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ECONOMIC AND LEGAL ASPECTS OF LABOUR MARKET REINTEGRATION: A CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF VULNERABLE CATEGORY EMPLOYMENT IN UKRAINE

ЕКОНОМІЧНІ ТА ПРАВОВІ АСПЕКТИ РЕІНТЕГРАЦІЇ НА РИНОК ПРАЦІ: ПОРІВНЯЛЬНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ПРАЦЕВЛАШТУВАННЯ ВРАЗЛИВИХ КАТЕГОРІЙ НАСЕЛЕННЯ В УКРАЇНІ

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The paper examines the socio-economic and legal foundations of employment and reintegration among vulnerable population groups: internally displaced persons (IDPs), people who have returned from abroad and veterans, in the context of current challenges facing the Ukrainian labour market.

It analyses the scale of migration, the protracted nature of displacement and the macroeconomic context, including the effects of inflation and the housing crisis on household incomes. The socio-demographic profile, household structure, and behavioral strategies of citizens belonging to the identified vulnerable groups, as well as their impact on migration decisions and opportunities for reintegration into the labor market, are described. The paper examines state employment support mechanisms and identifies structural labour market barriers faced by these groups, including skills mismatch and gender-related constraints, the need to adapt to a changing labor market, recognition or updating of experience.

Cross-case analysis is used to compare common and group-specific barriers to employment and reintegration among IDPs, people who have returned from abroad and veterans. The comparison identifies factors shared by all three groups as well as specific barriers associated with the particular circumstances of their economic and social reintegration: housing factors, legal and institutional guarantees and support mechanisms, human capital development.

Based on a systems analysis, the paper proposes a framework for combining state, legal and market-based instruments. This framework includes three interrelated components: (1) a cyclical model for transforming social assistance into economic self-reliance, which, following forced displacement, involves stages of government intervention, market integration and retraining, sustainable stabilization, and social cohesion; (2) a multi-level reintegration pyramid, which covers the levels of basic living needs and sociodemographic factors, active market policies, and the strategic macro level; as well as (3) a model of interaction between state guarantees, market instruments and human capital, aimed at strengthening economic independence and supporting employment among vulnerable population groups as well as the effective use of human capital in economic recovery processes.

Keywords: forced displacement, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, veterans, resocialization, legal social protection guarantees, skills mismatch, employment market, cross-case analysis.

У статті досліджено соціально-економічні та правові засади зайнятості та реінтеграції вразливих груп населення: внутрішньо переміщених осіб (ВПО), громадян, які повернулися з-за кордону, та ветеранів в умовах сучасних викликів, що постають перед національним ринком праці. Проаналізовано масштаби міграції, затяжний характер переміщення та макроекономічний контекст, зокрема вплив інфляції та житлової кризи на доходи домогосподарств. Охарактеризовано соціодемографічний профіль, структуру домогосподарств і поведінкові стратегії

громадян з числа окреслених вразливих категорій і їх вплив на міграційні рішення та можливості реінтеграції на ринку праці. Досліджено державні механізми підтримки зайнятості та виявлено структурні бар'єри ринку праці, з якими стикаються ці категорії, зокрема невідповідність професійних кваліфікацій (skills mismatch) та гендерні обмеження, потреба адаптація до зміненого ринку праці, визнання чи актуалізація досвіду.

За допомогою методу перехресного аналізу (cross-case analysis) порівняно спільні та специфічні для кожної групи бар'єри до працевлаштування та реінтеграції. У результаті зіставлення виділено чинники, загальні для всіх трьох груп, а також інші специфічні перешкоди, що зумовлені особливими обставинами їх економічної та соціальної реінтеграції: житлові фактори, правові та інституційні гарантії й інструменти підтримки, розвиток людського капіталу.

На основі системного аналізу запропоновано концептуальну модель поєднання державних, правових і ринкових інструментів. Вона охоплює три взаємопов'язані компоненти: (1) циклічну модель переходу від державної допомоги до власної економічної спроможності, що після вимушеного переміщення передбачає етапи державної активізації, ринкової інтеграції та перенавчання, стійкої стабілізації та соціальної згуртованості; (2) багаторівневу піраміду реінтеграції, яка охоплює рівні базових життєвих потреб і соціально-демографічний, активну ринкову політику та стратегічний макрорівень; а також (3) модель взаємодії державних гарантій, ринкових інструментів і людського капіталу, що спрямовано на зміцнення економічної незалежності та підтримку зайнятості серед вразливих верств населення, а також на ефективне використання людського капіталу в процесах відновлення економіки.

Ключові слова: вимушене переміщення, внутрішньо переміщені особи (ВПО), репатріанти, ветерани, ресоціалізація, правові гарантії соціального захисту, невідповідність професійних кваліфікацій, ринок праці, крос-кейс аналіз.

Introduction. Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine has significantly disrupted the national labour market, with severe humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and large-scale population displacement. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), internal displacement remains widespread, with approximately 3.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently living in Ukraine [1]. The crisis has also become protracted: more than 60% of IDPs have been displaced for over two years, shifting the issue from one of immediate humanitarian response to a broader socio-economic challenge for the state.

At the same time, the labour market is undergoing major transformations driven by other key socio-demographic factors, including the return of Ukrainian citizens from abroad and the active reintegration of demobilised veterans. Bringing these groups together within a single study does not imply that they are socio-economically homogeneous. Rather, they are treated as distinct groups facing partly overlapping but

also specific barriers to economic integration, which require differentiated support measures within a shared institutional framework. Given the differences in their barriers and needs, a comparative analysis within a common analytical framework is warranted. This paper applies cross-case analysis to compare IDPs, people who have returned from abroad and veterans in terms of key employment barriers, housing constraints, human capital development needs and the state and market-based support instruments available to them. This approach makes it possible to identify both common and group-specific factors shaping their economic reintegration.

Ukraine is currently facing a range of macroeconomic challenges, including inflationary pressures, acute labour shortages and disruptions to logistics chains. Rising consumer prices for essential goods, food and housing and utilities are significantly reducing the purchasing power of IDP and returnee households, with around 60% of families reporting that their incomes are insufficient even to cover basic needs [1, 2].

At the national level, the state seeks to mitigate these risks through specific legal mechanisms and employment support measures. Under the Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons" [18], the Law of Ukraine "On Employment of the Population" [22], legislation governing the social protection of veterans [27] and relevant regulations adopted by the Government and the State Employment Service [20, 21, 23, 24], a range of guarantees has been introduced for these groups. These include a simplified procedure for obtaining unemployed status, exemption from probationary periods when starting a job, employer compensation for hiring eligible individuals (up to twice the minimum wage) and educational vouchers worth up to UAH 30 280.

In practice, however, combining legal social protection guarantees with the realities of the market environment remains challenging. The main barriers include a mismatch between professional qualifications and labour market requirements (*skills mismatch*), the substantial financial burden of housing rent, which is the largest expense for more than 50% of IDPs, gender and family-related constraints affecting returnees with children, and circumstances specific to veterans, including cases in which several vulnerable statuses overlap. Accordingly, there is a pressing need for additional research into the economic and legal aspects of the reintegration of vulnerable groups, particularly in the framework of the employment cross-case analysis of during the war in Ukraine.

Literature Review. The issues of legal provision, socio-economic reintegration and employment of internally displaced persons under current crisis challenges are the focus of leading Ukrainian and international researchers.

A significant contribution to the study of general labor market trends and migration processes at the international level was made by Y. Kosyakova (2024) in her analytical reports for the Institute for Employment Research (IAB, Germany), which detail language barriers and qualification mismatches of forced migrants in the European labor market [3]. A systematic analysis of gender aspects of employment, the burden of unpaid childcare and the impact of the housing factor on the economic activity of displaced

persons is presented in analytical briefs by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD, 2025) [4].

An important source for assessing the scale of internal displacement and return dynamics is regular empirical research by the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM / DTM), including reports such as the Returning Home and the Internal Displacement Report [1, 2]. These documents comprehensively cover household structures, the duration of forced displacement as IDPs and their economic activity indicators. The macroeconomic context, inflationary pressure and the impact of price shocks on real household incomes in Ukraine are reflected in official periodical publications of the National Bank of Ukraine [5].

Recent academic discourse increasingly emphasizes the multi-dimensional nature of displacement and its structural impact on European labor markets. In this context, J. Reinhold and M. Siegel (2024) examine the core determinants affecting the labor market integration and socio-economic adaptation of mobile populations across host economies [6]. Complementing this perspective, contemporary studies analyze how formal policies and structural barriers shape employment trajectories and return intentions among displaced groups [7]. Furthermore, A. Kosny et al. (2019) highlight persistent institutional barriers and safety conditions regarding the employment integration of newcomers [8], while A. Bieńkowska et al. (2025) analyze how dynamic workforce capabilities help mitigate qualification mismatches and professional deskilling (*brain waste*) [9].

The interplay between legal uncertainty, migration aspirations, and labor-market navigation among displaced populations is comprehensively explored by C. Borge and J. Isaksen in their recent analysis of refugee adaptation strategies [10]. In addition, the intersection of gender norms, family obligations, and employment constraints – central to the work-care balance framework – is thoroughly addressed by L. Morrice (2016), who investigates how cultural sentiments and care responsibilities shape the economic participation of migrant women [11]. Finally, housing and socio-demographic factors affecting vulnerable groups are evaluated in specialized European migration studies by T. Wimark (2020) [12].

Among domestic researchers, the legal, financial and economic foundations of population reintegration are examined by N. Azmuk (2023) in the context of socio-economic and educational adaptation and employment [13] and S. Yehorycheva (2024) in works concerning financial and economic mechanisms for securing the social sphere [14].

Studies of international experience in the social and legal protection of war veterans were conducted by L. Siniova [15]. V. Boniak analyzed the current state and prospects for improving the social protection of internally displaced persons [16]. D. Tatarenko investigated current problems in realizing social guarantees under martial law conditions [17].

Thus, existing studies sufficiently cover individual aspects of IDP employment, migration processes, gender constraints, housing factors and state support. At the same

time, these areas are predominantly considered separately, while the issue of their harmonization within a unified economic reintegration mechanism – combining legal guarantees, employer incentives, human capital development and regional instruments – remains insufficiently developed. The paper proposes a conceptual model for harmonizing these instruments.

Accordingly, **the aim of this paper** is to substantiate a conceptual model for combining state, legal, and market-based instruments to support vulnerable categories, based on the results of a comparative analysis and a cross-case analysis of barriers to employment and reintegration faced by internally displaced persons, returnees, and veterans.

To achieve the defined aim, the study addresses four specific research tasks: 1. To analyze the macroeconomic, socio-demographic, and legal context shaping the labour market integration of IDPs, returnees from abroad, and demobilized veterans in Ukraine. 2. To conduct a comparative cross-case analysis identifying shared and group-specific barriers across employment, housing, human capital, and legal protection dimensions. 3. To construct and substantiate a three-component conceptual framework comprising a cyclical transformation model, a hierarchical reintegration pyramid, and a tripartite stakeholder interaction mechanism. 4. To articulate policy recommendations and define potential directions for subsequent empirical validation.

Research Methodology. The methodological basis of the study comprises a systems-structural approach to analysing the macroeconomic context and reports by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU) and other sources; a formal legal approach to examining legal guarantees and employment support mechanisms; a statistical and economic approach to summarising the scale and key characteristics of the problem; a comparative approach to assessing individual support instruments; and a synthesis method to develop the authors' conceptual model of how these instruments interact.

The study applies cross-case analysis to compare three population groups with different pathways to return or integration into the labour market: internally displaced persons (IDPs), people who have returned to Ukraine after living abroad and veterans. Each group is treated as a separate analytical case, and the comparison is based on a common set of criteria: key employment barriers, housing constraints, human capital development needs, legal guarantees and available state and market-based support instruments. This approach makes it possible to identify both common and group-specific factors affecting the economic integration of these groups.

In preparing the materials, the authors used artificial intelligence technologies (Gemini, Google, 2026) for stylistic editing of the paper and for creating Figures 7 and 9 based on the authors' own conceptual framework. All analytical conclusions, source selection and substantive content were developed by the authors, who take full responsibility for the publication.

Results. *Macroeconomic and Social Context of Forced Displacement*. Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine has brought about major socio-demographic and economic changes, leading to a structural transformation of the national labour market. According to the International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix, internal displacement remains widespread, with approximately 3.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently living in Ukraine, while cumulative estimates of the total number of displaced people reach up to 4.7 million [1]. More than 2 million are of working age, representing significant potential for the national economy while also requiring systematic measures to support their integration into formal employment.

At the same time, the displacement crisis has become protracted: over 60% of IDPs have been in the status of forced displaced persons for more than two years [1]. Such duration of forced displacement indicates the exhaustion of households' own financial resources, the destruction of pre-war social ties and the transformation of a temporary crisis situation into a prolonged problem for the labor market. IDPs face the need to reorient their professional trajectories in new places of residence.

The macroeconomic background against which IDP reintegration takes place is characterized by a combination of macroeconomic constraints. According to official analytical materials of the National Bank of Ukraine, the main limiting factors for the real sector of the economy are powerful inflationary pressure, an acute shortage of qualified personnel due to migration processes and mobilization measures, as well as logistic and energy constraints. The dynamics of gross domestic product (GDP) recovery is accompanied by disparities between the demand for labor in certain sectors and available labor supply, which is aggravated by regional asymmetry (concentration of economic activity in certain rear regions under conditions of recession in frontline zones). According to the results of NBU surveys for the second quarter of 2026, over 51% of enterprises recognize staff shortages as the main barrier to scaling up production (Fig. 1).

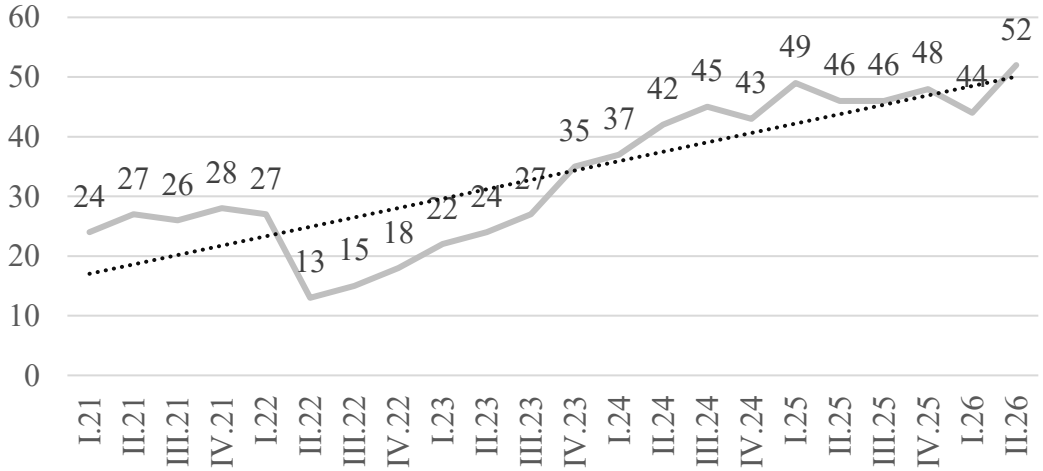


Figure 1. – Dynamics of the share of enterprises indicating a shortage of qualified workers as a factor limiting production (2021–2026, economy-wide), %

Source: based on NBU data.

The scale of the problem is also confirmed by June data of the Institute for Economic Research (IER), where about 71% of respondents named the labor shortage as obstacle number one for doing business: both indicators reached historical maximums for the entire observation period [5].

Despite relatively non-critical indicators of general inflation (within 7–8%), a significant dissonance is observed between aggregated statistical indices and the actual price growth for individual product groups and essential services. This indicates structural price transformations, where the growth rates of individual elements of the consumer basket significantly exceed the general inflation trend.

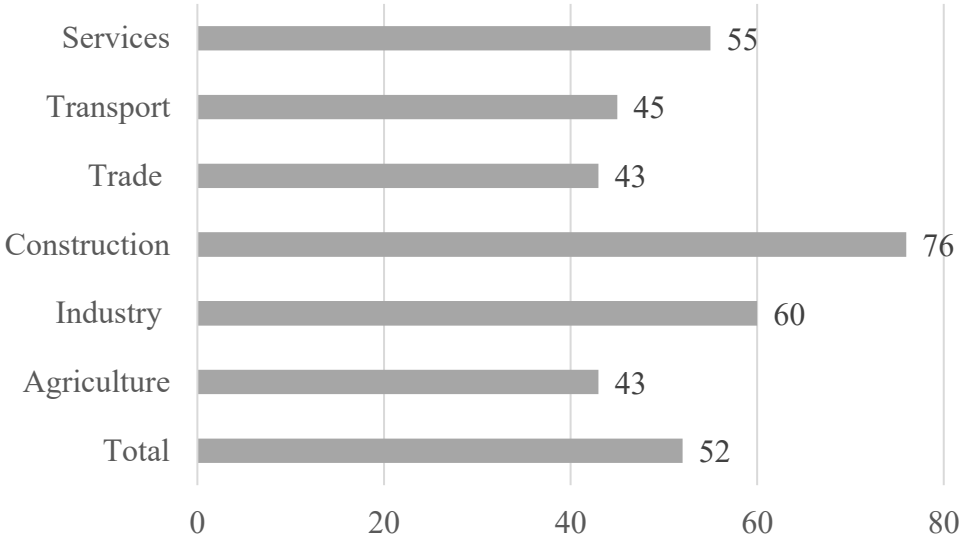


Figure 2. – Sectoral structure of personnel shortages based on enterprise survey results (II quarter of 2026), %

Source: based on NBU data.

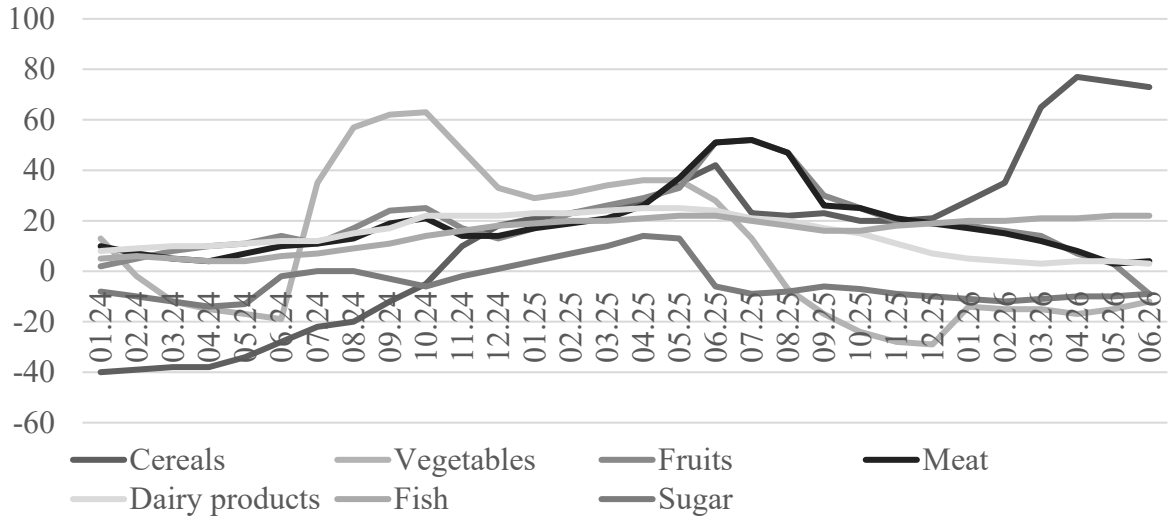


Figure 3. – Consumer price dynamics for individual food product groups (growth in % year-on-year)

Source: based on data from the State Statistics Service, NBU

A significant factor causing such an imbalance is the dynamics of energy carrier costs, in particular diesel fuel. Being a basic component in the structure of costs for internal logistics, freight transportation and agricultural production, diesel fuel prices form cost-push inflation, directly affecting the final cost of goods and limiting the purchasing power of the population.

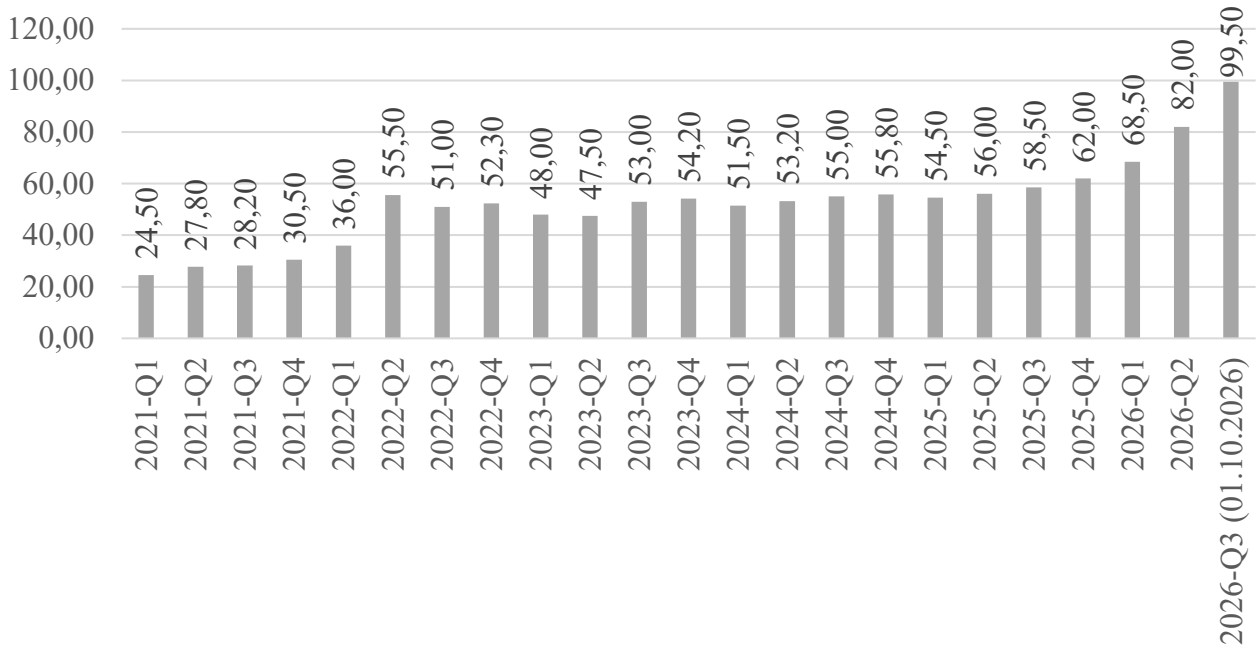


Figure 4. – Dynamics of the average cost of diesel fuel in Ukraine, UAH/L

Source: developed by authors based on market monitoring of the fuel market and data of consulting agencies ("A-95") as of 1.10.2026.

Macroeconomic fluctuations and inflationary pressures have a particularly severe impact on the well-being of vulnerable households, especially IDPs, families with children and citizens returning from abroad. Rising consumer prices for basic foodstuffs, medicines and housing and utility services erode the real value of household incomes. According to monitoring surveys, around 60% of IDP households consider their current income insufficient even to cover basic monthly needs, forcing them to resort to coping strategies such as using savings, cutting expenditure on food and healthcare and accumulating debt [1].

Alongside internal displacement, the national labour market and social infrastructure are also affected by reverse migration flows, namely the return of Ukrainians from abroad. The total number of citizens who have returned to Ukraine since the start of the full-scale invasion is estimated at approximately 1.5 million [2]. However, a closer analysis of this population reveals substantial internal differences and new challenges for state employment policy.

According to empirical data from the IOM, return migration can be divided into two fundamentally different categories:

– The majority, approximately 1.1 million people, have returned to their permanent places of residence in government-controlled territory.

– Approximately 398,000 people, representing around 10% of the total internally displaced population, have returned to Ukraine from abroad but have been forced to acquire or retain IDP status because their homes have been completely destroyed, damaged or occupied.

Legal Status and State Measures to Support IDP Employment in Ukraine. The economic reintegration of internally displaced persons requires a legal framework that defines their status and guarantees specific employment and social protection benefits. At the national level, the main principles are established by relevant legislation, particularly the Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons" and the Law of Ukraine "On Employment of the Population", as well as by secondary legislation adopted by the Government and the State Employment Service [18-26].

Under current legislation, internally displaced persons are citizens of Ukraine, foreign nationals or stateless persons who are legally present in Ukraine and were forced to leave or abandon their places of residence as a result of, or to avoid, the adverse consequences of armed conflict, temporary occupation, widespread violence, human rights violations or natural or man-made emergencies [18].

To address labour market barriers and encourage formal employment, Ukrainian legislation establishes specific employment and social protection provisions for IDPs:

– Exemption from probationary periods: under labour legislation, probationary periods are not established when employment contracts are concluded with internally displaced persons under the applicable general rules. This provision is intended to reduce the risk of unjustified dismissal during the initial stage of adaptation [19]. It should be noted, however, that during martial law, probationary periods may be established for all employees under the Law of Ukraine "On the Organisation of Labour Relations under Martial Law" [20].

– Simplified procedure for obtaining unemployed status: IDPs are entitled to register as unemployed with employment centres under a simplified procedure, even if they lack documents confirming the termination of previous employment, an employment record book or information about their insurance record, where these cannot be obtained because of hostilities or occupation [21].

– Right to terminate an employment contract unilaterally: displaced persons who have been unable to terminate their employment relationships with previous employers because they were in areas affected by hostilities or in temporarily occupied territories are entitled to terminate their employment contracts unilaterally by submitting an appropriate application to the relevant territorial employment centre [20].

In addition to employment-related guarantees, the state implements a range of active employment support measures through the State Employment Service for registered unemployed people from among IDPs:

– Relocation and transport-related compensation: Legislation provides for compensation of actual relocation costs incurred when moving to another locality in search of work, as well as reimbursement of the costs of mandatory pre-employment medical or drug screening where required for employment [22].

– Employer incentives through wage compensation: Financial incentives are available to businesses in the form of compensation for wage costs when they employ registered unemployed IDPs under fixed-term employment contracts. The compensation can amount to up to two minimum monthly wages [23].

A separate instrument for publicly funded professional adaptation is the provision of educational vouchers:

– Working-age IDPs who cannot find suitable employment are legally entitled to vouchers for free training, retraining, specialisation or the acquisition of a subsequent level of education in occupations and specialisations in demand in the labour market [22].

Funding is provided through the Ukrainian Compulsory State Social Insurance Fund in Case of Unemployment. The maximum value of an educational voucher is UAH 33,280. If the cost of training exceeds this amount, the difference may be paid by the employer or the individual receiving the voucher [24].

Socio-Demographic and Economic Profile of People Returning from Abroad. The socio-demographic profile, household composition and behavioural strategies of citizens who have decided to return to Ukraine after an extended period abroad have distinct characteristics that directly affect their subsequent reintegration into the national labour market and social environment. According to empirical data from IOM monitoring surveys, the gender distribution of returnees is markedly uneven: women account for 87% of respondents in returnee households [2].

– More than 48% of households include children under the age of 18, compared with 28% among the non-displaced population.

– Approximately 9% of all households are single-parent households, which significantly limits their capacity to enter full-time employment quickly. The corresponding figures are 5% among internally displaced returnees and 4% among the non-displaced population.

– Some 29% have at least one person with a disability. Among those receiving health- or disability-related assistance, 14% of returnees from abroad receive state benefits related to disability. In addition, 56% of these households include members with chronic illnesses.

The regional settlement patterns of people returning to Ukraine are characterised by a very high concentration in the country's administrative, economic and security centres. More than half of all returnees settle in five key locations: the city of Kyiv (21%), Dnipropetrovsk Oblast (10%), Kyiv Oblast (9%), Odesa Oblast (9%) and Kharkiv Oblast (8%). This uneven distribution is driven by the availability of jobs, the extent of infrastructure recovery and the desire to maintain pre-war social ties.

The adaptation period is often marked by a crisis. The highest incidence of psychological disorders and depressive symptoms (up to 51%), alongside acute financial difficulties, is recorded during the first 12 months after returning to Ukraine, when savings are depleted while employment has yet to stabilise. These factors create a significant risk of renewed emigration:

- Among those who returned less than a year ago, 16% are actively considering leaving the country again within the next three months. Among those who returned earlier, the figure is just 3%.
- If the security or socio-economic situation in their region of residence deteriorates further, 56% are willing to evacuate again, with 55% of this group planning to leave Ukraine.

In addition to economic and infrastructure-related barriers, social tensions are another significant destabilising factor. In surveys, 23% of people who returned from abroad reported experiencing prejudice, stereotyping or stigmatisation as "outsiders" by some members of the host communities.

Specific Characteristics of Returnees from Abroad Who Have Had to Acquire IDP Status. The profiles and regions of origin of people who returned to Ukraine from abroad but were subsequently forced to acquire internally displaced person status show a distinct regional concentration:

- Approximately 63% of this group originate from Ukraine's eastern macro-region, particularly Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv and Kherson oblasts.
- The main reasons preventing them from returning home are the complete destruction of their homes (35%) or the location of their homes in temporarily occupied territories.

From a socio-economic perspective, this group faces a housing crisis:

- Only 9% own housing in their new place of residence, while 61% have to rent accommodation, spending a substantial proportion of their income on housing.
- For 36% of respondents in this group, securing stable housing is identified as a key unmet need.

The legal and administrative status of this group is characterized by significant gaps and the risk of falling into a legal vacuum:

- Only 63% hold a valid, active certificate confirming their IDP status.
- Meanwhile, 24% of people in this group have never registered as IDPs, while the official status of 10% has been revoked or suspended due to bureaucratic inconsistencies or their absence from the registered place of residence.

As a result of legal uncertainty and administrative barriers, only 35% of this group receive targeted state housing assistance for IDPs. This reduces their resilience to macroeconomic shocks and increases the risk of marginalization amid broader inflationary pressures.

Macroeconomic Imbalances in the Labour Market Integration of IDPs and People Returning from Abroad. Despite the overall labour shortage and strong demand from businesses, the economic reintegration of IDPs and returnees faces systemic barriers.

1. Employment rates and job quality. Monitoring data indicate that only around 50–53% of economically active internally displaced persons are formally employed, substantially below the corresponding rates among the local population. Moreover, the employment structure of displaced people is characterized by a persistent predominance of informal, temporary or low-paid work with minimal social protection, undermining the guarantees provided by labour legislation.

2. Gender barriers and unpaid care. For people returning from abroad, childcare and household responsibilities are a key constraint on labour market participation (18%). Given that women account for the dominant share of returnees (87%), the lack of an extensive network of childcare facilities and after-school provision constitutes a structural barrier to their economic participation.

3. Skills mismatch and labour shortages. The labour market has developed a paradoxical situation: businesses report widespread and acute staff shortages, yet the professional qualifications and skills of available workers among IDPs and other vulnerable groups often do not match the requirements of vacant positions. This creates a need for substantial retraining through educational voucher schemes and employment centers.

Veterans in the Labour Market: Household Structure, Barriers and Pathways to Reintegration. War veterans constitute a distinct group within the national labour market and social sector. Their adaptation and economic reintegration involve a range of challenges. The situation becomes more complex when social statuses overlap, for example when demobilised service members are also internally displaced, have a disability or need to provide care for people with disabilities.

The transition from military service to the civilian economy involves a number of adaptation barriers [25]:

- Difficulties transitioning from military to civilian employment: challenges in translating distinctive combat experience, leadership skills and crisis management capabilities into terms that meet the expectations of civilian employers.
- Professional burnout and psychological strain resulting from combat-related trauma, stress and high levels of emotional exhaustion.
- Structural skills mismatch.

At the same time, the scale of these challenges varies considerably depending on the cumulative impact of displacement and other migration-related factors. Empirical data indicate that 53% of veteran-IDP households are forced to resort to emergency-level coping strategies. By comparison, the figure is 31% among veterans without IDP status, 25% among civilian IDPs and just 19% in the baseline control group, consisting of people who have neither IDP nor veteran status.

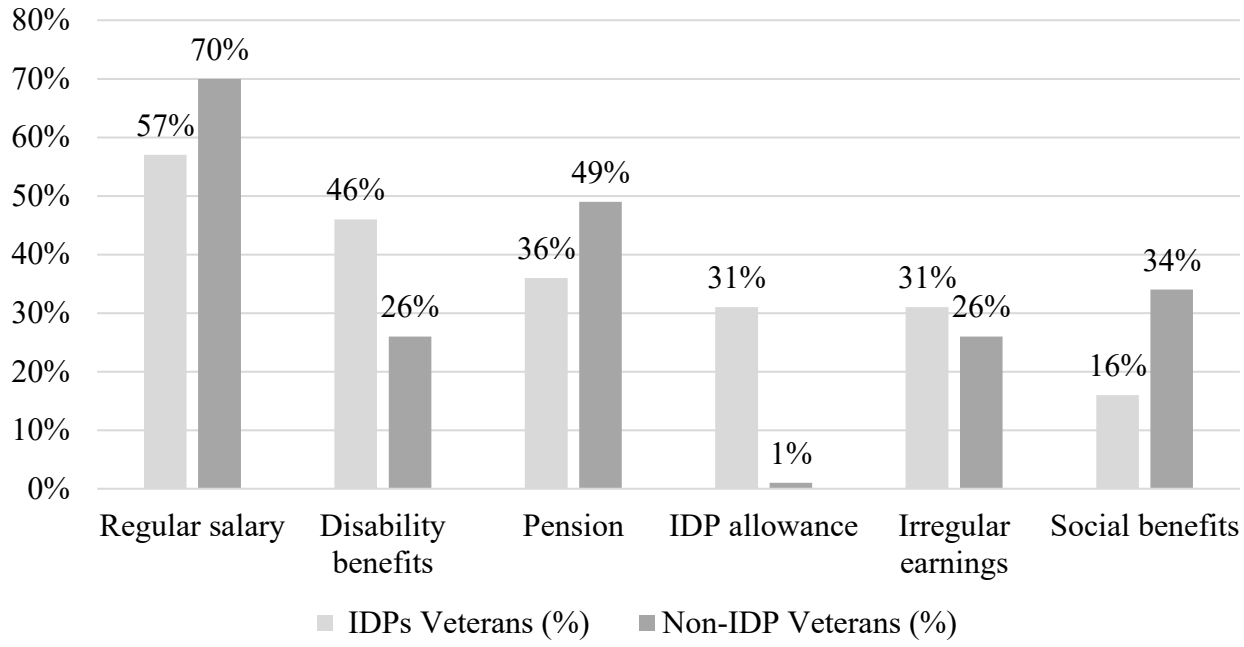


Figure 5. – Structure of Household Income among Veterans (by Category)
Source: [25].

This disparity supports the need for targeted employment and vocational retraining programs for this group. To overcome occupational barriers, government policy and businesses should focus on practical support measures:

– Access to high-quality retraining programmes and opportunities to acquire new digital or technical skills, funded by the state or through grant programmes.

– Adaptation of workplaces by employers to accommodate new physical or psychological needs, the creation of barrier-free environments and the introduction of mentoring programs.

– A significant proportion of veterans express an interest in starting their own businesses and developing micro-enterprises through grant schemes, including the state's Vlasna Sprava program and grants for veterans. These opportunities allow them to establish more flexible working conditions for themselves [26].

Cross-Case Analysis. Cross-case analysis shows that all three groups face common challenges in accessing stable employment, aligning their professional skills with labour market needs and overcoming the impact of housing constraints on economic integration.

However, the nature of these barriers differs across groups. For IDPs, geographical mobility and the need to adapt to a new regional labour market play a significant role. For people returning from abroad, the main challenges relate to reintegration after a period of residence abroad. For veterans, the key issues involve the specific requirements of professional and social adaptation following military service.

Thus, the findings of the cross-case analysis indicate that a fully uniform approach to employment support would be inappropriate. Shared instruments can provide a baseline

level of support, while specific measures should take into account the circumstances and needs of each group.

Table 1. Cross-case analysis of employment and reintegration barriers

Factor	IDPs	People Returning from Abroad	Veterans
Main employment barriers	Displacement, job loss and a mismatch between qualifications and demand in the new regional labour market	Recognition and updating of experience, adaptation to a changing labour market and expectations regarding working conditions	Professional adaptation after military service, health conditions or disability and the need for adapted workplaces
Housing factor	Loss of housing or housing insecurity and rental costs	Decisions about permanent residence and housing after returning	Housing needs associated with the transition to civilian life
Human capital	Retraining and matching skills to local labour market demand	Updating professional skills and validating experience	Retraining and transferring military competencies to civilian employment
Legal and institutional needs	Access to services and guarantees available to IDPs	Support measures for return and employment	Specific guarantees and support programmes for veterans
Role of employers	Workplace adaptation and support for regional mobility	Recognition of experience and competencies	Workplace adaptation and inclusive employment
Priority instruments	Employment support, housing assistance and professional adaptation	Employment support, recognition of qualifications and incentives for return	Employment support, professional adaptation and specific guarantees

Source: developed by authors.

The identified common and group-specific employment barriers provide a basis for examining the interconnected instruments needed to address them and support the reintegration of these population groups.

A Model for Combining Legal Guarantees and Labour Market Reintegration Instruments for IDPs and People Returning from Abroad. The analysis shows that individual state support measures address only some of the barriers faced by vulnerable population groups, including IDPs, people returning from abroad and veterans. It is therefore important to consider these measures in conjunction with legal, market, housing and regional factors.

The proposed conceptual framework consists of three interrelated components: (1) a cyclical model of transition from crisis support to economic self-reliance; (2) a multi-level reintegration pyramid; and (3) a model of interaction between state, market-based and regional instruments.

1. A Cyclical Model for Transforming Social Assistance into Economic Self-Reliance

The economic reintegration of vulnerable population groups is not a one-off event but a process of transition from crisis-driven survival to economic self-reliance. In this study, the process is conceptualized as a cyclical model of transformation comprising four stages:

1. Macroeconomic shock and forced displacement. This stage is characterized by the loss of housing and employment, the depletion of personal savings and households' critical dependence on state social benefits, which primarily serve a protective function at this point.

2. State-led activation. This stage involves the use of legal provisions, including exemption from probationary periods and simplified registration procedures, alongside financial incentives delivered through the State Employment Service. These include employer compensation of up to two minimum monthly wages, educational vouchers worth up to UAH 30,280 and grants for microenterprise development.

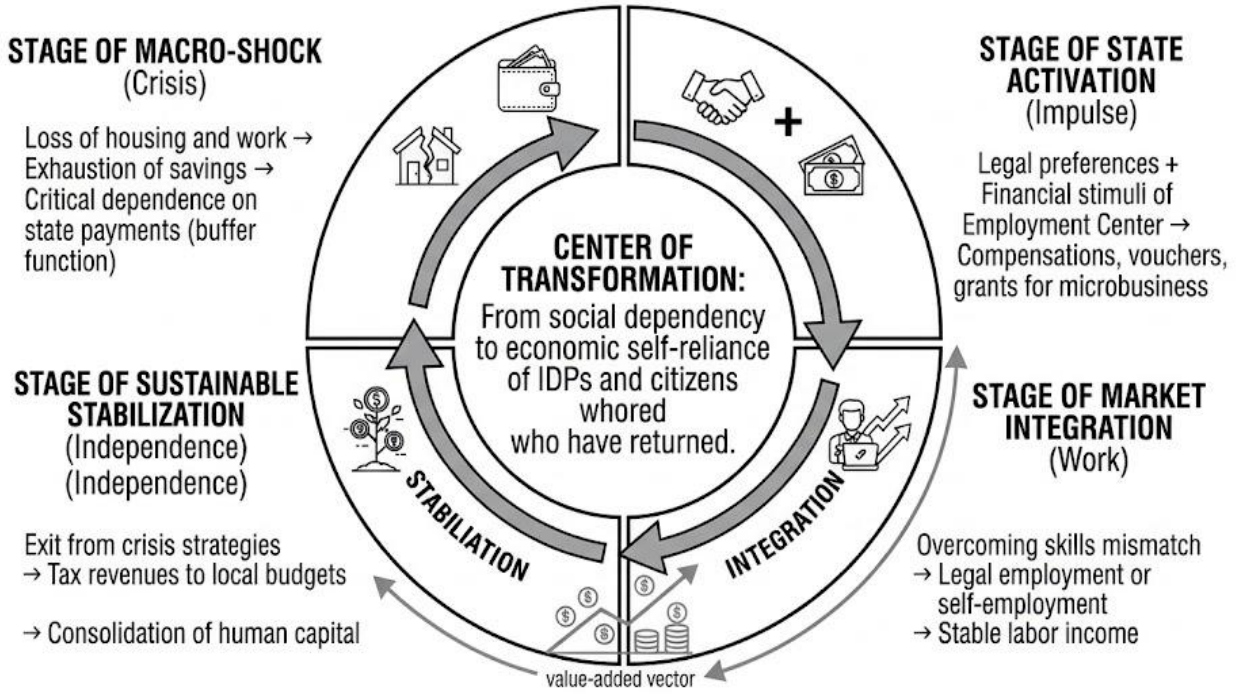


Figure 6. – Cyclical Model for Transforming State Social Assistance into Economic Self-Reliance among Vulnerable Population Groups
Source: developed by the authors.

3. Labour market integration and retraining. This stage involves addressing structural skills mismatches, securing formal employment in the legal economy or developing self-employment, thereby generating stable earned income for households.

4. Sustainable stabilisation and social cohesion. This stage involves moving away from crisis-driven and emergency coping strategies, generating tax revenue for local budgets, retaining human capital in Ukrainian regions and reducing the risk of renewed emigration.

2. Reintegration Pyramid

To translate the proposed model into practical instruments, a four-level reintegration pyramid, the *Vulnerable Population Reintegration Framework*, is proposed. It is based on a hierarchical approach to meeting basic needs and addressing labour market needs, adapting the classical logic of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to the context of socio-economic recovery. It assumes that the transition to active labour market instruments depends on first meeting basic living and safety needs.

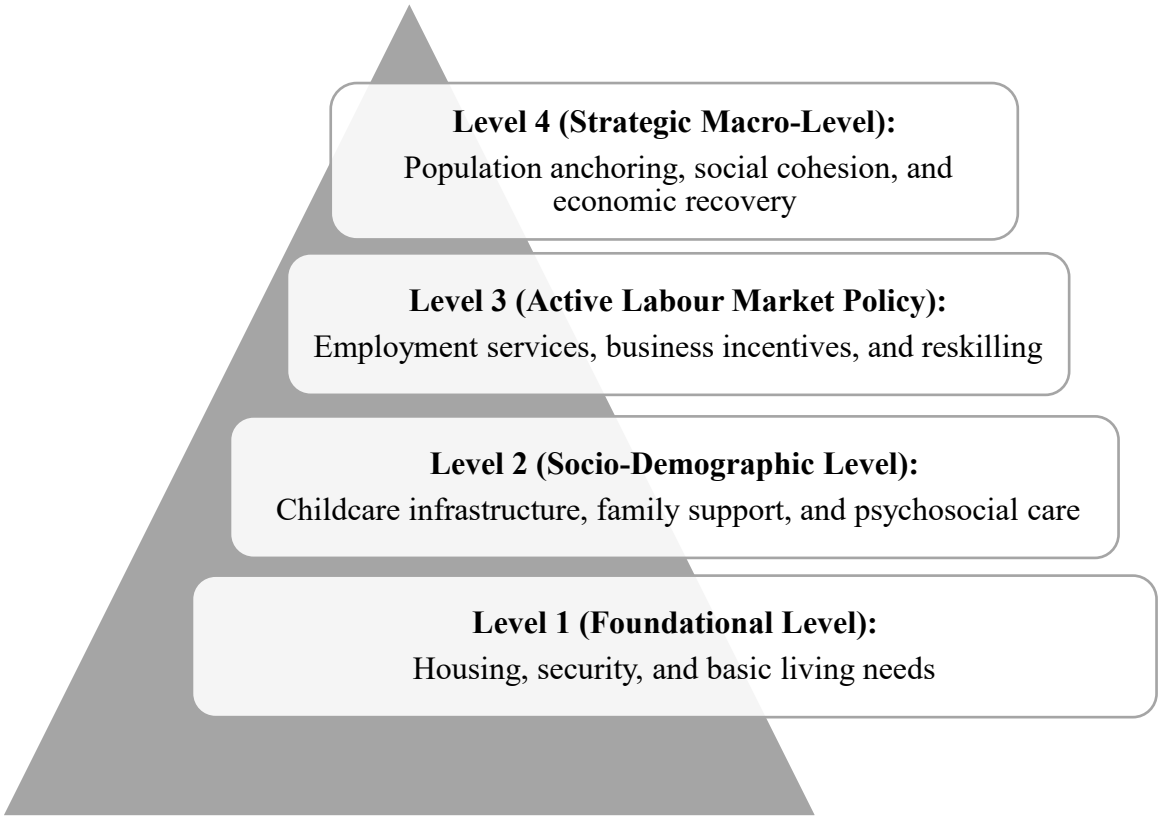


Figure 7. – The Vulnerable Population Reintegration Framework
Source: developed by the authors.

Level 1 (Foundation: Basic Living Needs). This foundational level focuses on addressing the acute housing crisis, in which rent absorbs more than 50% of household budgets in a substantial proportion of cases, as well as ensuring energy security and personal safety. Unless these basic needs are addressed as a priority, subsequent labour market measures may have limited effectiveness, as people's capacity is depleted by the struggle to meet their immediate survival needs.

Level 2 (Socio-Demographic Level). This level involves targeted action to address structural gender- and family-related barriers. In particular, it includes developing childcare infrastructure as a critical prerequisite for the economic participation of the 87% of women among those returning from migration, as well as providing comprehensive psychosocial support to veterans with overlapping vulnerable statuses to help rebuild their social capital.

Level 3 (Active Labour Market Policy). This level encompasses effective instruments delivered by the State Employment Service, financial incentives to support entrepreneurship, targeted vocational training and inclusive workplace adaptation. It facilitates the direct integration of the working-age population into the formal labour market by addressing skills mismatches (*skills mismatch*).

Level 4 (Strategic Macro Level). The upper level of the pyramid encompasses the coordination of national and regional policies aimed at supporting employment, social cohesion and economic recovery.

3. A Model of Interaction between State Guarantees, Market Instruments and Human Capital

The third component of the authors' conceptual framework is a model of interaction between state guarantees, market instruments and human capital.

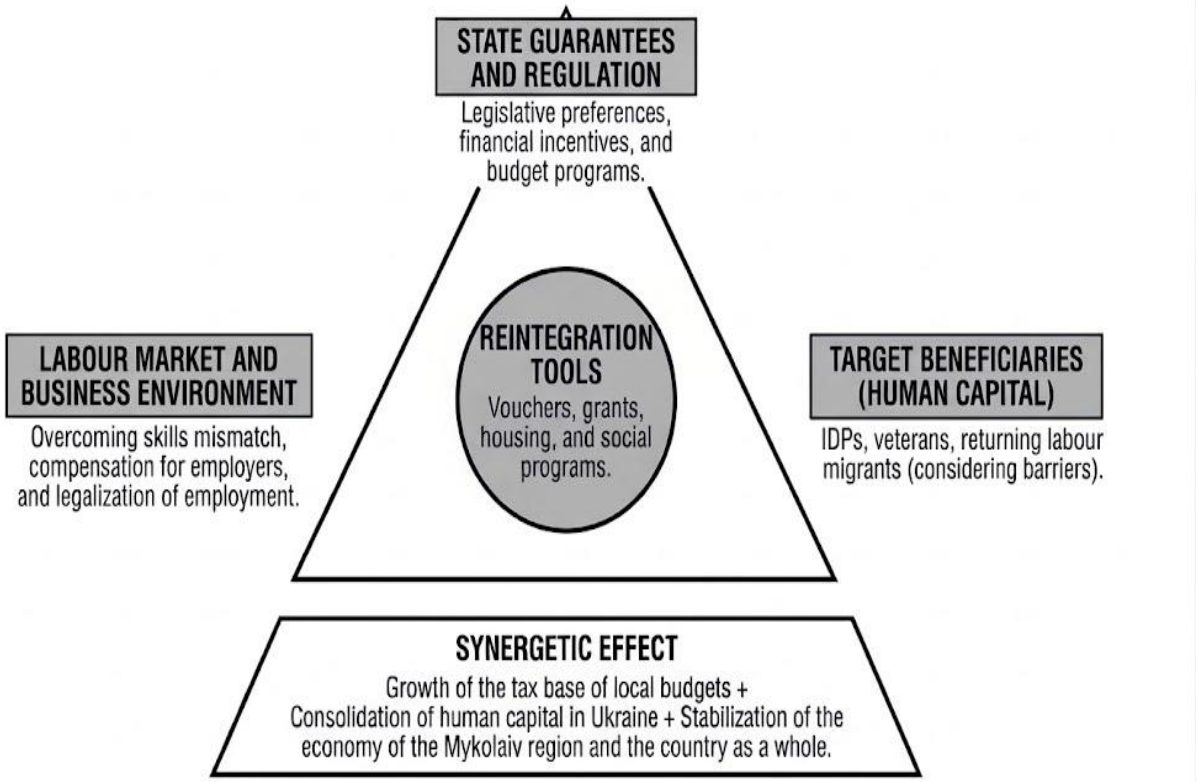


Figure 8. – Mechanism of Interaction between State Guarantees, Market Instruments and Human Capital

Source: developed by the authors.

– Macroeconomic inputs: large-scale demographic shifts (approximately 3.9 million people), inflationary pressures, acute labour shortages in regional labour markets and the cumulative challenges of reintegrating veterans and migrants.

– Core of the system (legal guarantees and market incentives): a combination of legislative provisions, targeted financial compensation for employers, educational vouchers and regional initiatives designed to mobilise the economy's internal potential.

– Target groups: internally displaced persons, citizens returning from abroad and war veterans, with due consideration given to their specific barriers through gender-sensitive and veteran-centric approaches.

– Expected outcomes: higher levels of formal employment, reduced dependence on social support, lower risk of repeat migration and more effective use of human capital in economic recovery.

Conclusions. This paper has examined the current state of the labour market, housing challenges and the socio-economic integration of vulnerable population groups in the context of the full-scale war, particularly internally displaced persons (IDPs), people who have returned from abroad and veterans. Based on an analysis of macroeconomic trends, institutional barriers and empirical data, the following conclusions are drawn.

1. The systemic nature of the housing crisis and its impact on mobility. Housing remains a significant constraint on the economic reintegration of IDPs. More than 50% of displaced people are forced to spend a substantial share of their household budgets on rent, while fewer than 10% have been able to purchase their own homes independently. The lack of accessible long-term mortgage schemes or rent-to-own programs increases households' dependence on the private rental market and limits the resources available for economic integration.

2. Structural employment barriers and the specific needs of different groups. The labour market is characterized by the simultaneous presence of staff shortages and a structural mismatch between workers' skills and employers' requirements (*skills mismatch*), which complicates access to employment for vulnerable population groups. Women returning from abroad, particularly those with children, and veterans need access to flexible forms of employment, vocational training and workplace adaptation. The overlapping statuses of veteran and IDP create additional barriers that should be taken into account when designing targeted support programs.

3. Findings of the cross-case analysis. The comparison of IDPs, people who have returned from abroad and veterans identified both common and group-specific barriers to economic reintegration. Common factors include limited access to stable employment, a mismatch between some competencies and labour market needs and the influence of housing conditions on employment opportunities. However, the nature and combination of these barriers differ across groups, highlighting the need to combine general support measures with targeted instruments tailored to their specific circumstances.

4. The need to coordinate support instruments. Individual state support measures, including employer compensation, educational vouchers and grants, are used to promote

employment but need to be coordinated with other areas of support. The proposed conceptual framework combines a cyclical model for transforming state assistance into economic self-reliance, a pyramid of priorities and a model of interaction between state guarantees, market instruments and human capital. Its application requires consideration of legal guarantees, employer incentives, housing conditions and regional specificities. The proposed framework is conceptual in nature and requires further empirical validation through regional programs, employment indicators and the outcomes of specific support measures.

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Valetska O.: legal analysis and regulatory framework; preparation of the text, visualization and editing – all authors.

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Conflict of Interest. *The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.*

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