Digital spaces, skills and competencies of Ukrainian migrants in Israel

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Introduction

This policy brief highlights the most important findings and policy implications on digital spaces, skills and competencies of Ukrainian migrants (olim & refugees), who arrived in Israel after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine (24/2/2022). Olim are migrants to Israel with Jewish ancestry and their spouses, who are granted according to the Law of Return (1950) Israeli citizenship upon arrival. This document identifies ways of successful communication with migrants and existing communication gaps and points to efficient ways to communicate with these migrants. During 2022, 14,516 olim[1] and 14,528 refugees[2] from Ukraine arrived in Israel.

In order to assess the digital spaces, skills and competencies of Ukrainian migrants in Israel, we examined and mapped sources of information and services available to Ukrainian migrants in Israel. Reports on migrants' digital skills published by Israeli governmental institutions as well as academic publications were mapped and analyzed. To map the information available to Ukrainian migrants in Israel, websites of ministries, municipalities, and NGOs were systematically analyzed (report 1).

Additionally, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with Ukrainian migrants, most of them olim. The interviewees live or have lived in hotels operated by the Jewish Agency in the north part of Israel (Nof Hagalil or Haifa), and were addressed to the interviewer by the Jewish Agency representative. All the interviews were thematically coded and analyzed (Braun and Clarke 2006). (report 2)

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[1] https://www.gov.il/he/departments/publications/reports/aliyah_2022

[2] https://main.knesset.gov.il/News/PressReleases/Pages/press07.06.22.aspx

Evidence and analysis

The systematic mapping of sources of information and services available to Ukrainian migrants in Israel, and the interviews conducted with Ukrainian migrants point to the following main findings:

- The main information and service provider for Ukrainian olim is the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration[3], whereas the main information and service provider for Ukrainian refugees is the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs in collaboration with NGOs, operating through the program Tzav Hasha'a[4].
- Most official Israeli governmental services that specifically target Ukrainian migrants (both olim and refugees) are provided online (e-government services) and are available in Russian. However, many e-government services meant for the general population require Hebrew language proficiency.
- As Ukrainian olim are Israeli citizens, they have more access to governmental services (mainly through digital platforms or e-government services) as compared to Ukrainian refugees. Ukrainian refugees receive most of their information and assistance from NGOs.
- Municipalities play a significant role in providing information and services to Ukrainian migrants, both online and in person. The support and assistance of municipal coordinators is perceived by the migrants as very helpful.
- Many of the Ukrainian immigrants (olim & refugees) who are highly educated and of working age have digital skills and competencies. The digital gap is slightly more apparent among elderly migrants and is manifested mainly in using various social network applications.
- Ukrainian migrants use social networks (mainly Facebook, Whatsapp, Youtube, and Telegram) to obtain information and to communicate with their friends and relatives in Israel. Communication with their friends and relative in Ukraine is also via social networks (mainly Facebook, Whatsapp, and Viber).
- There are many initiatives and a broad range of information on the internet aimed at migrants from Ukraine, but this abundance may be confusing for migrants who are unfamiliar with the Israeli bureaucracy.

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[3] https://hometoisrael.co.il/

[4] https://govextra.gov.il/molsa/tzav-hashaa/home

POLICY BRIEF

Policy implications and recommendations

- Training should be provided to Ukrainian immigrants (and immigrants in general) for efficient use of e-government services, with an emphasis on improving digital and linguistic (Hebrew) skills for elderly immigrants.
- E-government services for citizens in general should be provided in immigrants' languages.
- Migrants should be informed about the common procedures used in institutions such as banks and HMOs. If possible, initial use should be supported by representatives.
- The effectiveness of the initiative to deliver information and services to Ukrainian immigrants in one place through information fairs and innovative initiatives (for example: TechForChanges[5]) should be assessed. If proven successful, the methods should be implemented in cities hosting immigrants.

References

Braun, V. & V. Clarke (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101.

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[5] https://www.techforchanges.org/services