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DECENT WORK ACHIEVEMENT DURING THE POST-WAR RECOVERYIN UKRAINE REGIONS

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Abstract

The problem of creating decent work conditions in all regions of Ukraine is a key factor in the country's socio-economic recovery in the post-war period. The purpose of this study is to determine directions for the restoration of decent work in the regions of Ukraine, taking into account the challenges of post-war reconstruction. This research is based on a historical and retrospective analysis of the recovery experience of other countries in the world after military conflicts, and also uses comparative, statistical analysis and the deduction method. As a result of the conducted research, directions for the restoration of decent work in Ukraine are proposed, which include a system of measures, namely: support for IDPs, refugees and other socially vulnerable categories of persons; regional security and greening of employment; development of modern spheres of economic activity relevant for Ukraine, taking into account regional needs; legislative and institutional support in conditions of work digitization.

Keywords: decent work, post war recovery, employment, Ukraine regions, directions, regional aspects. **JEL Codes**: F 01, F 31, H 30.

Introduction

The full-scale invasion and war in Ukraine are creating new challenges for the country's economy and for Ukrainian society itself. As of June 2023, about 6.7 million people were outside the country (Kalashnyk, 2023). According to the results of a study by experts of the Center for Economic Strategies, there are significant risks that approximately half of them – 3.3 million (Vyshlinskyi, Mykhaylishyna, Samoiluk, Tomilina, 2023) – may not return to Ukraine at all. The reasons are the high level of adaptation of persons who have left the country:

- most of the people who went abroad after the start of the full-scale war are people who have some previous employment experience outside of Ukraine; such circumstances greatly simplify the job search process: at the beginning of 2024, 53% of adults who have left the country are already employed (Sologub, 2024);

- the basis of the migration wave of 2022-2023 among the adult population is women aged 35-49 (18% of the total number of emigrants, 83% of the total number of the adult population that left the country) with a relatively high level of education; their main leaving motivation is the safety of the children who left with them (the share of children in the total number of refugees is 28%), this fact is at the same time a powerful stimulator for socialization and employment, as well as for creating the most comfortable conditions for adaptation and assimilation of their own children in the social the environment in which they got into.

One of the main reasons for which the population moved abroad in 2022-2023 is the loss of a job (due to the physical destruction of an enterprise or due to its closure). On the other hand, according to sociological surveys, among the factors that will contribute to the return to Ukraine, the respondents mentioned "better employment opportunities" (Sologub, 2024).

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Another problem that acts as a "timedetonating mechanism" is internally displaced persons (IDPs). Currently, 4.9 million IDPs are registered in Ukraine (Internally displaced persons, 2024); approximately another 2 million people left their permanent place of residence, but are not officially registered (Vereshchuk named the number..., 2023). During 2023, 2.5 million of this population categories received housing assistance from the state (in 2022, their number was 2.3 million people). According to the results of surveys, as of the end of 2022, about 40% of the population who left the region of permanent residence, but remained in Ukraine, experience problems with employment. 65% of the same IDPs (who remained in Ukraine) indicated a lack of money, noting it as the greatest need (A new audience..., 2022). Problems with finding a job and financial hardship, as well as the unavailability of a safe place to live (29% of respondents) or any housing (23% of respondents) are the key reasons that force IDPs to move on (abroad) or return home (including a dangerous or occupied territories). Moreover, it can be added a review of the conditions for payment of housing assistance to IDPs and a significant reduction of the categories that were entitled to receive it (Housing allowance for IDPs ..., 2024) after March 1, 2024. So-called "twice internally displaced persons" who left for the controlled part of Ukraine in 2014 and were forced to do so a second time in 2022 found themselves in a particularly difficult situation. Among this group of IDPs, an even greater level of social tension is formed due to long-term social exclusion. There are no official statistics, but some of the twice internally displaced persons managed to purchase on their own or take a loan for a new home, which is now either newly occupied or completely destroyed.

According to experts, the losses suffered by Ukraine only in the first year of the war amount to 252 billion US dollars, and the costs for recovery at the beginning of 2023 were estimated at 349 billion US dollars (Post-war Reconstruction..., 2023). Reconstruction of the country after the cessation of full-scale hostilities is a long and costly process that cannot be implemented without the involvement of the required number of appropriately qualified labor

force. Creating of decent working conditions for those who stayed and are working now, as well as for that part of the population who went abroad, is a priority task facing the government of Ukraine right now.

The purpose of this study is to determine directions for the restoration of decent work in the regions of Ukraine, taking into account challenges of post-war reconstruction.

Literature review

The problem of restoring the socioeconomic systems of countries that survived the war and faced a large-scale crisis is not a new one. Positive experience worth paying attention to (Obukh, 2023): state, international grant funding of entrepreneurial initiatives; a system of benefits for exporting producers; tax optimization of the state apparatus and radical reduction of costs for its maintenance; targeted use and strict control over the development of financial resources from international donors and partner countries; increased funding of applied science.

The listed measures are the experience of Germany after World War II. In particular, the funding of applied research was increased five times compared to the previous pre-war period; the results and obtained inventions were immediately put into production. As a result, in the early 60s of the 20th century, the volume of industrial production in the Federal Republic of Germany increased three times, compared to the indicators before the beginning of the Second World War. The "German economic miracle" directly affected the life of the economically active population: during the 1950s, the salary of workers increased German by 73% (Wirtschaftswunder..., 2003), while labor productivity, safety and quality of life increased significantly.

The experience of other European countries, in particular, Croatia, which, after a series of armed Balkan conflicts in 1991-2001, chose an alternative purely industrial path of development, betting on the development of transport infrastructure, shipbuilding and tourism, which is known to be a powerful generator of new workplaces. But it is worth remembering not only the positive, but also the negative experience of the recovery of the



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countries of the world after military conflicts and not to make similar mistakes.

Back in 2010, the ILO provided recommendations on local economic recovery (Local Economic Recovery..., 2010) for postconflict areas. According to these recommendations, the basis for the restoration of the territory is: employment opportunities, to entrepreneurship development access favorable business environment, services, availability of financial resources. Experts emphasize that restarting the economy at the local level is possible precisely because of the creation of new jobs, that is the main condition for the restoration of the territory and the return of people. In accordance with the conditions that have developed in the regions of Ukraine after the ILO, it was also identified the main directions (sectors) of recovery (Approach to decent work..., 2022) with a focus on vulnerable categories of the population, among them: education, preschool e-commerce and construction.

In Ukraine, a number of experts deal with the problem of ensuring decent work conditions (Buyashenko, Kobzusta, Tkachenko, 2016; Makarova, Novak, 2021; Lomonosova, 2022). Even before the start of the war, the main obstacles to ensuring decent work were: the weakness of trade unions and the social insecurity of those employed with non-standard forms of work (Buyashenko, Kobzusta, Tkachenko, 2016), the reduction of unregistered forms of employment and labor protection (Makarova, Novak, 2021). Already in autumn 2022, the main problem of ensuring decent work is simply the availability of work, because according to the ILO, in August 2022, the unemployment rate reached 35% (Lomonosova, there are structural 2022). More over, disproportions of regional labor markets, in particular, a significant economic burden was recorded in the regions of Ukraine at the end of 2022: 416 unemployed IDPs per 1,000 employed persons of the local population (Vasyltsiv, Levytska, Rudkovsky, 2022). The highest rate in Zakarpattia Oblast: unemployed IDPs per 1,000 employed local

residents. Most experts emphasize the inconsistency of the modern requirements of the regional labor markets with the existing characteristics of the labor force, which has been released since the beginning of the full-scale invasion.

Research methods

The basis of the research methodology is a historical and retrospective analysis of the social and economic recovery experience in European countries and in other countries of the world after World War II, as well as after later local military conflicts. In addition, in order to achieve the results of the research, the methods of comparison (to compare modern Ukrainian and European and world trends of socio-economic development), statistical analysis (to determine trends in the development of the labor market before and after the start of the war in Ukraine), induction and deduction (to determination of areas of activity to create conditions for ensuring decent work in the regions of Ukraine) were used.

Results

In order to substantiate the conditions for ensuring decent work, it is necessary to look at this problem more systematically. According to a very broad definition, decent work involves employment in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. In the coming years, Ukraine will face the problem of creating the widest possible employment opportunities: the ability to work and receive a decent reward for it is a key criterion for the return, preservation and increase of human capital, which is already in short supply. The overview of the prerequisites and problems of ensuring conditions of decent work, presented above, makes it possible to identify the main directions of activities related to the creation of conditions of decent work during the post-war reconstruction (Fig. 1).

According to the scheme presented in fig. 1, four main areas of activity are considered, which are closely related and should interact and organically complement each other:

1. Support for IDPs, refugees and other socially vulnerable categories of persons.

It is impossible to say that there are no retraining programs in Ukraine and that there seems to be a focus on the modern needs of the market (How does an employment..., 2024), but is it taking into account the needs of the regional labor market? It is quite difficult to check the answer on this question. According to the current map of vocational and technical education placement centers of the State Employment Service, only 8 such structures (Rivne, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Odesa, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Sumy, Poltava) are currently operating in Ukraine, previously there were 11 (Nova Kakhovka, Kramatorsk, Severodonetsk). So, such centers are available in less than half of the regions of Ukraine.

Educational institutions working in partnership with the employment service are located in all regions of Ukraine (Full list of educational institutions...), but the content of the proposals for taking courses also needs to be reviewed. In particular, only 11 oblasts (Dnipropetrovsk, Luhansk, Odesa, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya, Zhytomyr, Zakarpattia, Mykolaiv, Poltava, Ternopil oblasts and the Kyiv city) out of 24 offer courses related to the digitization of work. Moreover, most courses offer the elementary basics of computer literacy, rather than mastering the basics of a specific IT profession.



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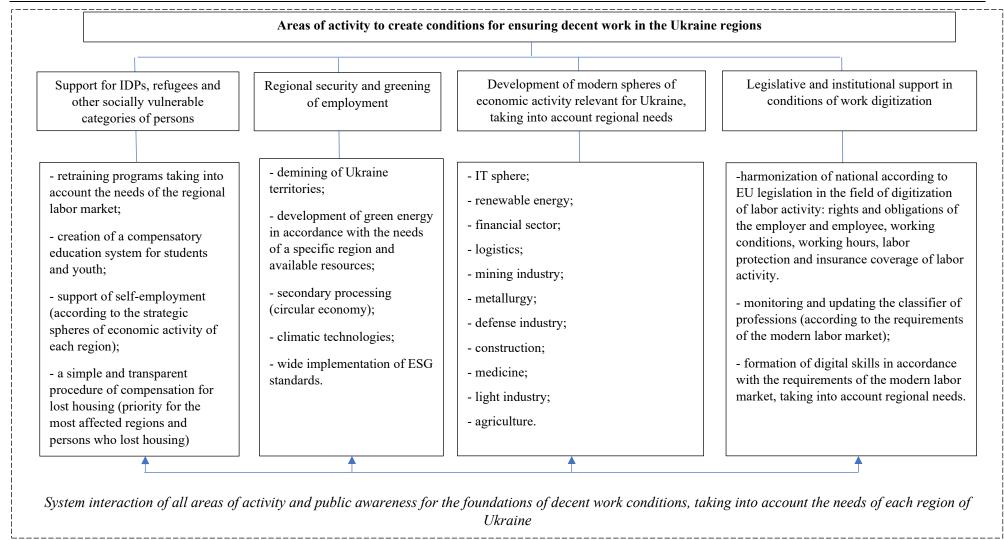


Figure 1. Areas of activity for creating conditions for ensuring decent work in Ukraine during post-war reconstruction

In conditions where the entire global world is moving towards digitalization of work, this is a problem that needs to be solved now.

The compensatory education system for students and young people is another big question, the answer to which must be sought now. In 2022, countries receiving refugees from Ukraine faced such a problem. For the integration of children and youth into the educational environment, "transitional" classes were created, language courses are provided with the aim of their rapid adaptation and inclusion into the social and educational environment. After the Ukraine victory for the return of IDPs, refugees, such approach will become extremely necessary, especially for children who lived and studied in a different socio-cultural environment. Compensatory education will be extremely relevant in the deoccupied regions for residents who did not leave their homes and for their children. Without social and linguistic adaptation, effective employment is not possible, and therefore it would not be possible to talk about decent work.

Highlighting the issue of compensatory education, it is necessary to recall study vouchers. This specified document is issued by the state employment center based on the list of 124 professions and specialties approved by the Ministry of Economy. The value of the voucher cannot exceed tenfold sum of the subsistence minimum for workable persons. Such an opportunity is provided to certain categories of people (Information for persons...), including IDPs who are not registered as unemployed, have vocational or higher education, but wish to acquire new professional skills competencies. The initiative itself is indeed very positive and has not been implemented for the first year, but there is a problem of analyzing the public funds effectiveness arises again: what are the principles according to which a person choose a profession that he/she plans to master; whether it is required for a specific region in which a person lives; how the applicant's personal abilities and psychological profile meet the requirements for a specialist in the chosen field of activity; how to ensure further employment after graduation; what percentage of those who have graduated work by their new specialty in the same region? To maximize the

effectiveness of the implementation of this initiative, the answers to the above questions should be tracked, recorded and analyzed.

Self-employment deserves special attention not only for IDPs or refugees, but for the entire economically active population who aspires to it and wants to start or expand their own business in particular region. This line of activity is one of the most successfully implemented even under martial law. A number of such programs and projects are at the service of small business representatives: 1) "Dostupni credyty 5-7-9%" (My loans 5-7-9%...) - state program of affordable loans; 2) "yeRobota" grant system for small business development (YeRobota. Action...); 3) EU programs to support entrepreneurs with soft loans through national banks under the EU4Business initiative (Finances: loans and grants...); in 2022, within the framework of EU 4 Business, the grant program "EU Support to the East of Ukraine of strengthening restoration, peace governance" also worked, but the deadline for its implementation was exhausted at the end of the same year; 4) grant programs of other countries of the world, in particular the USA - USAID Competitive Economy Program in Ukraine (USAID Competitive Economy Program...); the project program has several directions, one of which is the support of small and micro entrepreneurship;

Also, it should be noted the different range of opportunities depending on the region. It is easier to find out and get financial assistance for those entrepreneurs who were (or are now relocated) in relatively safe regional centers. As an example - the Lviv city, where the Entrepreneurship Support Center operates (Entrepreneurship Support Center...), on the website of this center there is presented detailed information on the possibilities of obtaining financial support for starting and developing one's own business. If we examine the instruments of financial assistance for small businesses and the self-employed in different regions, it can be noted that the list of these instruments and the donors who provide them will be different depending on the region.

The main question is: How such a system of support for SMEs will look like after the end of the war? Currently, the majority of



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international, state and regional initiatives are limited to the period of martial law. Will entrepreneurs have the same broad opportunities, especially in the de-occupied regions, where after demining, the population must be returned and the economy must be "launched" through the restoration of small businesses. In this case, it will be appropriate to recall the territories of priority development (territories in which unfavorable socio-economic and ecological conditions have developed, for the elimination of which a special regime of investment activity is being introduced with the aim of creating new jobs (The Law of Ukraine...)). Ukrainian scientists point to a number of problems that prevented the full implementation of the concept of territories of priority development. First of all, the legal imperfection of the foundations, creation and functioning of TPD and the inconsistency of the forms and volumes of state aid to economic operators of TPD in individual and regions with EU norms standards (Boychenko, Nikitina, 2022). Therefore, there is already a need to optimize the legal basis for the implementation of such territorial entities, harmonizing them with EU practice for the sake of rapid recovery and functioning on the territory of Ukraine in regions that will really need it after

A simple and transparent procedure for compensation for lost housing for IDPs and refugees from dangerous and occupied territories is a problem that is not directly related to the restoration of decent work conditions, but, in the context of the modern history of Ukraine, for a large share of temporary migrants, this is a critical issue of ensuring a decent quality of life, and accordingly decent work, in the last ten years. Against the background of the opportunity to receive compensation for damaged or destroyed housing for the population in the controlled and relatively safe part of the territories of Ukraine, for IDPs and refugees from the easten and south-eastern part of the country (especially for those who have been "in exile" for 10 years) the opportunity to receive compensation for the restoration or purchase of a new home – it is the lever, together with the

the end of hostilities.

possibility of employment, that will be a decisive factor in returning to the native region.

2. Regional security and greening of employment.

The second direction of creating conditions for decent work are safe labor activity and greening of employment. In 2019, the European Commission adopted the strategy "European Green Deal" according to which Europe aims to become the world's first climateneutral continent by 2050. Such a transition should create new employment opportunities, with the EU construction sector projecting an additional 160,000 green jobs by 2030 as a prime example. This transition will simultaneously affect the labor market, requiring the acquisition of new professional skills and retraining of workers in both new and traditional sectors of the economy (Andrusevych, Andrusevych, Kozak, Ptashyk, Romanko, 2023).

In 2021, the greening of employment in Ukraine was largely due to the development of the renewable energy sector, where 39,800 people were employed. This workforce was mostly distributed among various renewable energy sources, with solar power leading the way with 17,770 jobs.

According to experts, since 2015, the number of environmental vacancies worldwide has increased by 40%. Moreover, it is predicted that investments in environmentally neutral business practices will result in 52% more vacancies than investments under conditions of ignoring environmental aspects organization of economic activity. Also, we will have a significant impact on further job creation and widespread adoption of ESG standards (Environmental, Social, Governance) regarding sustainable environmental and social corporate governance (The Institutional Investor's Guide...). This process has already started in Ukraine (Why and for whom..., 2023), but taking into account the process of integration into the EU, the list of companies reporting according to these standards on all our regions will need to be significantly expanded.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) emphasizes that "decent work" is an

integral aspect of the concept of green jobs. The ILO says that "green" jobs are a new category of employment that is crucial for the development of environmentally friendly businesses and economies. Identifying and measuring these jobs is essential to understanding the relationship environmental sustainability between regional labor markets (International Labor Organization, 2013). This connection produces various results, in particular, the updating of the job profile, the obsolescence of specific existing "traditional" job duties, and the requirement to acquire the latest competencies in many modern the context professions in of regional development.

Some countries have already included the concept of "green jobs" in their national framework documents; among them: Austria, Korea, Germany, Finland, France, Japan and the United States (The Jobs Potential..., 2012).

According to experts, investments in the green post-war economy of Ukraine regions will generate 45% more jobs than investments without taking into account the principles of environmental and social responsibility; the calculation was made for the sectors of transport, energy, water supply and drainage, health care, education (Andrusevych, Andrusevych, Kozak, Ptashyk, Romanko, 2023), but all will depend on the legislative framework designed to support these initiatives and how the those investments will be connected with the critical needs of each region.

3. Development of modern spheres of economic activity relevant for Ukraine, taking into account regional needs.

The third direction of activity regarding the creation of conditions of decent work in Ukraine, which involves orientation towards partnership with foreign investors. Representatives of the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Poland, and Turkey show the greatest interest in investing in the Ukrainian economy (Promising industry economy..., 2024). Priority directions for international investors are: IT sphere; agriculture, renewable energy; financial sector; logistics; mining industry; metallurgy; defense industry and construction; medicine; light industry.

One of the most promising projects for investment is "green steel". Ukraine has great

prospects for supporting the development announced by the countries of the European Union and the subsequent transition to the production of steel of the vulgate-neutral type. Among the favorable factors, it is worth highlighting the following: the presence of rich deposits of iron ore; highly developed facilities for enrichment; infrastructure necessary for hydrogen transportation; convenient geographical location. The recovery of the industry after the war could create a large number of new jobs and significant demand for products such as long and flat products. With the correct vector of development of the abovementioned "green steel", this product will be able to occupy an important niche in the investment climate of the country and the export products. Investments in innovative provision of production processes, appropriate infrastructural components will eventually allow a return to pre-war export indicators.

The segment of IT technologies is very promising for Ukraine. The industry is in demand both among entrepreneurs who are actively launching new companies, and among specialists, including those who have changed their qualifications in recent years. Company growth statistics show a 10-fold increase in investment between 2014 and 2019. The period of 2020-2021 - the growth of investments in startups almost doubled. 40% of them are aimed at work for export, and 60% are focused on the domestic market. In Ukraine regions, the demand for IT specialists is constantly growing, and now it is strengthened by migration and the desire of employees of the segment to leave the country.

4. Legislative and institutional support for digitization of work.

As legal analysts point out (Social and labor rights..., 2023), legal support for digital progress can be effective when it is in close connection with all factors that can have an impact on social relations in the field of work: age and gender of workers, level of mastery of digital technologies, accessibility the use of digital platforms, depending on their regional location and technical support (availability and speed of the Internet depending on the living conditions of the region), and the quality of the



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law that ensures the transformation of labor relations.

At the global level, the adaptation of legislation to the conditions of digitization of labor activity has been taking place for more than a decade. Thus, on July 16, 2002, the European Union adopted a framework agreement dedicated to the regulation of remote work (The Framework Agreement on Telework..., 2002).

In Ukraine, in 2018, the "The Concept Development about the of Transformation of Society" was introduced (On the approval..., 2018), which declared 8 main principles of the digitization process and defined certain key terms, in particular, the document defines the content and parameters of the "digital workplace". The pandemic and the subsequent full-scale invasion prompted lawmakers to introduce a number of changes to labor legislation, which were designed to settle all the unresolved issues regarding the process of employer-employee interaction in the context of the digitalization of labor activity. But, according to experts, most of the introduced changes need to be critically reviewed, because legal and judicial practice prove that in some cases the introduced changes, instead of improving working conditions, led to restrictions on the rights and freedoms of individual employees (Social and labor rights..., 2023).

An important aspect of the success of legislative transformations is society's readiness for them: 1) psychological readiness to master digital innovations; 2) material ability to integrate into digitalization processes (availability of digital devices, appropriate equipment or necessary software), or availability of necessary equipment and means of communication.

Conclusions

1) Ukraine regions faced the task of creating decent working conditions for all categories of the population affected by hostilities, the focus of attention is on IDPs, refugees, and veterans. The main areas of activity are to meet the needs for employment (if necessary, for high-quality and relevant

retraining for the labor market) and housing. The latter (housing) is an objective condition for the return of the population to the affected and deoccupied territories;

2) the guarantee of safety (including mine) and greening of employment in combination with state stimulation of the development of promising, investment-attractive spheres of economic activity, necessary for each region, should play the role of a generator of new qualitatively equipped "green" workplaces;

3) a large segment of the work – repeated critical review of individual regulatory and legislative acts, which were updated in order to adapt and take into account the world experience of regulating labor relations in the conditions of digitalization of work, but according to the practice of implementation, they were recognized as imperfect and such that in some cases they do not improve, but on the contrary worsen working conditions, in particular, limiting the rights of employees.

In order to create conditions for decent work in the process of post-war recovery, the system of socio-economic adaptation vulnerable categories of the population to modern conditions of the regional labor market will be of great importance. Currently, the developed mechanisms for overcoming unemployment problems in Ukraine regions are formally modern, but the network of support institutions, the list of professions and the content of educational programs, the specifics of the implementation of individual initiatives financed with state funds, need monitoring and updating, because they do not meet the demand of regional labor markets in Ukraine.

Sustainable socio-economic and ecological development is a concept chosen by most countries of the world for global future strategy. Environmental problems and climate change forced a new look at the economic activity organization, including the organization of work. The trends of the last decade demonstrate significant positive dynamics regarding the increase in the number of jobs due to the development of green technologies and the introduction of productions organized according

to the principles of the circular economy. Prospective areas of economic activity are determined by the willingness of foreign investors to invest their own resources in the development of individual projects. Priorities are renewable energy, carbon-free metallurgy, IT sphere, logistics, construction, financial sector, medicine. In any case it should be done within regional requirements. For example, for south regions – the most perspective sector of recovery after demining is agriculture.

Despite the revision of the outdated legislative framework in the field of labor law, many innovations need to be updated again, because in the pursuit of the fastest possible implementation of formal steps to regulate social and labor relations in the conditions of digitalization of the economy, the legal

foundations for improving the conditions of decent work are not provided, on the contrary, the deterioration of the situation is recorded and restrictions on the rights and freedoms of employees in the conditions of remote employment.

Systematic information work and work on the formation and implementation of measures to motivate the population for their own professional development (within context of regional labor market) is another challenge that should be taken into account. The formation of the institutional infrastructure of comprehensive employment support through the formation of a conscious desire to acquire/improve modern professional competences and to live and work in Ukraine is the foundation for creating proper conditions for decent work in Ukraine regions.

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