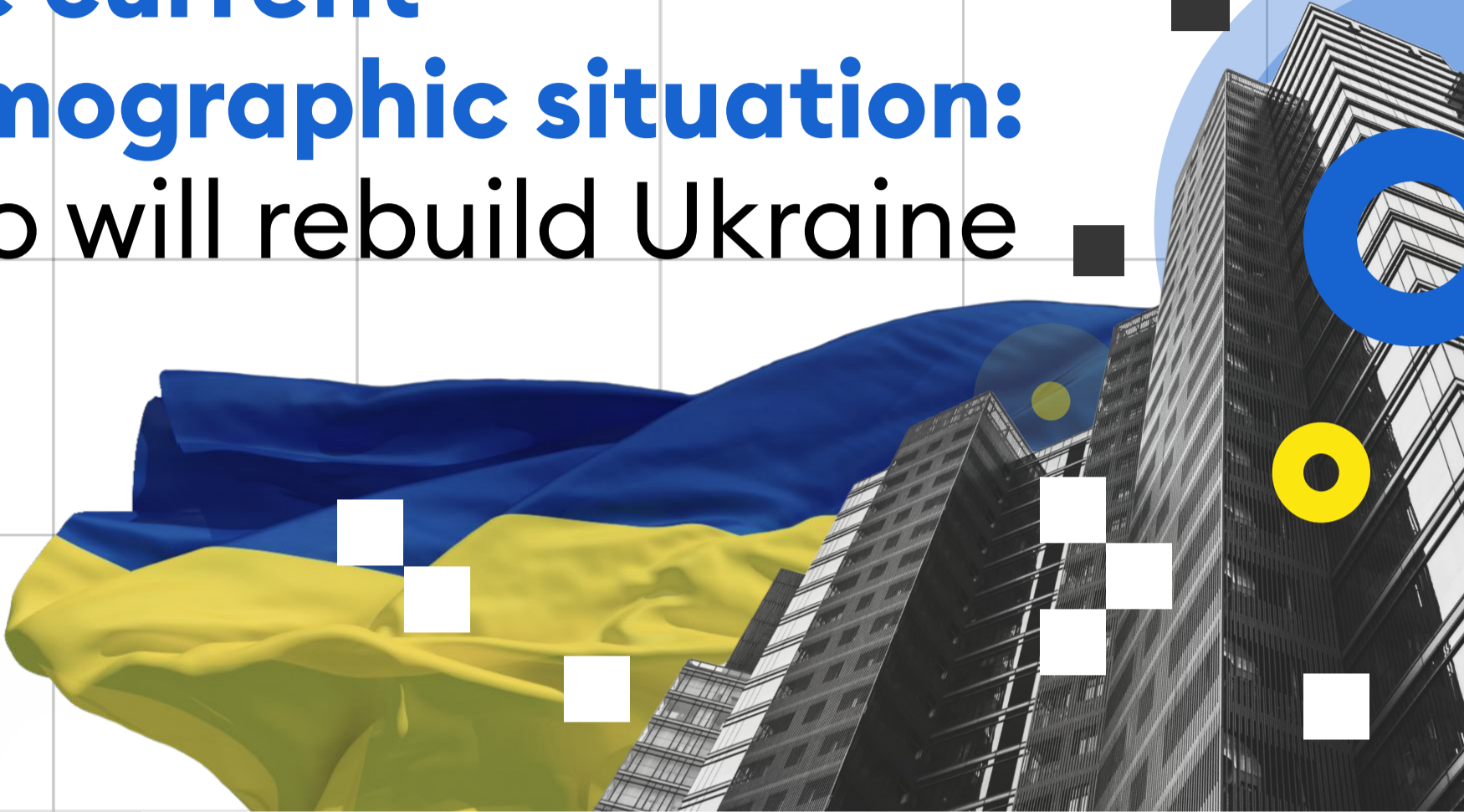


The current demographic situation: who will rebuild Ukraine



The vision of post-war recovery means creating a country with a high quality of life, where people wish to live: a safe, fair, and wealthy state. A poor country with a weak army, which economy is incapable of producing/buying quality weapons, and at the same time with the largest territory in Europe, will always be easy prey for any aggressive neighbor having imperial ambitions and much bigger mobilization potential. **The human resource is the only non-reproducible one.**

The demographic situation in Ukraine has significantly worsened due to the lasting war, creating serious challenges for future state recovery. Before the war started, the Ukrainian population was already decreasing due to low birth and high mortality rates.

41 million people  2022
population of Ukraine

According to the latest data, the population decreased to 41 million in 2022, and the war has accelerated the related processes.¹

6,2 million from 24.02.22 →
of Ukrainians left the country

7,6 million for now
of Ukrainians currently live in Europe²

The war also caused significant civilian and military casualties. It is impossible to get exact figures due to military secrecy but the verified death toll is already over 10,000, and the real number may be much higher.

➔ **According to the Ministry of Justice, births were registered:**

187 400 ²⁰²³

206 032 ²⁰²² 9% ↘

273 800 ²⁰²¹ 31,5% ↘

Although a wartime decline in the birth rate is natural due to the general uncertainty, such a trend could lead to the fact that in 2035-2037, the share of the population under the age of 18 will be 12-15%, as compared to the 25% recorded in 1993. That means that even fewer children will be born in the next generation. With even fewer in the next one, accordingly.

➔ **The mortality rate in Ukraine** is increasing not only due to hostilities but also as a result of a decrease in the level of healthcare and an increase in cardiovascular diseases given the stress.

<1 000 000 ²⁰²²⁻²⁰²⁴

deaths were registered in the territories of Ukraine controlled by Kyiv

About eight percent less in 2023 (496,200) than in 2022 (541,700)

Citizens of Ukraine in Russian-occupied territories die in the war and in the ranks of the Russian army, as they are subject to conscription if they are given Russian citizenship. The exact number of Ukrainians in the occupied areas is unknown, where citizenship of the Russian Federation is issued “automatically” and under coercion.

In September 2023, the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs claimed that since 2019, when the procedure for acquiring Russian citizenship was simplified, more than three million passports were issued to residents of Ukrainian territories not controlled by Kyiv. Moreover, more than 2.2 million documents were allegedly issued since the Russian Federation's illegal annexation of Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk, Donetsk, and Kherson oblasts in October 2022. It is impossible to verify this data in wartime.

Of the nearly 6.5 million Ukrainian refugees abroad, about 1.2 million in the Russian Federation. It is quite a large number, and its impact is significant. This includes 19,500 deported children who are being re-educated under the Russian realities.

1,2 million

Ukrainians are in the Russian Federation

Forecasts on the probability of Ukrainian refugees returning from abroad are not optimistic. According to Dariia Mykhailyshyna, senior economist of the CES, the share of those who plan to return decreases over time: based on the surveys conducted in the spring of 2023 and in December 2023 – January 2024 in the countries where refugees from Ukraine reside (excluding the Russian Federation and Belarus). 63% of respondents confirmed their plans to return the previous year, with only 26% of respondents having the same intentions now. The same number claimed that they would “probably return.” According to preliminary estimates, 1.4 – 2.3 million Ukrainians may not return from abroad, excluding the Russian Federation and Belarus.

The main incentive to return is safety. Among other factors, the surveyed Ukrainians named a higher standard of living in Ukraine, decently paid jobs, the end of temporary refugee protection, and the restoration of infrastructure in their native regions.³

➔ **Refugees returning home:**

- **safety and stability;**
- **housing** (developing programs for housing reconstruction and temporary housing provision will be a decisive factor for the citizens' return);
- **economic conditions** (creating jobs, restoring economic activity, and social guarantees will facilitate the return of Ukrainians from abroad).

➔ **Integration of those who return involves the following:**

- **psychological support** (the war had its psychological impact on many people who experienced traumatic events.
Psychological support and rehabilitation will become important aspects for the integration of those who return into society);
- **educational programs** (they will need opportunities for retraining and training to adapt to new labor market conditions.
Programs to support education and retraining will promote quicker integration into the country's economic life).

The post-war policy of states accepting Ukrainian refugees will be of equal importance. The European demographic situation is also not very good, so they are interested in Ukrainians. Most countries will likely adopt policies aimed at keeping them, given the current active efforts intended for their adaptation. Moreover, counter-migration flows are predicted after the war – that is, men still in Ukraine will leave the country to join their families abroad. So that not to lose the fight for its population and to preserve itself as a nation, Ukraine should already implement an active policy of social, humanitarian, and economic development.⁴

Factors promoting new emigration are the following:



Impact of new emigration: loss of qualified personnel; social challenges (the loss of labor force and population can worsen the demographic situation, increase the burden on social and pension systems, and also complicate the country's recovery).

➔ Demographic forecasts for Ukraine are extremely pessimistic (Fig. 1-3).

Exhausted demographic growth potential:

- for 60 years in a row, the birth rate has not even been ensuring a simple replacement of generations ($=1.2$);
- premature mortality is high, especially among men (according to 2021 data, 42% of 20-year-old men do not live to the age of 65, compared to 27% in Poland);
- long-term large-scale population outflow abroad;
- the share of the elderly in the population exceeds that of the youth ($=1.2$).⁵

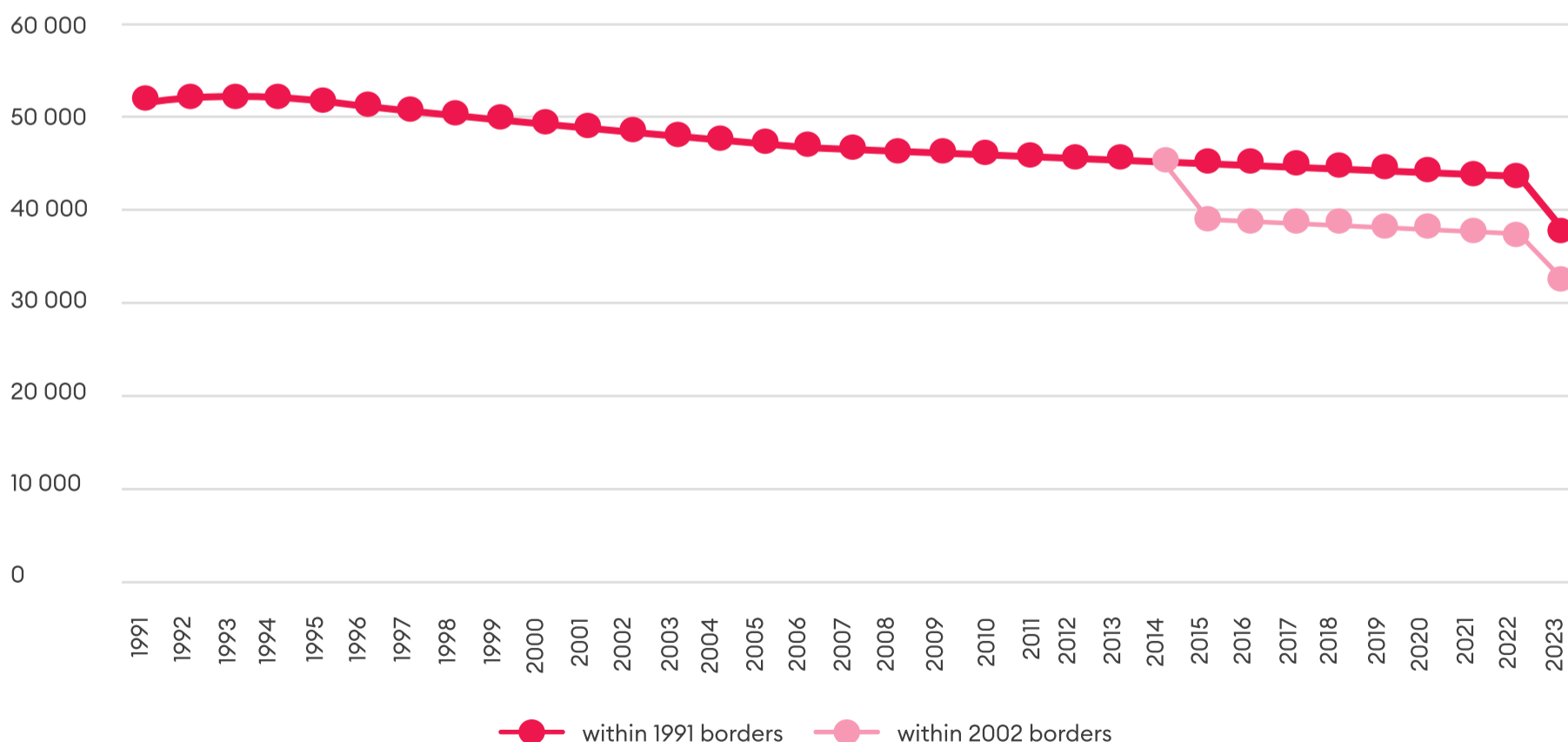


Figure 1. The population in territories under the Ukrainian government's control, 1991-2023⁶

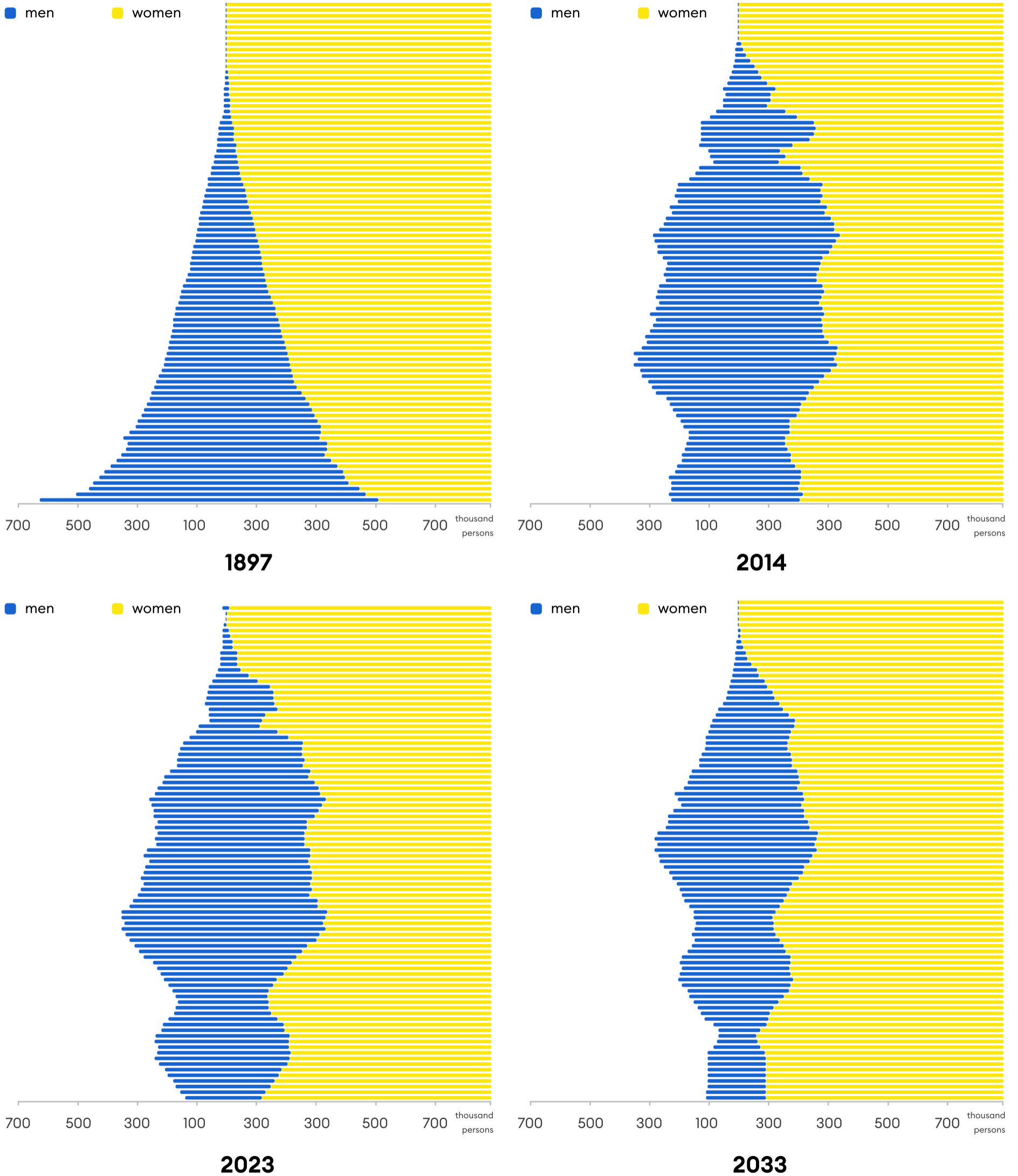


Figure 2. Gender-age structure of the populations of 1897, 2014, 2023, and 2033.⁷

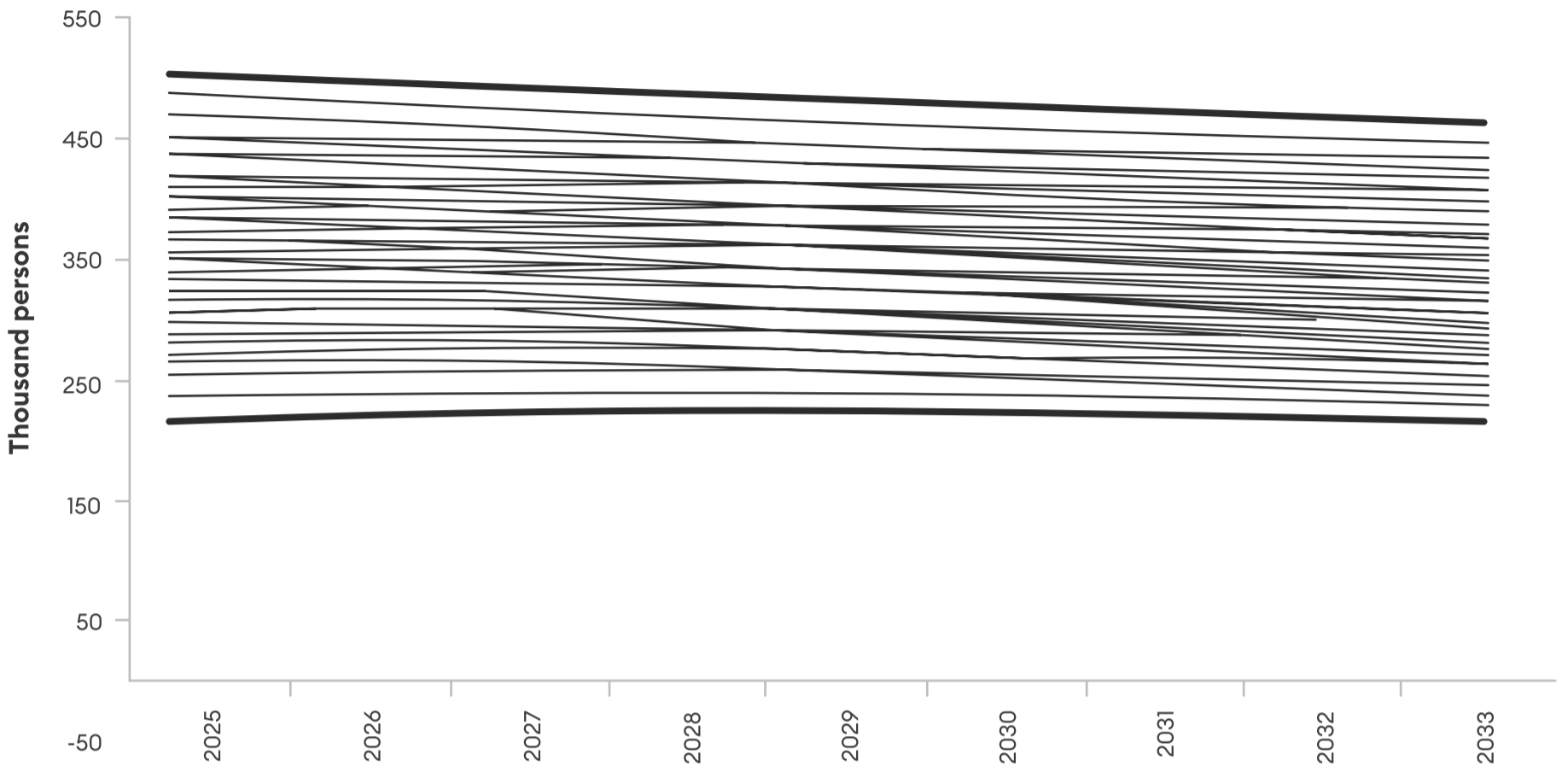


Figure 3. Annual migration balance to maintain a constant population of Ukraine, according to various hypotheses of birth and death rates ⁸

31.6 million persons

the population of the territories controlled by the Ukrainian government

01.01.2023

26-35 million persons

within Ukraine's 1991 borders ⁹

01.01.2033

What is ahead:

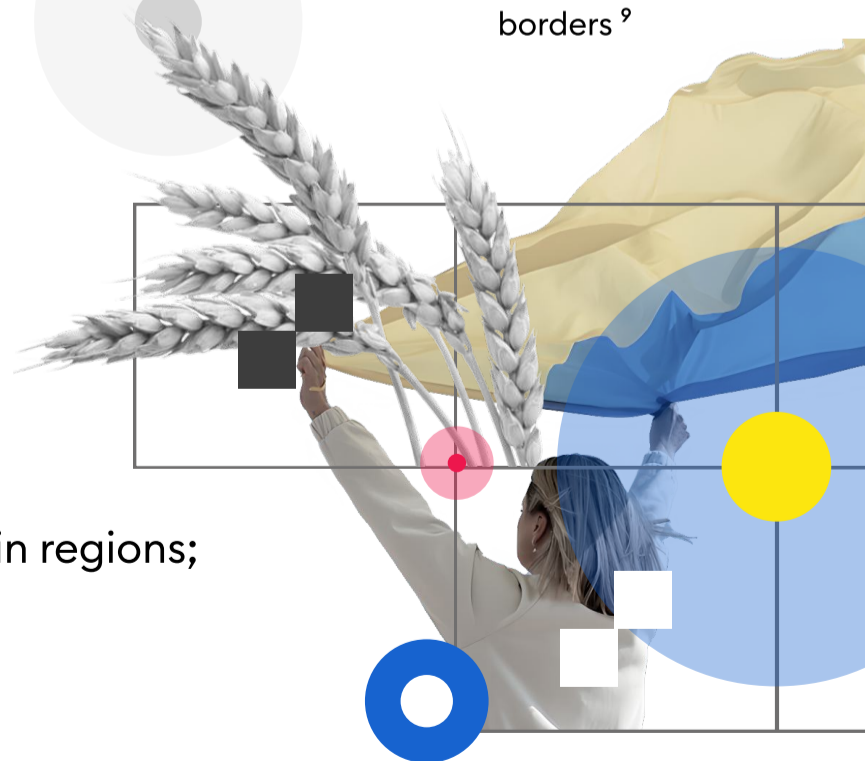
01 inevitable, given any conditions – depopulation:

- insufficient labor force;
- decrease in population density, especially in certain regions;

02 loss of a significant share of human capital;

03 demographic aging:

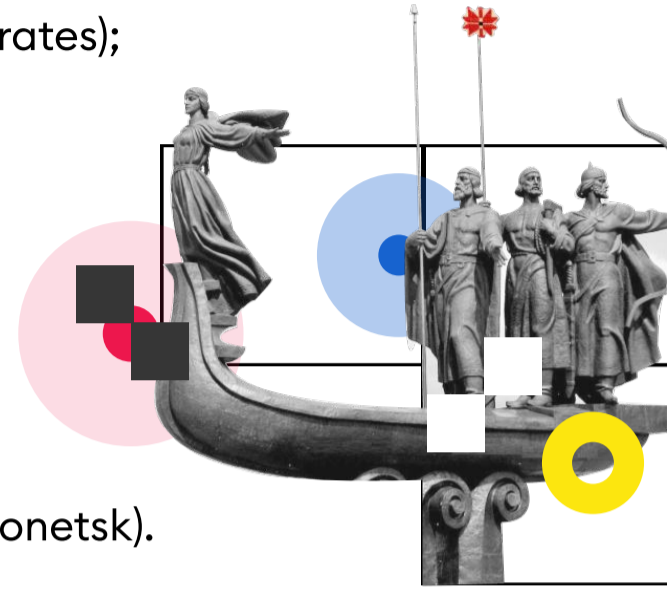
- problems with pension provision, healthcare, and social aid;
- burden on the working population (taxes);



- ↗ decrease in development potential (new knowledge, new occupations, mobility);
- ↗ strengthening of paternalistic guidelines;
- ↗ decrease in demographic growth potential (birth and death rates);

04 change in settlement system:

- ↗ western territories;
- ↗ northeastern territories;
- ↗ southeastern territories;
- ↗ central Ukraine;
- ↗ metropolitan areas (Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Odesa, Lviv, and Donetsk).



➔ Is altering the parameters of natural population changes possible? :

05 the birth rate in Ukraine is more or less in line with European standards and global trends:

- ↗ prevention of long-term exclusion of women from education/employment/self-development processes;
- ↗ aid to families with children – purpose, duration, amount:
 - amount-time;
 - budget limitations;
 - limitations related to the remuneration level;
 - duration of aid provision;

06 the mortality rate in Ukraine significantly exceeds European standards:

- ↗ lifestyle:
 - meals not eaten at home;
 - moving activities;
- ↗ conditions of employment;
- ↗ healthcare, regular medical examinations.

If migration is the main driver of Ukraine's population dynamics, a change in migration flows must be the priority

70% women

who left Ukraine after February 24, 2022 have a higher education, and most of them (in Poland) are already employed;

they have named the following conditions of their return: safety, availability of housing and jobs;

- if there are children of middle and high school age in the family, their position often plays a decisive role;
- there is a threat that some families will be reunited not in Ukraine, but abroad after the Ukrainian victory, that said, we will also lose young, active, and educated men;
- the return of Ukrainian “war fugitives” should not be accompanied by granting them exceptional benefits and creating public tension;
- we will be forced to attract immigrants.

What can be changed:

- quantitative losses of human capital can be compensated only by improving its quality;
- **health status:**
 - awareness;
 - motivation;
- **education:**
 - the general educational level of the population;
 - bringing qualification training in line with the labor market requirements;
- **economic and social activity:**
 - determining economic priorities, particularly industrial priorities, regarding opportunities for decent employment;
 - **economic model:**
 - labor cost;
 - labor coefficient;
 - **remuneration and social transfer ratio;**
 - **a prolonged period of economic activity, in particular labor activity.**



education
economy
health status
social activity

Following the war, migration processes will be complex and multifaceted. The Ukrainian government should implement comprehensive measures aimed at returning refugees, their integration, and the prevention of further emigration. This involves creating safe living conditions, restoring the economy, ensuring social guarantees, and supporting qualified professionals. Ukraine will be able to overcome demographic and economic challenges and ensure a stable and prosperous future only if a comprehensive approach is adopted.

Supporting those who have remained in Ukraine during the war is extremely important for maintaining social stability and the country's recovery. **Key areas of support:**

01 Physical and psychological safety:

- **Healthcare.** Ensuring access to quality healthcare services, including treatment of wounds and chronic diseases. Special focus should be paid to maintaining mental health, as many people have experienced severe stress and trauma;
- **Psychological support.** Psychological rehabilitation and support programs should include counseling, support groups, and therapy. This will help people cope with the consequences of war and loss.

02 Economic support:

- **Job creation.** Economic recovery via programs supporting small and medium-sized businesses, investment in infrastructure projects, and promoting entrepreneurship. This will ensure employment and stable income for the population;
- **Financial aid.** Ensuring financial aid to the most vulnerable categories of the population, including internally displaced persons, large families, and the elderly;

03 Social support:

- **Housing.** Ensuring housing for those who have lost their homes. This may include the construction of new housing complexes, the repair of damaged buildings, and the provision of temporary housing;
- **Education and preschools.** Reconstructing and supporting educational facilities so that children can return to learning in a safe environment. Creating additional places in preschools and daycares for children of internally displaced persons;

04 Humanitarian aid:

- **Food products and basic necessities.** Ensuring uninterrupted delivery of humanitarian aid, including food products, water, clothing, and other necessities;
- **Support of volunteer organizations.** Voluntary organizations play a key role in aid provision. The state and international partners should support their activities with resources and financial aid;

05 Restoration of infrastructure:

- **Repair and reconstruction.** Reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure, including roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and public buildings. This will not only improve the quality of public life but also create new jobs;
- **Energy sector and utilities.** Reconstruction of energy infrastructure, water supply, and sewage systems. This will ensure the proper functioning of cities and villages, and make people's lives easier;

06 Legal support:

- **Counselling and aid.** Providing free legal advice to the war-affected population. This may include aid with recovering documents, resolving property issues, and receiving social benefits;
- **Protection of rights.** Protection of the rights of internally displaced persons and other affected population strata at the national and international levels;

07 Public activity and mutual aid:

- **Supporting local initiatives.** Promoting and supporting local public initiatives aimed at recovery and assistance to victims. This may include funding local projects, training community leaders, and providing resources;
- **Social programs.** Organizing mutual aid and support programs, which include citizens voluntarily helping one another. This may mean joint events to solve problems, organizing charity events, and other activities.

In general, supporting those who remained in Ukraine during the war requires a comprehensive approach and coordinated efforts by the state, international organizations, businesses, and civil society. This will help ensure the country's stability and recovery after the war.

While recovering, Ukraine will face several **key demographic challenges**:

- **Lack of labor force.** Many Ukrainians left abroad, and their return will depend on economic opportunities and stability in the country. Moreover, a large part of the working population has been killed or injured as a result the war;
- **Population aging.** An imbalanced birth rate and a high mortality rate have led to the fact that the share of senior citizens is increasing creating an additional burden on the pension system and the state budget;
- **Technological modernization.** Economic growth can occur following the introduction of technology and the attraction of investment, which can compensate for labor shortages. Businesses will be forced to adapt and compete for employees by offering decent working conditions and competitive remuneration;
- **Integration of those who have returned.** It is important to create conditions for Ukrainians to return from abroad, including housing programs, jobs, and social guarantees.

Given the said factors, a successful national recovery requires comprehensive measures to support the birth rate, attract foreign investments, technologically update the economy, and socially support the population.

It is necessary to implement **a comprehensive strategy** including several key aspects for the successful recovery of Ukraine given the demographic crisis:

- **Supporting childbirth and families.** It is necessary to implement measures that promote childbirth, for example, improving healthcare services for mothers and children, financial support for families with children, establishing affordable and quality preschool institutions, as well as programs to increase awareness of the importance of family values;
- **Reintegration of refugees and displaced persons.** It is important to create conditions for Ukrainians to return from abroad by providing housing, employment, and social and healthcare services. It is also important to develop support programs for internally displaced persons so as to adapt them to new living and labor conditions;

- **Technological modernization of the economy.** The introduction of the latest technologies and the attraction of investments can compensate for the labor shortage. High-tech industries that require fewer employees but offer competitive remuneration can become a key to economic growth. Creating attractive working conditions will also help attract migrants to Ukraine;
- **Attracting foreign investments.** Attracting investments from international partners can speed up the restoration of infrastructure and the creation of new jobs. Investments in infrastructure projects, energy, information technology, and other strategic industries will become the pre-requisite for long-term economic growth;
- **Educational and retraining programs.** Investing in education and professional training is a key factor for the advanced training of the labor force. Retraining programs for employees who lost their jobs due to the war will help them discover new opportunities in the labor market. It is also important to support R&D development, which may become a driving force for innovation and technological progress;
- **Promoting the return of migrants.** It is important to create attractive conditions so that those who have left abroad will consider returning. This may include tax incentives, business support programs, social guarantees, and other measures;
- **Infrastructure development: restoration and update of infrastructure is a key task for post-war recovery.** This includes the repair and construction of roads, bridges, energy facilities, water supply, and sewage systems. Infrastructure projects not only create jobs but also improve the quality of public life and increase the investment attractiveness of the country;
- **Support of small and medium-sized businesses.** Small and medium-sized businesses are the basis of the economy of many countries, and Ukraine is no exception. State support for small and medium-sized businesses can include tax benefits, simplification of administrative procedures, and access to financing and advisory services. The development of small and medium-sized businesses contributes to the creation of new jobs and improving the economy at the local level;
- **Improving the healthcare system.** The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have proven the importance of a developed and efficient healthcare system. Investments in medical infrastructure, training and retraining of healthcare personnel, as well as ensuring access to quality medical services are crucial to maintaining the population's health and creating favorable conditions for refugees returning;
- **Social support and integration of veterans.** The war resulted in a large number of veterans requiring social support and re-integration into civilian life. This may include psychological support, employment programs, training, and social benefits. Supporting veterans is not only a moral obligation but also a necessity for the stability of society;
- **Public and international recovery programs.** Ukraine may benefit from taking into account the experiences of other countries that have survived devastating conflicts. Public recovery programs should be coordinated with international organizations and donors to ensure efficient resource allocation. Reconstruction programs should be transparent and accountable to promote trust in the government and international partners;
- **Political and legal stability.** Political and legal stability is crucial for the country's successful recovery. Judicial reforms, the fight against corruption, and improving democratic institutions will contribute to the creation of a favorable climate for domestic and foreign investments;

- **Education and R&D.** Investing in education and R&D is a long-term investment in the future of the country. The modern education system should be adapted to new challenges and ensure a high level of professional training. Supporting R&D and innovative projects will contribute to the development of new technologies and increase the competitiveness of the Ukrainian economy on the global stage;
- **Involving the diaspora.** The Ukrainian diaspora may become an important resource for the country's recovery. The diaspora may contribute to the attraction of investments, sharing of knowledge and experience, as well as the lobbying of Ukraine's interests internationally. Creating conditions for Ukrainians to return from abroad or their active participation in the country's recovery is an important task;
- **Regional development and decentralization.** Efficient decentralization allows regions to independently determine development priorities and attract local resources for their implementation. This will contribute to the balanced development of the country and reduce the pressure on the central government. Regional recovery programs should be implemented given local specific features and needs, which will allow more efficient allocation of resources and increase the involvement of local communities;
- **Environmental sustainability and restoration of natural resources.** The war caused significant damage to Ukraine's ecology by destroying natural landscapes and polluting water and air. Environmental restoration should be a priority, including programs to clean up contaminated areas and restore forests and other natural resources. The development of environmentally friendly technologies and green energy will help make the economy more sustainable and reduce dependence on traditional energy sources;
- **Increasing international cooperation.** Ukraine should actively cooperate with such international organizations as the UN, the EU, NATO, and other partners to ensure support for the country's recovery. This includes not only financial aid but also expert support, exchange of experience, and the involvement of international experts in the restoration project implementation;
- **Digitization and development of the IT sector.** Ukraine has significant IT potential, so the development of the IT sector may become an important driver of economic growth. Implementing digital technologies in public administration, education, health care, and other sectors will increase their efficiency and transparency, as well as create new opportunities for businesses and innovations;
- **An inclusive society.** A post-war society should be inclusive given the needs of all population strata, including people with disabilities, veterans, women, children, and the elderly. Social integration and equal opportunities are important for sustainable development and harmony in society. Support programs aimed at protecting rights and ensuring decent living conditions for all citizens should be implemented both at the national and local levels;
- **Development of culture and national identity.** Culture and national identity will play an important role in the country's recovery. Support of cultural projects, preservation of historical heritage, and development of national education will promote a sense of unity and patriotism among citizens. It will also contribute to a global positive image of Ukraine and attract cultural investors and tourists.

These measures will require significant efforts and resources but they are necessary to overcome the demographic crisis and ensure a stable and prosperous future for Ukraine. A comprehensive approach to the country's recovery including economic, social, and infrastructural aspects, will help create conditions for Ukrainians to return home and ensure sustainable development in the long term.

These measures will require the coordinated efforts of government, businesses, international partners, and civil society. Ukraine has to adopt a comprehensive approach to overcome demographic challenges and ensure the country's sustainable development and recovery.

The concept of a State of Gratitude in Ukraine may contribute to solving demographic challenges by supporting veterans and their families, improving living conditions, stimulating birth, and involving the diaspora. **This will help ensure social stability and sustainable development of the country, as well as create conditions for population growth and economic recovery after the war:**

- ➔ **Social benefits.** Ensuring housing, education, healthcare, and other social services to veterans and their families. This is aimed not only at acknowledging their contribution but also at stimulating demographic growth through improved living standards;
- ➔ **Financial support.** Ensure financial incentives, including tax rebates and grants for starting businesses. This will contribute to the economic stability of veterans' families and encourage young people to create families;
- ➔ **Psychological rehabilitation.** Ensuring access to psychological care and rehabilitation programs for veterans to help them adapt to a peaceful life and improve their mental health;
- ➔ **Physical rehabilitation.** Physical rehabilitation programs for wounded veterans to allow them to return to active life and work;
- ➔ **Educational programs.** Scholarships and grants for children of veterans to receive higher education. This is an investment in the future of the country, which also promotes population growth by better education conditions;
- ➔ **Vocational training.** Retraining and vocational training courses for veterans and their families to help them find a job or start their businesses;
- ➔ **Housing construction.** Housing construction programs for veterans and their families. This will not only provide housing for those who need it but will also contribute to demographic growth through new housing conditions;
- ➔ **Community recovery.** Reconstruction of infrastructure in war-affected communities, including schools, hospitals, and kindergartens. This will create comfortable living conditions and facilitate the return of refugees;

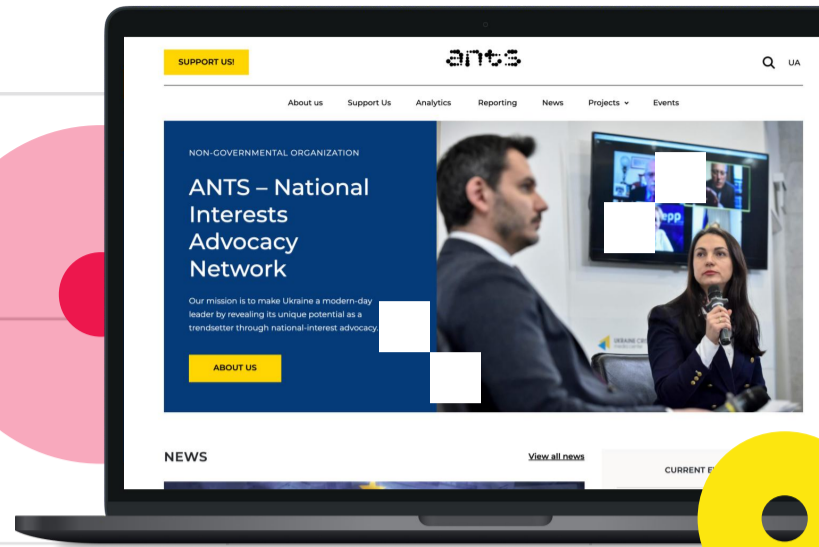
- ➔ **Investment programs.** Programs to encourage the Ukrainian diaspora to invest in the country's recovery. This may include financing projects, creating jobs, and supporting innovation;
- ➔ **Return of professionals.** Promoting the return of Ukrainians from abroad, in particular those who have important professional skills and knowledge, by ensuring them special benefits and working conditions;
- ➔ **Benefits for families.** Tax and social benefits for large families. This will promote population growth and support families who decide to have more children;
- ➔ **Availability of preschools and daycares.** Ensuring availability of high-quality preschools, daycares, kindergartens, and other children's educational facilities for families to combine work and raising children;
- ➔ **Supporting public initiatives.** Funding and support of civil society organizations that help veterans, internally displaced persons, and war victims. This will create an environment of mutual aid and promote social integration.

The concept of a State of Gratitude may become a powerful tool for the recovery of Ukraine after the war by combining honoring and supporting veterans with the solution to demographic issues. The implementation of this concept involves honoring and rewarding our heroes, social benefits, and support, not only to acknowledge the defenders' contributions, but also to create conditions for a stable life for their families. This will contribute to an increase in the birth rate and reduced outflow of the population abroad.

The concept of a State of Gratitude

Thus, the integration of the State of Gratitude concept with measures for demographic recovery will create conditions for social stability and economic prosperity in Ukraine. This will help not only to acknowledge the contribution of those who defended the country but also to ensure sustainable population growth and development of the national economy, thus setting a solid foundation for the future of the country.

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