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## Messy Arrangements? A Social Networks Perspective on Migrant Labor Brokerage: The Case of Ukrainian Migration to Poland

*Abstract:* This article draws on two studies conducted between 2016 and 2018 on the nature of labor migration from Ukraine to Poland. Using quantitative and qualitative data, it analyses the relationship between social networks and employment agencies. Building on research into migration infrastructure, we question the dichotomy—which also appears in migrants’ narratives—between migrant social networks and labor brokers, and offer evidence of overlap and interdependence between the two. Exploring various aspects of labor migration, we look at the role played by the social networks of the actors (both the migrants and the intermediaries) in enhancing migration infrastructure. We show how migrants use their social capital in regard to labor brokers and how the latter, rather than replacing networks, mobilize their network resources and experience to create a trusted transnational service.

*Keywords:* Social capital, social networks, labor brokerage, migration infrastructure, Ukrainian labor migrants, immigration to Poland

### Introduction

Migration is a process shaped by complex social interactions (Lindquist 2012). As research shows, social networks play a crucial role in channeling labor migrants to particular countries (Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014) and impact their adaptation in the receiving societies (Ryan and Mullholand 2015). We have also seen an increase in research on the role of intermediary infrastructure in labor migration (Axelsson, Hedberg, Pettersson, and Zhang 2022; Betts 2013; Cranston, Schapendonk, and Spaan 2018; Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013). In building on these studies, we were interested in analyzing the relationship between social networks and labor mediation. In this article we explore how the social capital of migrants influences the functioning of labor brokerage in migration from Ukraine to Poland.

The changing context of migration has resulted in a proliferation of numerous non-state organizations and commercially driven agents facilitating labor mobility (Elrick and Lewandowska 2008; Pijpers 2010). Recent studies also indicate the increasing role of formal intermediaries in recruiting migrant workers from Ukraine to Poland (Górny, Kaczmar-

czyk, Szulecka, Bitner, Okólski, Siedlecka, and Stefańczyk 2018), as well as the continuing importance of social networks in driving mobility between these two countries (Górny and Jaźwińska-Motyłska 2019). These findings inspired us to ask the following questions: (1) how do labor migrants access and use social capital to find labor brokers? (2) how do labor migrants access and mobilize social capital to become formal labor brokers? (3) how do formal labor brokers use their social capital to facilitate, sustain, and profit from international migration? Our hypothesis is that the importance of social capital developed throughout the migration experience does not decrease despite the institutionalization of migration infrastructure but enhances the opportunities of both labor brokers and labor migrants. The social capital of a labor broker significantly facilitates his or her access to workers and the provision of more targeted services. To some extent, brokers commercialize their migration experience—their “know how” and personal social networks. Social capital also increases a labor migrant’s agency in finding and changing jobs.

This article starts with a review of the literature and an analytical framework, focusing on the theories and research in regard to the different types of actors mediating migrant labor. We follow with a methodological section and a short discussion of the context of migration in Poland as a Central and Eastern European country. In the main section we present the findings of our analysis of quantitative data in order to provide a background for qualitative insights into the role of networks and labor brokers connected with the migration of Ukrainian labor to Poland. We end the article with a discussion of the role of social networks in migration infrastructure and reflect on the main factors that have contributed to the emergence of labor brokers in Poland.

### **Intermediaries and Social Networks: Literature Review and Analytical Framework**

A decade ago, Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh claimed that migration infrastructure, that is, the “institutions, networks and people that move migrants from one point to another” was “the ‘black box’ in migration research” (Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh 2012: 8–9). In recent years, an increasing body of literature has addressed various functions of recruitment and employment agencies: assisting migrants to traverse immigration regimes (Kern and Müller-Böker 2015; Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh 2012; McKeown 2012; Schapendonk 2018), outsourcing a state’s border controls (Goh, Wee, and Yeoh 2017), regulating migration (Axelsson et al. 2022; Fernandez 2013; Groutsis, van den Broek, and Harvey 2015; Hernandez-Leon 2013; Khan 2019), global migration governance (Betts 2013), co-operating with employers to cheapen and commoditize migrant labor (Guérin 2013; McCollum and Findlay 2018), and the consequent increase in migrants’ precarity (McDowell 2008; Rodriguez and Schwenken 2013). Researchers have also reflected on labor brokers’ role in—on the one hand—expanding migrants’ agency and “unmaking” precarious migrant subjects (Deshingkar 2019) and, on the other hand, controlling labor migration by cooperating with state border regimes (Berg and Tamagno 2013).

In analyzing employment agencies, researchers categorize them according to the profile of their activity (temporary staffing, job placement, posting, and job or personal counselling, in connection with the regulatory framework of different states) (see **International**

Labor Office 2007). The size and experience of employment agencies is another criterion that may be used for categorization. Sorensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen (2013) divide the intermediaries facilitating labor migration into two main categories: large agencies and companies which facilitate access to legal migration, offering job contracts, doing the paperwork, and providing transportation and housing; and individual brokers or smaller businesses, which are usually set up by migrants who apply their know-how and use their networks to provide commercial services to future migrants. According to Sorensen and Gammeltoft-Hansen (2013), the small entrepreneurs or individuals mediating between workers and employers may offer the same services as the large companies, but they also provide advice on how to meet formal requirements, find work, and settle in a way that is “tailored” to the migrants’ needs. We found the latter issue worth studying in Poland, where numerous experienced migrant workers have decided to establish intermediary services.

Researchers have noted irregularities in the operation of the migration industry and link them, in general, with irregular or quasi-regular forms of migration (see e.g., Broeders and Engbersen 2007; Kyle and Koslowski 2011). In practice, however, services facilitating international mobility contribute to regular flows to a higher extent than to irregular ones (see also McCollum and Findlay 2018). Legally operating intermediary companies have gained researchers’ attention in studies on the roles of various kinds of official, licensed employment agencies (Fiałkowska and Napierała 2013), and in the growing research on temporary work agencies (e.g., Andrijasevic and Sacchetto 2017). Lindquist and co-authors (2012: 14) claim that the “focus on the recruitment of transnational migrants inevitably problematizes distinctions between licensed and unlicensed, between legality and illegality, and even between the migrant and broker which, in turn, points to the importance of resisting the a priori vilification of brokers.”

Researchers studying recruitment agents from a regulatory perspective offer an interesting perspective, looking at the outcomes of the interventions of specific states in labor migration governance, for instance, in the licensing of informal brokers (Xiang 2012; Xiang and Lindquist 2014). Žabko, Aasland, and Endresen (2018) also claim that the research division into legal and illegal practices does not allow the complexity of migration infrastructure to be captured, since “the fact that an agency is licensed does not always mean that its operations are fully lawful, and unlicensed or no longer licensed agents may provide fair services outside the regulatory framework for labor brokers.

Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh (2012) note that profit and trust frequently “run hand-in-hand in between brokers and migrants, and distinctions between them are often impossible to sustain in practice” (Lindquist et al. 2012: 9). For example, Hernandez-Leon (2021) in his work on brokers in the US analyses how entrepreneurs who participate in the guest-worker visa program learn and develop the skills and competences needed to facilitate, sustain, and profit from cross-border mobility, and points to the crucial element of their membership in the migrant social world. Picherit (2019) also shows the fluidity between friendship, ties, and profit in the everyday practices of brokers in India. Awumbila and other authors (2019) point to the ambiguous relations between brokers and migrants in Ghana, with brokers performing some duties without financial gain but as a way to consolidate their reputation in the community. These “messy arrangements,” as Deshingkar (2019) calls them, “where altruism and morality collide with profiteering and illegal business” are

also, in our opinion, part and parcel of how a particular type of labor broker functions in the Polish case. Of interest to us in this article are the “in-betweens.” Like the aforementioned authors, in this paper we look critically at the clear-cut distinction between non-profit (altruistic), unregulated social networks and profit-oriented intermediaries, regulated by the state authorities.

Social networks are recognized by scholars as a key factor determining migration and adaptation processes (Massey et al. 2014; Ryan and Mulholland 2015). In general, research shows that the resources that migrants mobilize from their networks help them find better paying jobs—thus social capital is converted into economic capital (Danzer and Ulku 2011; Drever and Hoffmeister 2008; Van Meeteren, Engbersen, and Van San 2009). Research exploring the legal aspects of the economic adaptation of migrants has also confirmed the importance of social networks in these processes (Engbersen, Van San, and Leerkes 2006; Stefańska and Szulecka 2013). However, studies on intermediaries and studies on social networks rarely overlap, as there is a hidden assumption that labor brokers and social networks present two separate, alternative ways for migrants to reach a labor market and function within it. In this article we question the assumption, and focus on how and why social networks and labor brokers are interlinked and what the consequences are; we attempt to shed light not only on the economic adaptation of migrant workers but also on their agency in the context of various challenges posed by the legal and institutional framework and the structure of the labor market in the country of migration.

We define social networks as dynamic social constructions, involving complex processes of communication, which (re)produce and change social relationships (Fuhse 2015). We distinguish personal social networks of individuals (Bidart and Lavenu 2005), from business (Jenssen and Koenig 2010) or political networks (Sommerville and Goodman 2010). Personal networks evolve over time due to particular life events and are composed of ties of varying durations (Bidart and Lavenu 2005). Depending on whether these ties are weak or strong, they allow different types of resources to be mobilized (Granovetter 1978). Social networks may be the source of, but are not the same as, social capital. As Bourdieu (1986) wrote, social capital depends on “possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.” We define social capital as “resources that can be used by the actors to realize their interests” (Coleman 1990: 305). For social capital to exist, relations among persons have to be changed in order to facilitate action. The key is being able to use these resources for social advancement (Coleman 1990). Dahinden (2013), drawing on the work of Lin (1999), writes of network social capital as one of the possible forms of social capital and as an asset in a network—thus underlining the importance of the resources (the variety and quality of contacts) present in networks. The more differentiated social relations are, the better the quality of the social capital they produce. Thus, those networks that are characterized by a high variety of diverse ties—both “strong and weak ties”—and by a wide-range of ties with qualitatively different connections to diverse others (in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, or more generally, status, and also in terms of roles—kin, friends, etc.) are said to represent better network social capital. Similarly, as has been briefly discussed by various other authors, people who are “well equipped” with social-network resources, succeed better in achieving their goals (Kanas, Van Tubergen, and Van der Lippe 2011; Lancee 2010; Ryan 2011). According to Dahin-

den (2013) embeddedness in social relations produces network boundaries (i.e., structures of membership) along the so-called homophily principle—the preference to interact with similar others (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Homophily implies that distance in terms of social characteristics translates into network distance and vice versa, limiting people’s worlds and thus having a tremendous impact on the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and their everyday interactions.

We apply a social network perspective to analyze a particular aspect of the migration infrastructure: labor brokers. Migration infrastructure is, according to Xiang and Lindquist, “the multi-faceted space of mediation occupied by commercial recruitment intermediaries—large and small, formal and informal—bureaucrats, NGOs, migrants, and technologies” (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: 142). We focus in this paper on how formal and informal labor brokers use their personal network resources to their professional advantage. By a labor broker, following Lindquist and co-authors (2012: 8), we mean “a party who mediates between other parties, in this case the migrant and the employer or client.” This definition corresponds in general to the one envisaged in state regulatory frameworks, with the reservation that a mediating agent can be also a formal employer, as in the case of temporary employment agencies (TWAs). However, due to the fact that TWAs recruit and employ workers who perform their work duties for other employers (user employers or user companies), they have an intermediary function. This allows us to treat TWAs as a part of labor brokerage, that is, agencies mediating (migrant) work. In this article we use the term “labor broker” to cover a spectrum of recruitment and employment agencies and intermediary services.

### **Migration from Ukraine to Poland: The Development of Migration Infrastructure**

In the early 1990s, migration within the post-Soviet area of Central and Eastern Europe was characterized by largely unregulated cross-border mobility to neighboring countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, or Hungary. Some researchers referred to this area as a “buffer-zone” in light of Western Europe being the key migration destination; others claimed that a special migration space developed in Central and Eastern Europe (Wallace and Stola 2001). The development of such a space was possible thanks to a number of geographic, political, and economic conditions (practically no travel restrictions, spatial proximity, the functioning of a large informal labor market in Poland, and general social acceptance for undeclared work; see Dąbrowski 1996; Górny, Grabowska-Lusińska, Lesińska, and Okólski 2010; Maroukis, Iglicka and Gmaj 2011).

Social networks played a crucial facilitating role in this migration process: these were informal channels of recruitment, important risk-reducers providing migrants with needed information and support in their initial functioning, especially when it came to finding jobs. Using social networks also had negative consequences; among other things, it meant that migrants mainly found jobs in the secondary sector of the labor market (Kindler 2011; Okólski 2001; Wallace 2002). In regard to formal access to the labor market, until 2006 migrants without a permanent residence permit in Poland could work legally only after having received a work permit, which was a costly and time-consuming procedure and thus

discouraged the legal employment of foreigners (Szczepański 2010). In this context both public and private labor intermediaries, though they had been operating since the 1990s (Pichla 2008), were not migrants' preferred way of accessing information about job offers, and until approximately 2015 they mainly served Poles who wanted to work abroad.

What we have witnessed with time in Poland is a change from unregulated, informal migration based on social networks to more formalized labor migration. Factors contributing to this shift related mostly to the increased accessibility of documents required for cross-border travel and declared work opportunities. Restrictions in admitting foreign nationals to the labor market were successively mitigated from 2006 onwards. The crucial step toward liberalization was the introduction of a simplified procedure for employment of a foreign worker on a short-term basis (up to three months within a six-month period), based on an employer's declaration, without an obligation to obtain a work permit. This procedure, which initially applied only to citizens of Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia, was introduced for agriculture workers, and later encompassed all sectors of the economy. In the following years, the authorities extended the time period in which it was permissible to work without a permit (to six months within a twelve-month period) and added new countries to the list of beneficiaries of the facilitated procedure (Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia; see Górny et al. 2018; Szulecka 2016a).

The interest of migrants and employers in the scheme grew slowly but systematically. In 2014 the scale of immigration to Poland began to increase rapidly. Migrants came mainly from Ukraine, due, among other reasons, to Russia's military aggression in Donbas and Luhansk and the annexation of Crimea. The facilitations for legal entry and work in Poland were another crucial factor. In 2016, the number of employers' declarations submitted to labor offices in Poland reached 1.3 million (see Table 1). Although this number concerns the number of documents issued rather than the number of migrants employed (Górny et al. 2018), it became one of the indicators of Poland's changing migratory status. This occurred along with a positive migration balance, which was observed for the first time in the postwar history of Poland (see also Okólski 2021), along with Poland occupying the top position among OECD countries for the highest number of temporary migrant workers (OECD 2019).

The growing number of foreign nationals in Poland, in particular from Ukraine (see Table 1), was also accompanied by the increasing activity of employment agencies involved in recruiting and employing migrant workers. The question, however, is to what extent the visible growth in the inflow of Ukrainian migrants was facilitated by intermediary actors. One possible answer lies in the visible diversification of the regions from which Ukrainians were coming and their regional destinations in Poland. The available data shows a growing presence of migrant workers not only from western Ukraine (as in the previous two decades) but also from eastern and central Ukraine. In addition, migrants began to work in many other regions apart from the Mazowieckie voivodship, which until the mid-2010s had attracted the greatest numbers of migrant workers (Górny et al. 2018).

Additional evidence that employment agencies shaped the structure and scale of immigration to Poland was particularly visible in the processes of admitting foreigners to the labor market in 2018, when restrictions in the simplified procedure and seasonal work permits were introduced. The agencies adapted to the new formal requirements more quickly than did direct employers (Górny et al. 2018). In some sectors of the economy (such as manufacturing, food processing, and logistics), formal labor brokers contributed to the hiring of for-

Table 1  
**Residence and work documents of economic migrants in Poland between 2013 and 2021**

Type of documents		2013	2016	2019	2021
<b>No of valid residence cards<sup>a</sup></b>	Total	121,219	266,218	422,838	545,994
	% of Ukrainian nationals among card holders	31%	39%	51%	56%
<b>No of work permits issued to third-country nationals</b>	Total	39,078	127,394	444,738	504,172
	% of work permits issued to Ukrainian nationals	52%	83%	74%	64%
	% of work permits issued in Mazowieckie region	55%	38%	19%	21%
	% of work permits issued for administrative and support service activity (incl. TWAs)	not available	not available	22%	21%
<b>Registered employers' declarations for short-term migrant workers</b>	Total	235,616	1,314,127	1,640,083	1,979,886
	% of declarations registered for Ukrainian nationals	92%	96%	90%	83%
	% of declarations registered in Mazowieckie region	56%	28%	20%	18%
	% of declarations registered for administrative and support service activity (incl. TWAs)	not available	29%	15%	16%

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Office for Foreigners, the Ministry of Family and Social Policy<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Data as of first January in each year.

<sup>b</sup> As of April 2022. In the studied period there were changes to the names and competences of the ministries.

eign nationals by companies (Górny et al. 2018). However, there are sectors of the economy, particularly agriculture, where the use of migrant labor is a common practice, but formal employment agencies are rather uncommon. This does not mean, though, that labor brokers do not operate there—farmers draw not only on their own social capital and ties to their former workers, they also use (or are forced to use) the services of informal intermediaries who link them with the needed migrant workers (Górny et al. 2018; see also Szulecka 2016b).

It is impossible to estimate the number of informal brokers in Poland. However, the obligatory registration of intermediary agencies allows the development of formal labor brokerage to be traced and reveals intermediary activity in breach of the regulatory framework. In 2004, there were 867 entities, and in 2017, this number had increased more than tenfold, to 8,858, which was the highest number of intermediary agents reported in Poland up to 2022. In 2020, 23% of 8,818 employment agencies dealt with temporary staffing, whereas the main activity of 36% of the agencies was job placement. Three other forms of activities—personal and professional counselling and posting of workers—constituted about 40% of the overall activity of registered private employment agencies. 39% of 206,000 workers who found work thanks to job placements were foreign nationals. Similarly, foreign nationals constituted 40% of 661,000 temporary workers employed by agencies. Ukrainian nationals constituted the majority of them (87% of all foreigners employed by temporary work agencies). An important characteristic of this sector is the fact that almost 80% of the agents involved in labor brokerage are individuals running their own businesses or companies established at the lowest cost and with the least bureaucratic effort (MRPiT 2021).

According to state labor-inspection statistics, the highest share of foreigners detected as working in breach of the law in force in Poland in 2020 (36%) were employed in administrative and support-service activities, including employment agencies (GIP 2021: 149). Entities outsourcing their workers also became a concern for state agencies, due to the fact that these entities employ great numbers of foreigners despite de facto not having workplaces and thus are able to circumvent the provisions on temporary work and contribute to the precarious work status of migrant workers (GIP 2021: 152). Of the employment agencies established by foreigners (in the majority Ukrainians) that were inspected in 2020 by the state labor inspectors, most were involved in recruiting Ukrainians for temporary work purposes. They offered accommodation, transport, and support with paperwork, but the cost was not always transparently communicated to the migrant workers (GIP 2021: 156–157).

## Methodology

Our analysis is based on data from two research projects conducted between 2016 and 2018. The first study focused on the functioning of social networks among Ukrainian migrants in the context of their integration, and involved collecting survey data (509 respondents) in Warsaw and its vicinities in 2016. The survey was based on respondent-driven sampling, which allows “hidden populations” to be reached (Heckathorn 1997; Górny and Napierała 2016). Although the sample cannot be treated as representative for Poland, thanks to the sampling method the study has sufficient scope and scale to offer important insights on the Ukrainian migrant population and the role of migrants’ social networks in their



adaptation. The questionnaire-based interviews were conducted in Ukrainian, Russian, or Polish, depending on the preference of the research participants, who shared their experiences and opinions related, among other issues, to the arrangements regarding arrivals in Poland, accessing information about job offers and accommodation, and finally the support provided by family, acquaintances, or professional intermediaries in this respect. We treat this data as a background for understanding the social context of migration before the dynamic increase in labor migration and labor brokerage.

The second study aimed at assessing the legal and institutional framework (with a focus on the simplified procedure) of admitting economic migrants to Poland. The project involved qualitative in-depth interviews (a total of 252) with representatives of control institutions (local labor offices and labor inspectorates), employers, migrant workers (59), and formal labor brokers or temporary work agencies (42). The interviews were conducted between June 2017 and September 2018 in a number of regions and labor market sectors. The vast majority of the migrant workers interviewed were Ukrainian citizens. We based the qualitative part of our analysis on interviews with two types of informants—migrant workers from Ukraine and representatives of employment agencies involved in recruiting workers from Ukraine. For this analysis we selected 40 interviews: 20 with migrant workers from Ukraine, and 20 with representatives of formal employment agencies. We chose interviews with migrant workers who at the moment of the study were working in diverse regions of Poland, and on the basis of their different age, family status, year of first coming to work in Poland, and formal status in regard to staying and working in Poland (see more in [Annex 1](#)). All the interviewees had had the experience of benefitting (or trying to benefit) at some moment of their migratory experience from the simplified procedure for accessing the labor market. At the moment of the study only three interviewees were working for temporary work agencies; however, most of the interviewees had previous experience of using intermediary services and knew about the operation of labor brokers.

From the interviews with formal labor brokers, we selected those that allowed us to follow the development of the intermediary business and the recruitment of Ukrainian workers. We differentiated the analyzed sample by choosing interviews with labor brokers representing both large employment agencies and small companies, those established at the beginning of the 2000s and newer ones, set up around 2015, as well as those agencies established by Ukrainian migrants. Of the 20 agents interviewed, 13 represented entities that provided services to foreign workers (six of them existed before 2014), and seven additionally provided services for Poles (see more in [Annex 2](#)). Ukrainian nationals created three of the newest agencies, and Ukrainian recruiters or managers played crucial roles in most of the agencies in this study.

## Findings

### *Marginality and Distrust: The Beginnings of Formal Labor Brokerage in Migration from Ukraine*

What was the role of labor brokers in Poland until recently? According to the survey data, 14% of migrant workers found their first job in Poland thanks to labor brokerage. Of these,

5% claimed that they used the services of employment agencies in Ukraine and 9% used informal labor brokers there. Men used labor brokerage more often than women. Only 2% of the interviewed migrants used services offered by formal or informal intermediary agents based in Poland to find their first job in Poland. The role of formal or informal labor brokers in finding these migrants' current job was even less significant: around 3% indicated intermediary agents based in Poland and in Ukraine as a source of support in finding their current job, and in this case, informal brokers based in Poland were indicated most often.

The survey results confirm the marginal role of labor brokers and the crucial role of social networks in migrants' search for both accommodation and jobs in Poland. The respondents' received the most significant support through ties to acquaintances (weak ties) and family (strong ties) living in Poland. 44% of the respondents found their first accommodation this way. In turn, one fourth of the respondents claimed that they found their first accommodation thanks to employers. This usually translated into living in or near the place of work, for instance, in care work or seasonal jobs in agriculture. Both weak and strong ties allowed the majority of migrants (66%) to find their first jobs in Poland, with weak ties to acquaintances living in Poland (39%) having the greatest role and weak ties to acquaintances living in Ukraine (14%) also being important. One in ten of the migrant respondents found their first job in Poland thanks to family living in Poland. Families in Ukraine helped only 3% of migrants in this respect. The role of weak ties was even more important in finding the job the respondent held at the moment of the study or their previous job. 57% of the respondents indicated acquaintances living in Poland as those who helped them find these jobs.

Why was the role of intermediary services, in particular of temporary work agencies, marginal before 2016? One of the possible answers is that Poland was a latecomer in regard to migration infrastructure (there were very few labor brokers), while it had well-developed social networks facilitating labor migration. Another possible explanation of the marginal role of labor brokers was the migrants' reluctance to use their services. The interviewed migrants associated labor brokers with deceitful practices. The qualitative data provides evidence that fraudulent practices and unjustified fees charged by informal intermediary agents (labor brokers or document-fixers) operating between Poland and Ukraine contributed to employment agencies having a highly negative reputation. Several of the interviewed representatives of employment agencies in Poland attributed this poor reputation to the practices of the Ukrainians, who started intermediary businesses one after another, taking advantage of the increasing interest of employers in Poland in recruiting foreign workers. For example, Jan, a Pole running a work agency based in Poland, with more than 10 years of experience in recruiting migrants from Ukraine, noticed that

*Often these Ukrainian agencies are responsible for the fact that these people pay in Ukraine [...] This happens in these small Ukrainian entities, which pop up like mushrooms and everyone wants to profit from them [migrants] [...] and I think that this is the key to this issue—that this in fact is a phenomenon that these Ukrainians buy a declaration, stand at Warsaw West Station,<sup>1</sup> call the company, and no one replies. [...] when I had more contacts with them [foreign workers] every third person among them offered to go to Ukraine, open up a company, and*

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<sup>1</sup> The main bus station serving connections between Ukraine and Poland, neighboring one of the three main train stations in Warsaw serving international train connections. Many intermediary entities (including also informal brokers) decided to have their seats near or within these stations.

*recruit people for me. Because he himself paid to get here [...] They have no second thoughts that this is immoral, unethical, because in Ukraine you pay for everything. Nothing is for free. [...] And that is why these people who get here complain that they paid 350 USD and that there is no work and that someone cheated them. It is not us [who cheat]—it's them. [AZ\_101]*

Despite the fact that labor brokers operate in a transnational field, the labor brokers based in Poland, as well as the Ukrainian ones, made a clear division between the entities operating in Ukraine and those established in Poland, and critically reflected on the consequences of using unfair intermediaries in Ukraine. Nevertheless, large companies in Poland that cooperate with numerous labor brokers function similarly, charging migrants fees for (costless) job offers or documents (see further, [Szulecka 2016b](#)), and insufficiently supervising the recruitment process in Ukraine. This is either the result of the number of intermediaries de facto involved in recruiting migrants, or a lack of transparency (similar to the way intermediaries in Ukraine operate). According to both the migrant interviewees and the interviewed intermediary agents, upon recruitment, labor brokers promised to facilitate access to a particular job and salary, and to organize accommodation and transport. In some cases, the migrants learned upon arrival that a fee for additional arrangements would be deducted from their salary. The migrants felt betrayed. Such (intentional or unintentional) misinformation contributed to tensions between various types of brokers—usually the small entities or individuals operating in Ukraine and the experienced employment agencies in Poland.

Nevertheless, some migrant interviewees admitted that the most sought-after intermediary service was the provision of façade documents for entering Poland, and it seems that many migrants did not expect reliable job offers. Finding a document-fixer was a challenge, as described by Igor, a 20-year-old gastronomy worker:

*Then it was so difficult to find a [trustworthy] company, because there were many of those companies, but these companies took money from people and that was it. It was such a cheat! Then many people were leaving. No one knew what it was like [abroad]. And many companies cheated—100 dollars from one, two, three [people]. And in that way, such a company earned money and then it simply disappeared. And people were left in Ukraine, but without money. So the biggest difficulty was to find a company that would truly give you a permit, would do something, and with which there would be no problems at the border, because the biggest problem was to cross the border, so that they [border guards] would believe you were going to work [legally in Poland]. [PK\_130]*

Igor pointed to the changeability and deceitful practices of intermediaries operating in Ukraine, and emphasized that often the “effectiveness” of labor brokers was not judged in consideration of the final employment they provided but of their capacity to deal with formal requirements related to crossing the border. According to Igor, at a time of intensified mobility from Ukraine to Poland, finding an intermediary agent offering real work and proper documents was a significant challenge.

#### ***A Migrant's Social Network: A Safety Net and Trusted Source of Information on Labor Brokers***

According to the qualitative study results, labor brokerage in Poland developed most rapidly between 2014 and 2016, when the scale of immigration from Ukraine increased visibly and, at the same time, there was a demand for intermediaries to support employers in recruiting migrant workers. This development depended on access to potential Ukrainian workers

being provided by official and unofficial brokers operating in Ukraine (see also [Górny et al. 2018](#)). The initial marginal role and poor reputation of brokers in Ukraine, which affected the intermediary sector as a whole, did not, however, hinder the development of labor brokerage in Poland in the context of labor migration from Ukraine. Which factors contributed to this?

To access a reliable labor broker, migrants needed information from a trusted source. Analyzing our qualitative data, we found that migrant workers' social capital, which was based on both weak and strong ties to people in Ukraine and in Poland, not only provided an alternative to official labor migration routes, such as turning to registered employment agencies, but also increased the likelihood of a migrant's use of labor brokers. We identified three ways that migrants access and mobilize their network resources in that regard. First, migrants received contacts to labor brokers from their acquaintances; however, the latter neither knew nor recommended these agencies but generally found the information on the internet. Second, migrants received contact details and recommendations to labor brokers from acquaintances. Both these practices are mentioned by Michail, a 28-year-old man working, at the moment of the interview, as a warehouse worker. He arrived in Poland for the first time in 2015, through the services of a labor broker:

*My first job was in [name of town], in a restaurant, washing dishes. But I worked there for a short time. I found this job through an acquaintance. It was arranged by his mom via internet. We were informed that there was a job and we can come. But at that time, we did not have acquaintances who worked here and who could confirm that everything would be all right with the job. It was "a pig in a poke." We had to believe in good faith. [...] Then we changed jobs—acquaintances of the friend with whom I came found jobs for us through an intermediary agency. [PK\_203]*

Michail did not mention a labor broker in connection with his first job, but as it was arranged through the internet this might mean that intermediaries had placed job advertisements on various internet groups and portals. The information was passed to Michail by a "weak tie"—an acquaintance, whose mother was actually the one who arranged it. However, these people were based in Ukraine and did not know the actual working conditions. It was, as Michail phrased it, "a pig in a poke." The second job was again recommended to him by acquaintances (weak ties), who had used a certain labor broker before. This, in the opinion of respondents, increased the chances of decent work conditions, but did not guarantee them. Our interviewees also recommended trusted labor brokers to their acquaintances.

A third practice of using network resources to access trusted intermediary services is when the migrant personally knew one of the employers, or the owner or an employee of the intermediary agency. For example, Lila, a 25-year-old woman who arrived to Poland in 2017 and who worked at the moment of the interview in a factory, said that

*My brother's wife has an acquaintance who works for [name of intermediary work agency], which employs people and she helped me with this—to find a job—she gave me a few job offers. There was even a choice. [PK\_148]*

In this case, Lila mobilized her strong ties (her brother's wife) to access a labor broker agency's employee. Again, knowing someone who works as a labor broker increases the chances of finding a "good job." However, according to the interviewees, some of their acquaintances who were labor brokers offered them unfavorable contracts.

These three practices show an important relation between the character of ties and the quality of information received concerning labor brokerage. The least reliable information comes from weak ties based in the country of origin (as in the case of Michail's first job), while the most reliable originates from strong ties (the case of Lila's first job). Thus, social networks play an important role as safety nets when it comes to labor exploitation (Anthias and Cederberg 2009; Kindler 2011; Massey et al. 2014). Our research also confirms that relying on social networks allows migrants to display agency in relation to labor brokers when faced with lack of a contract or an unfair contract, exploitative working hours, or poor living conditions. For example, 34-year-old Maria, who arrived in Poland in 2012, was an important node of this kind in her network. She reacted to the labor brokers' incompetence in providing migrants with proper documents—which placed a number of workers, including her husband, at risk—in the following way:

*I placed such pressure on the agency that the Border Guard called them all the time. [...] This agency was afraid I would come and beat them up. They said they wouldn't give me any documents. Later, these people were fired from the agency. [PK\_205]*

In such instances, social networks allow migrants to escape from exploitative working conditions. Migrants weigh the legal and economic risks and decide that the legal aspect, which is guaranteed by labor brokers, is less of a risk than the financial one, that is, the fact that they are not earning enough money. Entering the labor market via legal channels is not a “one-way street” and depending on the situation, migrants may decide to search for irregular but better paid jobs. They may also use labor brokers only to “open the gates” to legal entry to Poland.

#### *Starting and Sustaining Trusted Intermediary Services via Social Networks*

Finally, our crucial finding is that migrants use their social capital to become labor brokers. Our interviewees comment abundantly on this phenomenon. For example, Oleg, with 20 years of experience in circulating between Poland and Ukraine, noticed how actors supporting migrants for profit (e.g., drivers) turned into informal brokers and then formalized their operation:

*People, our Ukrainians, who had already lived here [in Poland] for a while, turned into labor brokers [...] Now there is a multitude of such companies. Now they are legal, and before that, everything was illegal. [PK\_98]*

We identified three types of labor brokerage practices among migrants. First, there are people who are still migrants but who act as informal and unintentional intermediaries, usually operating in the transnational field. By being labor migrants themselves, they participated in the process of finding work and legalizing their work status, and thus they unintentionally became reference points for other migrants. Their phone numbers were passed from one person to another with the recommendation that “this person can help you.” These persons, being unintentional brokers, also serve as gatekeepers to other labor brokers, operating formally.

A second type are migrants who act as informal but intentional intermediaries. They have participated in negotiations with employers or actual labor brokers, as in the case of Alina, a 40-year-old woman working in gastronomy:

*[...] They are already a bit afraid of me. I go everywhere; I know everything. [...] I told one boy from work what to do and how. He went to her [the employer] with information. [...] I have been teaching him since August. [...] I can see that he is grateful to me. He took the courses quickly. They reworked his papers. [PK\_168]*

A third type are migrants with extensive social networks and access to social capital, who transform their informal support activity into for-profit labor brokerage. A stable legal-residence status is key for such a transformation. In general, this transformation is the migrant's own initiative, based on their own observations of how the intermediary business works and how their own contacts to (potential) migrants from Ukraine could be commercialized.

Social capital mobilized via social networks is used by labor brokers to run their own business and verify the job offers of employers, other actors in the migration industry or actors collaborating with them. Vlad emphasized the significance of social networks in running such an employment agency:

*[migrants] pass information to one another. They have my phone number. A person who wants to work calls me. I look for information about job offers on X [internet platform]. I call [the potential work place]. I go there with this person [job seeker] to see where they will work. I check that there won't be conflicts or mistakes. I've been at every workplace with which I cooperate. I check where people will live and under what conditions they will work. [...] I cooperate with companies in Ukraine that help to arrange visas. My acquaintances from Ukraine call me, recommend their relatives who want to work in Poland. I take care of them, because this is very important. [AZ\_177]*

The case of Vlad is worth noting, since it may reflect factors contributing to decisions on formalizing intermediary services. Vlad came to Poland almost not knowing Polish and having little knowledge about the local labor market. He worked for a few years in various places as a hired worker. Knowing numerous employers in Poland, and Ukrainian migrant workers, allowed him to build his social capital. He started his own company providing services in advertisement. When running his own business, he kept informally mediating between workers from Ukraine and employers in Poland. Being successful in the latter, he decided to formalize the labor brokerage he was involved in. His success in this activity may be ascribed to his own experiences as a migrant worker, when he used various strategies to look for jobs and check the reliability of employers. Thanks to these experiences he knew exactly which elements would cause people to trust him as a labor broker and at the same time encourage employers to pay for his services.

### ***The Transformation of Labor Brokers: From Informal to Formal, from Unreliable to Trustworthy***

According to the analyzed data, by 2018 labor brokers in Ukraine already had transparent procedures and reliable job offers. Some of the agencies operating in Poland also established their branches directly in Ukraine. Although—as control agents and some intermediaries claim—brokers who exploit migrants continue to operate, reliable services became more accessible for Ukrainian migrants, and this in turn contributed to greater interest in using labor brokers.

Oleg, a 50-year-old migrant worker in construction, who circulates between Ukraine and Poland, recalled the transformation of informal intermediaries into labor brokers:

*In the past, when you arrived at Warsaw West Station [...] you could approach people who were standing there and say "I am looking for a job." And they would tell you that there were such and such possibilities, such jobs.*

*“If you’re interested, then hop in, we’ll take you there, it costs such and such.” That’s how it used to be. [...] When I was recently at Warsaw West Station, leaving for Ukraine, I saw that there are now intermediary agencies, legal companies. [PK.98]*

Oleg pointed to the professionalization of Ukrainian labor brokerage in Poland. However, he also added that the formal operation of intermediaries does not imply reliability, that is, that the conditions of work in Poland will accord with those offered in Ukraine upon recruitment. This opinion was shared by Vlad, who offers intermediary services to Ukrainian migrants. Asked about the professionalization of labor brokers in the area of Warsaw West Station, he replied that

*These are the same [brokers] who cheat. Earlier they used to walk around with business cards, now they have cabins [offices]. Nothing has changed. (AZ.177)*

However, he added that a change can be observed in the awareness of migrant workers: they are more resistant to fraud, and they do not pay for job offers, thus decreasing space for the operation of unfair intermediaries. A number of interviewees claimed that the offerings of paid labor brokers are attractive for people who migrate for the first time. In the interviewees’ opinion, people who have experienced migrants in their network do not need labor brokers. However, these claims contrast with a reality that is not as clear cut, as our migrant interviewees included those who de facto had ties to other experienced migrants, some of whom were paid labor brokers.

One of the facets of the professionalization of recruitment and employment agencies is their complex offering for migrant workers. This offering is in some sense competitive with what migrants can access and mobilize via social networks. Apart from job offers and assistance in obtaining necessary documents, some labor brokers also offer additional arrangements, such as accommodation or transport. In general, temporary work agencies present these as part of their competitive advantage to attract workers. Such offerings also aim at building trust and providing migrants, especially those without experience, with a sense of security. This trust will be upheld if migrant workers are informed from the beginning under what conditions they can access these additional arrangements. The message from labor brokers to migrants is simple: we do everything for you; you will not get lost in the chaos of regulations and formalities; you will not be left on your own; and you will not be exposed to informal, unfair intermediaries. In some way, labor brokers want to replace people’s social networks. This, however, could also mean that migrant workers are isolated from their social networks and from information that could change their willingness to continue to work for this particular agency. Migrants who feel that they are under “good care” may be less eager to know, for instance, what salaries are paid in work offered by another agency. If they knew, they might—as our interviewees expressed it—“run away” from the agency and approach another broker or employer.

Formal labor brokers are able to provide migrants with correct information and prevent them from taking risks such as undertaking work without pay or paying for fictitious job offers. However, they also admit their helplessness in this respect. One of the temporary work agencies’ representatives complained about migrants who got documents from his company and a reliable job offer, but still either left the job or did not even start it because they had hopes of better conditions in another place, even if it meant working illegally:

*I warned them that that would be illegal work. But they don't want to listen. They still go. Some of these workers return. They were promised a particular rate, but they got less. [AZ.111]*

The relatively secure work conditions offered by agencies are often less attractive than the conditions of undeclared work (higher earnings and flexibility) promised by informal intermediaries or found by other migrants in social networks.

Formal labor brokers try to limit the role of unfair intermediaries mobilizing social capital. One of their strategies is to rely on a trusted person's social network, as suggested by Vlad, a labor broker from Ukraine living in Poland. He declared that he tries to control the process of recruitment and paperwork on his own, by making use of his various contacts:

*[...] I go there [to Ukraine] if there is a client who needs a lot of people. If not, I have my people there [in Ukraine] who arrange visas. [...] I have contacts everywhere, even in the offices. Also, I know Klitschko [Ukrainian politician, former professional boxer]. [AZ.177]*

Another strategy, which work agencies established by Poles also used, was to reduce the number of intermediaries through direct contacts and visits to the regions of origin of migrant workers. This, however, requires various resources, from time and finances to capacity in building social capital. The new branches of the large employment agencies functioning in Poland, with seats in Ukraine, confirm that the strategy may bring the expected results. Thanks to social capital, following this strategy may be easier for intermediary services established by Ukrainian migrants in Poland.

## Conclusion

Despite numerous studies on the role of social networks in migration there are still many questions about how social networks are formed in the migratory context, how network resources are accessed, and why social capital has varying effects in studies of different countries. In discussing our findings, we also end with more questions than answers. To summarize, in the past 30 years labor migration from Ukraine to Poland has been the outcome of political and economic instability in Ukraine. It has also been a response to the growing demand for a foreign workforce in Poland, which has thus had a preferential admission policy for migrant workers from neighboring countries. Migrant employment changed from being primarily network-driven in the 1990s to being also based on migrant infrastructure by the 2020s. A question arises as to why migrant infrastructure in general, and labor brokerage in particular, are important, when the logistics of arranging migration to Poland seem straightforward (due to the spatial proximity) and the legal framework facilitates economic migration from Ukraine. A partial answer lies in the fact that migration to Poland is happening in the context of restricted access to EU territory by so-called third country nationals. Thus, legal, institutional, and economic changes created room for the introduction of labor market mechanisms, such as labor brokerage, which facilitates job searches and placement in Poland.

Ireneusz Sadowski (2018) wrote that using labor market mechanisms such as labor brokerage means that the job-search process becomes institutionalized and depersonalized. Is this also the experience of migrant workers in Poland? The results of our analysis



confirm the hypothesis that despite the institutionalization of migration infrastructure, the importance of social capital developed throughout the migration experience does not decrease but changes its character. The process of accessing and mobilizing social capital has various intermediaries, and is used by both labor brokers and labor migrants to enhance their opportunities. Labor brokers rely on numerous institutionalized recruitment mechanisms to reach workers, but they also use social capital as a strategic resource. We suspect that the extent of the use of institutionalized resources or social capital may depend on the sector of the labor market, with some sectors relying more on labor market mechanisms in job searches (for example, logistics or manufacturing), while others rely more on social networks (for example, domestic work). In future studies, following Williams and colleagues (Williams, Hughes, Bhandari, Thornton, Young-DeMarco, Sun, and Swindle 2020), it would be worth investigating the differences between brokered and non-brokered migration corridors to Poland.

Following Deshingkar's (2019: 2639) argument that the "role played by brokers in expanding migrant agency and 'unmaking' the precarious migrant subject" is complex, instead of separate entities and categories, we see brokerage as a process. We came across evidence of a continuum between labor migrants, migrant institutions, and labor brokers. At one end of the continuum we found the unintended labor brokerage provided by labor migrants, and at the other end, intentional brokerage (cf. Chamaratana, Ayuwat, and Chinnasri 2017; Chamaratana, Ayuwat, de Jong, and Knippenberg 2010), with those who suddenly turned into intermediaries (for example, being hired by a company based on their language competences) and those who gradually turned into labor brokers, developing their social capital along with their experience of migration and partially commercializing it to establish their own intermediary businesses. This continuum, however, does not mean that the activity of unintentional or intentional labor brokers changes in one direction only. Depending on the context, labor brokers may intentionally provide their services on different bases: formally or informally, offering arrangements targeted specifically to (potential) migrant workers, or reducing their offering to standard services.

According to our qualitative material, labor brokers do not transform their personal networks into depersonalized business networks. Instead, as Lin (1999, 2002) and co-authors (Lin, Ensel, and Vaughn 1981) found, they use their personal networks for their own benefit, acting as gatekeepers, and consequently they may also at some point depersonalize their social capital (cf. Walker, Kogut, and Shan 1997). As labor brokers, they develop and use their social capital to reach out to friends and acquaintances and through them, further, to those who lack the relevant network resources to engage in migration. Although they profit from these personal ties, the latter are not immediately depersonalized. The role of trust is crucial here, and in contrast to Granovetter's idea of the strength of weak ties (Granovetter 1973), the strength of strong ties (Moroşanu, King, Lulle, and Pratsinakis 2021) plays a role. Migrants, although they know that they have to pay for the service, view a trusted friend who happens to be a labor broker as someone providing a useful service in an unknown environment.

Following these reflections, new research questions arise in regard to migration from Ukraine. The main one is why, despite the now much larger number of migrants in Poland, migrants do not rely solely on social networks to find jobs. Based on the literature, we can

assume that with the growth of the migrant group, migrants start viewing each other as competition in the labor market; they start drawing boundaries, to give or deny access to their networks, and selectively distribute their social capital (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2005; Kindler 2021). However, this should be further explored.

In the case of labor migrants from Ukraine, we can conclude that the boundary between the process of finding jobs by using labor market mechanisms and the process of finding them by using social networks in the Polish labor market is blurred. Our first research question, concerning how labor migrants access and use social capital to find labor brokers, actually implied that they needed their social networks to find trusted and reliable labor brokers. Depending on the quality of their social capital, migrants may reach or fail to reach reliable agencies. Labor brokers, although they represent a particular business, are also people in someone's network and serve as "bridging ties"—not always for direct profit—providing access to better quality resources. In other words, these are not depersonalized entities but individuals who belong to social networks and thus can be approached by (future) migrant workers. Simultaneously, these individuals take advantage of their social networks and commercialize their social capital to develop intermediary services, and at some point, this social capital may become depersonalized. Social capital gained through migration experience also improves the agency of migrant workers in their search for work. Before turning to labor agencies, migrants often use their social capital to verify these agencies' reliability and the quality of their services.

Turning to our second question, concerning how migrants use their social capital to become labor brokers, we found evidence that migrants are agents who use their social relations and migration know-how to become part of the migration industry. This actually adds complexity to the claim of a study conducted in the 1990s (Górny and Stola 2001) that migration social capital becomes less important with longer migratory experience, with migrants relying more and more on their human capital and institutional solutions. According to our analysis of the intermediary sector in Poland, we see that social networks are important at every phase of the migration experience. Migration experience increases migrants' awareness of the possible job options and their ability to use their know-how and social relations. As a result, some migrants become intentional, informal or formal labor intermediaries. We should also mention the issue of becoming a labor broker as a form of occupational mobility in the country of migration (cf. Chamaratana et al. 2017). This is an interesting path to be further explored: the strategic role of social capital in job mobility should be analyzed and the multifaceted image of labor brokers—from outright negative and exploitative, to the broker as someone providing a reliable service—should be taken into account.

Our reply to the third question—in regard to how formal labor brokers use their social capital to facilitate, sustain, and profit from international migration—is first of all that the successful operation of labor brokers (especially in recruitment) is in fact based on their or their employees' social capital. The brokers' success also depends on their capacity to take advantage of the opportunity structure in Poland (a "worker's market," with a demand for labor and facilitated access to the labor market for some categories of migrant workers). Their success also rests on the need of migrants for reliable information and future migrants' need for assistance in obtaining documents—needs which labor brokers meet

with services and from which they profit. In addition, based on our qualitative material, we see a preference among employment agencies for employing former or current labor migrants who can mobilize their network resources for the company's profit.

Our analysis revealed an ambiguous image of labor brokers emerging from the accounts of Ukrainian migrant workers and the labor intermediaries recruiting them. The fact that intermediaries have been associated with frauds, unjustified fees, and fictitious job offers, could deter some future migrants from using intermediary services. However, people who lack relevant social capital to search for jobs abroad will nevertheless have to rely on intermediary agencies. This could confirm the claim that labor market mechanisms are only accessed when social networks fail, as researchers analyzing Poles' job-searching strategies have indicated (see [Pawlak and Kotnarowski 2016](#); [Sadowski 2018](#)). However, in our qualitative data, we see some evidence against this conclusion, as some of our migrant interviewees used the services of both formal and informal labor brokers, especially in Ukraine, and bore the necessary costs of having their paperwork arranged without expecting a reliable job offer. These migrants used the services of labor brokers as only one of their strategies for accessing Poland's labor market. They were planning to look for job offers independently, which meant asking for information from people they met on their way to Poland or when already in Poland, or checking job advertisements in newspapers and the internet. In this case, we have to bear in mind that document-fixing, without job offers, could be a conscious strategy of these labor brokers. Simultaneously, treating trustworthy labor brokers only as document-providers could be a sign of an instrumental approach among labor migrants.

The negative image of labor brokers in Ukraine should also be analyzed in the context of bribes being part of an everyday experience of street-level corruption in the countries of the former Soviet Union, and a conviction among migrants that an "informal fee" is necessary to guarantee access to the needed services. In our opinion, acceptance of informal fees has contributed to the development of formal labor brokers in the transnational field. Despite being critical of dishonest intermediaries in Ukraine, the interviewed labor brokers claimed that they had to use their services when recruiting migrants from Ukraine. They have tried to deploy various strategies to reduce the chain of intermediaries reaching out to (potential) migrant workers and to reduce the risk of fraudulent practices in the recruitment process. Having trusted migrants as employees of the agency, or running one's own intermediary business, based primarily on network resources, seemed the most effective strategy. These are the "messy arrangements" between various types of labor brokers: unintentional and intentional, informal and formal, operating in Poland and in Ukraine, and providing recruitment, employment, and document advisory services. These are also the "messy arrangements" between brokers and migrants, with brokers being *de facto* friends or acquaintances in the migrant's network. Brokers may be a "lost" tie in a migrant's network when they try to profit financially from a personal relation. On the other hand, migrants may decide to keep friends or acquaintances who are brokers in their social networks, if they expect to benefit as migrant workers from such contacts. This fact confirms that analyzing labor brokerage in the case of economic migrants from Ukraine in Poland involves studying the way resources from personal networks may be used for business purposes in the migration context.

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Annex 1  
**The main characteristics of the interviewed migrant workers**

Code of interview	Sampling	Gender, age & family status	Year of the first arrival to Poland for work purposes & character of the first of work	Current <sup>a</sup> region of living and working in Poland	Current status & character of work
PK_50	Snowball	M, 32 years old; single	2016; short-term <sup>b</sup> undeclared work in agriculture	Mazowieckie	Short-term declared work in a hotel restaurant
PK_92	Internet search	F, 45 years old; husband and children living in Ukraine	2016; short-term declared work in agriculture and food processing	Pomorskie	Long-term declared work in agricultural sector
PK_96	Met during fieldwork	M, 28 years old; Ukrainian wife living in Poland	2016; short-term declared work in services and advertisement	Dolnośląskie	Long-term declared work in advertisement company
PK_98	Snowball	M, 50 years old; wife and children living in Ukraine	1998; undeclared part-time jobs in agriculture and renovations	Mazowieckie	Undeclared short-term jobs in renovations
PK_135	Snowball	M, 40 years old; planning to bring wife and children from Ukraine to Poland	2017; short-term declared work in a factory	Dolnośląskie	Short-term declared work as a handyman and physical worker in a resort
PK_139	Snowball	F, 60 years old, children living in Ukraine	2003; short-term undeclared work in agriculture	Mazowieckie	Undeclared work as a shop assistant
PK_142	Snowball	M, 23 years old; Ukrainian partner living in Poland	2015; part-time undeclared jobs in IT	Mazowieckie	Long-term declared work in graphic design and project management
PK_148	Snowball	F, 25 years old; single, close family members living in Poland	2017; short-term declared work in food processing (TWA <sup>c</sup> worker)	Mazowieckie	Short-term declared work in food processing (TWA worker)
PK_154	Snowball	M, 25 years old, single	2016; short-term declared work in manufacturing (TWA worker at the production line)	Zachodniopomorskie	Long-term declared work in manufacturing (TWA worker at the production line)
PK_155	Snowball	F, 47 years old; child in Ukraine	2015; short-term declared and undeclared work in agriculture, manufacturing and cleaning	Mazowieckie	Long-term declared work in retail trade (TWA worker)
PK_168	Snowball	F, 40 years old; children living in Poland and in Ukraine	2014; short-term declared jobs in gastronomy and part-time undeclared jobs in cleaning	Mazowieckie	Long-term declared work in gastronomy and part-time undeclared cleaning
PK_174	Snowball	F, 38 years old; living in Poland with Ukrainian wife	2015; short-term declared work in a storage	Podkarpackie	Long-term declared work in a storage

Code of interview	Sampling	Gender, age & family status	Year of the first arrival to Poland for work purposes & character of the first of work	Current <sup>a</sup> region of living and working in Poland	Current status & character of work
PK.185	Snowball	M, 38 years old; wife and children living in Ukraine	2010; part-time declared and undeclared jobs in construction, agriculture, forestry	Podkarpackie	Long-term declared work in logistics
PK.186	Snowball	M, 27 years old; single	2015; short-term declared work in administrative services for seasonal workers	Lubelskie	Long-term declared administrative work on the farm
PK.199	Snowball	F, 25 years old; single	2017; short-term declared, unskilled work in gastronomy	Mazowieckie	Long-term undeclared work in child care and cleaning
PK.202	Internet search	M, 35 years old; wife and children living in Ukraine	2017; short-term declared and undeclared work in renovations and installations	Wielkopolskie	Long-term undeclared work in food delivery
PK.203	Snowball	M, 28 years old; single	2015; short-term declared work in gastronomy and logistics (TWA worker)	Wielkopolskie	Long-term declared work in a storage
PK.204	Snowball	M, 42 years old; divorced with children in Ukraine	2013; short-term declared and undeclared jobs in agriculture and food production	Wielkopolskie	Long-term declared work in a storage
PK.205	Snowball	F, 34 years old; divorced with child brought to Poland	2012; short-term declared and undeclared jobs in agriculture and manufacturing	Wielkopolskie	Long-term declared work in manufacturing (at the production line)
PK.226	Snowball	M, 34 years old; wife and children brought from Ukraine to Poland	2015; short-term declared work in food production	Podkarpackie	Long-term declared work in food production

Source: Own elaboration.

<sup>a</sup>As of the moment of study, i.e. between September 2017 and March 2018.

<sup>b</sup>“Short-term” understood as below 12 months, allowed to perform work within the simplified procedure.

<sup>c</sup>Temporary work agency

Annex 2  
**The main characteristics of employment agencies run by the interviewed labour brokers**

Code of interview	Sampling	Experience & profile of the agency	Sectors & scope of the activity
AZ_1	Internet search	Big, international employment agency (also TWA), established in 2006, employing foreigners since 2013	Mostly manufacturing and logistics in various regions of Poland (around 15,000 TWA workers on average daily)
AZ_90	A list of employment agencies selected randomly for survey purposes	Small TWA established in 2009, and since then recruiting almost only foreigners	Mostly construction, services, catering in central Poland (around 100 TWA employees on average daily)
AZ_97	A list of employment agencies selected randomly for survey purposes	Big employment agency established in 2006, recruiting only foreigners, acting as TWA since 2014	Mostly manufacturing in southern Poland (few thousands of TWA employees on average daily)
AZ_101	Official data base of employment agencies and internet search	Big TWA established in 2007, hiring foreigners since then; recruiting only migrant workers	Mostly manufacturing, services, hotels and catering in central Poland (few thousands of TWA employees on average daily)
AZ_103	Official data base of employment agencies and internet search	Small TWA established in 2013, hiring foreigners since 2016	Mostly tourism and industry in northern and south-western Poland
AZ_111	Internet search	Small TWA established by Ukrainian national in 2016 and since then hiring foreign workers	Mostly construction and catering in south-western Poland (below 100 TWA workers on average daily)
AZ_121	A list of employment agencies selected randomly for survey purposes	Small job placement agency established in 2015 (as additional activity for another company); focused almost only on foreign workers	Mostly construction and gastronomy in north-western Poland (below 50 job placements a month)
AZ_128	Official data base of employment agencies and internet search	Small TWA and job placement agency established in 2013, hiring foreigners since 2016	Mostly IT, logistics, manufacturing in central and south-eastern Poland
AZ_133	Internet search	Small TWA established by Ukrainian nationals in 2015 and since then hiring foreigners	Mostly construction, manufacturing and logistics in south-western and central Poland (below 100 TWA workers on average daily)
AZ_137	Internet search	Small TWA registered in 2015, operating since 2012, hiring foreigners since 2015	Mostly construction and logistics in south-western Poland
A_147	A list of employment agencies selected randomly for survey purposes	Small TWA and job placement agency; established in the 1990s as a company providing services; as intermediary entity since 2016, employing only foreigners since then	Mostly care and healthcare services in central Poland
AZ_162	A list of employment agencies selected randomly for survey purposes	Big TWA established in the 1990s, employing foreigners since 2016	Mostly trade, logistics, industry in all regions of Poland (around 5,000 TWA workers on average daily)
AZ_177	Internet search	Small job placement agency established (by Ukrainian migrant) in 2017 and since then mediating between migrant workers and employers in Poland	Job placement mostly in central Poland, in services and manufacturing

Code of interview	Sampling	Experience & profile of the agency	Sectors & scope of the activity
AZ.195	Social network of the researcher	Big TWA established in 2009 and since then employing only foreigners	Mostly manufacturing, logistics, transport, food processing in central and south-western Poland (around 10,000 TWA workers on average monthly)
AZ.213	A list of employment agencies selected randomly for survey purposes	Small TWA established in 2015 and since then employing only foreigners	Mostly food processing and manufacturing in central Poland (around 100 TWA workers on average monthly)
AZ.228	Official database of employment agencies and internet search	Big TWA established in 2011 and since then employing only foreigners	Mostly food processing, construction, industry, hotels and catering in central, western and northern Poland (around 15,000 TWA workers on average daily)
AZ.232	A list of employment agencies selected randomly for survey purposes	Small TWA established in 2013 and employing only foreigners	Mostly food processing, electronics, logistics, construction in central Poland (below 300 TWA workers on average monthly)
AZ.134	Internet search	Big TWA and job placement agency established in 2004; employing foreigners since 2016	Mostly agriculture, logistics and catering in all regions of Poland (below 2,000 TWA workers on average monthly)
AZ.235	Official database of employment agencies and internet search	Small TWA established in 2017 and since then employing only foreigners	Mostly construction, logistics, transport in south-eastern Poland (below 500 TWA workers on average monthly)
AZ.239	Internet search	Big TWA established in 2008 and employing mostly foreigners	Mostly food processing and logistics in north-western Poland (below 1,500 TWA workers on average daily)

Source: Own elaboration.