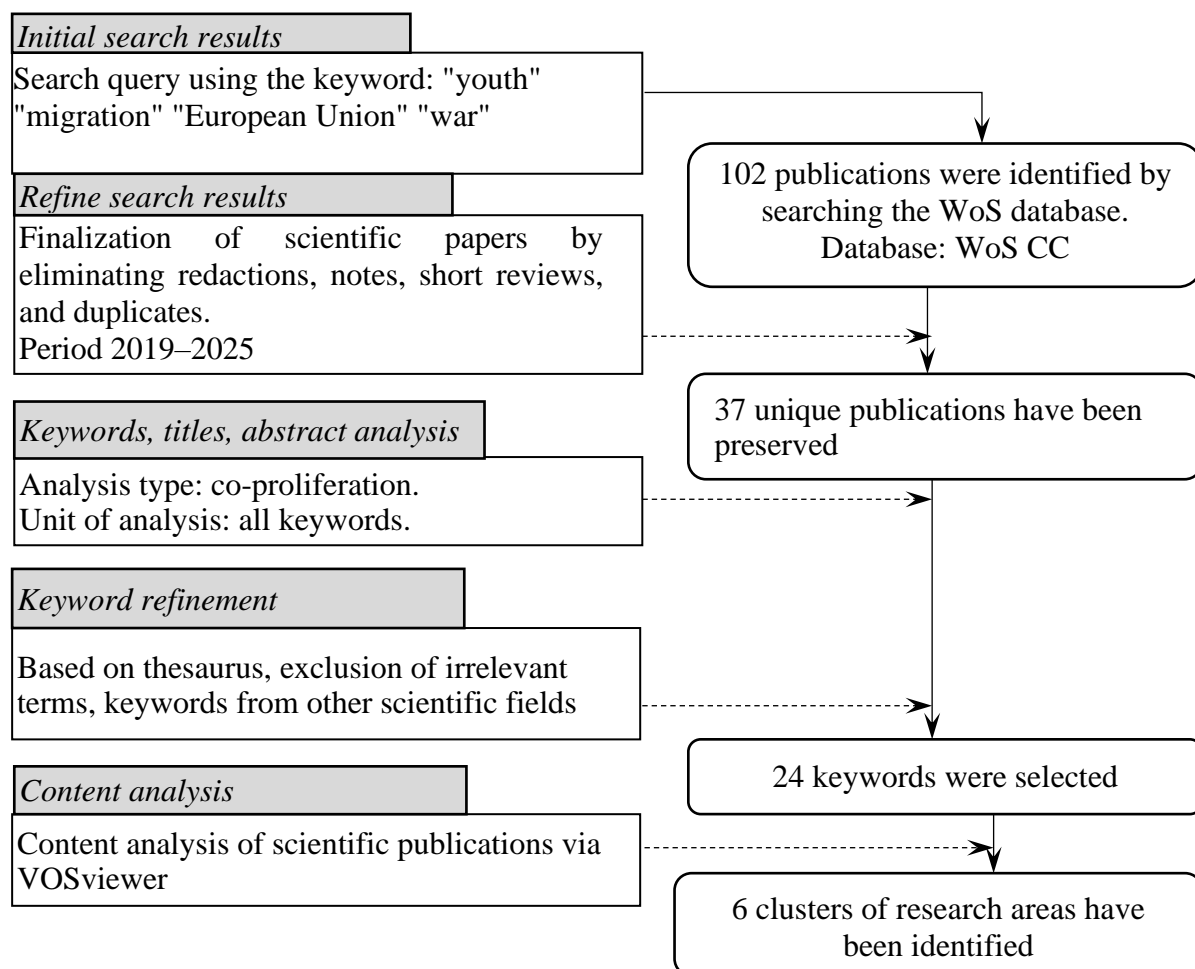


Fig. 1.1. Research methodology of studying youth migration to the EU according to the WoS CC database via VOSviewer, Search Term Identification

To identify key thematic areas in the array of research papers, a cluster analysis was conducted using keywords. The result of the analysis was a map of the scientific landscape (Fig. 2), which visualizes the relationships between terms and groups them into six clearly defined clusters. Each cluster reflects a separate aspect of the research problem, and their mutual arrangement and connections demonstrate the structure of modern scientific discourse.

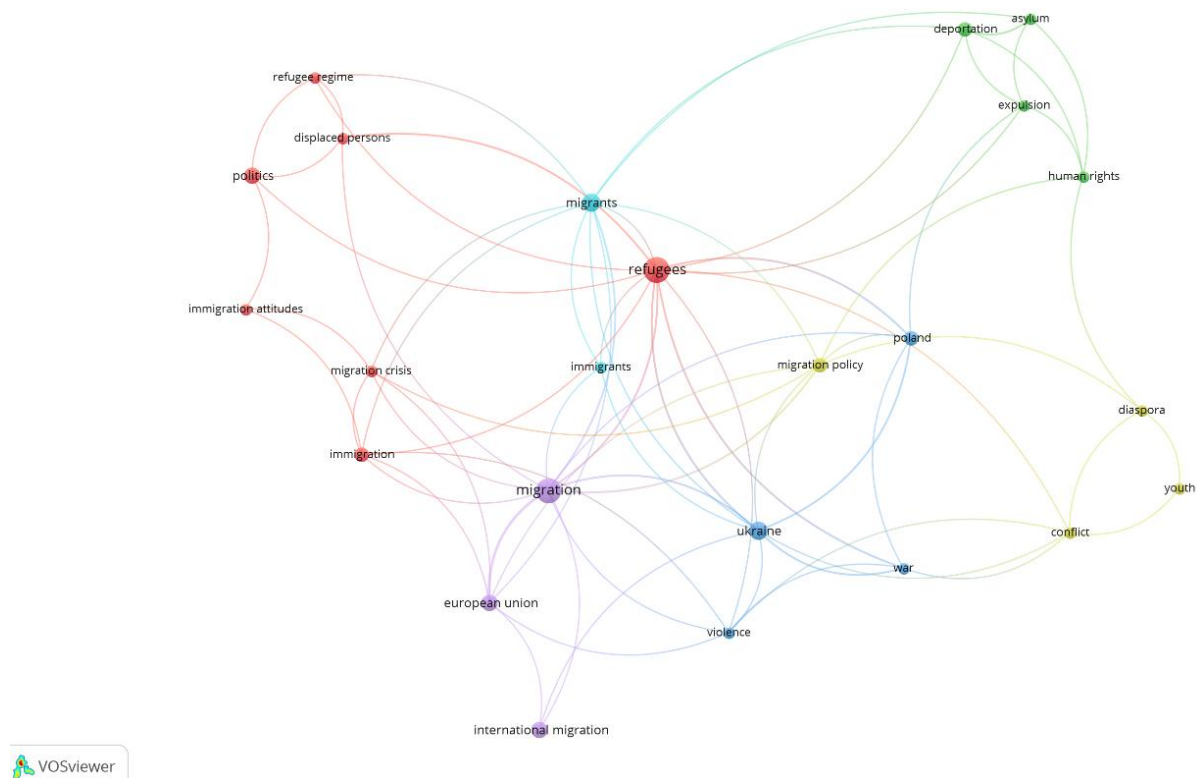


Fig. 1.2. Graphical visualization of the relationship between studies according to the WoS CC database (created using VOSviewer v.1.6.10).

Source: authors' development

As shown in Figure 1.2, there are six clusters of publications. Their features are grouped in Table 1.1.

The geopolitical context is at the heart of this discourse, represented by the blue cluster, where the terms “Ukraine”, “war”, “Poland”, and “violence” unambiguously identify the war in Ukraine as the root cause of migration flows and Poland as a key host country. A direct consequence of these events is the political and social dimension of the problem, revealed in the red cluster through

the terms “refugees”, “displaced persons”, “migration crisis”, and “politics”. This dimension is inextricably linked to the legal and administrative aspect, presented in the green cluster, where issues of asylum, human rights, and forced return procedures are analysed. Further development of the topic moves to issues of migration management and its long-term consequences, which are reflected in the yellow cluster, which combines policy development with the topics of youth and diaspora. All these processes are considered within the broader institutional framework of the purple cluster, which focuses on the role of the European Union and the phenomenon of international migration.

Table 1.1

Characteristics of research clusters in the WoS CC database

Cluster name and colour	Keywords	Characteristics of the cluster
Cluster 1 (red)	displaced persons, immigration, immigration attitudes, migration crisis, politics, refugee regime, refugees	Political and social dimensions of the refugee problem; analysis of the crisis, public sentiment and governance frameworks.
Cluster 2 (green)	asylum, deportation, expulsion, human rights	Legal and administrative aspects of migration; asylum procedures, human rights protection and forced return.
Cluster 3 (blue)	Poland, Ukraine, violence, war	Geopolitical context; focuses on the war in Ukraine as the root cause of migration and on Poland as the leading host country.
Cluster 4 (yellow)	conflict, diaspora, migration policy, youth	Migration management and its long-term consequences; policy development, youth integration and the role of diasporas.
Cluster 5 (purple)	European Union, international migration, migration	Macro-level and institutional dimension; considers migration as an international phenomenon in the context of European Union policies.
Cluster 6 (blue)	immigrants, migrants	Terminological core; the most general concepts that refer to people in the process of displacement and unite other thematic blocks.

The central place on the visual map is occupied by the most general concepts of “migrants” and “immigrants”, which form a blue cluster and function as a connecting terminological core for all more specialized areas. The overall structure of the scientific landscape reveals a high level of interconnectedness among all aspects, indicating that the research is complex and multidimensional. They closely link the root cause of the conflict with its humanitarian, legal, and political consequences, fitting them into the long-term integration strategies and institutional framework of the European Union. Thus, the scientific discourse around youth migration is deeply influenced by modern military conflict.

To analyse the geographical distribution of publications in the field (Fig.1.3), the central element of the resulting semantic network is Germany, which functions as a key research hub integrating various research areas.

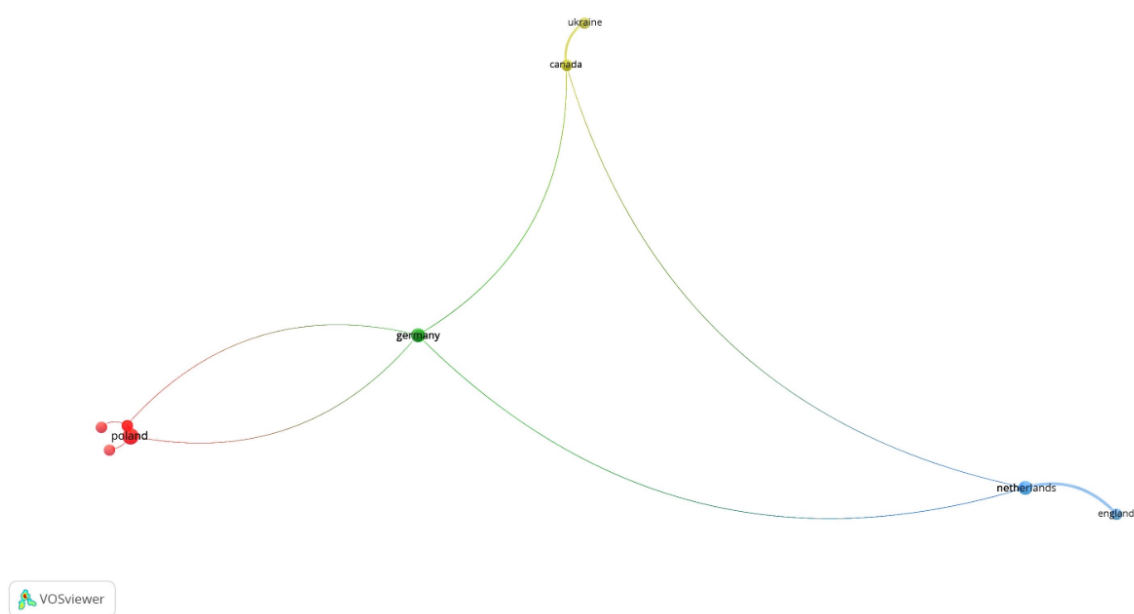


Fig. 1.3. Geographic visualization of relationships between studies based on WoS CC database data (created using VOSviewer v.1.6.10)

Source: authors' development

On the one hand, Germany is closely connected to the cluster of countries on the Eastern flank of Europe and the transit countries (Poland, Hungary, and Turkey), where the primary stages of migration are primarily studied. On the other hand, it serves as a bridge to a cluster of Western European destination countries (England, the Netherlands), where policies for the long-term integration of young

migrants are analysed. Separate from the European focus, a pronounced transatlantic migration corridor exists between Ukraine and Canada, reflecting the specific characteristics of Ukrainian youth migration outside the European Union. This area is also indirectly connected to the pan-European discourse through Germany, which may suggest the need for comparative studies of migration policies. Thus, network analysis reveals that the modern scientific field on this issue is geographically determined, comprising several regional subsystems integrated into a single discourse through research focused on Germany as a key recipient country and object of analysis.

The bibliometric review is more comprehensive when previous results are combined with publications listed in the Scopus database. There are more than six thousand publications in the field. The research process is shown in Figure 1.4.

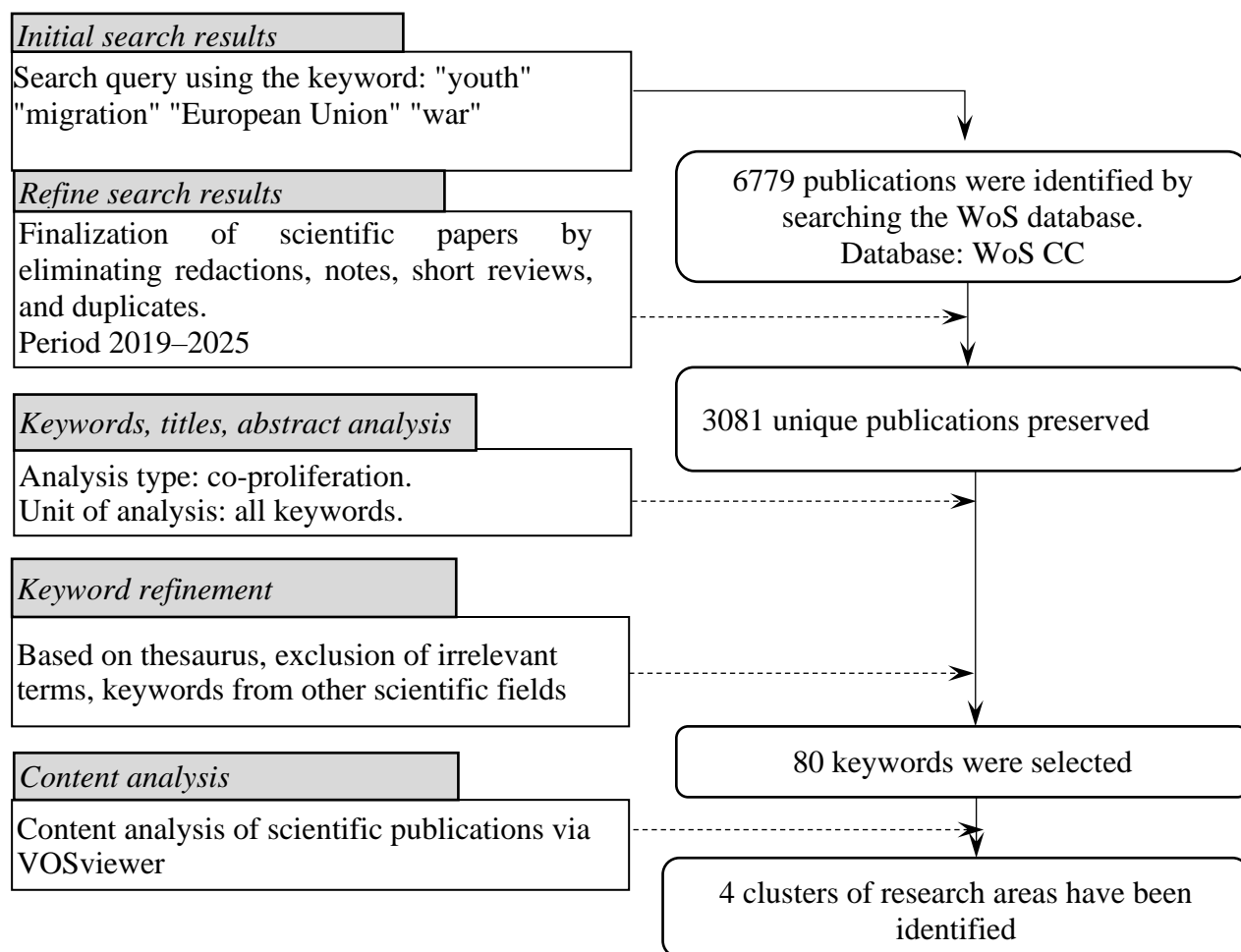


Fig. 1.4. Research methodology of studying youth migration to the EU according to the Scopus database via VOSviewer

The visualization shows a much broader and more global scientific landscape compared to the previous analysis. All keywords are grouped into four large macro-clusters, each representing a fundamental direction in the study of youth migration (Figure 1.5).

The central core of the entire research field is the red cluster, which focuses on socio-cultural integration and identity. It examines the social aspects of migrants' lives in host societies, covering topics such as identity, discrimination, the role of education and family, and political and cultural challenges, often in the context of specific countries, including Germany and the United Kingdom. This social focus is closely linked to the green cluster, which looks at migration at the macro level, analysing its political, economic and security aspects. This strand examines global causes of migration, such as war, climate change, and conflict, and their impact on the economy, public policy, and security issues, including terrorism, in different geographical regions.

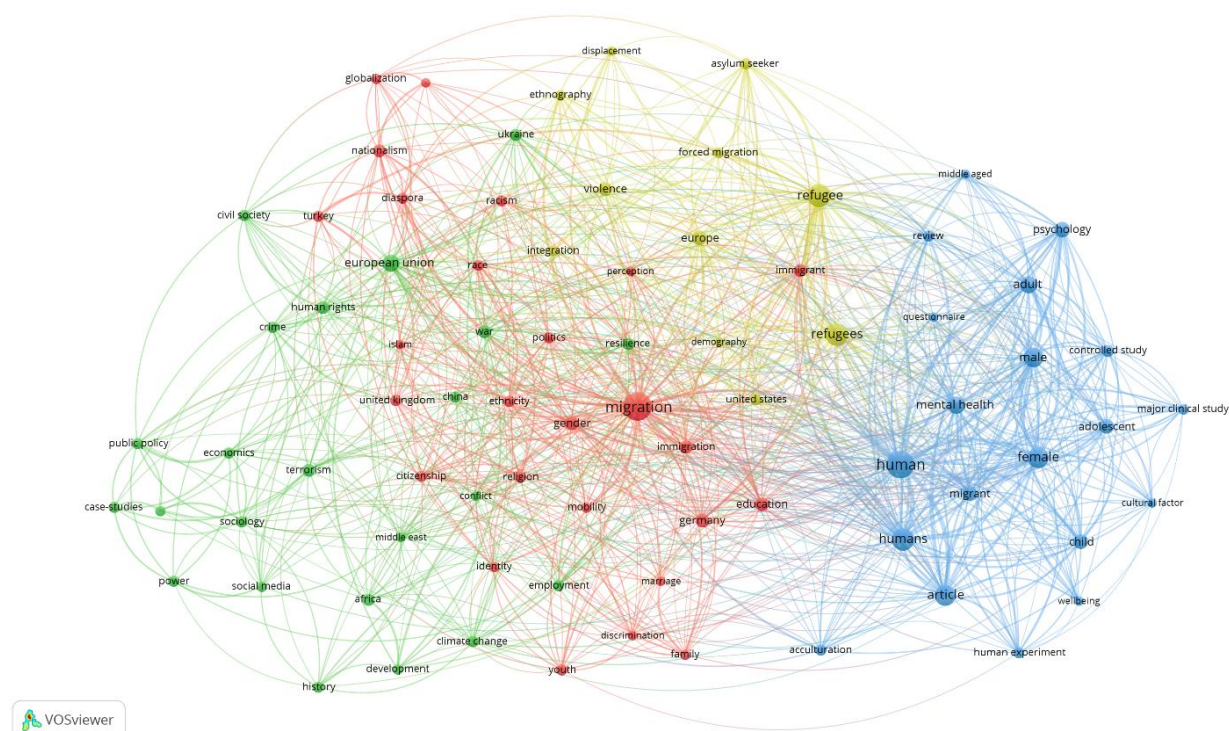


Fig. 1.5. Graphical visualization of the relationship between studies according to Scopus database data (created using VOSviewer v.1.6.10).

Source: authors' development

In contrast to global processes, the blue cluster is highly specialized and focused on the individual experience, psychological health, and well-being of migrants. Using the terminology of clinical research, the study examines the topics of mental health, acculturation, and adaptation across different age and gender groups. A separate important direction, represented by the yellow cluster, focuses on the legal and social aspects of forced migration, clearly distinguishing the concept of "migrant" from the specific statuses of "refugee" and "asylum seeker", as well as analysing the processes of obtaining protection and further integration in Europe and the USA. The details of the research focus in each cluster are represented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2

Characteristics of research clusters in the Scopus database

Cluster name and colour	Keywords	Cluster description
Cluster 1 (red)	citizenship, diaspora, discrimination, education, ethnicity, family, gender, Germany, globalization, identity, immigrant, immigration, Islam, marriage, migration, mobility, national identity, nationalism, perception, politics, race, racism, religion, Turkey, United Kingdom, youth	Sociocultural Integration and Identity. This is the largest, central cluster, focusing on the social aspects of migrants' lives in host societies. It covers topics such as identity, discrimination, the role of education and family, and the political and cultural challenges of integration, often in the context of specific countries (Germany, the United Kingdom, Turkey).
Cluster 2 (green)	Africa, case-studies, China, civil society, climate change, conflict, crime, development, economics, employment, European Union, history, human rights, Middle East, public policy, resilience, social media, sociology, students, terrorism, Ukraine, war	Political-economic and security aspects. This cluster examines migration at the macro level, analysing its global causes (war, climate change, and conflicts) and consequences. It links migration to economics, public policy, security issues (including terrorism and crime), and the activities of institutions such as the EU in various geographical regions.

Cluster 3 (blue)	acculturation, adolescent, adult, article, child, controlled study, cultural factor, female, human, humans, major clinical study, male, mental health, middle-aged, migrant, psychology, questionnaire, review, wellbeing	Migrant psychological health and well-being. This is a highly specialized cluster focused on the individual experiences and psychological state of migrants. Key topics here are mental health, well-being, acculturation, and adaptation of different age and gender groups. The terminology used is clinical and psychological research.
Cluster 4 (yellow)	asylum seeker, demography, displacement, ethnography, Europe, forced migration, integration, refugee, refugees, United States, violence	Forced Migration and Refugee Status. This cluster focuses on the legal and social aspects of forced migration. It clearly distinguishes between the concepts of “migrant” and “refugee” / “asylum seeker”. Key topics include the causes of displacement (such as violence), the processes of obtaining protection, and further integration in the context of Europe and the USA.

Thus, the analysis of Scopus data reveals that the study of youth migration is a complex, interdisciplinary field, where sociocultural integration is a central theme that unites research on global politics, individual psychological experiences, and the specifics of refugee legal status. Despite the search query limitations, the results reflect not only the EU's migration direction but also studies related to the USA and the entire continent of Europe, not just the EU. It highlights the scope of the problem and the common urgent areas in its resolution. These are linked to official status, ensuring health and well-being, and the most evident and widespread problems associated with societal integration (red and green clusters). The primary research interest focuses on social and economic integration, which may lead to various types of conflicts. In the EU, the core areas of research in linked to public relations economic aspects, but in Germany, unlike other EU countries, significant attention is paid to religion, discrimination, and

other social differences. The keyword “youth” has the most obvious and direct links with Germany, too.

An analysis of bibliographic connections between countries based on Scopus data (Figure 1.6) reveals a multipolar, yet clearly hierarchical structure of the global scientific field on youth migration caused by war.

The research is performed mainly in the UK, the US, and Germany, which act as key nodes that generate the most significant volume of publications and integrate other scientific communities around them. Around the European leaders, in particular the UK and Germany, a powerful Western European cluster (France, the Netherlands, Switzerland) is forming, which is the core of the academic discourse in the EU. It is contrasted by a geopolitically cohesive cluster of Central and Eastern European countries (Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, and Turkey), whose research focuses on the direct consequences of the migration crisis in the region. At the same time, the US leads a transatlantic network that unites scholars from Canada, Southern Europe, and the Mediterranean.

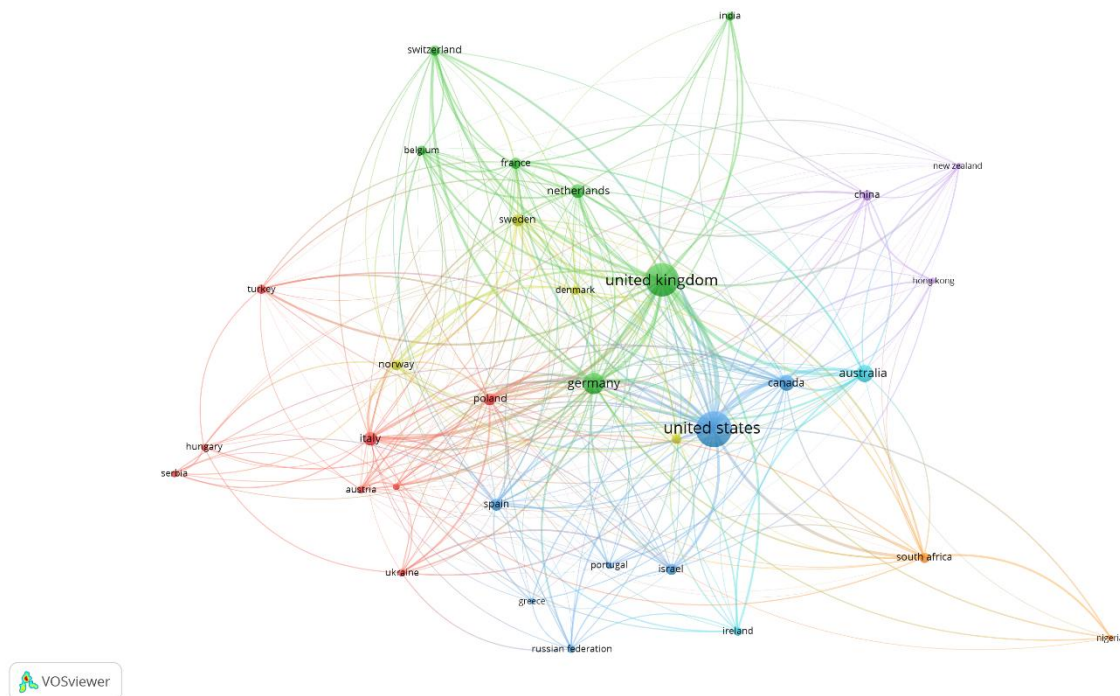


Fig. 1.6. Geographic visualization of relationships between studies according to Scopus database data (created using VOSviewer v.1.6.10)

The Scandinavian countries demonstrate separate stable ties, forming their own cluster focused on comparative analysis of regional integration models. Thus, the structure of scientific cooperation reflects geopolitical reality: research on the problem is distributed among several regional blocs, each with its own specific characteristics, but the global scientific discussion is moderated and primarily controlled by leading Western academic centres.

To conclude, the bibliometric analysis of research on youth migration under the influence of war reveals a multidimensional nature of the current state of the art, where geopolitical, social, legal, and psychological aspects are tightly linked. Studies indexed in both the Web of Science and Scopus databases show that the war in Ukraine has become the central determinant shaping academic discourse, positioning Poland and Germany as key regional foci of analysis. The Web of Science data outline six thematic clusters emphasizing the political, legal, and institutional dimensions of migration and the EU's role in addressing forced displacement. Scopus results, based on a broader publication base, offer a more comprehensive understanding of the problem, emphasizing sociocultural integration, identity, and psychological well-being as central to understanding youth migration experiences.

Integrating the results from both databases provides a holistic view of youth migration to the EU in light of instability caused by the war. The findings underscore the directions for policy development that equally address legal protection, social inclusion of young migrants, alongside long-term strategies for economic integration and education within the EU. By combining the aims of social protection for migrants, many of whom were forced to leave their homes, with the economic benefits gained by hosting countries from youth migration, the results suggest using these insights in policymaking to design more resilient migration and youth policies in post-war Europe.

Therefore, the next stage of the research is to define how policies regarding young migrants to the EU reflect the current problems and peculiarities of youth migration, as typically discussed in the scientific discourse in the field.

1.3. The problem of youth migration in youth policies in the EU

The full-scale war in Ukraine has led to the most significant population displacement in Europe since World War II. A significant share of forced migrants are children and young people. Thus, as of December 2024, 18% of the total number of migrants from Ukraine are persons aged 14 to 35 (Center for Economic Strategy, 2025). This population group is both the most vulnerable and strategically important, as the future of both Ukraine and the EU depends on its integration into the societies of the host countries and the possibility of return. The European Union has become the primary platform for forming a regulatory and institutional response to the challenges of Ukrainian youth migration. Adopted acts of the European Parliament, decisions of the Council of the EU, and communications of the European Commission determine the legal and organizational mechanisms for ensuring access to education, social protection, the labour market, and integration tools for this population category. They create basic conditions for the preservation and development of human capital, as well as for preventing the risks of social disintegration and marginalization of youth.

In view of this, an important scientific task is to conduct a content analysis of European Union documents regulating the conditions of stay, education, employment, and integration of Ukrainian youth. Such an approach will not only allow us to identify key areas of EU policy in the field of migration of Ukrainians, but also to trace the evolution of priorities, from emergency humanitarian solutions to the development of long-term integration strategies. Analysis of the content of EU documents will allow us to assess the extent to which the declared provisions ensure real access of young Ukrainians to the education system, labor market, and social guarantees in the member states. In addition, such an analysis will create a basis for determining the potential consequences of these policies both for EU countries (in the context of social cohesion and the use of human capital) and for Ukraine, which, in the post-war period, will need the return and involvement of the younger generation in the reconstruction processes.

To accomplish the task, the content analysis method was used, which allows for a systematic study of the texts of regulatory legal acts and political documents of the EU. Content analysis identifies key categories, the frequency of concept use, the formation of semantic clusters, and assesses the relationships between them. From a technical point of view, the analysis was carried out using the digital platform Voyant Tools, which is a common tool for processing text documents. Using Voyant Tools allows you to download the corpus of EU documents, perform automated processing, form word clouds, visualize the most used concepts, analyse the frequency and content of key terms, and identify thematic clusters in various documents.

Given the relevance of the identified issues, it is advisable to begin the content analysis with key documents from the European Union, which form the basis for a regulatory response to the challenges of Ukrainian youth migration. First of all, it is necessary to refer to Directive 2001/55/EC “On minimum standards for providing temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons” (Council Directive 2001/55/EC, 2001). This document is the basic legal instrument that defines the status of displaced persons from Ukraine and establishes their key rights, including access to education, the labor market, and social services. Although the specified act is universal in nature and applies to all categories of migrants and refugees, it created fundamental guarantees of integration for children and young people, on which the entire EU migration policy was subsequently built.

A word cloud formed based on the text of Directive 2001/55/EC demonstrates the most commonly used terms and allows you to identify the semantic accents of the document (Fig. 1.7).

assistance, access to education and healthcare. The inclusion of the words “asylum” and “international law” in the semantic field emphasizes that the Directive operates within the broader context of the international legal system of refugee protection, while also creating its own special rapid response mechanism.

Thus, the formed word cloud confirms that Directive 2001/55/EC is primarily an instrument for the collective regulation of crisis migration, focusing on temporary protection, coordination between Member States, and determining the legal status of displaced persons. This legal framework was further activated for Ukrainians in 2022, creating guarantees for young people's access to education, social services, and the labour market.

Having considered Directive 2001/55/EC as a fundamental legal instrument that defined the framework conditions for granting temporary protection, the next step is to analyse the documents in which the European Union directly outlined the specifics of supporting Ukrainian children and youth. In this context, the European Parliament Resolution of April 7, 2022 “On the protection of children and young people fleeing the war in Ukraine” (European Parliament, 2022) is of key importance, which became one of the first political acts aimed at detailing humanitarian and socio-legal guidelines for educational integration, social protection and access to the labour market for young migrants. It is the analysis of this document that will allow us to identify the initial conceptual framework of the EU’s approaches to Ukrainian youth in the context of a full-scale war.

To identify the content accents of the Resolution, text data visualization tools were used using the Voyant Tools software application. Figure 1.8 shows a word cloud formed based on the text of the European Parliament Resolution of April 7, 2022. It reflects the most commonly used concepts and allows us to outline the semantic dominants of the document, which will later become the basis for detailed content analysis.

need for protection, but also indicates the participants in the political processes who are obliged to ensure this protection in practice.

The substantive core of the document is reflected by the words “protection”, “care”, “support”, and “social”. They indicate that we are discussing a comprehensive approach, which includes not only formal legal status but also ensuring living conditions and access to social services. In this context, the appearance of the word “fleeing” emphasizes the crisis nature of the situation – the Resolution considers children and youth in the dynamics of forced displacement.

The presence of the terms “calls”, “ensure” in the cloud is also significant. This is a typical lexical marker of European Parliament documents, which do not create legally binding norms, but form political guidelines and appeals to member states and EU institutions.

The word cloud confirms that the Resolution of 07.04.2022 is structured around three key dimensions: addressee (Ukrainian children and youth), content (protection, social support, and access to services), and responsible institutions (EU and Member States). It is this triune logic that allows us to consider the document as a starting point for further decisions that will specify the educational, social, and labour rights of Ukrainian youth in the European Union.

The word cloud analysis allowed us to identify the key content areas of the Resolution and form categories for further systematic generalization. To present the results of the content analysis in a structured manner, it is advisable to use Table 1.3, which displays the main categories, relevant quotes from the document, and their scientific interpretation.

Table 1.3

Content analysis of the European Parliament Resolution of April 7, 2022, "On the protection of children and young people fleeing the war in Ukraine"

Category	Subcategory	Quote	Interpretation
Legal protection	The principle of the “best	"The best interests of the child should always be a primary	All decisions of Member States regarding Ukrainian

	interests of the child”	consideration in all decisions"	children must place the best interests of the child above institutional or administrative constraints.
	Protection from statelessness	"identifying ... nationality, statelessness or risk of statelessness on arrival"	The requirement to determine the status of each child immediately to avoid legal “traps” and exclusion from the legal field.
Safety and security	Evacuation and humanitarian corridors	"Calls for the creation of safe passages and humanitarian corridors for children fleeing the conflict"	Guarantees of physical security and access to humanitarian aid.
	Protection from violence/exploitation	"Every child has the right to be protected from violence, exploitation, and abuse"	Avoiding the risks of human trafficking, violence, and abuse.
Care and custody	Guardianship of minors	"unaccompanied... foster care or other community-based care should be prioritized"	Preference for family and community forms of care, rather than institutional ones.
	Support through special mechanisms	“strengthen the... hotline for missing children (116,000) and the... helpline... (116,111)”	Tools for responding to missing or needing assistance for children.
Education and training	Access and integration	"swiftly integrate learners of all ages into mainstream... learning structures"	Integration into EU school and university structures with additional language and pedagogical support.
	Recognition of qualifications	"the need to recognize diplomas, qualifications and learning periods"	Promoting the recognition of Ukrainian educational documents for further study or employment.
Socio-economic integration	Access to services	"ensure... socio-economic integration, equal access to quality	Young people are seen not only as refugees, but as a potential workforce that should have equal

		jobs, education, training and care"	rights in the labour market.
	Relocation within the EU	"promotion of relocation mechanisms... especially for unaccompanied children and children with disabilities"	Coordinated intra-European relocation to avoid concentration in a few countries.
Financial and institutional instruments	Financing of guarantees	"urgently increase the funding of the European Child Guarantee... at least EUR 20 billion"	Budget support for programs that directly affect children and youth from Ukraine.

Source: authors' development

It can be argued that the EU Resolution of 7 April 2022 became a conceptual starting point for the formation of European policy towards Ukrainian children and youth. It not only declared the need for protection but also identified directions for the practical implementation of integration and social measures within the EU. Therefore, in continuing the analysis of European Union documents aimed at supporting Ukrainian youth, it is important to turn to texts where political guidelines are specified as practical recommendations. Such a document is the Staff Working Document SWD (2022) “Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education: Considerations, key principles and practices for the school year 2022-2023” of 30 June 2022 (European Commission, 2022a) focused on the development of detailed principles and practices for the integration of Ukrainian schoolchildren and adolescents into the national education systems of the EU Member States. This document allows us to assess how political declarations were transformed into operational mechanisms and specific tools for educational integration.

Figure 1.9 shows a word cloud formed by its content, which allows us to highlight key concepts and understand the document's focus.



Fig. 1.9. Word cloud based on the text of the Staff Working Document
 “Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education:
 Considerations, key principles and practices for the school year 2022-2023”
Source: authors' development

The dominant term is “education”, which confirms the primary focus of the document – ensuring continuity of education and full access of children from Ukraine to the school environment of the EU countries. Next to it stand out the words “children”, “school”, “schools”, “learning”. This indicates that the emphasis is placed not only on formal legal guarantees but also on the practical organization of the educational process, the adaptation of curricula, and the creation of conditions for equal access. The concept of “language” occupies an important place. The frequency of its use proves that linguistic integration is a key factor in the inclusion of Ukrainian children in the new educational environment. Without linguistic support, any formal guarantees lose their effectiveness, because it is precisely the mastery of the language of the host country that opens access to high-quality education and socialization (Németh et al., 2024). The terms “support”, “teachers”, and “families” outline the multidimensionality of the integration process. This is not only about the students themselves, but also about teachers who need methodological assistance, and families who are involved in

the adaptation process. This broadens the vision of integration as a joint effort of school, family, and community.

The combination of the concepts “displaced” and “Ukrainian” is also interesting, reflecting the specifics of the document’s addressees: we are talking about refugee children who were forced to leave Ukraine. Thus, the document is not a general instruction on the integration of migrants, but has a clear target focus. The presence of technical elements in the cloud (“https”, “en”) indicates the practical nature of the document: it widely presents links to online resources, platforms, educational materials, and methodological recommendations for teachers and schools. This proves that the SWD (2022) serves as both a descriptive and an instrumental document, oriented towards direct application in school practice. Therefore, this document is of an applied nature and focuses on three main areas: ensuring access to education, language support, and overcoming barriers, creating a system of assistance for teachers, students, and families. Taken together, these elements form a practical framework for the EU’s integration policy in the field of school education for Ukrainian children.

Special attention is paid to documents that go beyond the school education of migrants from Ukraine and directly relate to the functioning of the university sector. An important example is the European University Association document “Supporting the Ukrainian university sector” European University Association, 2023), which contains recommendations on preserving the academic capacity of Ukrainian higher education institutions, their integration into the European educational space, and strengthening international cooperation. This document demonstrates how the European academic community is building long-term mechanisms to support students and scholars from Ukraine and contributing to the restoration of the university system in war conditions. A word cloud created based on its text allows us to see the main focuses of the document (Fig. 1.10).



Fig. 1.10. Word cloud formed from the text of the document “Supporting the Ukrainian university sector”

Source: authors' development

The visualization focuses on the concepts of “education”, “higher”, “universities”, and “institutions”, which are closely linked to the markers “Ukraine” and “Ukrainian”. This indicates that the document is explicitly dedicated to the Ukrainian higher education sector and the tasks of its preservation and development under war conditions. A noticeable group is made up of the words “research”, “collaboration”, “partnerships”, and “European”. They reflect the EUA’s vision: support should be implemented not only through internal measures, but also through strengthening international ties, exchanges, and joint projects. In this context, war is perceived as a threat to the continuity of research and transnational cooperation, making the priority the preservation and expansion of partnerships (Bamberger et al., 2025).

Another semantic block is formed by the words “support”, “measures”, “reconstruction”, and “reform”. They denote a dual approach: a combination of

operational solutions (ensuring students' access to education, staff support, short-term mobility) and a strategic vision (restoring university infrastructure, reforming management, integration into the European space). The frequency of the terms “reconstruction” and “reform” emphasizes that we are not only talking about assistance here and now, but also about long-term institutional transformations.

The words “students”, “staff”, “fellowships”, and “exchange” also appear frequently in the text. This indicates the document's focus on the human dimension: support is intended for students, teachers, and researchers. Various mechanisms are proposed, ranging from scholarships and training programs to virtual or blended formats of cooperation, which enable the maintenance of educational and scientific trajectories even in crisis conditions. This is important in the context of youth migration: the goal is to transform potential “drainage” into the circulation of knowledge with the possibility of return or joint activities in transnational teams (Lam & Rui, 2023). Technical labels such as “https”, “resources”, and “funding” remind us that the document is practical, not just declarative: it contains references to real resources, funding instruments, and cooperation opportunities. This confirms the EUA's intention to provide not only strategic advice, but also specific ways to implement support.

Overall, the word cloud demonstrates that the EUA recommendations form a multi-level framework: ensuring the continuity of education and research, developing international partnerships, supporting human capital, preparing for post-war reconstruction, and reforming the higher education system. For Ukrainian students and young scholars, this means creating stable channels of participation in the European educational space, which reduces the risk of losing potential and promotes integration even in times of crisis.

Along with the recommendations of European university associations, an important source for analysis is official reports of EU institutions that systematize data and practices of supporting Ukrainian students. One such document is the Eurydice report “Supporting refugee learners from Ukraine in higher education in

Europe” (2022), which summarizes the approaches of member states to organizing access of Ukrainian students to higher education institutions, recognition of their qualifications, financial support, and integration measures (Eurydice, 2022). This report enables us to trace how the response to the challenges of the mass movement of young people from Ukraine was shaped at the level of the entire European education system.

The content analysis of this document suggests that access to higher education for Ukrainian students has become a priority in most EU countries. National governments have simplified admission rules: they have allowed entry without additional visa procedures, and sometimes without a complete package of documents. At the same time, Eurydice records differences between countries: in some, policies were more flexible and integration took place faster, while in others, administrative obstacles remained.

A separate section is devoted to the recognition of qualifications and diplomas. The report emphasizes that many Ukrainian students left without the originals of their educational documents. In response, Member States allowed the submission of copies, electronic files, or even oral confirmations, with subsequent verification. This became possible thanks to the mechanisms of the Lisbon Convention (Council of Europe & UNESCO, 1997) and the work of the European Network of Information Centres/National Academic Recognition Information Centres, which ensured international coordination.

Considerable attention has been paid to financial support. In most countries, Ukrainian students have been equated with local students, granting them the right to free or reduced tuition. In addition, special scholarship programs and grants have been created to prevent the risk of interruption of studies due to a lack of funds. This indicates the EU's awareness that the financial barrier is one of the greatest threats to educational integration.

Social and psychological support was no less important. Universities organized consultations, language courses, and also created special “welcome offices” that helped students navigate the new environment. The report

emphasizes that student integration is viewed not only in a narrow academic sense but also as a broader process of social adaptation.

However, Eurydice identifies challenges that remain unresolved. The biggest challenges are related to language barriers, housing shortages, and difficulties in recognising non-formal or interrupted education. This suggests that short-term measures need to be supported by long-term strategies.

The following important stage of the analysis is considering regulatory acts that directly affect the educational and professional trajectories of Ukrainian students and young professionals. While previous documents concerned universal access to education and support in higher education, the “Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/554 of 5 April 2022 on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine” is more applied in nature: it establishes approaches to the recognition of qualifications and diplomas of those forced to flee from war (European Commission, 2022b). This document is key, as the ability of Ukrainian citizens to continue their education, gain access to regulated professions, or integrate into the labour market in EU member states depends on it.

Figure 1.11 visualizes the main semantic accents of the document, identifies which concepts have the most significant weight in its structure, and which semantic fields set the logic of its content.

The terms “recognition” and “qualifications” are dominant. This reflects the very essence of the regulatory act: it aims to ensure the prompt and flexible recognition of the qualifications of persons fleeing war. The high frequency of these words indicates that educational and professional documents (diplomas, certificates, attestations) constitute the central subject of regulation.

An important place is also occupied by vocabulary related to the institutional framework: “commission”, “European”, “member states”. This demonstrates that the document simultaneously designates the European Commission as a coordinator while placing the main burden of implementation on the EU Member

States. The Recommendation does not create binding legal norms, but fixes a single benchmark that national governments must adhere to.

Fig. 1.11. Word cloud formed by the text “Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/554 of 5 April 2022 on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine”

The semantic block “temporary”, “protection”, “Ukraine”, “Ukrainian” links the document to the broader legal framework of the Temporary Protection Directive. This shows that the recognition of qualifications is not seen as an autonomous process, but as part of a broader humanitarian response policy. Qualifications should be recognized not only for educational reasons but also to enable people from Ukraine to work, continue their studies, and integrate into the societies of the host countries.

The words “education”, “professional”, “higher”, and “training” outline the areas covered by the Recommendation. These include not only university degrees, but also professional certificates and access to regulated professions. For young people, this means the opportunity to continue their studies in higher education

institutions, and for young professionals, to enter the labour market even without a complete package of documents.

An in-depth content analysis of Recommendation EC 2022/554 allowed us to identify three main content areas:

1. Recognition of diplomas and qualifications. The Recommendation calls on member states to apply the most flexible mechanisms for Ukrainians who arrived without a complete package of documents. It is proposed to accept copies, digital versions, or other evidence of education and professional training. This helps avoid the loss of educational and employment opportunities due to war circumstances.

2. Access to regulated professions. The document explicitly stresses the need to simplify procedures for professionals seeking to work in regulated fields (e.g., medicine, education, engineering). Member States should develop temporary or fast-track competence assessment schemes to ensure rapid recruitment.

3. Educational integration and continuing education. The recommendation applies not only to the labour market, but also to higher education: universities should admit students even in the absence of official documents, using alternative verification methods (tests, interviews). This is aimed at preserving the educational trajectories of Ukrainian youth in wartime.

The importance of the Recommendation is enhanced by the fact that an official assessment of its implementation was published in 2023, allowing us to verify the reality of the proposed approaches' application. This creates an opportunity for a comprehensive analysis, from the defined principles to the practical implementation of the policy, recognizing Ukrainian qualifications in the European Union.

“Assessment of Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/554 of 5 April 2022 on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine” (European Commission, 2023a) demonstrated that most Member States promptly implemented the recommendations and ensured access to education and professional activities for Ukrainians. Examples of how EU Member States have

minimized formalities when assessing applications from Ukrainians enjoying temporary protection include:

- adopting emergency legislation or other measures to abolish documentary requirements, for example, accepting other types of evidence than original documents and requiring only those that are necessary (e.g., Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain);

- applying more flexible deadlines or starting to process applications even if the list was incomplete (e.g., Poland, Czech Republic);

- waiver of in-depth assessments based on the results of previous recognition procedures when the circumstances are similar and there are no serious doubts about equivalence (e.g., Hungary, Portugal);

- giving priority to applications from persons fleeing Ukraine compared to applications from other third-country nationals (e.g., Lithuania);

- reduction of the time for issuing a recognition decision (e.g., Lithuania);

- reduction or elimination of costs associated with the recognition procedure (e.g., Belgium, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, Romania);

- promoting the recognition of professional qualifications for Ukrainians to access craft professions (e.g., France) (European Commission, 2023a).

Summarizing the results of the analysis of regulatory and programmatic acts, it is also appropriate to highlight those documents of the European Union that directly relate to youth policy and have direct references to Ukraine. They reflect how the EU integrates Ukrainian youth into its own strategic and institutional framework, combining the foreign policy dimension with educational and social instruments. A brief description of such documents is systematized in Table 1.4.

Thus, the content analysis of the European Union documents demonstrates that after the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine, a multi-level system of support for Ukrainian youth was formed. It combined legal guarantees of temporary protection, political guidelines in the field of education and employment, and specific integration tools, ranging from flexible recognition of qualifications to financial assistance and academic mobility.

Table 1.4

EU youth policies and initiatives mentioning Ukraine

Document/initiative	Year	Content and meaning
Council Conclusions on the Youth Action Plan (2022–2027)	2022	Official EU Council framework document. Directly mentions “Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine and its significant impact on Ukrainian youth”; identifies support for youth in conflicts and among displaced persons as a strategic priority.
Joint Communication on the Youth Action Plan (2022–2027)	2022	Policy framework and roadmap for youth inclusion in EU external action. Used by the Council as a basis for conclusions; focus on youth participation in democratic processes, reconstruction and international cooperation, with a particular focus on Ukraine.
Youth and sport: enhance cooperation with Ukraine	2023	The European Commission has confirmed the strengthening of cooperation with Ukraine in the field of youth policy and sport. The EU4Youth program, along with measures for employment and civic engagement of Ukrainian youth, was separately mentioned.
Erasmus+ (Reviewed budget 2023)	2023	Expanded support for Ukrainian students, pupils and educators. Increased funding for mobility, special measures for integration, and academic cooperation with Ukrainian educational institutions are provided.

Source: compiled from data (Council of the European Union, 2022; European Commission, 2022c; European Commission, 2023b; European Union, 2023).

Thanks to this, Ukrainian children, students, and young professionals were able to continue their education and professional activities in the EU countries. At the same time, an assessment of the implementation of these measures showed uneven practices between the Member States. This highlights the limitations of the EU's "soft law" and, at the same time, indicates the need for long-term strategies that would transform temporary assistance mechanisms into sustainable policies of integration and human capital development.

CHAPTER 2. CURRENT PROBLEMS AND TRENDS IN YOUTH MIGRATION TO THE EU

2.1. Trends and key reasons of youth migration to the EU

The European Union is an important destination for migration, which becomes especially obvious under the hazardous circumstances like war. EU countries, despite significant differences in their migration policies, remain more desirable destinations compared with non-EU countries. These patterns were confirmed during the war in Ukraine, when Germany and Poland hosted the majority of Ukrainian refugees: according to the UN data, the number of refugees is 1233280 and 1006900 people, respectively, while the total number in Europe is 5192110 people and 5852670 worldwide (UNHCR, 2025). The war in Ukraine has become the largest-scale social catastrophe of the last decades. The first wave of migration in 2022 reflects perceptions of foreign countries regarding security, support from the host population, and social integration potential. Other waves also confirmed that language obstacles and differences in traditions and culture (especially when comparing the German and Ukrainian populations) matter less than attitudes toward migrants.

The first glance at young migrants' aspirations can be gained by comparing the age structure of the EU population with those born in foreign countries. The appropriate data are shown in Figure 2.1.

As seen from the figure, the age structure of the EU population shows noticeable differences, with a higher share of older age groups, particularly those aged 54 and over. Till this age, the share of those born abroad is higher. When summing the share of the youngest groups in the age group up to 34 years, the share of the foreign-born population is 34.2%, compared to 28.7% who were born in the EU. Therefore, even from these data, it can be concluded that the EU is an attractive destination for migrants, especially of the younger groups.

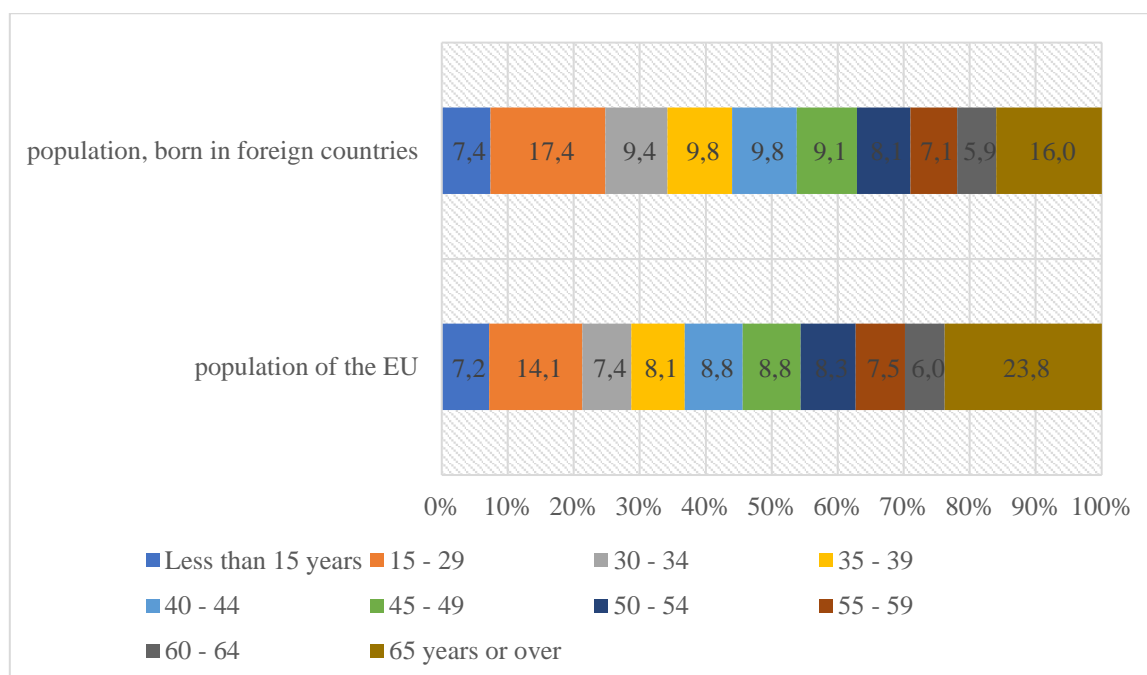


Fig. 2.1. Distribution of population born in the EU and population born in foreign countries in 2024, %

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Migration. Migrant population indicators. Proportion of population by age group, sex, and country of birth (Eurostat, 2025)

Gender distribution of the foreign-born population in the EU is given in Figure 2.2.

It is evident that younger males are more willing to migrate to the EU. Even if we exclude the age group under 15 years, whose migration decisions could be influenced by parents, the share of the male population aged 15-29 and 30-34 years is significantly higher than that of females. Therefore, it can be assumed that men are more assertive in migration intentions. Furthermore, this tendency is typical only for the first aged groups represented in Figure 2.2, showing the most significant differences compared to women aged 15-29. This can also be linked to educational intentions and positive expectations regarding career perspectives. This suggestion will be verified in this study on Ukrainian students' migration intentions.

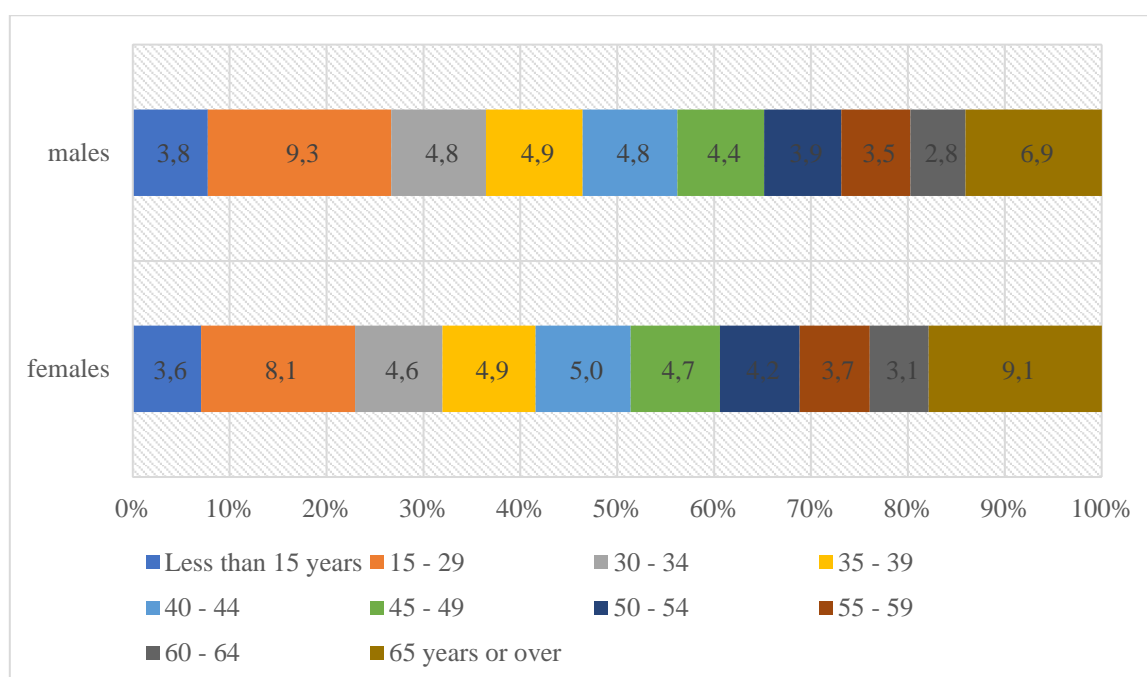


Fig.2.2. Gender distribution of the foreign-born population in the EU in 2024, %

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Migration. Migrant population indicators. Proportion of population by age group, sex, and country of birth (Eurostat, 2025)

Country comparisons of the foreign-born youth aged 15-34 (Fig.2.3) allow for identifying some geographical distribution patterns (data for Lithuania are absent for 2024).

On average, the ratio of 15-29-year-olds is 17,4%. The higher share of the youth in this age is typical for Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Ireland, Spain, Cyprus, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Finland, and Sweden. The share of the population aged 30-34 is lower, but generally follows the same trend, except for some countries. Besides, the permit for residence or other documents legalizing the status of foreign-born in the EU could be issued earlier; therefore, it does not obviously reflect the current policies regarding young migrants.

As for the population aged 15-29, it can be assumed that the listed countries have the most attractive policies for migrants. Furthermore, countries like Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Latvia, and Slovakia have the strictest migration policies, with less developed programs for attracting youth compared to previous countries.

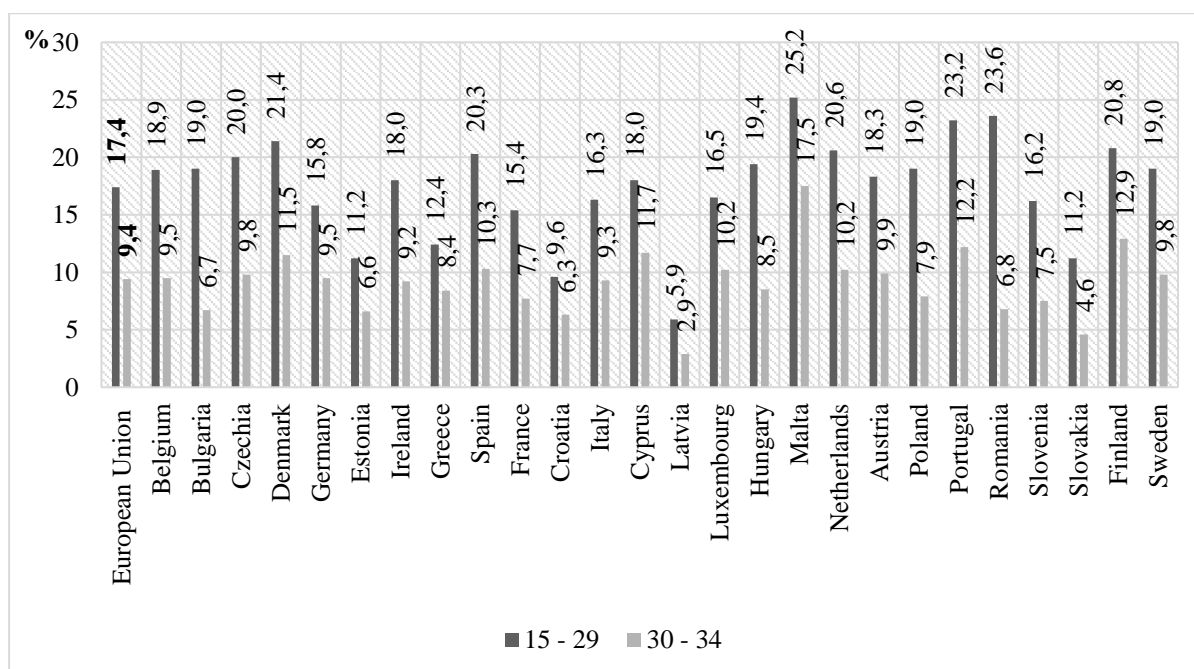


Fig.2.3. Country distribution of the foreign-born population aged 15-29 and 30-34 in the EU in 2024, %

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Migration. Migrant population indicators. Proportion of population by age group, sex, and country of birth (Eurostat, 2025)

Comparisons of net migration to the EU are complicated because not all countries provide appropriate information on net migration in 2023. For 2024, the statistics are unavailable for the EU and all its member states. Therefore, the comparisons exclude Ireland, Greece, Spain, Lithuania, Malta, Austria, Romania, and Slovenia, which have not reported on net migration in 2023. The comparisons are based on data on total migration to the countries (population of all age groups) and the younger population, which is grouped with 5-year intervals: 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, and 30-34 years (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Distribution of net migration in the EU in 2023 by age groups, number of people

Country	Total net migration	Including age groups			
		15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34
Belgium	73 538	9 281	15 313	13 202	8 159
Bulgaria	41 580	2 025	2 475	2 533	2 615

Czechia	88 510	14 164	9 333	7 734	8 387
Denmark	30 172	3 246	8 571	3 814	2 722
Germany	722 752	85 796	145 633	129 583	83 892
Estonia	13 856	934	1 521	1 229	1 533
France	151 245	-4 285	-24 615	20 062	36 142
Croatia	30 178	740	4 239	5 253	5 369
Italy	281 220	28 420	35 277	35 072	34 393
Cyprus	13 782	155	1 614	2 375	1 941
Latvia	2 415	-55	-224	29	-17
Luxembourg	10 376	703	2 185	2 579	1 457
Hungary	24 823	4 794	4 444	2 058	3 458
Netherlands	151 023	26 560	25 228	24 821	18 245
Poland	109 212	3 085	881	10 397	15 148
Portugal	155 701	7 928	9 417	16 647	21 171
Slovakia	1 401	38	83	47	-263
Finland	57 914	4 553	5 403	8 282	8 449
Sweden	21 080	2 455	7 273	5 569	2 980
Mean	104 251	10 028	13 371	15 331	13 462

Note: colour grey – net migration is above average.

Source: authors' calculations based on Eurostat data: Migration. Migrant population indicators. Net migration by age and sex (Eurostat, 2025)

The comparative analysis of net migration across EU member states in 2023 reveals substantial asymmetries in both total and youth-specific inflows. Despite data limitations for several countries, the available figures demonstrate that migration remains unevenly distributed, with Germany, Italy, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal emerging as the principal destinations for migrants. Germany's exceptionally high total net migration (over 720.000 people from the total 2.962.213 net migration flow in the EU) not only confirms its position as Europe's primary demographic attractor but also underscores its critical role in

absorbing migration driven by geopolitical instability. In contrast, several Central and Eastern European states, such as Slovakia, Latvia, and Estonia, recorded minimal or even negative net migration among specific youth cohorts, reflecting persistent outmigration and/or the perception of these countries as transit points for migrants. A similar situation is typical also for France if one considers not the total net migration in a country, but only the net migration in the 15-24 year cohorts.

Age-group analysis further emphasizes that migration is most intensive among individuals aged 25-29, who account for the majority of net flows among youth across nearly all countries. This concentration suggests that migration to the EU in 2023 was primarily driven by educational, professional, and security-related motivations among young adults. Educational incentives could also be confirmed as the net migration is high in the group of 20-24, especially in countries with attractive rules for foreign students' support, like Germany and the Netherlands. The comparatively low inflow to Poland is explained by the loss of its own youth to more developed countries within the EU. In general, the dominance of this cohort (25-29) in overall youth net migration flow highlights both the attractiveness of EU labour markets and the long-term implications for countries experiencing youth population losses.

Countries with above-average levels of net migration, notably Germany, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Poland, form a distinct group of high-attraction economies that combine strong labour demand, relative political stability, and developed integration systems. Their ability to attract younger cohorts, especially individuals aged 20-34, suggests a structural advantage in demographic renewal and workforce sustainability. These countries also play a central role in shaping the EU's broader migration dynamics, serving as both humanitarian and economic hubs and fostering new integration models for the Union.

Overall, the data indicate that net migration patterns in 2023 reinforce pre-existing demographic and economic hierarchies within the EU. Western and

Southern European states continue to function as core migration magnets, while the majority of Eastern member states remain peripheral sources of mobility. For policymakers, these findings stress the importance of coordinated strategies to balance regional demographic disparities, enhance youth retention, and address integration challenges in high-intake countries.

The net migration distribution provides an overall understanding of the country's attractiveness to migrants. However, these imaginations and decisions about future migration depend on the experience of living and integrating into hosting communities after some time staying in a new country. To identify trends in the attractiveness of destination countries based on subjective estimates of well-being before the migration decision, it is necessary to compare immigration flows within the EU. The immigrants' statistics reflect the subjective perception more clearly.

The appropriate distribution among countries with available statistical data is given in Figure 2.4. To define the safety reasons and influence of the war in Ukraine, the most significant military conflict on the European continent since World War II, comparisons have been made between two periods: pre-full-scale invasion (2021) and 2023, with 2023 providing the most recent available information on immigration. Due to the absence of immigration statistics for Poland, which hosted a significant number of immigrants in 2021, data from 2020 have been used for this country.

The comparative analysis of immigration to EU countries in 2021 and 2023 reveals a substantial rise in inflows following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, accompanied by a concentration of migration geography and intensity among member states. The total number of immigrants increased markedly in nearly all countries with available data, with the most pronounced growth observed in Germany, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and France. These seven countries form the EU's primary immigration core, jointly accounting for the overwhelming majority of total migrant inflows.

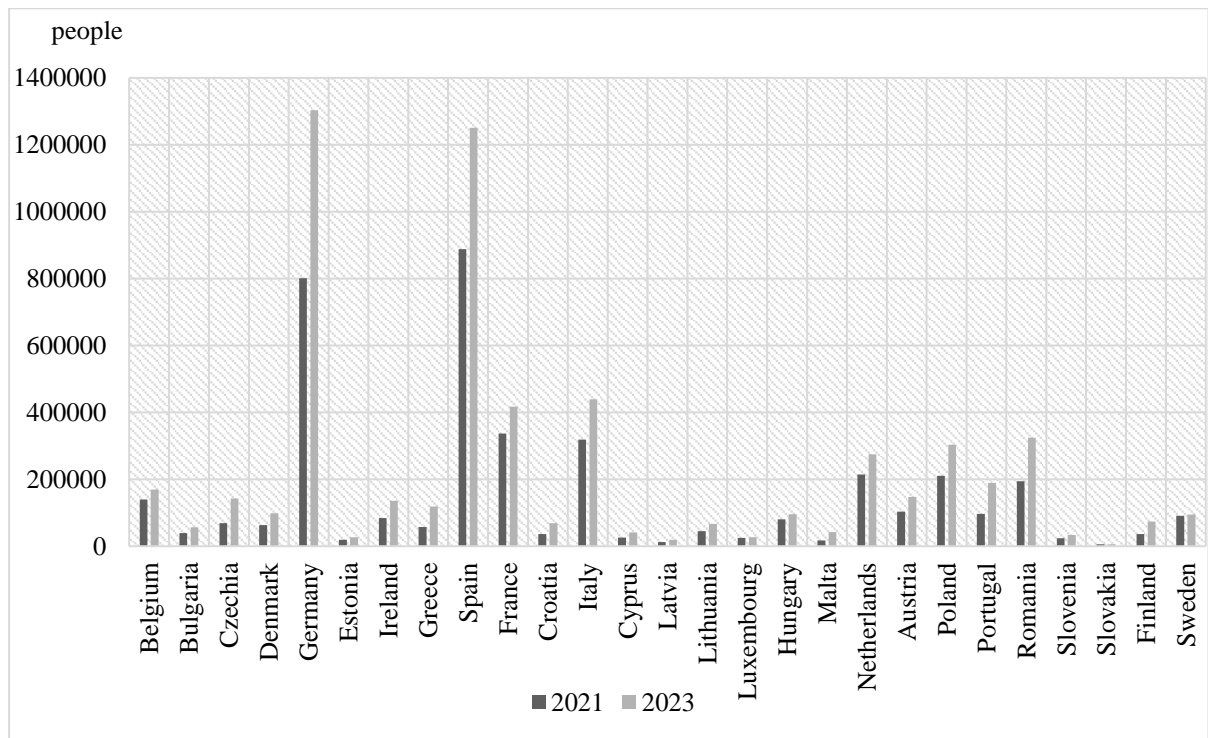


Fig.2.4. Country distribution of the immigrants in the EU in 2021 and 2023

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Migration. Immigration. Immigration by age group, sex, and level of human development of the country of previous residence (Eurostat, 2025)

However, regarding youth immigration, data for Romania are unavailable for different age groups, and it does not rank among the leaders in attracting young migrants. Instead, five of the listed countries (Germany, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, and France) demonstrate a consistent increase across all youth cohorts (Table 2.2). Germany alone almost doubled its number of young immigrants between 2021 and 2023, reflecting both humanitarian inflows and strong labour-market absorption capacity.

Table 2.2

Distribution of young immigrants in the EU in 2021 and 2023 by age groups, number of people

Country	Age group							
	15-19		20-24		25-29		30-34	
	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023
Belgium	10550	12712	20189	24289	23709	28365	17514	21531

Bulgaria	1613	2796	2886	4182	3486	4282	3842	4305
Czechia	5652	17606	9489	15045	11776	14417	10462	15040
Denmark	4893	6669	12918	24410	11890	16993	8184	11605
Germany	56573	109429	129530	198107	137759	210177	102780	160626
Estonia	529	1343	2054	2809	2763	2979	2953	3181
Spain	58211	81571	91618	132442	110190	162909	102020	151000
France	29955	40143	57545	78012	50069	63621	36117	45029
Croatia	1140	2253	4533	7902	5083	10425	4690	9877
Italy	20264	33777	32891	48133	47496	63674	43831	57818
Cyprus	1310	1684	3362	4691	3596	6507	3215	5965
Latvia	254	759	756	1532	1401	1845	1893	2126
Lithuania	645	2080	3294	5005	5823	8763	7044	11390
Luxembourg	1071	1241	3128	3523	4983	5406	3730	3831
Hungary	4864	6590	11644	14650	11688	15351	10211	13917
Netherlands	23826	29632	37355	43585	38770	47054	28418	35833
Poland	<i>6128</i>	11923	12931	12382	<i>26656</i>	28475	<i>30624</i>	41559
Portugal	3805	9513	7792	16340	10491	24297	10559	25495
Slovakia	183	221	222	199	319	354	381	382
Finland	2059	5145	4328	7174	6464	10713	5888	10657
Sweden	5033	5041	10452	12038	15244	15823	13778	14064
Mean	11360	18197	21853	31260	25222	35354	21340	30725

Note: italic – data for 2020 (Poland) as 2021 is unavailable.

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Migration. Immigration.

Immigration by age group, sex, and level of human development of the country of previous residence (Eurostat, 2025)

The data show that youth migration (aged 15-34) expanded most significantly in the 20-29 age group, confirming that individuals of working and studying age predominantly drove the migration surge. Average inflows across all countries rose from approximately 11000-25000 per cohort in 2021 to 18000–35000 in 2023, indicating a near 50% increase within two years. The sharpest growth occurred in Central European destinations that have become key transit or settlement points for displaced persons, particularly Czechia, Poland, and Finland, where the number of immigrants in each youth category more than doubled. In

contrast, Northern and smaller Baltic states (e.g., Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) display moderate but steady increases, suggesting limited absorption capacity but a consistent upward trend.

Comparing 2021 and 2023 also highlights structural differences between traditional Western destinations and emerging Eastern entry points. Western states such as Germany, Spain, Italy, and France primarily attract long-term migrants that can be linked with employment and educational aspirations, while countries closer to Ukraine (Czechia, Poland, Hungary, and Finland) act as initial hosts for war-related migration, often serving as transition zones toward Western Europe. The regional distribution of immigrants thus mirrors both economic hierarchies and geopolitical proximity to conflict zones.

A more precise view on youth migration is possible if to analyse overall data on youth migration in the age of 15-34 in the top 5 countries and Poland for comparisons due to its significant role as a transborder country which hosted the primary wave of migrants from Ukraine for staying or further transit (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3

The top 5 EU countries hosted youth immigrants in 2021 and 2023

Country	2021	2023	Change
Germany	426642	678339	251697
Spain	362039	527922	165883
France	173686	226805	53119
Italy	144482	203402	58920
Netherlands	128369	156104	27735
<i>Poland (for comparison)</i>	<i>76339</i>	<i>94339</i>	<i>18000</i>

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data: Migration. Immigration. Immigration by age group, sex, and level of human development of the country of previous residence (Eurostat, 2025)

The data in the table confirms the sharp rise in youth immigration to the EU following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Between 2021 and 2023, all leading destination countries experienced significant growth in inflows. The increase was

particularly pronounced in Germany and Spain, where the number of young immigrants nearly doubled, reflecting both the developing of humanitarian support and expanding economic integration opportunities. Italy and France maintained steady growth, while the Netherlands continued its upward trend, confirming its role as a mid-sized but consistently attractive destination.

To understand the strength of young people's aspirations to receive the rights for permanent residence in the host country, which is the most apparent manifestation of a positive perception of the new place of stay, it is important to consider the dynamics of residence permits. The data from the top 5 countries are the most appropriate for this purpose. Additionally, to avoid the influence of temporary migration trends, which can be affected by the peculiarities of legal regulations regarding border crossing and staying in certain countries, we consider two other countries with the most significant number of valid residence permits – Poland and Portugal, where the overall number of valid permits is higher than 1 million by the end of 2024. Thus, we consider only the most persistent and highly motivated immigrants who build strong relationships with the host country and simultaneously identify the most attractive countries.

The scale of permits provides convincing data illustrating both migrants' satisfaction with the conditions of staying and countries' willingness to host new residents. The data summarizing the difference in the pre-war period (before the large-scale invasion) and the most recent ones are given in Figure 2.5.

The dynamics of valid residence permits in the EU illustrate indirectly patterns of long-term integration and host countries' readiness to accommodate new residents. The comparison of 2021 and 2024 data reveals a steady overall increase in the number of valid permits, reflecting both demographic inflows and the institutional adaptation of European migration systems to sustained arrivals. Among the top seven EU countries, the total number of permits for the youth population (aged 15–34) increased in all cases. Germany remains the leader, with over 1.7 million valid youth permits in 2024.

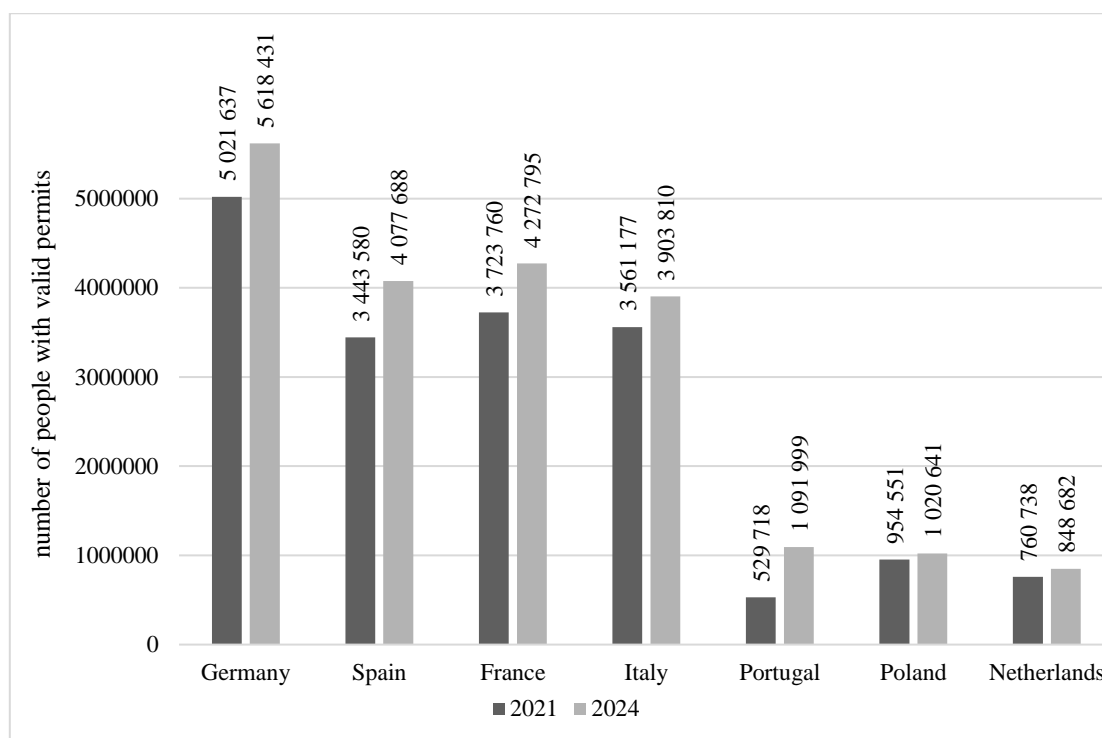


Fig.2.5. The top 7 countries in the EU by the valid permits for residence in 2021 and 2024

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Migration. Managed migration. All valid permits by age, sex, and citizenship on 31 December of each year (Eurostat, 2025)

Regarding the share of youth among all permit holders (Table 2.4), it has increased moderately in most countries, suggesting growing attractiveness for younger age groups.

Table 2.4

Dynamics of permits for youth aged 15-34 in the top 7 EU countries in 2021 and 2024

Country	Permits for the youth, number		Share in total number of permits, %	
	2021	2024	2021	2024
Germany	1 525 447	1 773 878	30,38	31,57
Spain	960 926	1 201 389	27,90	29,46
France	1 234 032	1 443 743	33,14	33,79

Italy	1 055 954	1 169 549	29,65	29,96
Netherlands	274 340	315 196	36,06	37,14
Poland	458 423	445 003	48,02	43,60
Portugal	200 475	465 484	37,85	42,63

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Migration. Managed migration. All valid permits by age, sex, and citizenship on 31 December of each year (Eurostat, 2025)

Particularly notable is Portugal, where the number of youth permits more than doubled between 2021 and 2024, highlighting the country's transition from a peripheral to a mainstream EU destination. Conversely, Poland's youth share fell from 48% to 44%, implying a partial outflow or the reclassification of temporary humanitarian statuses into other legal categories. It reflects the strengthening of rules for migrants in Poland and partial redistribution among countries with more loyal policies.

Unfortunately, official statistics do not cover the data on reasons for permits applied for by the age groups. It is only possible to analyse the overall distribution of reasons in the countries that hosted the majority of immigrants, including those with valid permits. Besides, only three reasons are reported. The reasons for employment intentions and remuneration are considered in the list, but there is no available data regarding these reasons. Therefore, the distribution and growth of permits by the indicated reason are presented in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5

Dynamics of permits by reasons in the top 7 EU countries in 2021 and 2024

Country	family reasons			education reasons			other reasons		
	2021	2024		2021	2024		2021	2024	
	share, %	share, %	growth	share, %	share, %	growth	share, %	share, %	growth
Germany	37,63	37,03	-0,60	3,65	3,86	0,21	4,97	3,49	-1,48
Spain	35,81	37,03	1,22	1,86	3,58	1,72	52,73	45,34	-7,38
France	35,57	32,55	-3,02	6,30	8,19	1,89	38,32	35,64	-2,68

Italy	49,86	42,12	-7,74	1,32	1,99	0,67	3,84	9,51	5,67
Netherlands	25,21	26,66	1,45	4,52	4,88	0,37	42,01	35,03	-6,97
Poland	6,89	7,87	0,98	4,44	2,10	-2,33	21,72	26,46	4,74
Portugal	28,26	16,02	-12,23	3,89	8,53	4,64	41,95	48,07	6,11

Source: Authors' calculations based on Eurostat data: Migration. Managed migration. All valid permits by reason on 31 December of each year (Eurostat, 2025).

The distribution given in Table 2.5 varies widely across national contexts but exhibits several common tendencies. The share of family-related permits remains the largest among the indicated reasons (despite the “others”) across most countries, yet its relative importance has declined in the post-invasion period. In contrast, education-related permits have grown slightly in all major host states (the only exception is a decrease in Poland), indicating a gradual expansion of educational migration channels.

The “other reasons” category, which includes humanitarian and miscellaneous grounds, shows the strongest positive dynamics in Southern and Eastern Europe, particularly in Italy, Poland, and Portugal. This pattern reflects the impact of war-induced displacement and subsequent regularisation of migrants’ status within EU legal frameworks. Notably, among “other reasons,” safety concerns can be included; therefore, data for 2024, reflecting the dynamics of Ukrainian migrants fleeing the war, can confirm this.

Particularly, according to Eurostat data, 4,197,365 people who fled Ukraine had temporary protection in the EU on 1st January 2024, which amounts to 9.3 people per 1,000 EU population. The top 10 countries that hosted refugees from Ukraine and provided temporary protection to them are depicted in Figure 2.6.

As shown in the figure, the list of the top ten host countries is similar to the previous ranking of countries hosting immigrants, and they provide the same support for Ukrainian refugees. Among them, Germany and Poland together account for over half of all beneficiaries, confirming their leading role as primary

destinations for displaced Ukrainians. Czechia and Spain have also emerged as central hubs, reflecting both geographical proximity and active humanitarian policy.

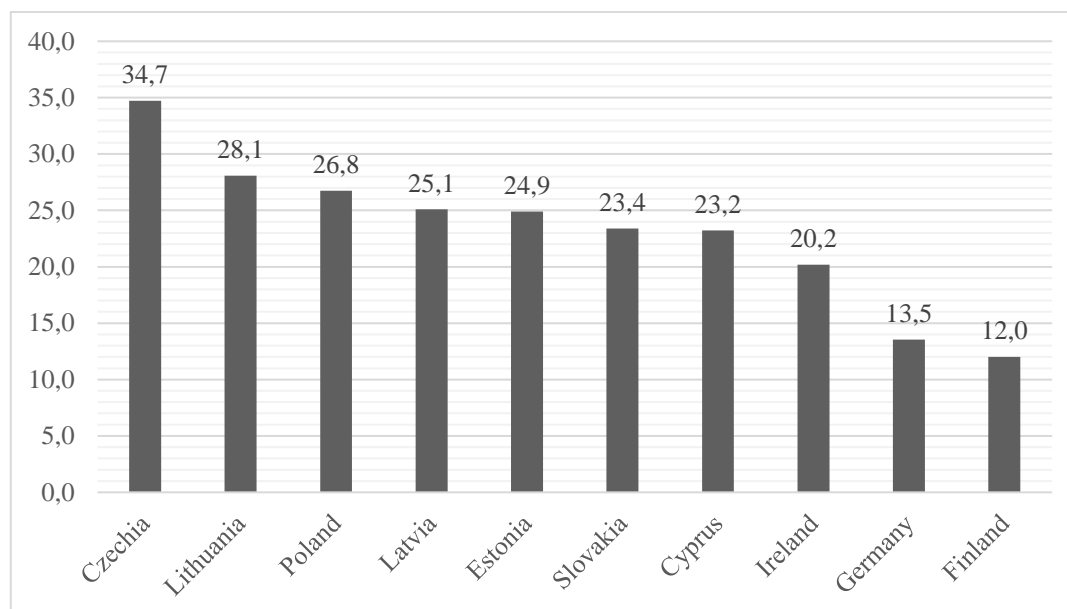


Fig.2.6. The top 10 countries in the EU by the temporary protection for Ukrainian refugees on 1st January 2024

Source: developed based on Eurostat (2024b).

In comparison with earlier immigration and residence-permit statistics, these data illustrate a clear shift: while Western European states remain dominant in economic and long-term migration, Central and Eastern European countries now play a central role in emergency protection and initial reception. Both these groups of countries provide significant support for Ukrainian refugees.

The gender-age structure of beneficiaries of temporary protection (data for September 2024) reveals a highly asymmetric demographic profile (Figure 2.7). Women constitute a clear majority, while men of conscription age are under-represented due to legal and military restrictions in Ukraine. The large age cohorts are concentrated in the younger and middle-adult groups, including young women aged 18-34 and children. This pattern, illustrated by the Ukrainian case, underscores the dual challenge for host countries: ensuring rapid labour-market

and educational integration while addressing the social and psychological needs of displaced youth and families. Furthermore, of course, these peculiarities of demographic losses remain challenging for the donor country, especially if the war does not end soon. The problem of inappropriate demographic recovery due to intensive migration is widely discussed (Berde & Remsei, 2025; Pavlovskiy et al., 2024; Pyatnychuk et al., 2024) and has a particularly negative impact in the case of youth migration. The aspiration of a large share of young women to prolong their residence in hosting countries can have a disastrous impact on demographic recovery.

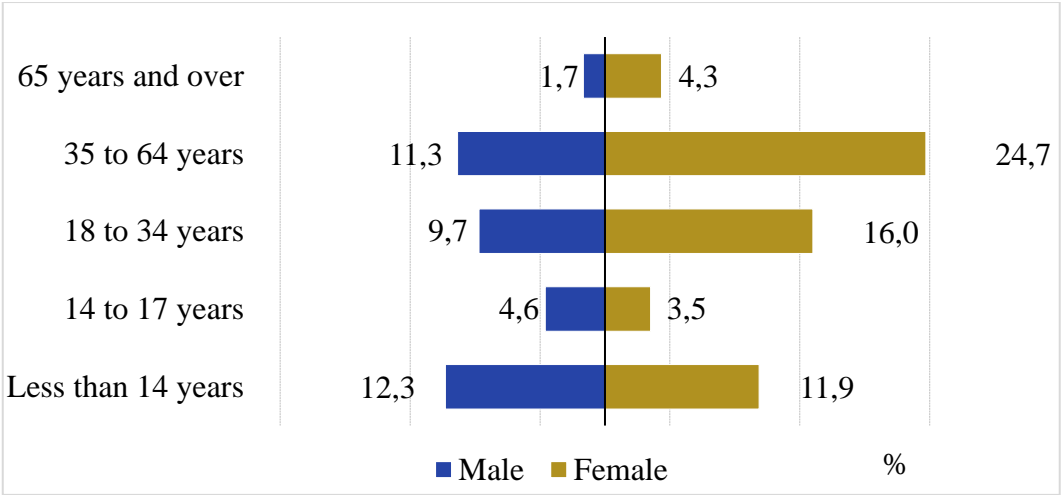


Fig. 2.6. Gender and age structure of beneficiaries of temporary protection (those who fled Ukraine) in the EU in September 2024

Source: Eurostat (2024b).

Taken together, the temporary protection data complement earlier immigration and permit analyses by showing how the EU’s migration landscape since 2022 has changed. The similarities in all findings are developing support policies for migrants facing extreme dangers like war. Youth have numerous possibilities arising not only from social policy perspectives, but also from labour market and education perspectives. As seen from the dynamics of migration and its structural reasons, youth actively use this window of opportunity, searching for the most developed EU countries for long-term residence. Youth's perception of the EU as an attractive destination, mainly related to efforts to reside in

countries with high economic and human development. Particularly, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, and the Netherlands are consistently among the leaders in the various dimensions of the youth migration discussed above.

2.2. Formation of migration intentions among high-school students

In today's globalized world, the phenomenon of migration is becoming particularly relevant, as population mobility increasingly affects the socio-economic and digital development of countries (Vasylytsiv et al., 2022; Bilan et al., 2025). The problem of intellectual and labour migration attracts considerable attention in scientific discussions, because it is young people who are at the stage of obtaining education and professional self-determination who are most sensitive to external socio-economic, political, and cultural factors of migration (Villamin et al., 2025; Saridou et al., 2025; Laaker, 2024). Young students form their vision of the future under the influence of the educational environment, family expectations, information space, and social transformations, which causes the emergence of migration intentions even before completing secondary education (Husin et al., 2025).

In the context of hostilities, social instability, and economic uncertainty characteristic of Ukraine after the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, the issue of youth migration strategies is particularly important: it directly affects the demographic situation, educational policy, and the possibilities for the country's post-war recovery. At the same time, educational programs abroad are becoming increasingly accessible, and the number of international exchanges and grant opportunities is rising, creating additional incentives for young people to consider foreign educational and professional development trajectories. In this context, the study of migration intentions in the student environment holds both theoretical and applied significance. Such research will allow for a deeper understanding of the motivational mechanisms that determine the choices of young people and

identify factors that influence their decision-making on international migration. At the same time, the formation of an evidence base opens up opportunities for the development of targeted educational and social policies aimed at preserving and developing human capital, creating conditions for realizing the potential of youth within the country, as well as the formation of a balanced state strategy in the field of migration management.

To study the migration attitudes of schoolchildren, a sociological survey was conducted using Google Forms from September 2 to September 29, 2025. The survey questionnaire contained 8 questions: 5 related to assessing the migration attitudes of young people, and 3 focused on characteristics of respondents by gender and age. The total number of respondents was 71 people, who were students of secondary education institutions (schools, lyceums, gymnasiums) in the city of Rivne. By gender, the sample of schoolchildren was dominated by women (71.8%). The proportion of men who participated in the survey was 28.2%. The age distribution of respondents was as follows: 13 years old - 5.6%, 14 years old - 11.3%, 15 years old - 29.6%, 16 years old - 47.9%, 17 years old - 5.6%.

The survey results revealed that overall, more than half of the surveyed students (57.8%) have a clear desire to study outside Ukraine (Fig. 2.7). This indicates that international educational trajectories are perceived as a real and desirable prospect for a significant part of the student population.

At the same time, approximately one in five respondents (21.1%) do not express such intentions, and another 14.1% are uncertain. The presence of 7% of those who would like to study abroad but do not see opportunities for this indicates the existence of a barrier group, with the main obstacle being resource limitations: financial, language, or institutional.

The respondents' answers demonstrate significant differentiation by age. At 13–14 years old, the share of those who want to study reaches 75%, with no responses of "no" or "no possibility". This indicates a mostly idealized perception of opportunities: at a younger age, students are not yet faced with the realities of

financing, competitive selections, or the need for language certificates to enter foreign higher education institutions.

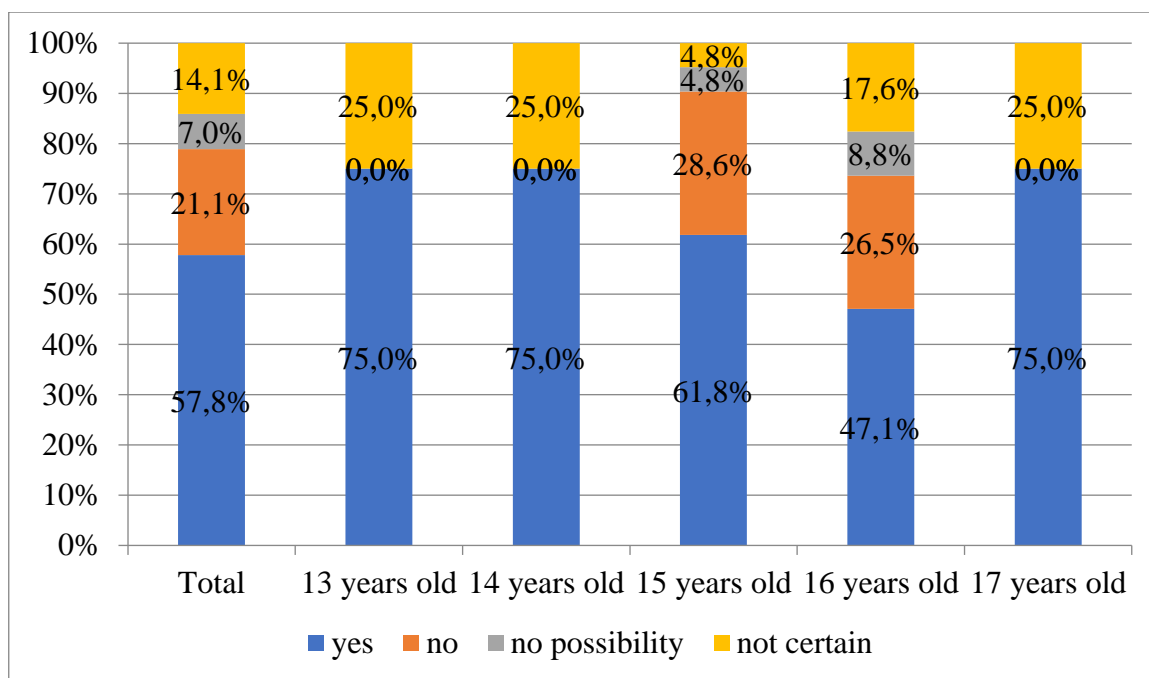


Fig. 2.7. Respondents' answers to the question "Do you want to study outside Ukraine?"

Source: authors' development

At the stage of 15-16 years old, the picture changes significantly. The share of "yes" decreases (to 61.8% at 15 years old and only 47.1% at 16 years old), while the share of those who want to study in Ukraine ("no" - almost a third of respondents at 15-16 years old) and those who have not yet decided increases. This demonstrates the moment of transition from dreams to a more pragmatic assessment of one's own resources and opportunities. It is at this age that the awareness of barriers increases: linguistic, financial, family, or psychological. At the age of 16, the group of those who acknowledge the desire but emphasize the impossibility of its realization also grows (8.8%).

At 17, there is again a sharp jump in the desire to study abroad (75%), while the answers "no" and "no possibility" disappear. This can be explained by the approaching moment of decision-making: some high school students are already actively searching for educational programs and preparing the necessary

documents. In conditions of war and economic instability, choosing an external educational route can be considered not only as an academic opportunity but also as a security strategy (Eusafzai, 2024). This partly explains why in the older age group, where decisions are immediate, intentions increase again: students tend to perceive studying abroad as an investment in their own stable life and future (Vasylytsiv et al., 2024).

As for regional preferences, the ranking of the most desirable countries for education is headed by the USA - over 73% of respondents consider studying in this country the most attractive (Fig. 2.8). This indicates the strong influence of the global educational brand, the high level of universities, the prestige of diplomas, the association with career development opportunities and access to modern technologies (Soysal et al., 2022). In addition, American culture and information space are widely present in the lives of young people, which also forms an attractive image of the country (Butler, 2024).

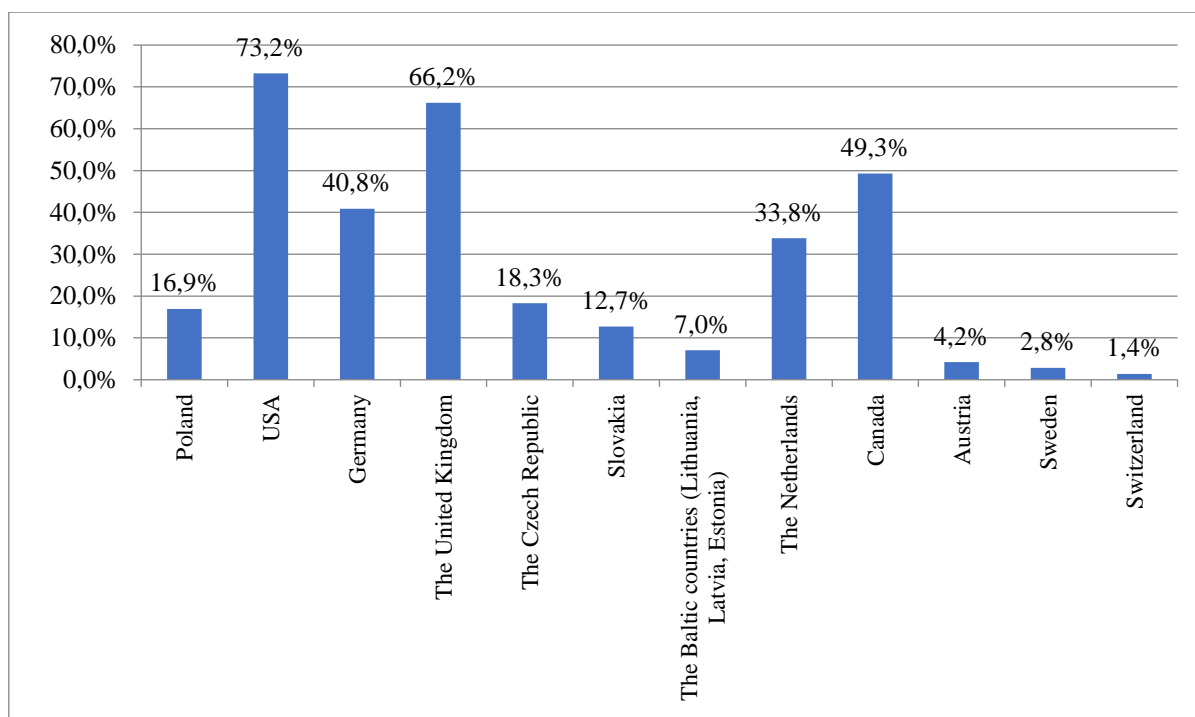


Fig. 2.8. Respondents' answers to the question "In which countries do you think studying is the most attractive?"

Source: authors' development

The United Kingdom came in second place, which was noted by 66.2% of respondents. Its popularity is due to its stable image of elitism and traditions of classical university education. Oxford and Cambridge, as well as famous London universities, form the symbolic capital of British education, which, for students, is associated with high social status, quality of training, and global recognition of diplomas (Beardsmore, 2022). The third position is occupied by Canada (49.3%). This country is perceived as safe, multicultural, and open to the integration of young people from other countries. In addition, Canada actively advertises its educational programs, which also contributes to the growth of its attractiveness for foreign students (Griset et al., 2025).

A relatively high level of interest is also observed in Germany (40.8%). The popularity of this country has a practical basis: a significant number of English-language programs, a well-developed system of scholarships and grants, and relative geographical proximity to Ukraine (Abbas et al., 2021). For many students, Germany represents an affordable, yet prestigious education with a strong engineering and technical base (ApplyBoard, 2025). The Netherlands was noted by 33.8% of students, which is also a significant indicator. An important factor here is the spread of English-language programs, modern innovative research areas, and the country's image as tolerant and open (Aara Consultancy, 2023).

Less popular among respondents are the Czech Republic (18.3%), Poland (16.9%), Slovakia (12.7%), and the Baltic countries (7%). Despite the objective accessibility of education in these countries, they are less attractive compared to prestigious English-language areas. This is probably because, for students, the symbolic status of a diploma and the possibility of global mobility are more important than just financial or geographical factors (Tokas et al., 2023).

The lowest levels of interest were recorded for Austria (4.2%), Sweden (2.8%), and Switzerland (1.4%). These countries have strong education systems but are perceived as too expensive or difficult to integrate, and the accessibility of their educational programs to Ukrainian students is relatively low (Westin &

Nilsson, 2023; OECD, 2025).

The main factor that has the most significant influence on the choice of a country for educational emigration of Ukrainian students is the possibility of employment after graduation - 71.8% of respondents chose this answer from the proposed ones (Fig. 2.9). This indicates that for students the decisive importance is not so much the direct presence of a higher education document, but the prospect of its practical application (Yue & Lu, 2022). Young people are clearly oriented towards the future labor market: they want guarantees that education will become a tool for social mobility, stability, and economic independence (Pozniak et al., 2025).

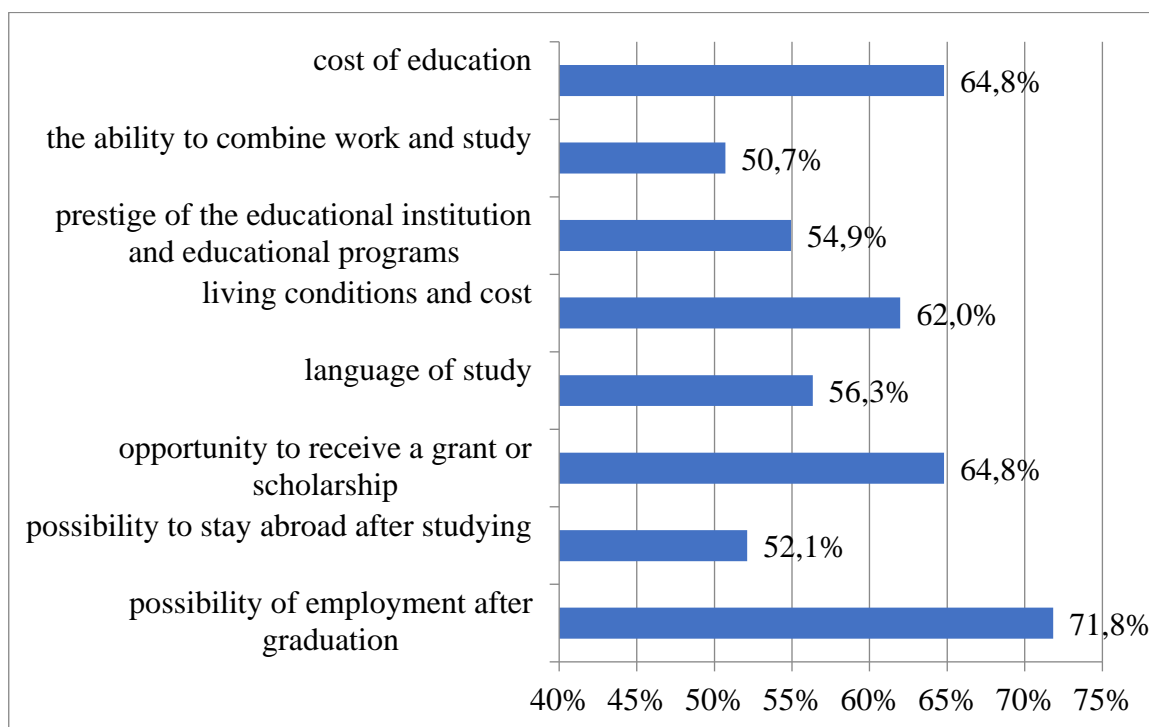


Fig. 2.9. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "What are the most important factors when choosing a country for study?"

Source: authors' development

The second position is shared by two factors: "cost of education" and "opportunity to receive a grant or scholarship", which were named by 64.8% of respondents. Thus, the cost of education abroad for Ukrainian families is one of the most significant barriers, and the availability of financial support in the form

of grants and scholarships can help mitigate these costs. Therefore, the educational mobility of students is directly related to the financial capabilities of the family or access to external resources.

The third most important factor is “living conditions and cost” (62%). This once again emphasizes that the economic dimension prevails in the perception of opportunities for education abroad. Young people do not consider education in isolation from everyday expenses: they evaluate the costs of housing, transportation, food, and adaptation conditions. For Ukrainian students, the “price-quality” ratio is important in a broad sense – not only a diploma, but also a comfortable living environment that will allow them to focus on their studies (Samoliuk et al., 2024).

Slightly lower were the “language of study” (56.3%) and “prestige of the educational institution and educational programs” (54.9%). This confirms that for Ukrainian students, it is more important for education to be financially accessible and to allow for decent employment in the future. In this context, it is also worth noting that a significant proportion of respondents consider “possibility to stay abroad after studying” to be significant (52.1%). This reflects migration intentions: some young people perceive education not only as an investment in knowledge and their future, but also as a channel for long-term integration in the host country (Zayachuk, 2025). For them, education is the first step towards changing their life trajectory.

The least important factor among the factors proposed in the questionnaire is “the ability to combine work and study” (50.7%). For half of the students, an important condition is the flexibility of educational programs that allow them to earn money while studying.

The results of the sociological survey also revealed the priorities of Ukrainian students in the use of information sources regarding studying abroad (Fig. 2.10).

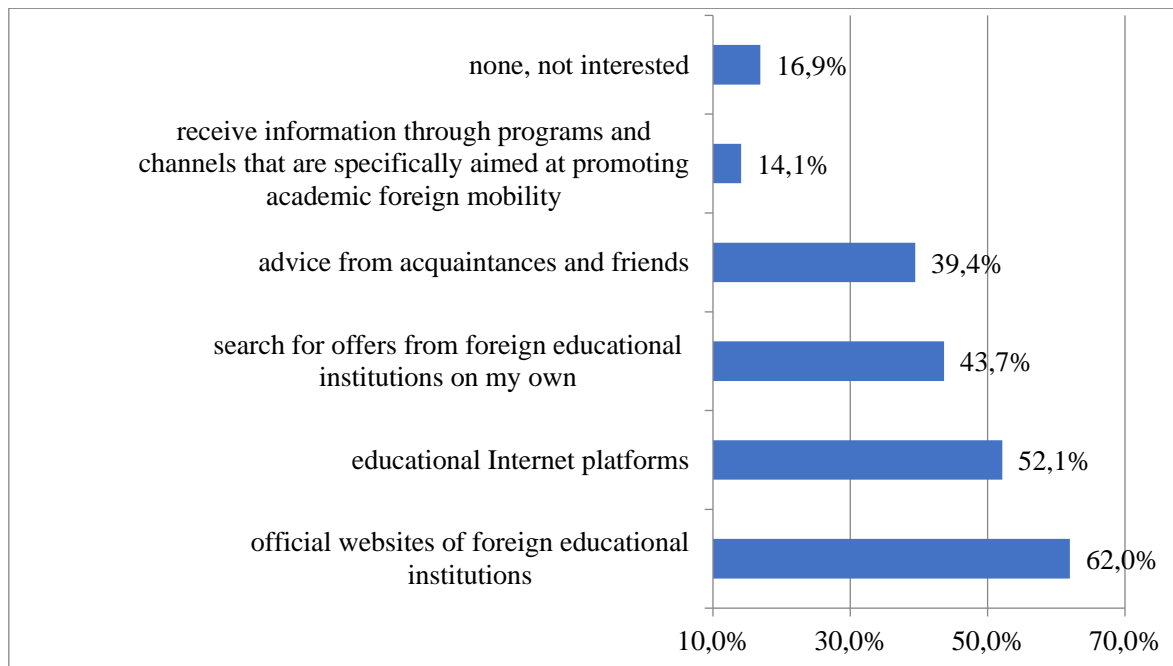


Fig. 2.10. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "What sources of information about academic mobility opportunities do you use?"

Source: authors' development

The key search channel is the official websites of foreign educational institutions, which are used by 62% of respondents. This confirms the tendency to seek verified and reliable information (Terra Dotta, 2024). The second most popular source was educational Internet platforms (52.1%), indicating the digitalization of the process of finding opportunities and the trust young people have in online resources. To a lesser extent, students are oriented towards search for offers from foreign educational institutions on their own (43.7%) and advice from acquaintances and friends (39.4%). Therefore, although interpersonal contacts and own initiative remain important, they do not dominate the structure of information sources. Young people prefer institutionalized sources of information, where the level of reliability is much higher (Howard et al., 2023). Only 14.1% of respondents receive information through programs and channels that are specifically aimed at promoting academic foreign mobility. This indicates the weak role of organized educational or government initiatives in disseminating information.

Thus, the priority of information channels for information dissemination demonstrates that schoolchildren actively use official and digital resources, striving for objectivity and relevance. Therefore, it can be argued that access to information determines whether a potential intention to study abroad will become a real educational path.

Regarding the desired specialties for Ukrainian students, the most significant interest is aroused by “Law” (12.7%) and “Medicine” (11.3%). (Fig. 2.11). Both specialties have high social value and are associated with prestige, stability, and guaranteed employment. Law is attractive due to its potential to influence social processes and its high social status (University of Queensland, 2023), while medicine is seen as a path to a stable and sought-after profession with universal significance, regardless of the country (Li et al., 2023).

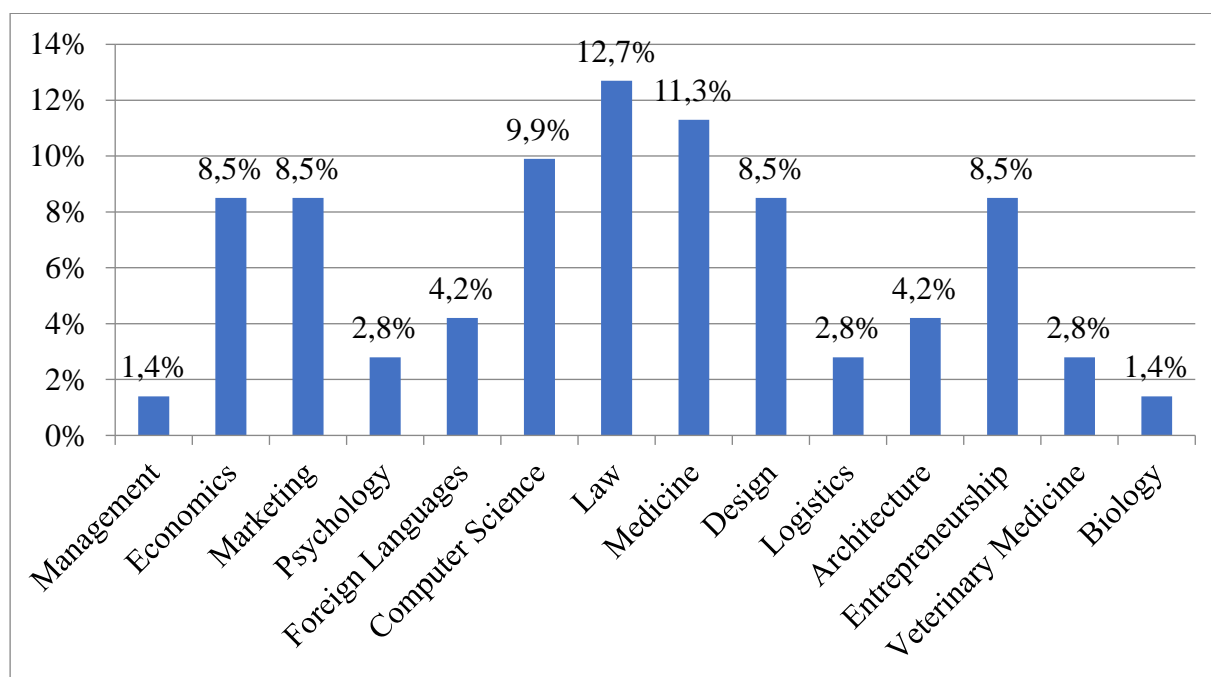


Fig. 2.11. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "What specialties are you interested in?"

Source: authors' development

A reasonably high level of interest is shown by "Computer Science" (9.9%). This reflects the impact of global digitalization trends and the demand for IT specialists (Tsymbal & Kalenyuk, 2023). Students are aware that this field opens

up a wide range of opportunities for international mobility and provides competitive conditions in the labour market.

Slightly lower are the specialties "Economics", "Marketing", "Design", and "Entrepreneurship" - each of them collected 8.5%. This indicates a fairly even distribution of interest among professions that combine practicality and, at the same time, creative or entrepreneurial potential. Less popular are "Foreign Languages" (4.2%), "Architecture" (4.2%), as well as "Psychology", "Logistics", and "Veterinary Medicine" (within 2.8–4.2%). The lowest level of interest was recorded for the specialties "Management" and "Biology" (1.4% each). Therefore, we can say about the pragmatic approach of students to choosing a future specialty: the highest indicators were received by those areas that traditionally guarantee a stable demand on the international labour market.

The study found that the intentions of Ukrainian youth to study abroad are mainly determined by pragmatic motives: the availability of quality education, financial factors, prospects for further employment, and the possibility of long-term integration in the host society. Such an orientation towards future professional realization aligns with scientific conclusions on the importance of responsible employment policy, as providing stable and decent jobs is considered a key factor in preserving the country's labour potential (Oliinyk, 2020). At the same time, increasing the attractiveness of higher education in Ukraine is impossible without guarantees of decent and safe working conditions in the future, which is an important element of corporate practice of enterprises around the world (Oliinyk, 2017). Therefore, based on the results obtained, proposals were formulated to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of Ukrainian higher education and to create conditions for reducing the educational emigration of youth (Table 2.6). The recommended measures are based on current international and national research in the field of higher education, internationalization and the labour market. They are based on analytical reports of the OECD on key trends in student mobility (OECD, 2025), Eurostat data on the employment rate of graduates (Eurostat, 2024a), as well as modern research on the impact of financial

support, the quality of the educational environment and dual education on the retention of young people in national education systems (Harvard Business School, 2024; Manic & Ptukhina, 2022; Brito et al., 2025). Additionally, Ukrainian realities are taken into account: the introduction of state grants for education, new mechanisms for financing and accreditation of HEIs, as well as directions for modernization, which are reflected in the reports of the World Bank (World Bank, 2025) and the European Training Foundation (European Training Foundation, 2025).

Table 2.6

Recommended measures to reduce the educational migration of Ukrainian youth

Direction	Characteristic
Increasing the international attractiveness of Ukrainian universities	It is important to ensure the modernization of educational programs in accordance with international educational standards. This involves developing English-language and bilingual courses, engaging teachers with international experience, and internationalizing the educational process. The creation of competitive double degree programs in partnership with EU universities can give Ukrainian higher education institutions a significant status in the global educational space.
Development of a system of scholarships, grants and financial support.	Since the cost of tuition and living is one of the key factors in choosing foreign universities, it is necessary to expand access to public and private scholarship programs in Ukraine. This can be implemented through targeted funds to support talented youth, educational vouchers for training in priority specialties, as well as co-financing from businesses (especially in IT, medicine, and technical sciences).
Strengthening the connection between education and the labour market.	An important motive for students is the prospect of employment. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate the dual education system, internships in Ukrainian and international companies, and cooperation with employers into educational programs. This will allow students to see that a diploma from a Ukrainian university provides no fewer opportunities for professional realization than a foreign one.
Creating a comfortable and safe	Young people are focused not only on obtaining a diploma, but also on living conditions. The development

student environment.	of modern campuses, student dormitories, accessible mental health services, and cultural and volunteer programs can strengthen trust in Ukrainian universities as spaces for development, not just learning.
Information policy and consulting support.	The analysis showed that schoolchildren mostly search for information on their own, using the official websites of foreign higher education institutions. Ukraine needs national and regional information platforms to gather data on educational opportunities within the country and offer consultations on choosing specialties and career paths. This will reduce the information imbalance, which often causes Ukrainian youth to know more about studying abroad than at home.

Source: authors' development

Thus, keeping students from going abroad is possible only under the condition of a comprehensive combination of factors: improving the quality of higher education, availability of financial support, employment prospects, creation of a comfortable environment and transparent information policy. Ukrainian higher education institutions should become spaces not only for learning but also for life realization, which will provide young people with confidence in the future without the need to look for an alternative outside the country.

2.3. University students' migration as a manifestation of brain drain: links to the country's resilience

In today's globalized world, student migration is becoming one of the most dynamic forms of international mobility, significantly influencing the development of human capital and determining the competitive advantages of countries in the long term. Traditionally, this phenomenon has been viewed through the lens of "brain drain", which is associated with the loss of intellectual potential for the country of origin (Vega-Muñoz et al., 2021). This means that when graduates or students leave the country for better study conditions, research

work, or career opportunities abroad, the country loses the resources it invested in their education, as well as the potential for innovation, development of the scientific and technological sphere, and improvement of the quality of life in general (Oliynyk et al., 2021). Such migration losses are manifested not only in a decrease in the number of specialists in critical sectors (Ewers et al., 2022) but also in an increased risk of demographic decline, reduced economic productivity, and the potential for institutional reforms (Kalemba et al., 2022).

At the same time, modern research increasingly focuses on the fact that student mobility creates “brain gain” and “brain circulation” effects (Fu et al., 2024; Kurokawa & Kusakabe, 2025; Dzotsenidze, 2025). Within this approach, studying abroad does not mean the final loss of highly qualified specialists; on the contrary, it opens up opportunities for return, knowledge transfer, the formation of international academic and professional networks, and innovative growth (Oliynyk, 2023).

The relevance of this issue is that student migration is becoming a factor that is closely related to the resilience of the country (Mishchuk et al., 2024). By resilience, we mean the ability of a country to counteract crises, quickly recover, and adapt to new socio-economic conditions. Countries with a high level of educational emigration risk are facing demographic and institutional challenges (Mukhtarova et al., 2024). However, at the same time, they get a chance to integrate new knowledge and competencies through return migration, diaspora networks, and international scientific collaborations (Skariah & Sivarenjini, 2024).

Attracting foreign students is becoming a key resource for strengthening the country's resilience. The influx of young people from different countries provides an expansion of human capital, improves demographic balance, stimulates the development of educational institutions and the introduction of innovations (Bambi et al., 2025). In addition, the internationalization of universities contributes to the formation of new academic and scientific practices, the integration into global educational and research networks, and the enrichment of

the social and cultural environment (Avolio & Benzaquen, 2024). Thus, student migration is not only an educational or demographic process, but also an important factor in the formation of the country's long-term economic, social and institutional resilience.

The study used a set of indicators that reflect various aspects of educational international mobility to assess the relationship between student migration and country resilience, namely:

X1 – Brain gain, value – average answer to the question: To what extent does your country attract talented people from abroad? (1 – not at all, 7 – to a great extent (the country attracts the best and brightest from around the world) INSEAD (2023);

X2 – The Human Flight and Brain Drain Indicator, score – considers the economic impact of human displacement (for economic or political reasons) and the consequences this may have on a country's development (Fund for Peace, 2023);

X3 – Inbound mobility rate, % (UNESCO, 2023) – number of internationally mobile students enrolled in all levels of tertiary education (ISCED 5 to ISCED 8) in a given country, in a given academic year, expressed as a percentage of the total tertiary enrolment in the same academic year;

X4 – Outbound mobility ratio, % (UNESCO, 2023) – number of students from a given country studying abroad, expressed as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment in that country;

X5 – The OECD Indicator of Talent Attractiveness, value – university students (OECD, 2023).

Thus, the above indicators, when considered together, create a multidimensional analytical framework that allows us to trace not only the balance between losses and gains in human capital but also assess the quality of the country's integration into the global educational space and its position in the international competition for talent. The use of both qualitative and quantitative indicators makes it possible to identify both the direct effects of student mobility

and indirect consequences related to the attractiveness of the institutional environment, the level of trust in the country as an educational and scientific centre, as well as the country's ability to counteract the loss of intellectual potential. This approach will allow us to consider student migration not only as a statistical phenomenon, but also as a factor in the formation of a long-term trajectory of human capital development, which affects the innovativeness of the economy and contributes to strengthening the economic, social and institutional stability of the country.

To measure the resilience of a country, the study used the FM Global Resilience Index (U-score), a universal comprehensive tool based on quantitative data that covers about 130 countries worldwide (FM Global, 2023). This index allows you to assess the stability of the business environment and identify its strengths and weaknesses. The calculation methodology involves the identification of three sub-indices that integrate 15 separate indicators:

U1 – Economic (productivity, political risk, energy intensity, urbanization rate, health expenditure), score;

Y2 – Risk quality (seismic risk exposure, climate risk exposure, cyber risk quality, fire risk quality, climate risk quality), score;

Y3 – Supply chain (infrastructure quality, control of corruption, corporate governance, supply chain visibility, supply chain timeliness), score (FM Global, 2023).

The actual values of the dependent and independent variables for the countries of the European Union in 2023, as well as their numerical characteristics, are given in Table 2.7. The choice of EU countries as the object of the study is due to the fact that the EU is one of the largest educational and scientific spaces in the world, which is characterized by a high level of academic mobility. The presence of the Erasmus+, Horizon Europe programs, and numerous bilateral agreements between higher education institutions, creates favourable conditions for international student mobility, which will allow for a

comprehensive tracing of the mechanisms of brain gain and brain drain within the integrated space.

Table 2.7

The significance of educational migration and country sustainability indicators and their numerical characteristics in the European Union countries in 2023

Country	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	IN	U1	U2	U3
Austria	4.3	1.7	19.95	6.2	0.47	93.3	75.8	93.1	89.4
Belgium	4.86	2.7	10.4	3.23	0.46	93.2	71.2	99.4	88.3
Bulgaria	2.63	5.2	8.7	8.24	*	61.2	48.6	77.1	55.1
Croatia	2.08	6.1	3.73	6.07	*	66.8	55.1	81.1	58.7
Cyprus	3.96	3.5	22.28	44.47	*	69.8	63	75.2	63
Czech Republic	3.31	3.5	16.62	3.29	0.4	83.7	65.4	96.6	75
Denmark	4.58	1	9.95	2.01	0.49	100	83.3	96.4	95
Estonia	4.43	4.7	11.1	7.4	0.41	77.2	65.3	84.7	69.8
Finland	3.78	1.5	9.26	2.61	0.48	93.6	70.9	94.5	92.9
France	4.14	2	9.68	4.03	0.48	89.7	68.6	95.3	85.9
Germany	4.65	1.9	12.69	3.85	0.56	96.8	79.7	97.6	90.4
Greece	2.39	4	3.02	4.31	0.31	63.1	53.3	70.5	59.9
Hungary	2.92	3.9	14.39	4.67	0.4	73	59.4	86.4	64.6
Ireland	4.96	2.5	*	*	0.41	87.6	94.1	70.5	78.6
Italy	3.18	2.5	4.8	3.92	0.47	76.7	64.7	78	74
Latvia	3.51	5.8	13.37	6.06	0.36	67.6	61.6	82.6	54.3
Lithuania	3.64	5.6	10.7	6.86	0.45	75.2	64.6	84	66.7
Luxembourg	5.8	1.7	52.28	167.18	0.49	97.3	100	93.5	78.1
Malta	5.17	3.7	29.56	5.03	*	69.3	65.4	83.4	54.1
Netherlands	5.23	2.3	*	1.92	0.48	90	76.3	79.5	91.6
Poland	2.91	4.6	6.62	1.68	0.43	80.3	59.8	100	70.1
Portugal	4.04	3.1	13.26	3.87	0.51	79.1	60.8	89.6	74.1
Romania	2.33	5.6	6.72	5.28	*	68.4	58.4	81.3	59.3
Slovak Republic	2.3	4	15.22	21.23	0.43	68.9	56.8	90.3	55.3
Slovenia	2.67	3.6	10.63	3.6	0.42	67.7	61.5	62.5	68.4
Spain	3.56	1	4.31	2.14	0.48	87.9	64.6	99.9	82.1
Sweden	4.25	0.6	7.28	2.96	0.51	93.8	75.5	93.9	90
<i>Average value</i>	<i>3.7622</i>	<i>3.2704</i>	<i>13.061</i>	<i>12,773</i>	<i>0.45</i>	<i>80.415</i>	<i>67,544</i>	<i>86.552</i>	<i>73,507</i>
<i>Median</i>	<i>3.78</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>10.63</i>	<i>4.17</i>	<i>0.465</i>	<i>79.1</i>	<i>64.7</i>	<i>86.4</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>Minimum value</i>	<i>2.08</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>3.02</i>	<i>1.68</i>	<i>0.31</i>	<i>61.2</i>	<i>48.6</i>	<i>62.5</i>	<i>54.1</i>
<i>Maximum value</i>	<i>5.8</i>	<i>6.1</i>	<i>52.28</i>	<i>167.18</i>	<i>0.56</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>1.0208</i>	<i>1.5949</i>	<i>10.18</i>	<i>32,642</i>	<i>0.05546</i>	<i>11.958</i>	<i>11.78</i>	<i>10.153</i>	<i>13.561</i>

<i>Coefficient of variation</i>	0.27133	0.48768	0.7794	2.5554	0.12325	0.1487	0.17441	0.1173	0.18448
<i>Asymmetry</i>	0.06113	0.14848	2.4975	4.3374	-0.5365	0.06227	1.0761	-0.501	0.07486
<i>Kurtosis</i>	-0.9641	-1.0265	7.0375	17,872	0.42423	-1.3922	1.0086	-0.5742	-1.3385
<i>5% percent.</i>	2.168	0.76	3.233	1.764	0.3175	61.96	50.48	65.7	54.18
<i>95% percent.</i>	5.572	5.98	45,464	124.23	0.5525	98.92	97.64	99.96	94.16
<i>Interquartile range</i>	1.67	2.7	7.805	3.2025	0.0725	24.3	15.7	15.8	28.4

* data not available.

Source: authors' calculations

The data presented in Table 2.7 demonstrate significant differentiation of the European Union countries in terms of student mobility and country resilience indicators. The overall FM Global Resilience Index in 2023 ranges from 61.2 points in Bulgaria to 100 points in Denmark, with an average value of 80.4, which confirms the relatively high level of resilience of European countries in the global dimension. At the same time, there is a clear regional differentiation: the countries of Northern and Western Europe (Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Netherlands) demonstrate the highest values, while the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Slovakia) are inferior in terms of integral assessments. The largest differences are recorded in the "Supply chain" subindex: in countries with developed transport and logistics infrastructure (Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Austria), the indicators exceed 90, while in peripheral countries they rarely exceed 60, which emphasizes the key role of infrastructure provision in shaping the country's resilience.

In the field of student mobility, there are mixed trends. The “Brain gain” indicator, according to the INSEAD methodology (X1), is characterized by high values in countries with open education systems and developed labour markets (Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Denmark), which corresponds to their role as the main centres of attraction for international students within the EU. At the same time, the “Human Flight and Brain Drain” indicator

(X2) reveals increased risks of intellectual capital outflow in a number of Central and Eastern European countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania).

The asymmetry between incoming and outgoing student mobility within the European Union reflects the quality of national education systems and their competitiveness in the global space. High values of incoming mobility are characteristic of countries that have successfully formed a positive image as attractive educational hubs, providing training for foreign students through modern infrastructure and internationally recognized programs. In countries with long and well-developed university traditions (France, Italy, Spain), incoming mobility is lower, since the domestic market is able to satisfy the main demand, and international attractiveness is manifested not so much in quantitative indicators as in reputational effects. At the same time, high levels of outward mobility are recorded in countries with less diversified educational offers and limited international attractiveness of universities (Luxembourg, Cyprus, Slovakia), while countries with strong education systems (Germany, Spain, Poland) show low rates of student departure. This confirms that the balance between inflows and outflows indicates not only the scale of the education market but also its qualitative characteristics, which determine a country's ability to compete for talent in a globalized educational environment.

The OECD's country attractiveness index for international students (X5) shows relative stability, ranging from 0.31 in Greece to 0.56 in Germany, with an average value of 0.45. These data indicate that the attractiveness of the educational environment in most EU countries is perceived as quite high, although individual countries face certain barriers.

The generalization of the above statistical characteristics allows us to conclude that student mobility in the countries of the European Union is complex and multidimensional. In order to assess not only descriptive differences but also to identify the nature and strength of the relationship between the parameters of student migration and the level of resilience of the country, it is advisable to apply quantitative analysis tools. The first step in this direction is to conduct a

correlation analysis, which will determine how closely the dependent and independent variables are related. This approach will allow us to move from stating differences to empirically testing the hypothesis about the impact of student migration and the resilience of EU countries. The identification of relationships was carried out by calculating the Pearson pairwise correlation coefficient (Shrestha, 2020). To check its statistical significance, the t-test formula was used (Alsaqr, 2021).

$$t = r \sqrt{\frac{n-2}{1-r^2}}, (1)$$

where r is the value of the correlation coefficient; n is the total number of observations.

The calculated values of the Pearson correlation coefficient and their statistical significance are given in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8

Results of the correlation analysis of the relationship between student migration indicators and the resilience of EU countries in 2023

Indicator	IN	U1	U2	U3
Correlation coefficient with X1	0.707	0.818	0.289	0.587
<i>Estimated value of Student's t-test</i>	4,997	7,119	1,511	3,621
<i>Critical value of Student's t-test</i>	2,059			
<i>Statistical significance $\alpha=0.05$</i>	+	+	-	+
Correlation coefficient with X2	-0.827	-0.660	-0.430	-0.843
<i>Estimated value of Student's t-test</i>	-7,342	-4,387	-2,383	-7.825
<i>Critical value of Student's t-test</i>	2,059			
<i>Statistical significance $\alpha=0.05$</i>				
Correlation coefficient with X3	0.221	0.612	0.105	-0.024
<i>Estimated value of Student's t-test</i>	1,089	3,707	0.508	-0.114
<i>Critical value of Student's t-test</i>	2,069			
<i>Statistical significance $\alpha=0.05$</i>	-	+	-	-
Correlation coefficient with X4	0.193	0.569	0.054	-0.025
<i>Estimated value of Student's t-test</i>	0.963	3,391	0.267	-0.124
<i>Critical value of Student's t-test</i>	2,064			
<i>Statistical significance $\alpha=0.05$</i>	-	+	-	-
Correlation coefficient with X5	0.753	0.470	0.528	0.736
<i>Estimated value of Student's t-test</i>	5,116	2,380	2,780	4,869
<i>Critical value of Student's t-test</i>	2,086			
<i>Statistical significance $\alpha=0.05$</i>	+	+	+	+

Source: authors' calculations

The results of the correlation analysis indicate the heterogeneity of the impact of student migration indicators on the resilience of EU countries. The indicators with the greatest impact were those reflecting the qualitative component of the country's educational and institutional attractiveness for foreign students. Thus, brain gain (X1) has a strong positive relationship with the general FM Global index ($r=0.707$), as well as with the sub-indices of economic ($r=0.818$) and logistical resilience ($r=0.587$). A similar nature is also demonstrated by the indicator of the country's attractiveness for foreign students (X5), which is significantly correlated with the general resilience index ($r=0.753$) and with indicators of risk management ($r=0.528$) and supply chains ($r=0.736$). This pattern confirms that countries able to integrate talents and provide a competitive educational environment are highly capable of counteracting crises.

The opposite effect is exerted by the Human Flight and Brain Drain indicator (X2), which has a strong negative correlation with the integral country resilience index ($r=-0.827$) and the supply chain resilience subindex ($r=-0.843$). Therefore, countries with a high level of human resource outflow suffer losses not only in intellectual capital but also in their ability to maintain the continuity of economic and institutional processes. The outflow of talents in this case is not only a demographic but also a structural challenge, which directly undermines the country's resilience.

Unlike qualitative indicators of a country's attractiveness to foreign talent, the volume of student flows – inbound (X3) and outbound mobility (X4) – primarily demonstrates a clear connection with the economic component of the country's sustainability. Statistically significant values of the correlation coefficient with the economic sustainability subindex indicate that the intensity of academic mobility can be considered as a factor that strengthens the country's economic sustainability through the development of human capital, increased labor productivity and increased international integration (Liang & Chen, 2024). At the same time, the absence of significant connections with other subindexes confirms that the impact of student migration is most noticeable precisely in the

economic sphere, where the direct attraction and use of knowledge, skills, and resources that support the country's competitiveness occurs (Areesophonpichet et al., 2024).

To detail the impact of student migration on the resilience of European Union countries, the multiple linear regression method was used, allowing us to describe the dependence of the FM Global Resilience index on a set of independent variables. Using the multiple linear regression method will allow us not only to confirm the statistical significance of the relationships identified in correlation analysis but also to assess the partial contribution of individual variables while controlling for the influence of other factors. Using this approach opens up the possibility of testing the hypothesis that it is the qualitative characteristics of the country's educational attractiveness for foreign students and talents, in particular the brain gain indicators (X1) and the OECD indicator (X5), that play a leading role in shaping the country's resilience. In addition, the regression model will provide a quantitative assessment of the explanatory power through the coefficient of determination (R^2). It will also allow us to check the adequacy of the general specification of the model using the F-criterion, making it a reliable tool for empirical testing.

At the initial stage of the regression analysis, a three-factor model was constructed with the inclusion of variables X1, X2, and X5. These indicators demonstrated the highest values of the Pearson correlation coefficient with the integral index of stability, which made them theoretically reasonable candidates for simultaneous inclusion in the model. However, the constructed model in this configuration did not reach statistical significance. Therefore, in the optimization process, a two-factor model was formed, including two independent variables, X1 and X5, which were confirmed as reliable and significant in the previous analysis. The resulting equation has the form:

$$Y=17.6623+6.2893 \cdot X1+91.9157 \cdot X5 \quad (2),$$

where Y is the FM Global Resilience Index value, score; X1 is the Brain Gain value, value; X5 is the OECD Indicator of Talent Attractiveness value, score.

The constructed two-factor model is characterized by a high level of consistency, with a multiple correlation coefficient of 0.875. The explanatory power of the model is significant, since the value of the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.766. This means that more than 76% of the variation in the FM Global Resilience integral index is explained by the factors included in the model. The statistical adequacy of the model is confirmed by the results of the F-criterion ($F=31.08$, $p<0.001$), which confirms its statistical significance. Both coefficients are statistically significant ($p<0.01$), which confirms their key role in the model.

Thus, the two-factor regression model proves the hypothesis that qualitative indicators of student migration are crucial in ensuring the sustainability of EU countries. The results demonstrate that a country's ability to attract foreign students, scientists, and highly qualified workers has a fundamental impact on strengthening its sustainability.

The results of the correlation analysis also revealed a statistically significant impact of X1, X2, X3, and X4 on the subindex of economic resilience (Y1). This suggests that educational and migration characteristics play a significant role in forming the economic component of resilience, and therefore require deeper analysis. For this, at the next stage of the study, it is advisable to apply the cluster analysis method, which will not only allow us to identify groups of countries with similar parameters of student migration but also trace how these similarities are transformed into differences in economic resilience. The use of such an approach creates the possibility of an integrated interpretation of the results, since clustering combines the influence of several factors simultaneously, revealing typical profiles of countries within the European educational and economic space. In this way, the study moves from the analysis of pairwise statistical relationships to a multidimensional assessment of structural differences, which allows for a more complete understanding of the role of student mobility in ensuring the economic resilience of the country.

Cluster analysis was conducted using the Orange software environment, which allowed us to visualize the results in the form of a dendrogram. This approach provided a visual representation of hierarchical relationships between EU countries based on the set of selected indicators X1-X4. It is worth noting that the original data set contains some gaps (2.8%), which concern only two countries. Their number is insignificant and does not affect the representativeness of the sample or the reliability of the results obtained. The formed dendrogram is presented in Fig. 2.12.

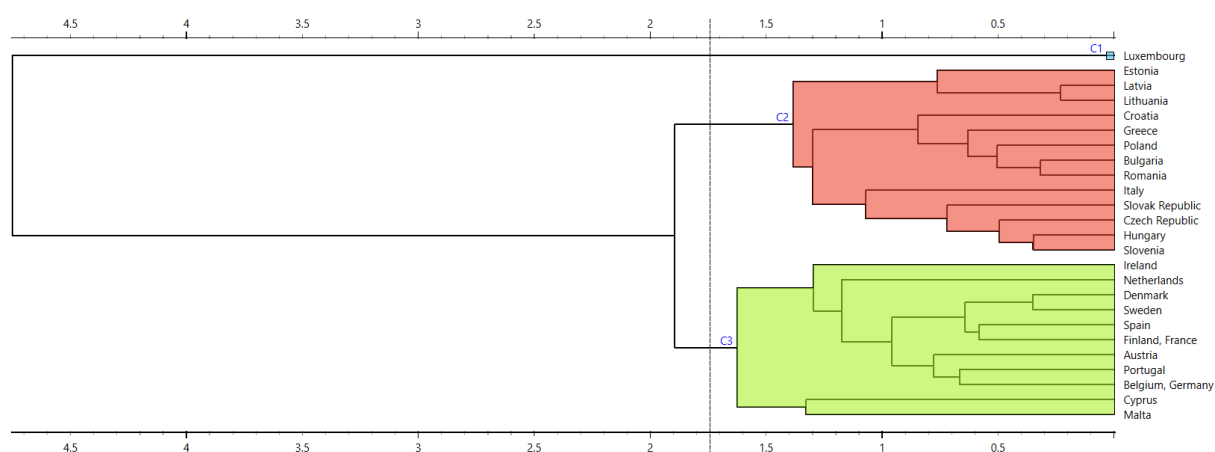


Fig. 2.12. Dendrogram of clustering of EU countries by indicators of intellectual and educational migration in 2023

Source: authors' calculations

The results of the cluster analysis allowed us to identify three main groups of EU countries that differ significantly in the parameters of intellectual and educational migration. First of all, it is worth paying attention to Luxembourg, which forms a separate branch of the classification due to its extreme values of inward and outward mobility. This country is a unique case, where an extremely high share of foreign students and a significant level of education among citizens abroad create a specific model of educational and migration exchange, which has no analogues among other EU countries.

The second cluster (marked in red) unites Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, Greece, Czech Republic. This group is characterized by a lower level of brain gain and

higher values of brain drain, which indicates a greater vulnerability of education systems to the outflow of human capital. The values of inward mobility here are moderate or low, and outward mobility often exceeds the average levels in the EU. It is these features that make the countries of this cluster more dependent on external educational centres and less protected in terms of forming long-term economic sustainability.

The third cluster (green) is formed by Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Spain, and Portugal, as well as the smaller Cyprus and Malta. These countries are characterized by a high level of attractiveness for foreign students, a lower risk of brain drain, and relatively balanced mobility flows. Their education systems are integrated into the international academic space while also meeting domestic demand, making them more resilient to external and internal challenges.

The identification of three clusters of EU countries based on intellectual and educational migration provides a basis for further testing the extent to which these groups correlate with actual differences in levels of economic resilience. To this end, the average values of the economic resilience subindex (U1) in each cluster were compared (Table 2.9).

Table 2.9

Comparison of the values of the economic sustainability subindex (Y1) in the formed clusters of EU countries

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Countries	Luxembourg	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Greece, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Italy, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia	Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Finland, France, Austria, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, Cyprus, Malta
Average value of Y1	100.0	59.7	73.7
Minimum value Y1	100.0	48.6	60.8
Maximum value of Y1	100.0	65.4	94.1

Source: authors' calculations

The comparative analysis reveals a clear relationship: clusters that unite countries with higher talent attractiveness and more balanced student mobility flows also have higher average and maximum values of the economic resilience subindex. At the same time, clusters with higher brain drain risks are limited to lower average values, which confirms the impact of migration processes on the economic component of resilience.

Thus, student migration in the context of brain gain is not only an educational or demographic phenomenon, but also one of the key factors shaping the economic resilience of the country. For countries with low attractiveness values for students from abroad, this means the need to revise educational and migration policies in order to increase the ability to compete for talent and integrate them into their own economic systems. For leading countries, it is important to maintain their achieved positions by developing institutional attractiveness, innovation ecosystems, and mechanisms for retaining intellectual capital. The results obtained confirm that brain gain can become a powerful driver of strengthening the country's resilience, and student migration is an important resource for a long-term sustainable development strategy.

CHAPTER 3. POSSIBILITIES FOR LABOUR MARKETS BALANCING AND HUMAN CAPITAL RESTORING CONSIDERING THE YOUTH MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS

3.1. Demand for labour and youth skills as factors of employability in the EU labour markets

Migration led to significant changes in EU policies regarding social support and the inclusion of migrants. These support programs could not only be a manifestation of human-oriented social policies but also be beneficial for EU member states experiencing aging and shrinking populations. Such tendencies have long compelled governments to view the recruitment possibilities of workers from third countries as a strategically important initiative (Angenendt et al., 2023).

In the case of youth migration, the impact is more complicated due to changing youth aspirations and the permanent pursuit of better life opportunities, which is especially typical for younger cohorts. In these choices and decisions, employability plays a crucial role as the foundation for achieving well-being and stable connections with local communities. To analyse the changes in demand for youth skills that create a reliable base for employability, it is worth starting with an overview of changes in the EU labour market. This should include leading indicators reflecting youth participation in the labour force and employment, with special attention to immigrants.

These statistics are available by comparing overall trends with the same indicators for foreign-born people. According to the Eurostat methodology, the foreign-born data on the labour market reflects the first generation of these people; therefore, the official data actually deal with immigrants who have entered the EU labour market.

To understand the current trends, we compare the overall data for the EU and countries that significantly impact migration support, particularly the most attractive in the Western part (Germany) and the Eastern (Poland). Both these countries significantly impact youth attraction (including Ukrainian), serving as

either a destination or a transit point (often relevant for Poland), but with severe migrant inflows and impact on social policy and labour market. Considering this, further analysis will be conducted using data on the EU, Germany, and Poland, with a precise focus on youth. To compare the data before and after the full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine, which changes European labour markets because of migration, the period 2021 (pre-war) and the most recent (2025) were chosen. To avoid seasonal influence, the data are compared in the same quarter – the second quarter of both years (Q2).

The EU countries have a growing demand for the labour force, as evidenced by employment data. Notably, Figure 3.1 demonstrates differences in the total number of employed persons in the EU and employed who are foreign-born,

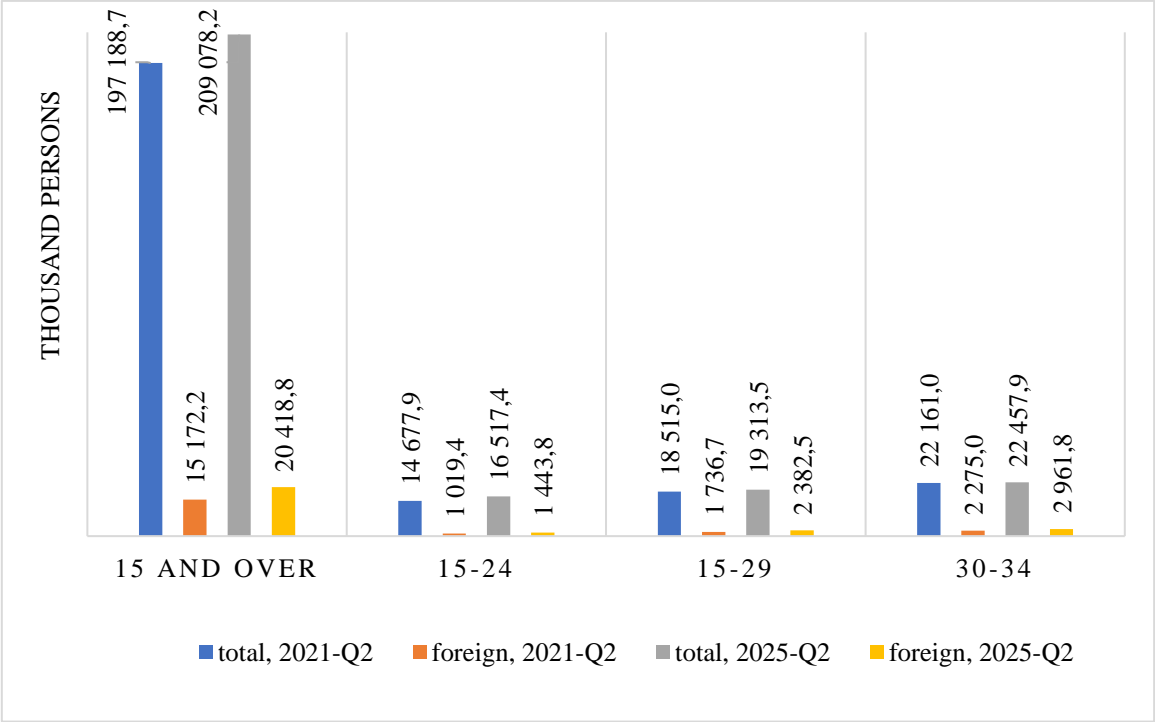


Fig. 3.1. Employed persons by citizenship and age in the European Union in 2021-Q2 and 2025-Q2

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Labour market. LFS series – detailed quarterly survey results. Employment. Employed persons by citizenship - quarterly data. (Eurostat, 2025).

The comparative data for 2021 (Q2) and 2025 (Q2) reveal notable structural shifts in youth employment across the EU, particularly in Germany and Poland -

two countries that have been most affected by post-war migration dynamics. As shown in Figure 3.1, overall employment has expanded within the Union, accompanied by a substantial increase in the number of foreign-born workers. The presence of migrant youth in the labour market has grown significantly, reflecting both intensified mobility and the progressive integration of displaced and foreign-educated young people. However, for the EU, the most obvious growth was typical for those aged 30-34 compared with other youth cohorts. In light of the overall increase in the number of people aged 15 and over, it is evident that older age groups accounted for the majority of this growth. In any case, the general data confirm the growth in labour force demand despite their different temps.

Comparing the situation in Poland and Germany (Fig.3.2), it is evident that the demand for the labour force differs significantly.

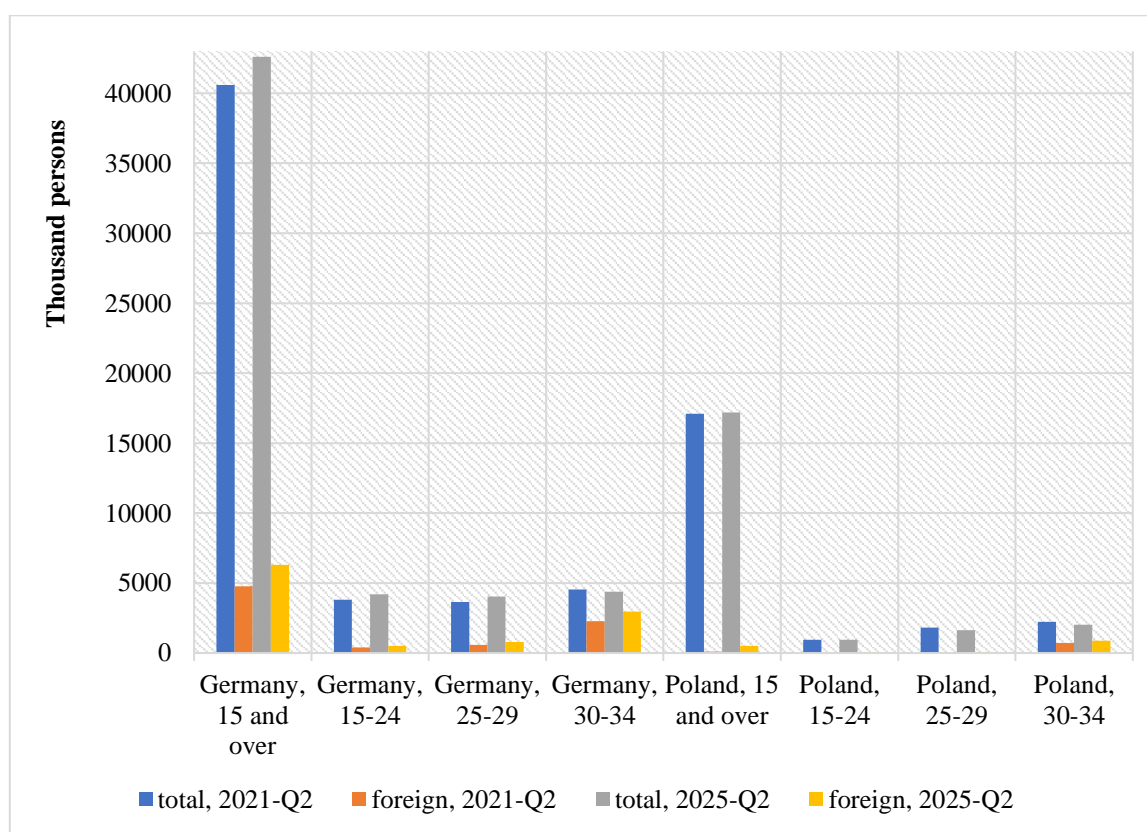


Fig. 3.2. Employed persons by citizenship and age in Germany and Poland in 2021-Q2 and 2025-Q2

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Labour market. LFS series – detailed quarterly survey results. Employment. Employed persons by citizenship - quarterly data. (Eurostat, 2025).

Particularly, the overall growth of employed persons in Germany is almost equal to the growth of foreign-born employed persons. Therefore, the labour market of this country received essential development due to migration. Instead, the Polish labour market stopped its growth, which was typical for previous periods omitted from this figure. Nonessential overall growth is accompanied by a tendency to increase employment in younger age groups, except for foreign-born aged 30-34. There is no unavailable data for Poland for comparisons with other young groups; however, the overall data is stable and illustrates the stable position of foreign-born workers.

Although the statistical definitions of “youth” vary slightly between datasets due to Eurostat’s methodological framework, the upward trend in participation among younger cohorts is consistent across all sources. The following comparisons will be made according to the age classification in labour force surveys, where no other possibilities exist to analyse age group statistics, such as using intervals like 15-29 and 15-39, in light of the group 15 and over (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 illustrates that labour force participation rates have risen for both native-born and foreign-born populations, but the growth is sharper among migrants. In the EU average, and even more distinctly in Germany, the post-invasion period brought a visible narrowing of the gap in participation between foreign-born youth and their native peers. Poland, while demonstrating a smaller absolute rate, shows faster recovery and integration of newcomers into the workforce, confirming its evolving role as both a transitional and increasingly stable labour market. So, youth became the primary source of the Polish labour market growth and immigrants (as the first generation is considered in this data) play a significant role in this upward trend.

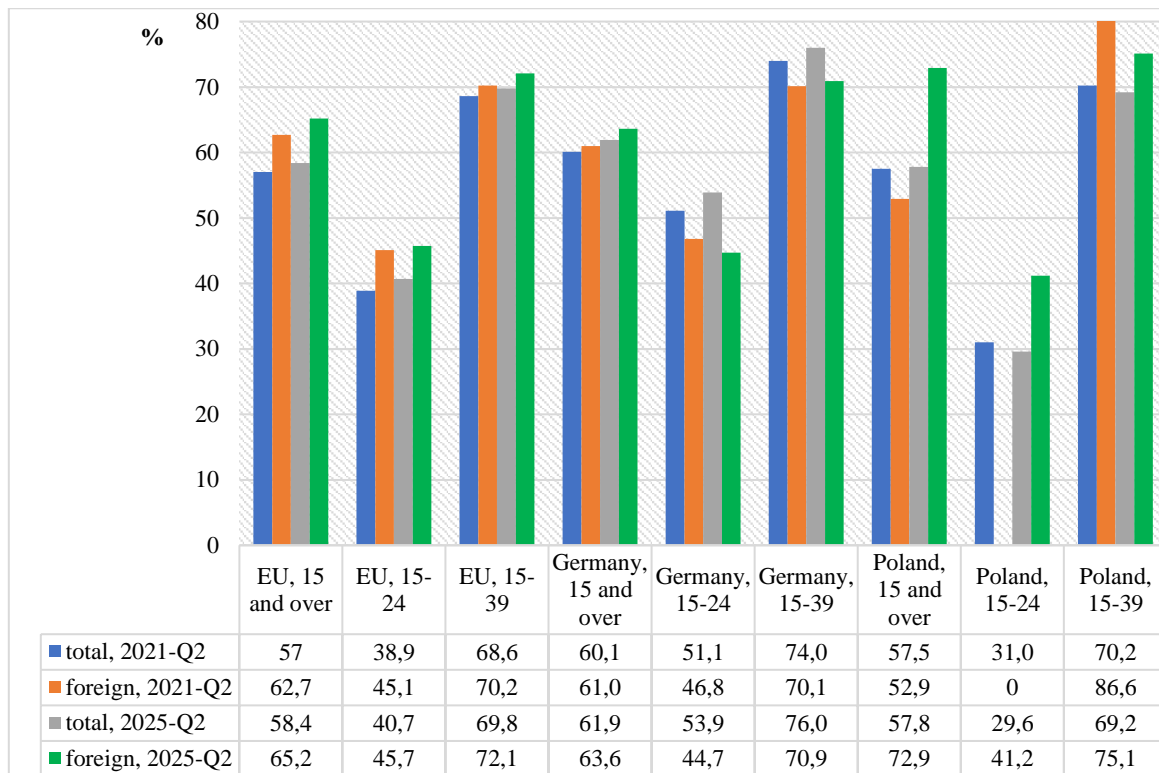


Fig. 3.3. Labour force participation rate by country of birth and age in the EU, Germany, and Poland in 2021-Q2 and 2025-Q2

Note: 0 – the data are absent.

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Labour market. LFS series – detailed annual survey results. Activity and activity rates. Labour force participation rates by country of birth - quarterly data. (Eurostat, 2025).

The employment rate comparisons (Figures 3.4-3.5) further emphasise the decisive impact of educational attainment on employability.

The comparative employment data for 2021 and 2025 (Figure 3.4) demonstrate a general upward trend across all age groups, yet the post-invasion period amplifies generational differences. Employment rates among young adults (particularly those under 35, except for young foreigners in Poland) have increased more dynamically than in older cohorts, reflecting both demographic renewal and the rapid integration of younger migrant workers. This growth is most pronounced in Germany, where labour market absorption remains strongest. Overall, the figures confirm that youth employability driven by flexibility, mobility, and skill acquisition continues to underpin the EU's labour market resilience in the aftermath of large-scale migration.

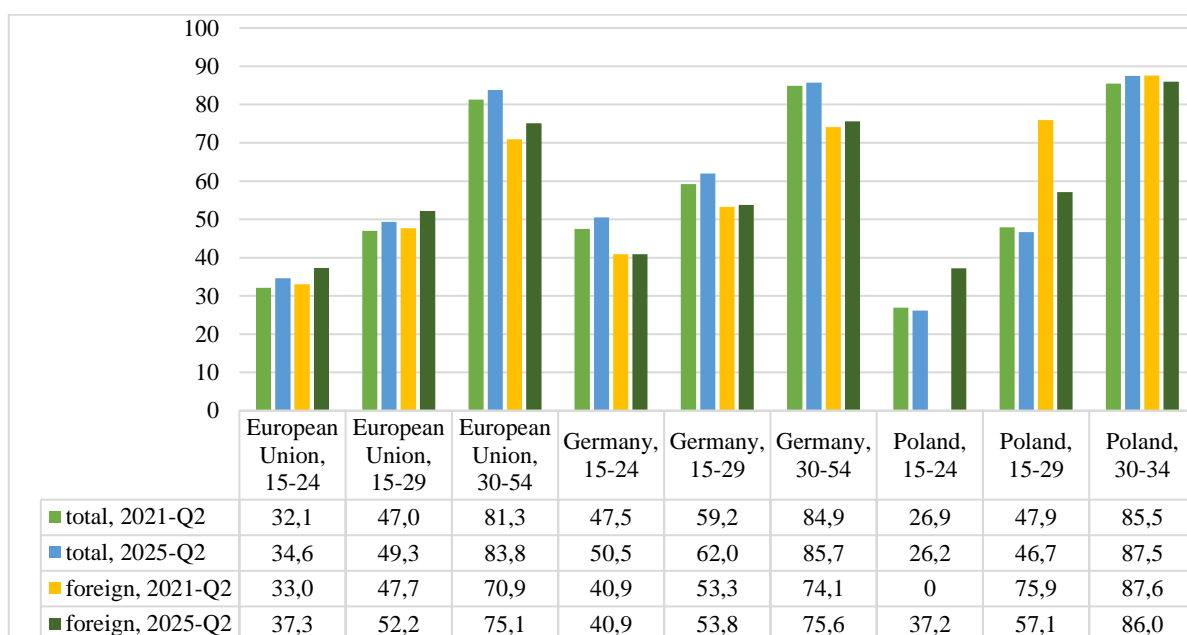


Fig. 3.4. Employment rates by migration status and age in the EU, Germany, and Poland in 2021-Q2 and 2025-Q2

Note: 0 – the data are absent.

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Labour market. LFS series – detailed quarterly survey results. Employment rates. Employment rates by migration status, citizenship, and educational attainment level - quarterly data. (Eurostat, 2025).

Across all three contexts (the EU as a whole, Germany, and Poland), individuals with tertiary education exhibit the highest and most resilient employment levels, regardless of migration status (Figure 3.5).

The data suggest that higher education mitigates structural disadvantages faced by migrant youth and supports their successful labour-market inclusion. This trend contrasts with the slower recovery among those with lower education levels, underlining the significance of tertiary education as a key determinant of youth employability in the post-2022 European labour landscape.

Overall, the results highlight a clear pattern: young and educated migrants have become an increasingly integral component of the EU labour force. Their participation can strengthen economic resilience and contribute to workforce renewal amid demographic challenges.

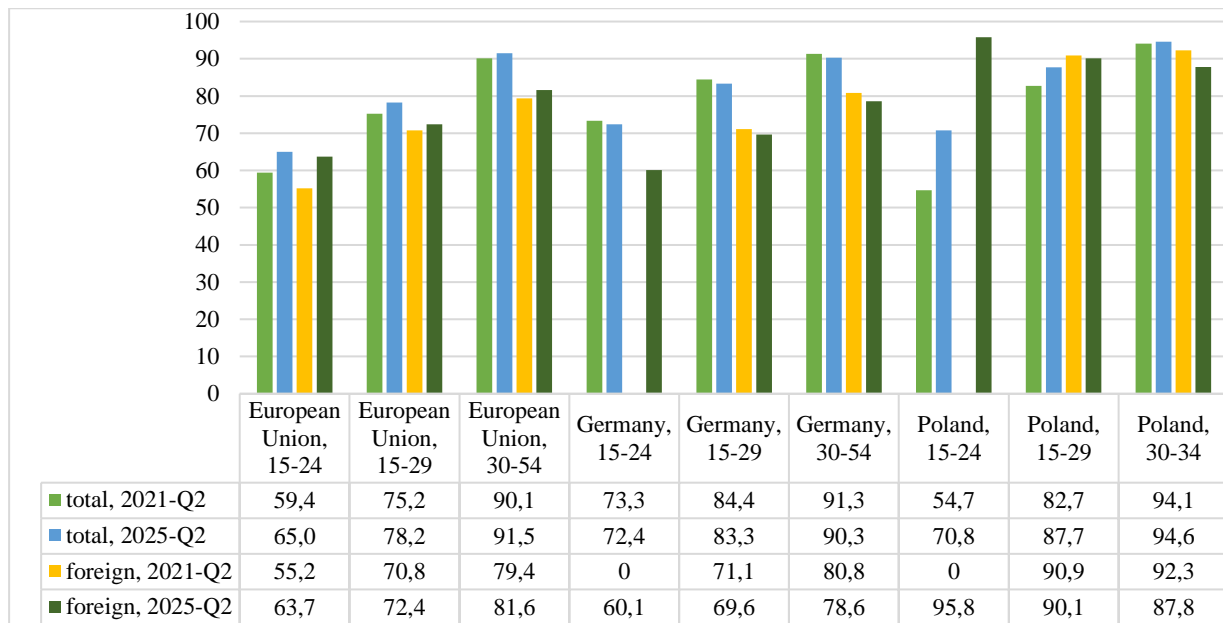


Fig. 3.5. Employment rates of population with tertiary education by migration status and age in the EU, Germany, and Poland in 2021-Q2 and 2025-Q2

Note: 0 – the data are absent.

Source: developed based on Eurostat data: Labour market. LFS series – detailed quarterly survey results. Employment rates. Employment rates by migration status, citizenship, and educational attainment level - quarterly data. (Eurostat, 2025).

A more precise look at skills that ensure employability on labour markets is available in one of the recent studies in the field (Roshchyk et al., 2024). Based on comparisons of the vacancy descriptions on job sites in Germany and Poland, the authors define the most essential skills for the professions that are in high demand on the labour markets of highly skilled employees:

- “Personnel/Human Resources Management, Labour Resources”;
- “Construction, Architecture, and Design”;
- “Programming”;
- “Marketing, Advertising, and PR.”

The results of the comparisons are presented in Table 3.1.

The analysis of required competencies in job advertisements in Germany and Poland reveals important patterns that should be considered by job seekers, especially for young migrants competing in the local labour market with the native

population. To secure a job related to the analysed position within the highly qualified segment, the following peculiarities should be considered.

Table 3.1

The availability of separate employability constituents by profession groups and requirements to candidates in Germany (G), and Poland (P) in April 2024, %

Competencies that are either mandatory or desirable for employment, or that provide an advantage in the employment process	Profession Groups							
	Personnel Management, Human Resources		Construction, Architecture, and Design		Programming		Marketing, Advertising, and PR	
	G	P	G	P	G	P	G	P
Professional, evidenced by a diploma of higher education or a certificate of study from a higher education institution in the relevant field	100	42	91	86	96	37	55	50
Professional, evidenced by experience	69	83	50	55	46	50	45	79
Digital (including those related to specialised software)	69 (24)	79 (50)	50 (45)	91 (77)	100 (100)	100 (100)	82 (64)	83 (42)
Legal	24	33	23	0	0	0	0	0
Language (foreign language)	41	63	14	23	58	58	68	83
Soft skills*	97	92	95	86	63	63	82	83

Notes:

1. **Bold** indicates the proportion of vacancies with specific requirements of 50% or more; *italic* denotes the proportion of vacancies with specific requirements in Ukraine that is higher than in at least one other country.

2. *The most common soft skills by professional groups are as follows: 1) “Personnel management, human resources”: time management and multitasking; communication skills and high personal culture; 2) “Construction, Architecture, and Design”: analytical thinking, result-oriented work, creativity, self-organisation; 3) “Programming”: responsibility, independence, multidimensional and analytical thinking, willingness to develop; 4) “Marketing, Advertising, and PR”: organisational skills, creativity, communication skills, client and demand orientation; 5) all professions: teamwork.

Source: Roshchyk et al. (2024).

In the “Personnel Management and Human Resources” vacancies, employers from both countries prioritise work experience and soft skills as key selection criteria for young applicants, such as recent graduates or university students. In Germany, a university degree was required in all analysed cases, whereas in Poland, this condition is slightly more flexible but remains highly desirable. Digital literacy is another standard expectation: proficiency in general office software is mentioned in 79% of Polish and 69% of German advertisements, while Polish employers more frequently demand familiarity with specialised HR-related software. Fluency in foreign languages is valued in Poland as an additional advantage. In contrast, legal competencies (which were expected for the position with duties related to law use in relations with personnel) are rarely mentioned in the labour market.

For vacancies in “Construction, Architecture, and Design”, both countries demonstrate strong emphasis on higher education credentials, with 91% of German and 86% of Polish employers requiring a degree or other confirmation of university enrolment. Across both markets, soft skills and practical experience are key hiring factors, cited in approximately half of all postings. At the same time, digital competencies, especially the ability to use industry-specific design

software, are increasingly indispensable (91% of advertisements in Poland).

In the IT and programming sector, employers in Germany and Poland consistently require advanced technical proficiency. Knowledge of specific programming languages is mandatory in all analysed postings, while work experience is viewed as beneficial but not decisive (mentioned in about half of Polish listings). Soft skills and foreign language fluency, particularly English, are highlighted as important assets for professional communication and teamwork within international environments.

Similarly, in the marketing, advertising, and public relations sector, both German and Polish employers valued professional competence, most often evidenced by a relevant university diploma or verified student status, alongside strong soft skills. Digital competencies, such as managing online campaigns and using analytics tools, along with foreign language proficiency, are regarded as essential for market-oriented professions in both countries.

Overall, the findings indicate that across these occupational fields in Germany and Poland, the most valued attributes for young candidates include soft skills, digital literacy, and verifiable professional qualifications. The latter shows the most apparent differences across occupations in both countries, but the main features are similar.

A university education remains a key determinant of employability, providing not only formal eligibility but also a signal of adaptability and competence. These findings are supported by data on the employment rate for the population with tertiary education (Figure). At the same time, employers increasingly recognise the importance of transversal skills (communication, teamwork, and problem-solving) alongside technical expertise. These peculiarities reflect a European labour market that rewards both academic achievements and practical abilities.

3.2. Migration policies for youth: opportunities for using best practices in attracting talent

In today's conditions of growing competition for human capital, the problem of youth migration is gaining particular importance. Young professionals and students are considered a key resource for socio-economic and innovative development. At the same time, countries around the world face challenges related to the outflow of talent (brain drain) and the need to create attractive conditions for attracting and retaining talent (brain gain). That is why the formation of effective migration policies focused on youth is becoming a strategic priority for countries seeking to increase their competitiveness in the global labor market.

The European Union and its member states have accumulated significant experience in regulating migration flows, developing educational and professional mobility, and creating tools to attract young talent. From academic exchange programs to creating special visa regimes for highly qualified workers, EU policy demonstrates a variety of institutional solutions aimed at combining the interests of the labour market, the education system, and social integration (Oliynyk et al., 2022). Initiatives such as the European Skills Agenda (European Commission, 2020), the Youth Action Plan 2022–2027 (European Commission, 2022d) and the development of the EU Talent Pool (OECD, 2022; European Commission, 2023d) are of particular importance, as they provide the basis for the formation of a comprehensive policy for attracting and developing young people in the European space.

For Ukraine, analysing EU best practices opens up prospects for adapting effective mechanisms to attract talent. This is especially relevant in the context of post-war reconstruction, when the issues of reproducing human potential, ensuring the competitiveness of the economy and integration into the European space become key factors of sustainable development. In this context, it is necessary to study program and regulatory documents that define the strategic

guidelines of the European Union in the field of skills development, supporting youth, and attracting highly qualified workers (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

Key EU initiatives as a basis for a policy to attract young talent

Document	Goal	Focus on talents	Strengths	Weaknesses
European Skills Agenda	Building the “right skills for the right jobs”; developing digital and “green” competencies in youth and adults	Linking education to labour market needs, increasing the mobility of young professionals through standardized qualifications.	Systematic, clear quantitative goals, integration with the European Education Area.	It is not always related to immigration mechanisms; instead, it focuses on upskilling and reskilling the existing population.
Youth Action Plan in EU External Action 2022-2027	Youth is a strategic partner of the EU in external action; emphasis on the right of young people to participate in democratic processes and peacebuilding.	Not so much "attraction" as creating conditions for developing the potential of youth (capacity building, participation in reconstruction).	Integration of youth into foreign policy and humanitarian efforts (including Ukraine).	Little attention is paid to instruments of economic migration or career integration; soft power prevails.
OECD Feasibility Study on the Development of an EU Talent Pool	Analyses the possibilities of creating a digital base (Talent Pool) to attract highly qualified employees from third countries.	Directly aimed at brain gain - attracting young and highly qualified personnel, including students and graduates.	Focus on the transparency of procedures, the possibility of using digital tools.	Difficulty in harmonizing different national rules; risk of duplication with existing instruments (Blue Card, national visas).
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the	Transform the idea from the OECD study into a regulatory framework. Introduce a	A tool for attracting young professionals (especially STEM, medicine, IT).	Transparent selection mechanism.	The effectiveness of implementation depends on the willingness of member states

Council establishing an EU Talent Pool	platform where EU employers can find skilled migrants and candidates can create profiles.			to share their market data.
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Source: authors' development

Addressing key initiatives will not only allow us to identify the main priorities of European policy, but also to highlight the tools that are already being used to achieve the set goals.

The results of the analysis indicate that the EU policy in the field of work with youth and talents is multi-level in nature. Some documents focus on creating a favourable environment for education, mobility, and civic activity, while others provide regulatory solutions and practical mechanisms for selecting and attracting highly qualified specialists. This approach demonstrates the transition from declarative principles and the support of youth potential to specific instruments that determine the rules of integration and employment. Therefore, the next step of the study is to identify the instruments directly embedded in the analysed documents, as they allow us to trace how the declared goals are transformed into practical measures for attracting young talent (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Tools for implementing policies in the field of skills development and youth engagement in the EU

Document	Basic tools
European Skills Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pact for Skills (industry alliances for skills development). ➤ Skills intelligence (systems for collecting and analysing data on skills). ➤ Micro-credentials (short certified courses). ➤ Individual learning accounts. ➤ Europass (digital platform for recognition of qualifications).
Youth Action Plan in EU External Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (enhancing mobility).

2022–2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support for youth organizations and networks. ➤ Institutional partnerships with third countries. ➤ Programs for youth participation in reconstruction and humanitarian projects.
OECD Feasibility Study on the Development of an EU Talent Pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Expression of Interest (EoI) system is for the pre-registration of candidates. ➤ EU-wide platform for job seekers' profiles. ➤ Matching systems between candidates and employers. ➤ Lists of scarce professions.
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an EU Talent Pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A centralized database for job seekers and employers. ➤ Standardized profile submission and selection procedures. ➤ Integration with Blue Card and national visa regimes. ➤ Focus on shortage professions (STEM, medicine, IT).

Source: authors' development

Thus, the proposed instruments reflect different levels of impact on the processes of youth engagement and development. Some of them are more “soft” in nature, focusing on creating educational opportunities, supporting mobility and forming international partnerships. Mechanisms such as Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, or micro-credentials not only expand access to knowledge but also increase the attractiveness of the EU for young people due to a favourable environment for self-realization. Other instruments are more “hard” in nature and are directly related to the legal and institutional framework. This primarily concerns the creation of digital databases for migrants, the introduction of standardized candidate selection procedures, the identification of scarce professions, i.e., the formation of specific channels for attracting highly qualified workers to the labour market.

Taken together, these approaches form a multi-level system, where educational and social initiatives are combined with regulatory mechanisms, providing a logic from training and skills development to integration and employment. This approach allows the European Union to position itself as a

space that not only supports young people but also actively builds the infrastructure to attract talent. At the same time, the problem of weak coordination between the educational block and migration procedures remains noticeable, along with the risks associated with the varying levels of readiness among member states to implement new tools in practice. However, it is this evolution from “soft” to “hard” mechanisms that creates the kind of comprehensive approach that can be a helpful guide for Ukraine.

To assess the effectiveness of the declared instruments in practice, it is important to turn to quantitative indicators. This opportunity is provided by the European Skills Index 2024, which measures the level of development, activation, and relevance of skills in EU countries (Cedefop, 2024a).

The index assesses the effectiveness of national systems in three key dimensions: skills development, their activation on the labour market (skills activation), and the correspondence between the acquired qualifications and the needs of the economy (skills matching). Thus, the index provides an empirical dimension that allows us to check whether the approaches declared in the strategic documents are reflected in practice. Thanks to the ESI, it is possible to determine which countries have truly made progress in creating a favourable environment for youth and talents, and which are lagging behind, despite political declarations. That is, the index acts as a kind of “bridge” between the political framework (strategies, programs, proposals) and the real state of affairs in the EU, which is confirmed by quantitative data. This makes our research not only conceptual but also applied, which is especially important for formulating recommendations for Ukraine. The values of the ESI and its sub-indices for EU countries in 2024 are shown in Fig. 3.6.

The European Skills Index 2024 data clearly show that EU countries achieve high results in developing and using skills in various ways, with these differences closely related to the tools used. The Czech Republic's leadership is due to an exceptionally high level of matching of education and labour market needs, which is evidenced by close cooperation with employers and national mechanisms for

forecasting skills needs (Cedefop, 2023c).

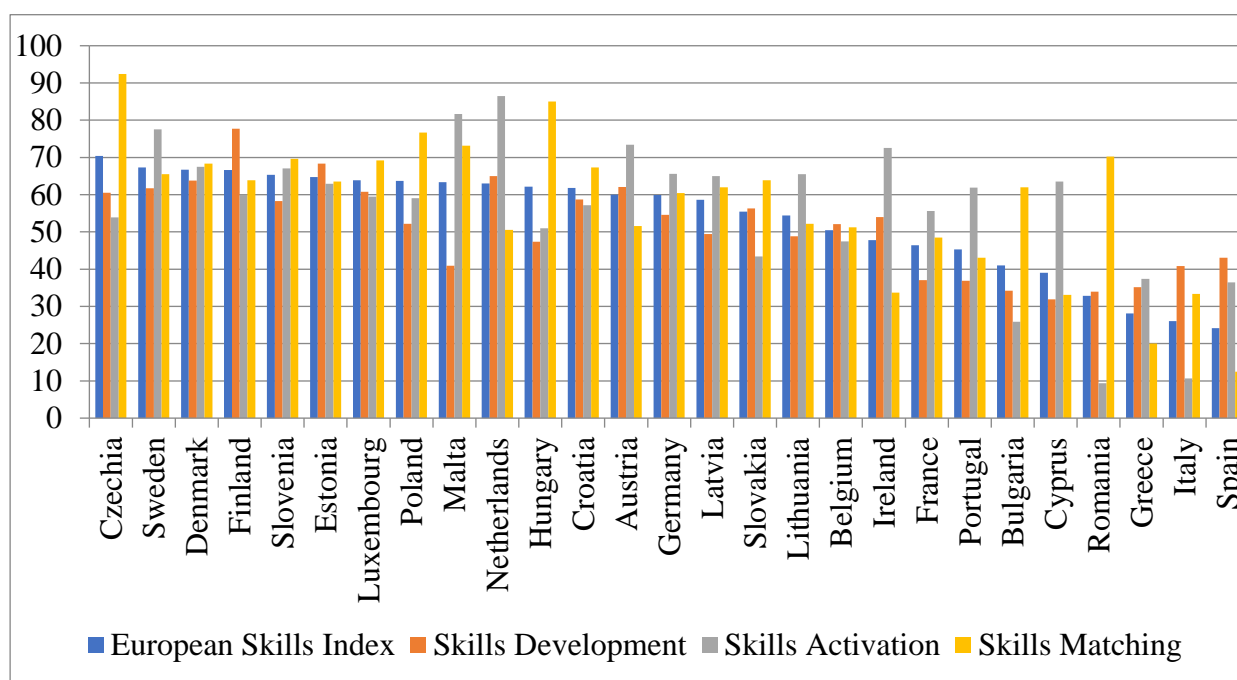


Fig. 3.6. European Skills Index 2024 and its sub-indices in EU countries

Source: Compiled based on (Cedefop, 2024b)

These are precisely the approaches envisaged by the European Skills Agenda through the development of skills intelligence and the expansion of vocational training. Good results in the field of skills development and activation distinguish Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, and Finland). This is directly related to lifelong learning tools, micro-credentials, and active youth support programmes in the labour market, which meet the objectives of the Youth Action Plan and create conditions for the rapid integration of graduates.

The countries of Central Europe show other results. Poland and Hungary have high skills matching indicators with more modest results in development and activation. This indicates a policy orientation towards practical training and a clear direction for young people to areas with a shortage of personnel (Cedefop, 2024c). This aligns with the logic of creating the EU Talent Pool and using the list of shortage professions as a mechanism for attracting talent. Small open economies, such as Malta or Cyprus, are characterized by high levels of young people's integration into the labour market, even with weaker results in the field

of education. This is explained by the fact that their economies rely to a large extent on imported skills and foreign specialists, and therefore are most in need of an effective functioning Talent Pool and tools for quick access of migrants to vacancies (OECD, 2025).

In Southern European countries (Spain, Italy, Greece), the opposite picture is observed: a weak match between education and labour market needs, high levels of youth unemployment, and over-qualification. This indicates the limited effectiveness of national skills matching systems and the lack of tools capable of quickly integrating young people into stable employment. Initiatives such as micro-credentials, educational accounts, and career integration programs, as laid down in the European Skills Agenda, along with the development of international mobility programs, which partially compensate for the structural problems of internal labour markets, are particularly relevant here (Cedefop, 2023b).

The analysis shows that, despite the general framework laid down in the European Skills Agenda and related initiatives, the countries of the European Union have developed their own models of responding to the challenges of developing, attracting, and retaining talent. For a deeper understanding of this differentiation, it is advisable to analyse individual national policies that reflect the specifics of socio-economic conditions and, at the same time, offer examples of effective tools: the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Ireland, and Estonia.

The Netherlands represents a “digital innovation” model through the active implementation of micro-credentials and educational credits (Cedefop, 2023a). Germany is an example of a classic dual vocational training system that ensures a high level of skill matching with labour market needs (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, n.d.). Finland demonstrates an educational-value approach that combines quality education with youth integration programs (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, 2020). Ireland is interesting as an economy that systematically positions itself as a “talent hub” through an international strategy for attracting specialists and students (Government of Ireland, 2023). Estonia embodies a digital model focused on developing future

competencies through innovative educational strategies and national initiatives for the formation of digital skills (Ministry of Education and Research, Estonia, 2021; European Commission, 2023c). Thus, these countries demonstrate the implementation of a range of tools – from traditional vocational education mechanisms to the latest digital tools and global mobility strategies, which makes their experience particularly useful for developing recommendations in the context of Ukraine.

The generalized tools that shape talent development and attraction policies in selected countries are presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Talent attraction and development tools in some EU countries

Country	Tool
Netherlands	Introduction of micro-credentials (3–30 ECTS) in VET and higher education (Cedefop, Versnellingsplan). Educational accounts for lifelong learning.
Germany	Dual vocational education system (Dual VET): training in the company + theory in a vocational school (BMBF, BIBB). Standardization of qualifications and continuous professional renewal under the guidance of BIBB.
Finland	VANUPO: an interdepartmental national youth policy program for participation and integration. Ohjaamo (One-Stop Guidance Centres): multi-service youth support centres in the fields of education, work, and social services.
Ireland	Global Citizens 2030: international strategy for attracting students, researchers, innovators. Employment Permit Policy: work permit system, lists of scarce professions, Labour Market Needs Test, integration with EURES.
Estonia	Education Strategy 2021–2035: flexible educational trajectories, lifelong learning, matching skills with the market. Digital Agenda 2030 / Digital Decade Roadmap: development of digital skills, STEM, cyber competences. AI Leap: a national program for teaching artificial intelligence in schools.

Source: authors' development

In general, the analysis of EU policies in the field of development and attraction of young talent demonstrates the complexity of complementary instruments. Their multi-vector nature indicates that the success of the policy depends on the country's ability to combine instruments of different nature—from national employment programs to global mobility strategies. This complexity is the core of effectively attracting and retaining talent.

Studying the experiences of European Union countries forms the basis for developing practical guidelines in Ukrainian policy aimed at attracting young talent. For Ukraine, which is at the stage of gradual integration into the European space, it is essential to combine instruments of different natures: educational, social, institutional, and international. At the same time, the key task is to create a system that would simultaneously ensure the retention of its own human capital from emigration and create conditions for attracting talent from abroad. Adapting the best EU practices, while considering Ukrainian realities, can become the basis for forming a comprehensive national strategy for attracting and developing youth. To outline the possible directions of such a strategy, it is advisable to identify key instruments that have already demonstrated effectiveness in EU countries and can be adapted for the Ukrainian context. They cover the educational, social, institutional, and international dimensions and reflect the multi-vector nature of the talent attraction policy:

1) educational tools:

- introduction of micro-credentials in the higher and vocational education system (following the example of the Netherlands);
- development of dual education (German experience) as a way to increase the correspondence between training and labour market needs;
- development of flexible educational trajectories (Estonian and Finnish models) focused on lifelong learning;

2) social tools:

- creating a network of youth guidance centres like the Finnish Ohjaamo,

which would combine educational, career, and social services;

- support for integration programs for IDPs and youth from vulnerable groups through local initiatives (adaptation of VANUPO models);

3) institutional instruments:

- introduction of a national system for forecasting skills needs (analogous to Kompas in the Czech Republic, but integrated with European platforms);

- using the list of shortage professions (the experience of Poland and Ireland) to guide state educational programs and labour migration policy;

4) international instruments:

- formation of a Ukrainian "hub of talents" strategy (following the Irish model), focused on attracting students and young specialists from abroad;

- increased participation in European mobility programs (Erasmus+, EU Talent Pool, Digital Decade), which contribute to the integration of Ukrainian youth into the educational and professional space of the EU.

Thus, adopting the best European practices in developing and attracting young talent is of strategic importance for Ukraine. It not only preserves its own human capital during a period of serious challenges but also creates conditions for forming a new model of socio-economic growth. We are discussing the possibility of transforming Ukraine into a competitive centre for youth development, combining high-quality education, modern support institutions, and a favourable environment for professional self-realization. Such a transformation requires political will at the highest level, proper institutional capacity of the state, and partnership with business and civil society. It is also important to ensure a long-term vision that goes beyond short-term reforms and lays the foundation for stable recovery and integration into the European space. In this context, orienting towards the best European practices can drive Ukraine's modernization in the post-war period, combining the preservation of human capital with the active involvement of new knowledge and competencies.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of youth migration to the European Union reveals a complex, multi-dimensional nature of the youth migration decisions reflecting the complex influence of humanitarian, educational, and economic factors. Across all dimensions studied (from theoretical review and statistical analysis to the policies developed in the field of youth migration regulation) a clear picture emerges: the migration intentions of the youth are increasingly shaped by overlapping crises, the structural asymmetries of European labour markets, including those driven by the war threats and changes in national policies regarding migrants.

Bibliometric findings from Scopus and Web of Science databases demonstrate that post-2022 studies on youth migration have shifted from traditional push–pull models, which focus on economic factors and related aspects of quality of life, toward a more systemic understanding that integrates security, resilience, and human capital perspectives. The most thriving research clusters focus on forced migration, educational mobility, integration policies, and digitalisation as a factor in migration decision-making. This reflects the growing recognition that migration is not solely a demographic or humanitarian issue but also a strategic dimension of human capital development in a changing Europe. It requires changes in decision-making and the development of long-term migration consequences, their threats, and benefits for the hosting countries.

The statistical analysis of net migration and immigration patterns among the youth, considering overall trends, reveals significant shifts in the spatial distribution of migrants within the EU since 2021. While traditional destination countries such as Germany, France, and Spain maintain leading positions, the post-invasion period has seen the rising importance of Poland, Czechia, and other Central and Eastern European states as both entry points and destinations. The influx of young and working-age migrants has become an important factor, helping to offset labour shortages and stimulate economic recovery by increasing the supply of labour and new opportunities for educational market development.

However, there are evident disparities between the attractiveness of the member states for young immigrants. Countries with higher levels of socio-economic stability and advanced welfare systems continue to attract more migrants with permanent intentions to stay. In contrast, others serve primarily as transit or temporary destinations. Youth migration thus mirrors broader regional inequalities and differences in national policies towards immigration.

The analysis of residence permits and temporary protection data indicates that post-2022 migration to the EU is distinguished by its humanitarian character and gender-age specificity. More than four million Ukrainians, a majority of them women and children, have obtained temporary protection in EU countries. Germany and Poland jointly host over half of these refugees, confirming their pivotal role in the European response to war threats and leading role in social policies supporting refugees in the EU during the crises caused by the war.

Because the large share of refugees is young females and children, and there is no obvious perspective that the war will end soon, it requires a shift in the national policies within the EU from short-term humanitarian aid toward sustainable inclusion strategies focused on education, labour market inclusion, and social integration of the youth.

Employment tendencies of youth compared with the adult population show an upward trajectory across the EU in the post-invasion period (comparing 2025 to 2021), particularly driven by the integration of younger workers, including first-generation foreign-born migrants. Germany and Poland exemplify this trend: in both countries, labour-force participation among migrant youth has risen markedly since 2022, reducing the gap with native populations. This reflects the adaptability of young migrants, their relatively high educational levels, and the proactive labour-market policies of host states.

At the same time, data confirm that tertiary education remains the strongest predictor of employability and a reliable factor of personal success in the labour market. Individuals with tertiary degrees, regardless of migration status, exhibit higher employment rates, positively affecting the overall increase of employment.

These tendencies are typical for Germany, Poland, and generally for the EU, demonstrating that migrants' labour force can significantly contribute to overall positive shifts in labour markets, offsetting losses of the native population (which is typical for Poland). Hence, tertiary education emerges as both an individual and systemic determinant of the labour market development.

Survey and qualitative evidence, combined with the contextual analysis of economic indicators, suggest that a combination of structural and personal factors influences youth migration intentions. The primary drivers include the search for stability, professional self-realisation, access to quality education, and the perceived fairness and transparency of institutional systems abroad. The war in Ukraine has amplified these motives, transforming educational mobility into a broader quest for security and belonging. The increasing opportunities for the youth within the EU, in the form of supportive educational policies provided by universities and national governments, have strengthened their migration aspirations. The educational dimension of migration, especially student mobility and international study pathways, has gained unprecedented significance. EU countries have expanded access to higher education for Ukrainian and other displaced youth. Incorporating active tools for attracting talented youth, universities provide language support, opportunities to combine work and education, and assistance on the labor market after graduation, thus responding not only to the immediate humanitarian needs but also contributing to Europe's broader innovation and skills agenda. Brain gain through attracting talented youth is strongly linked to countries' innovative development and resilience, as confirmed in this study.

The findings underscore that migration and employability policies must be interlinked with education, innovation, and demographic strategies. The post-2022 experience illustrates the need for integrated governance frameworks that bridge the humanitarian, economic, and educational dimensions of mobility. Based on the problems of youth integration in the EU confirmed in our study, it can be concluded that the effective responses should include: coordinated

recognition of qualifications and micro-credentials across the EU and neighbouring states; targeted youth employment programmes and apprenticeships in sectors of high demand; psychological and social support mechanisms for displaced youth; stronger university-business collaboration meeting the professional needs and employability of graduated regardless the migrant status.

Among the most promising ways for the reliable and long-term integration of young migrants, the following measures can be considered. There is an obvious need to develop evidence-based national and EU-level frameworks for integration. They should align youth migration, education, and labour policies to meet the needs of national strategic development, including demographic recovery and innovative strategies, considering that the youth are the most promising cohort in this regard. The best practices in educational policies experienced in the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Ireland, and Estonia highlighted in this monograph, can be disseminated for this aim.

Actions aimed at youth employability should be prioritized in recovery and reconstruction plans, with special attention to displaced and migrant youth. These measures could be combined with the further development of digital literacy, which is seen nowadays as an effective way to tackle the obstacles to employment. Besides, it is possible to remove bureaucratic barriers to employment by developing digital platforms for cross-border verification of diplomas, micro-credentials, and prior learning. In many cases, the formal confirmation of educational achievements is still important (as confirmed in the analysis of job vacancies in Germany and Poland), so this action can be helpful for immigrant youth.

In addition, the development of cross-country data-driven monitoring of vacancies, demand for certain professions, and hosting possibilities for migrants can be implemented. It could be based on the implementation of a unified indicators system for tracking youth migration and employment possibilities. These measures can significantly simplify the distribution of migrant inflows, fostering personal well-being and increasing countries' economic capacity. Of

course, implementing this comprehensive information system requires the agreement of at least the key hosting countries.

In conclusion, youth migration in the post-2022 European context is both a challenge and an opportunity. It challenges existing systems of labour governance, education, and social cohesion; however, it also offers a pathway to renewal through the infusion of skills, diversity, and innovation.

For both donor and recipient countries, youth migration creates challenges and opportunities. For recipient countries, the new chances are linked to an increase in competitiveness through building a resilient, knowledge-based human capital system capable of sustaining growth and inclusion in the digital age. The youth are a ubiquitous driver for economic development in this regard. For donor countries, there is a need to develop strategies for attracting youth by using the European best practices in this sphere. This is especially important for Ukraine and the need for post-war recovery. The youth returning to a country with new knowledge, advanced social capital, sharing European values, and a developed network of contacts with peers abroad is a reliable basis for ambitious plans of steady economic development and European integration.

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Youth migration aspirations: imagining the EU from the outside

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