

## **ЕКОНОМІКА, МЕНЕДЖМЕНТ**

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### **PANDEMIC OF COVID-19 AS KEY IMPACT FACTOR ON LABOUR MARKET IN UKRAINE**

**Abstract.** The situation on the Ukrainian labour market, which has developed as a result of the pandemic, is analyzed. The main post-quarantine tendencies of the labour market are characterized. Given that the crisis caused by the COVID-19 epidemic was not initially economic, the impact of anti-epidemic measures completely blocked the activities of certain sectors of the economy and affected all other sectors. The coronacrisis and quarantine dealt a much greater blow to employment. No one will name the actual number of those laid off or those who have become temporarily unemployed. For many companies, sending employees on partially and completely unpaid leave was the first priority anti-crisis decision to reduce operating costs. Given the continuation of quarantine, there are two possible baseline scenarios in Ukraine: further severe quarantine and moderate developments, that is different measures depending on the level of morbidity in different regions. Attention is paid to labour migration as a key factor influencing the labour market. The problem with migrant workers who have now returned to Ukraine is considered and possible options for the development of events in the current conditions are identified. Despite the general complexity of the economic situation in the host countries and the still closed borders, labour migration has every chance to intensify. The extent of this depends on the situation in the economy of a particular country. The hardest thing abroad now is for those migrant workers who work illegally. Because they voluntarily deprive themselves of all rights and cannot enjoy the social support of the country where they are. It is advantageous for foreign employers to deal with illegal migrant workers, because those who came

to the country to earn money illegally do not have legal and social protection. The unresolved problem of the return of migrant workers is complicated by the new requirement to build a high-quality, efficient, bureaucracy-free, discriminatory and underfunded reintegration system for migrant workers.

**Keywords:** labour market; labour force; unemployment; quarantine; pandemic; labour migration; migrant.

## **INTRODUCTION / ВСТУП**

**Formulation of the problem.** The labour market, in which there is a relationship of international exchange of factors of production – labour, which has the ability to move around the world in search of more attractive conditions for its sale, is an important component of any national economy. It is worth noting that the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the existing labour force largely depend on the possibilities of structural transformation of the Ukrainian economy. Migratory activity from Ukraine threatens not only the loss of active labour potential, but also a significant reduction in the country's demographic potential, which requires the implementation of effective measures to stabilize this process.

Aspects of national formation labour market are becoming important in the context of globalization of the world economic space. Delimiting the work of people according to the needs of society, this market covers all sectors of the economy, activities, forms of ownership, and the relationship between supply and demand on it determines stability state economic development. Therefore, in contemporary business conditions issues of comprehensive research are extremely relevant and monitoring of processes taking place in the labour market.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Well-known scientists, such as E. Libanova, O. Malinovska, M. Romanyuk, L. Semiv, U. Sadova and others have made a significant contribution to the study labour market issues.

There are a number of debatable issues in the scientific literature today and there is no single point of view on the formulation of the essence and definition features of the labour market.

## **AIM AND TASKS / МЕТА ТА ЗАВДАННЯ**

The *purpose* of the article is to study the transformation of the labour market in Ukraine, which occurred as a result of the pandemic, caused by the spread of COVID-19.

According to this goal, the article sets the following *tasks*: to describe the

main post-quarantine trends of the labour market; to analyze the situation on the Ukrainian labour market as a result of the pandemic.

## **THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS / ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ОСНОВИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ**

The category of the labour market attracts ever-increasing attention, especially in contemporary conditions, because under the influence of scientific and technological progress changes the content and nature of labour, increasing demands on workers, therefore, include a variety of factors – social, demographic, educational. It is worth noting that any economic crisis inevitably has a negative impact on wages and unemployment. The crisis, caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, was not initially economic. However, the impact of anti-epidemic measures has completely blocked the activities of certain sectors of the economy and affected all other sectors.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS / РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ**

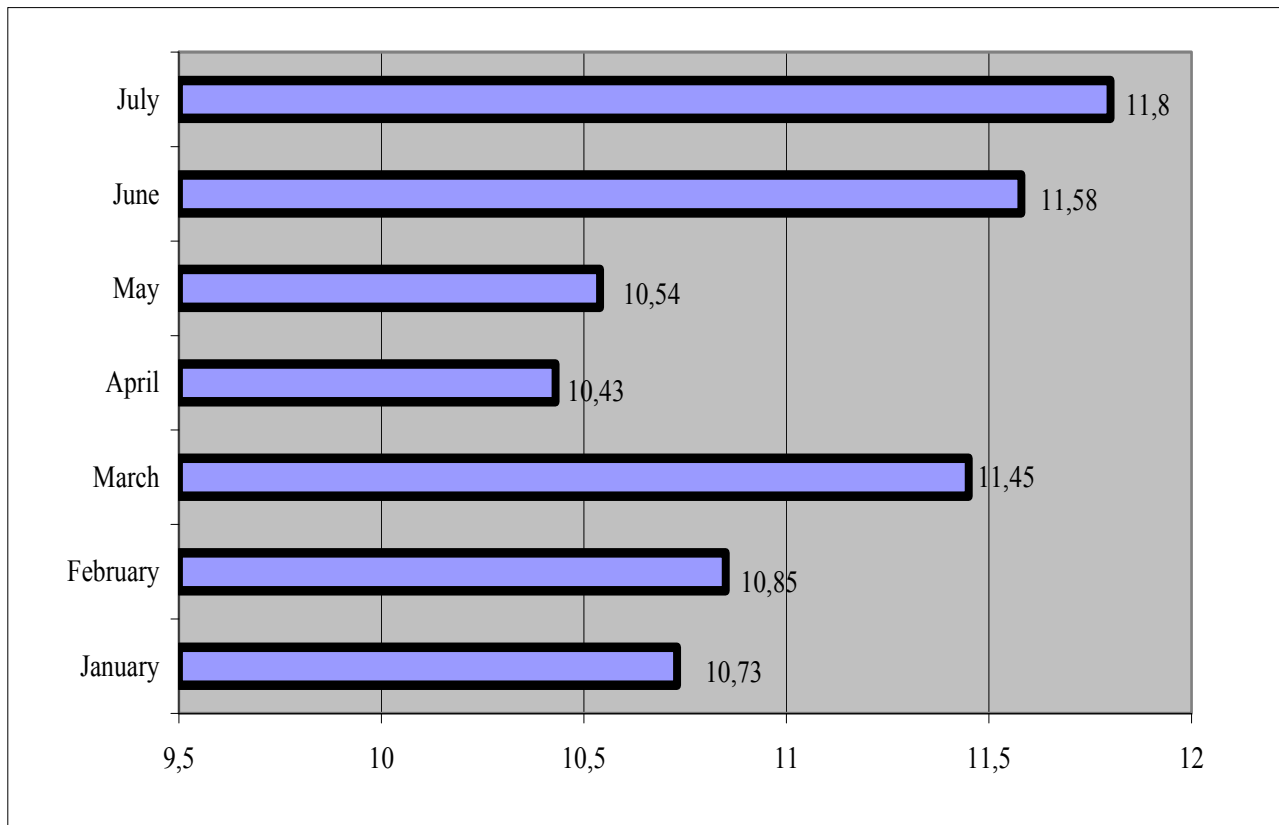
The dynamics of the average salary in Ukraine in 2020 fully reflects the course of quarantine measures. This explains the failure of wages in April-May and their gradual recovery in July, even above the pre-crisis level (fig. 1).

In particular, the average nominal salary in July compared to June in Ukraine increased by 2%, and year on year (until July 2019) – by 7,6%, reaching 11,8 thousand UAH. Real wages in July compared to July 2019 increased by 5,1%, and compared to June 2020 – by 2,6%.

On average, wages in the market fell by 10–15%, although at the beginning of the year was planned to increase by 20–25%. Salary reductions affected IT-specialists and top managers (commercial, financial and operational directors) the most – by an average of 15–30%. Many candidates dump because their market conditions have tightened, reducing their financial appetites by 10–15%, making them more competitive. Most often, employers prefer cheaper «candidates» and are willing to train / retrain rather than hire highly qualified, thereby optimizing the payroll [2].

The coronacrisis and quarantine dealt a much greater blow to employment. No one will name the actual number of those laid off or those who have become temporarily unemployed. For many companies, sending employees on partially and completely unpaid leave was the first priority anti-crisis decision to reduce operating costs. The official figures of the State Statistics Service cover only part of the employment process, but reflect approximate trends. According to the State Employment Service, as of August 31, the number

of unemployed in Ukraine was about 477,7 thousand people (+ 73% compared to the same period last year).

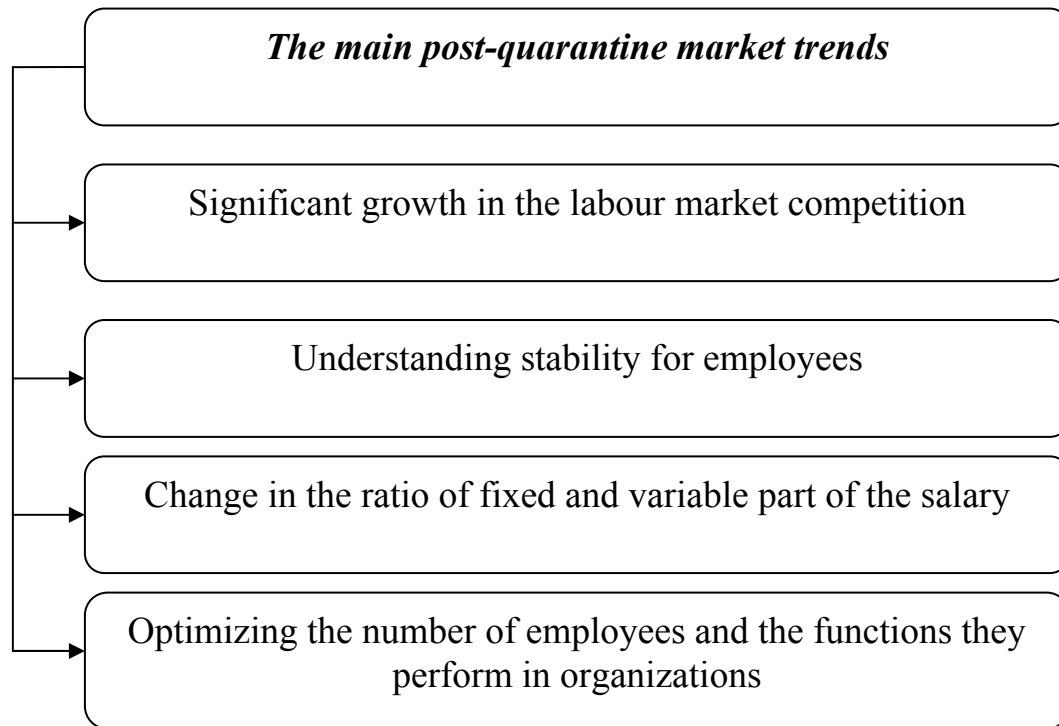


*Fig. 1 Average nominal salary in January – July 2020, thousand UAH [1]*

At the same time, the number of registered unemployed has been declining recently. If in April 149 thousand people received the status of the unemployed, in July – only 68 thousand people. Since the beginning of 2020, more than 409 thousand unemployed people have been employed, including 260 thousand people during the quarantine period [3], [4].

Construction, industry, tourism, restaurant business, banks, and logistics suffered the most. The smallest losses were suffered by the IT-sector, trade, pharmaceuticals, and agro-industrial complex.

Quarantine has largely transformed the labour market. The main post-quarantine market trends include (fig. 2):



*Fig. 2 The main post-quarantine market trends [5]*

1) Significant growth in the labour market competition; the requirements of employers in the selection of employees have become even more stringent. Employers have the opportunity to hire better staff for less money. Companies are reviewing their requirements for potential employees. Thus, almost half of employers (48%) began to make more demands while looking for new employees. Among them: 22% expanded the list of wishes for non-professional skills of a potential employee – *soft skills*; 11% became more demanding in terms of professional skills – *hard skills*. We can say that the «market of candidates», which existed before the crisis, has become an «market of employers»;

2) understanding stability for employees. Ukrainians are less inclined to change jobs because for many, having a job as such comes first. Expectations of salary increases or indexation can be left to «better times», except for crisis managers, narrow and key specialists;

3) change in the ratio of fixed and variable part of the salary, that means reduction of payments of the fixed part of the payment (rate) and the transition to payment based on the results of work performed. Companies move away

from «leveling» and set KPI (*key performance indicators* – key performance indicators of the enterprise) individually, taking into account various factors;

4) optimizing the number of employees and the functions they perform in organizations. Everything that was previously perceived as appropriate (for example, the presence of regional offices) is now being analyzed. If you can communicate in Zoom mode, why keep other offices? The same issues – in the warehouse, logistics. Now and in the near future, businesses will focus on outsourcing as much as possible and inflating staff as little as possible. After all, the priority now is to ease the structure while maintaining productivity [5].

The main trend of the contemporary labour market should be considered a multiple increase in various options for remote work. And even after the acute phase of quarantine has passed, «remote employment» has only strengthened its relevance. The reasons are clear: the coronavirus disease has not disappeared, most employees have shown efficiency even when working from home, and employers are cutting office costs and partially saving on staff salaries.

It is likely that the changes for the labour market are not over. Given the continuation of quarantine, there are two basic scenarios in Ukraine: further rigid quarantine and moderate developments that is, holding different measures in different regions depending on the level of morbidity. Prior to quarantine, one of the key factors influencing the labour market was labour migration. The introduction of quarantine in neighboring countries and the closure of borders have led to the mass return to Ukraine of a large number of migrant workers. With these people with experience working abroad, Ukrainian business could strengthen its human resources.

However, the same reasons that «expelled» migrant workers home led to a reduction in the number of jobs within the country. In other words, there are not enough jobs for them here. Therefore, the return of migrant workers was initially forced and temporary.

Despite the general complexity of the economic situation in the host countries and the still closed borders, labour migration has every chance to intensify. The extent of this depends on the situation in the economy of a particular country. It is worth noting that the economies of other countries are losing too much without workers. If during the quarantine period charter flights were organized, let alone the situation after the opening of borders. Domestic economic problems in Ukraine will only increase the motivation to go to work abroad.

It should be agreed with E. Libanova that migration from Ukraine may slow down when salaries in the country will be 70–75% of the Polish level. «Currently, at purchasing power parity in Ukraine, the average salary is about \$ 700, in Poland – \$ 2,200. Migration may slow down when the salary of

Ukrainians is 70–75% of the Polish level. If there is a comparable salary, they will not go like that», – she said. Migration has always been a very important factor in the Ukrainian labour market, as well as in Soviet times. Ukrainians are quite mobile, very qualified. It should be emphasized that the place of the Ukrainians who left will be taken by Asians. But it will be a completely different ethnic group, with a different culture, with a different religion. It is not a fact that our people are ready to live in a polyethnic ethnos, because we are not a polyethnic nation, we are a monoethnic nation [13].

Experts expect a rise in wages by the end of the year, although its dynamics will be minimal compared to previous years. For example, the National Bank forecasts an increase in nominal wages in 2020 by 4,1% compared to 2019, and real – by 1,3%. The International Monetary Fund expects that the dynamics of nominal wages after a rapid increase in 2018-2019 (by 24,8% and 18,5%, respectively) this year will slow sharply – to 3,6%. The wage growth rate in 2021 in the National Bank and the International Monetary Fund is estimated at 14,4% and 11,4%, respectively. According to the results of 2020, the National Bank of Ukraine expects the unemployment rate to rise to 10%, while the International Monetary Fund – to 12,6%. However, next year the National Bank of Ukraine and the International Monetary Fund predict a decrease in this figure to 9% and 12%, respectively [6], [7].

It is worth noting that the hotel and restaurant business, the tourism industry and the passenger transportation industry lost the most during the quarantine period. After severe restrictions, Ukrainians are gradually opening up the borders of other countries – both for leisure and for work. It is already possible and not difficult to find a job abroad today. For example, migrant workers entering Poland must undergo a mandatory 2-week quarantine at the address they provide when crossing the border. Violation of this requirement risks a fine of up to 30 thousand zlotys (6,5 thousand euros) and deportation and a ban on entry into the country for up to 10 years [8], [9].

The hardest thing abroad now is for those migrant workers who work illegally. Because they voluntarily deprive themselves of all rights and have not any social support of the country where they are. In European countries, there is a fairly high level of health and social insurance, which reliably protects not only citizens but also those who are officially employed. The working conditions stipulated in the employment contract cannot be too strict, otherwise they can be challenged. When migrant workers choose a work schedule of 10–12 hours a day, it is often not a requirement of the employer, but their desire to earn more.

It should be noted that it is advantageous for foreign employers to deal with illegal migrant workers, because persons who came to the country to earn money

illegally do not have legal and social protection. Moreover, they are forced to accept any job – seasonal, difficult and dangerous; the tariff rates set for them are much lower than for citizens of their country. External labour migrants from Ukraine in many countries are forced to work long hours and in hazardous working conditions, have limited or no access to health care and social protection, are not protected from low wages, occupational injuries, diseases [9].

With the start of quarantine, thousands of citizens working abroad were forced to return to Ukraine. Many arrived after statements from the country's leadership about the closure of borders, and some lost their jobs due to strict quarantine across Europe. Initially, the authorities also made statements about their intention to employ hundreds of thousands of people, including those who left the European Union. However, after a long lockdown, special flights began to fly from Ukraine with workers who did not find decent income at home.

The slowdown in the flow of labour abroad has created additional pressure on the labour market in Ukraine, where even without migrant workers there was a high level of unemployment. According to the State Employment Service, from March 12 to August 4, 406 thousand people were officially registered as unemployed [4].

In European countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit hardest in the area where employment in Eastern Europe, including Ukrainians, is highest. We are talking about agriculture and seasonal work. In neighboring Poland, labour shortages became apparent immediately. Other states have faced the same problem. The need for seasonal workers in the spring of 2020 increased sharply: in France there was a need for 200 thousand workers, in Spain – from 70 to 80 thousand, in Italy – about 250 thousand, in Great Britain – from 70 to 80 thousand, in Germany – 300 thousand.

Quarantine restrictions have suspended the flow of labour to European Union countries and the situation remains uncertain. Further developments depend on how the epidemiological situation abroad will develop [5].

According to the National Bank, in the first 5 months of this year, migrant workers transferred \$ 4,5 billion to Ukraine, which is 2,2% less than the previous year. Losing several billion dollars in revenue due to limited labour mobility is a realistic prospect, but it will not be critical for Ukraine. The government previously believed that the proceeds from remittances made by migrant workers compensate for the fact that most Ukrainians will not go abroad this year to spend money on vacation.

Given this year's reduction in the number of migrant workers from Ukraine, we should expect a reduction in the amount of funds they will send to Ukraine by the end of this year. The decrease in the amount of private transfers



to Ukraine from abroad in 2020 reflects the actual process of reducing the income of the population of our country as a whole. Thus, according to the National Bank of Ukraine, presented in the «Report on Financial Stability. June 2020», in 2020 the three-year trend of income growth will stop. Fears of a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic will hold back job recovery. Wage growth after the removal of quarantine restrictions is unlikely. Even before the crisis, the sharp rise in labour costs restrained the growth of profitability of enterprises. The income of natural persons-entrepreneurs will also decrease, which currently forms almost a quarter of the available income of the population – this segment has been affected by quarantine restrictions the most [10], [11].

Despite economic problems in the European Union, related to the coronavirus, the wages of Ukrainian migrant workers in Europe have not fallen. It may increase, but it will depend on the speed of the economic recovery of European Union after the pandemic.

In the context of the above, it should be noted that the problem with migrant workers who have now returned to Ukraine remains difficult. You can often hear calls about the importance of their maintenance, initiatives to create jobs. Under today's conditions, the following scenarios are possible:

- migrant workers will enter the labour market of Ukraine and will look for work here. On the one hand, we have a number of scarce professional areas (workers, manufacturing and the agro-industrial sector, for example). However, the salaries offered in these areas are not always competitive compared to the European market. If demand from job seekers and competition for the vacancy increases even more, salary offers may begin to decline. Therefore, this option is likely to be viable only in the short term.

- labour migration will resume as soon as possible, there is every chance that the flow of migrants will even increase: those who have already had experience abroad will be joined by those who lost their jobs during quarantine. Who lived this time due to savings and «airbags» and will be forced to quickly renew them. And for some, quarantine will work as a catalyst. This is the category of people who have thought about going abroad and to quarantine, and not so much because of the opportunity to earn more there, but because of better prospects and a more stable situation. And the crisis caused by the COVID-19 epidemic will accelerate their solution, shift plans to migrate from the theoretical to the practical plane.

The problem of labour migration needs a long-term and comprehensive solution. And it lies in the plane of raising the general standard of living, the economy and wages. But there are no imperative bans when migrants are simply

deprived of the opportunity to travel. Such steps, unfortunately, can have the opposite effect and only push the exit process [12].

## CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH / ВИСНОВКИ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ПОДАЛЬШИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ

The migration of highly skilled labour is a rather big problem for Ukraine, which can turn into a national catastrophe. Of particular relevance is the lack of sufficient and unambiguous information on the scale and regional features of migration of Ukrainians abroad and quantitative flows of migratory capital, the size of which is a significant share of social and investment financial resources of the country. The situation is not threatening for the current generations, as we now have a positive effect of filling the budget with remittances from migrant workers.

But in the long run, when migrant workers acquire emigrant status and join the large Ukrainian diaspora, this effect will gradually lose its significance. It should be emphasized that labour migration is resorted to not only by people in hopeless conditions due to the difficult social and economic situation. Modular surveys prove that the profile of a migrant's personal qualities includes such traits as activity, initiative and purposefulness, willingness to invest and overcome numerous difficulties, so it is the profile of a potential entrepreneur. And, most importantly, migrant workers have the ability to integrate into a foreign economic and cultural environment.

Thus, the still unresolved problem of the return of migrant workers is complicated by the new requirement to build a high-quality, efficient, bureaucratic, discriminatory and underfunded system of reintegration of migrant workers, which **determines the prospects for further research.**

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## ПАНДЕМІЯ COVID-19 ЯК КЛЮЧОВИЙ ЧИННИК ВПЛИВУ НА РИНОК ПРАЦІ В УКРАЇНІ

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**Анотація.** Проаналізовано ситуацію на українському ринку праці, яка склалася внаслідок пандемії. Охарактеризовано основні посткарантинні тенденції ринку праці. Враховуючи, що криза, спричинена епідемією COVID-19, спочатку не була економічною, однак вплив протиепідемічних заходів повністю заблокував діяльність окремих галузей економіки та позначився на всіх інших секторах. Набагато більшого удару коронакриза та карантин завдали зайнятості населення. Реальну кількість звільнених чи тих, що стали тимчасово безробітними, не назве ніхто. Для багатьох компаній відправлення співробітників у частково й повністю неоплачувану відпустку було першим за пріоритетністю антикризовим рішенням стосовно скорочення операційних витрат. Враховуючи продовження карантину, в Україні можливі два базових сценарії розвитку ситуації: це подальший жорсткий карантин і помірний розвиток подій, тобто в різних регіонах різні заходи залежно від рівня захворюваності. Увага приділена трудовій міграції, як ключовому чиннику впливу на ринок праці. Розглянуто проблему з трудовими мігрантами, які наразі повернулись в Україну та визначено можливі варіанти розвитку подій за умов сьогодення. Попри загальну складність економічної ситуації в приймаючих країнах і досі закриті кордони, трудова міграція має всі шанси посилитися. Масштаб цього залежить від ситуації в економіці конкретної країни. Найважче за кордоном зараз тим трудовим мігрантам, які працюють нелегально. Бо вони добровільно позбавляють себе усіх прав і не можуть користуватися соціальною підтримкою країни, де перебувають. Зарубіжним роботодавцям вигідно мати справу з нелегальними трудовими мігрантами, бо особи, які прибули в країну з метою заробітку на незаконних підставах, не мають юридичного та соціального захисту. Невирішена проблема повернення трудових мігрантів ускладнюється новою вимогою щодо розбудови якісної, ефективної, позбавленої бюрократії, дискримінації та недофінансування системи реінтеграції трудових мігрантів.

**Ключові слова:** ринок праці; робоча сила; безробіття; карантин; пандемія; трудова міграція; мігрант.

## **ПАНДЕМИЯ COVID-19 КАК КЛЮЧЕВОЙ ФАКТОР ВЛИЯНИЯ НА РЫНОК ТРУДА В УКРАИНЕ**

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**Аннотация.** Проанализирована ситуация на украинском рынке труда, которая сложилась в результате пандемии. Охарактеризованы основные посткарантинные тенденции рынка труда. Учитывая, что кризис, вызванный эпидемией COVID-19, изначально не был экономическим, однако влияние противоэпидемических мероприятий полностью заблокировало деятельность отдельных отраслей экономики и сказался на всех других секторах. Гораздо больший удар коронакризис и карантин нанесли занятости населения. Реальное количество уволенных или ставших временно безработными, не назовет никто. Для многих компаний отправка сотрудников в частично и полностью неоплачиваемый отпуск было первым по приоритетности антикризисным решением по сокращению операционных расходов. Учитывая продление карантина, в Украине возможны два базовых сценария развития ситуации: это дальнейший жесткий карантин и умеренное развитие событий, то есть в разных регионах различные мероприятия в зависимости от уровня заболеваемости. Внимание уделено трудовой миграции, как ключевому фактору влияния на рынок труда. Рассмотрена проблема с трудовыми мигрантами, которые сейчас вернулись в Украину и определены возможные варианты развития событий в условиях современности. Несмотря на общую сложность экономической ситуации и до сих пор закрытые в принимающих странах границы, трудовая миграция имеет все шансы усилиться. Масштаб этого зависит от ситуации в экономике конкретной страны. Тяжелее за границей сейчас тем трудовым мигрантам, которые работают нелегально. Потому что они добровольно лишают себя всех прав и не могут воспользоваться социальной поддержкой

страны, где находятся. Зарубежным работодателям выгодно иметь дело с нелегальными трудовыми мигрантами, потому что лица, прибывшие в страну с целью заработка на незаконных основаниях, не имеют юридического и социальной защиты. Нерешенная проблема возвращения трудовых мигрантов осложняется новым требованием по развитию качественной, эффективной, лишеной бюрократии, дискриминации и недофинансирования системы реинтеграции трудовых мигрантов.

**Ключевые слова:** рынок труда; рабочая сила; безработица; карантин; пандемия; трудовая миграция; мигрант.

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