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B2B OUTSOURCING AND LABOUR MIGRATION: NEW FORMS OF INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

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The article examines B2B outsourcing and labor migration as modern international mobility patterns which emerged within the global economic system. The research investigates how these processes interact with each other to transform labor markets and worldwide value chains. The research uses systematic analysis and comparative evaluation of international organization data to establish its methodological framework. B2B outsourcing functions as a substitute for physical labor migration because it enables donor countries to maintain their human capital while developing their high-tech economic sectors. The research demonstrates that states need to unite outsourcing with labor migration strategies to achieve global market competitiveness and establish a new international mobility system.

Keywords: *B2B outsourcing, labour migration, virtual migration, international mobility, global economy, labour market, digitalisation.*

Introduction. The modern global economy features active and interconnected markets that have created new patterns of international worker movement. B2B outsourcing functions as a vital instrument for redistributing labor resources between countries through cross-border cooperation while traditional labor migration continues to play its established

role in balancing donor and recipient nations. The combination of digital transformation and information technology development enables companies to access human capital through outsourcing which functions as a substitute or addition to physical employee relocation. The scientific value and practical application of this research topic remain high because it affects countries that send labor migrants and provide outsourcing services to the world market including Ukraine.

Research conducted internationally demonstrates that business process digitization together with globalization has transformed how labor moves across borders. International business migration functions as a vital element which needs thorough evaluation of its economic and social impacts [1]. The authors of Kedia, Lahiri support an international outsourcing model which creates partnerships that minimize transaction expenses while fostering worldwide service development [2]. The research of Hatzigeorgiou at al. demonstrates that migrant employment costs influence offshoring contracts which proves the direct link between labor migration and outsourcing operations [3].

The modern world of global mobility includes virtual migration as a new phenomenon which connects workers to transnational projects through digital platforms. The research field of global virtual work shows promise according to Froese, Sahoo, Peltokorpi [4] because it demands fresh approaches to business structure and team leadership. The employment structure of developing countries undergoes changes due to offshoring according to Basu at al. because outsourcing functions as a domestic labor retention strategy. [5]

Despite considerable scientific interest, questions remain unresolved regarding mechanisms for integrating labour migration and B2B outsourcing as complementary forms of mobility, the impact of these processes on the labour markets of donor and recipient countries, opportunities for using

outsourcing as a tool for preserving human capital in countries with high levels of emigration.

The topic requires attention because it needs a complete policy framework that controls labor migration while promoting B2B service development for global economic participation. The issue holds dual scientific and strategic practical value for Ukraine because it serves as both a labor provider and an outsourcing service supplier.

Definition of the purpose and objectives of the article. The purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between B2B outsourcing and labour migration as new forms of international mobility in the global economy and to determine their impact on the transformation of the labour market, the preservation of human capital, and the integration of national economies into global value chains. The article defines the following tasks: to reveal theoretical and methodological approaches to the analysis of outsourcing and labour migration in the context of international mobility and to investigate current trends in the development of the B2B services market and their interconnection with global migration processes, assess the economic and social effects of combining outsourcing and labour migration for donor and recipient countries. Identify the potential risks and benefits of virtual mobility as an alternative to traditional labour migration. Justify the prospects and strategic directions for the use of B2B outsourcing for Ukraine in the process of post-war recovery and integration into global markets.

Description of the main material of the article, indicating the methods and full justification of the scientific results.

To achieve the set objectives, the study employs comparative and structural-functional analysis, generalisation and empirical analysis. Comparative analysis is used to compare classical labour migration and B2B outsourcing as forms of international mobility. Structural and functional analysis was used to identify the role of B2B outsourcing in global value

chains. The method of generalisation was used to systematise the research results. Empirical analysis was used to assess the scale of labour migration and service exports.

B2B outsourcing functions as a cost reduction method while creating international partnership opportunities which drive resource distribution between nations [2]. The outsourcing model enables donor countries to maintain their human capital at home through virtual mobility which connects workers to international business networks [5]. International migration numbers have grown to 281 million people who now make up 3.6% of the worldwide population [6]. The global outsourcing services market has surpassed 260 billion US dollars [7] while experts predict it will reach 450 billion US dollars by 2027 which demonstrates how virtual mobility has become the preferred choice over traditional migration methods.

Offshoring and outsourcing are creating a new economic geography of employment, in which a number of countries specialise in providing high-tech services, while others focus on attracting labour through migration channels. Global virtual labour contributes to the formation of new formats of international interaction, where the use of digital platforms allows for the effective organisation of remote teams, reducing transaction costs and risks associated with the physical mobility of workers [8].

In the case of Ukraine, which is both one of the largest exporters of labour migrants to the EU over 5 million people [9] and a leading player in the IT outsourcing market in Eastern Europe, IT services exports in 2021 amounted to approximately 7.4 billion US dollars, which is 36% more than in 2020 [11], this dual dynamic is particularly telling. It demonstrates that, alongside the mass outflow of labour, there is active development of sectors focused on «virtual mobility».

The modern international mobility system based on B2B outsourcing depends on digitalization and worldwide network connections and global

value chain participation. The global economy rewards nations that successfully unite their physical and digital mobility capabilities to achieve strategic market advantages.

Offshoring and outsourcing of services account for up to 30% of cross-border transactions in IT, finance, consulting and marketing, and the global outsourcing market exceeded 260 billion US dollars in 2022 [7]. This figure is expected to reach over 450 billion US dollars by 2027, demonstrating the growing importance of «virtual mobility» as an alternative to traditional labour migration.

Modern business operations combine physical worker migration with remote teams under a unified global service production system. The importation of foreign workers by recipient countries brings advantages while their active pursuit of outsourcing contracts enables them to achieve cost efficiency and production growth [1]. The Eastern European countries of Ukraine and Poland demonstrate how their labour market operates through dual systems where physical work migration solves staffing needs in manual industries and business-to-business outsourcing drives digital and high-tech sector growth. The modern international labour market operates through a hybrid system which unites physical migration with offshoring to create a complementary relationship between these two processes. The global labour market structure is evolving into a complex system which merges physical workforce movements with digital-based virtual mobility through international platforms and contractual agreements. The 21st century labour market success depends more on countries' ability to connect with global service and knowledge exchange networks than on the physical movement of workers [1].

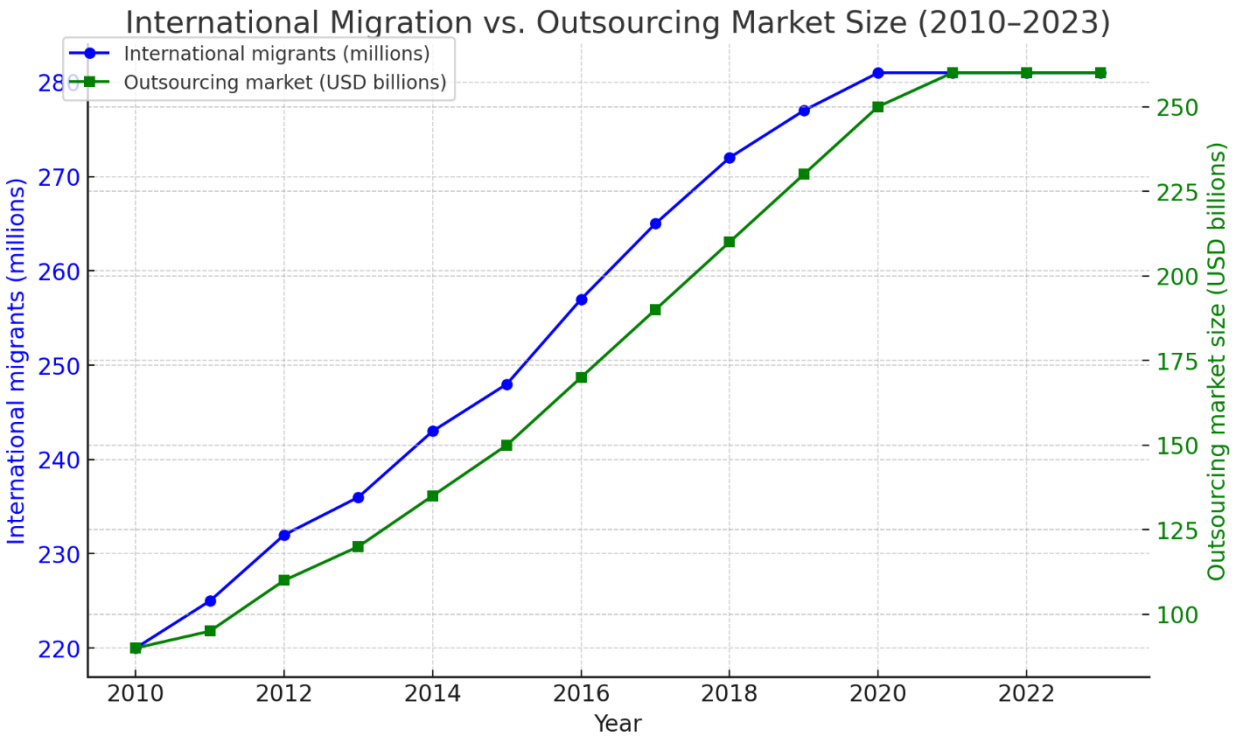

Figure 1. International Migration vs. Outsourcing Market Size (2010-2023)

*Source: [6; 7]

Figure 1 shows the parallel growth in the number of international migrants (millions of people) and the volume of the global outsourcing market (billions of US dollars). The dynamics confirm that physical and virtual mobility are developing synchronously, forming a new architecture of the global labour market.

The practice of outsourcing enables recipient nations to achieve two goals through cost reduction of business operations and enhanced implementation efficiency which benefits competitive industries. Financial services companies in developed nations can cut their expenses by 20-30% through offshoring and outsourcing while IT outsourcing enables savings of up to 40% [11]. The decrease in physical labor immigration requirements enables countries to minimize certain social expenses that come from integrating foreign workers into domestic labor markets.

For donor countries, outsourcing plays a strategic role as it provides an alternative to labour migration, keeping highly skilled workers within the

national economy. This is particularly important for Ukraine, [9] loses up to 1.5–2 million active workers annually due to physical labour migration, while the volume of IT services exports in 2022 exceeded 7.3 billion dollars [10]. Thus, even with a massive outflow of labour, the development of the outsourcing sector creates added value within the country: if the average IT specialist in Ukraine generates between 25,000 dollars and 30,000 dollars per year in the form of export contracts, this is comparable to or even exceeds the annual remittances of a single labour migrant working in low-skilled jobs abroad.

However, the contractual costs of offshoring are closely linked to the market integration of migrants [12]. If a country accepts significant numbers of labour migrants, the business environment becomes more accustomed to multicultural interaction, which in turn reduces the risks of contract non-performance and cuts the costs of monitoring them. According to their calculations, a 1% increase in the share of immigrants in the workforce can reduce the costs of enforcing contracts in international B2B agreements by approximately 0.2–0.3%, which stimulates an increase in the number of cross-border agreements [3].

Table 1

Economic effects of outsourcing and labour migration for donor and recipient countries

Dimension	Recipient countries (developed economies)	Donor countries (developing/emerging economies, incl. Ukraine)
Labour costs	Reduction of business costs by 20–40% through outsourcing	Retention of skilled labour, reduction of “brain drain” through virtual mobility
Productivity	Increase in efficiency of IT and finance sectors	Growth of export-oriented services: Ukrainian IT exports reached 7.3 bn USD in 2022
Migration flows	Lower demand for low-/medium-skilled immigrant workers due to outsourced services	Outflow of 1.5–2 million labour migrants annually, partly compensated by outsourcing contracts

Contract costs	Decline in enforcement costs when immigration share in workforce rises: 1% more migrants → 0.2–0.3% lower costs	Higher integration into global B2B contracts as migration experience reduces business risks
Added value	Access to global talent without permanent immigration	Each Ukrainian IT specialist generates 25–30k USD annually in export revenue, comparable to or higher than remittances
Social effects	Less pressure on local social systems due to reduced physical immigration	Preservation of family ties, reduced social costs of migration, strengthening of digital skills base

Source:[9; 10;13]

Table 2 shows a comparison of the economic and social effects of B2B outsourcing and labour migration for recipient and donor countries. The data presented shows that for developed economies, outsourcing is an effective tool for reducing production costs and increasing the productivity of business processes, while reducing dependence on physical labour immigration. This minimises the social and institutional costs associated with integrating foreign workers into national labour markets. For labour-exporting countries, including Ukraine, B2B outsourcing serves as an alternative to traditional labour migration, as it helps to retain skilled workers within the country and generate domestic value added through the export of services. The above indicators confirm that the development of outsourcing sectors, especially in the field of information technology and financial services, partially compensates for the loss of human capital caused by physical migration.

Global virtual work is shaping fundamentally new business models based on remote team management, the development of cross-cultural communication, and the use of digital collaboration platforms. This approach allows companies to integrate specialists from different countries into unified production and service processes without the need to physically relocate

employees, effectively creating a new form of international mobility – virtual migration [8].

The scale of this phenomenon is confirmed by statistical data more than 28% of service sector employees worldwide have the opportunity to work remotely, while in high-tech sectors this figure exceeds 45% [9]. At the same time, according to the [14], the share of global companies using remote international teams has grown from 16% in 2015 to 62% in 2023, indicating a systemic transformation of work organisation models.

Digital platforms for international cooperation have become the infrastructural basis for virtual migration. The market for online platforms for professional B2B services (Upwork, Toptal, Fiverr, Freelancer, etc.) provides an annual volume of cross-border contracts exceeding 70 billion dollar US, and the average annual growth rate of this segment exceeds 15%. Thus, a new mechanism for integrating human capital into global value chains without traditional migration channels is being formed. From an economic point of view, virtual migration also changes the structure of currency inflows. While traditional labour migration generates remittances averaging around 3000–5000 dollar US per migrant per year for middle-income countries, the average contract for a remote IT specialist or consultant in the B2B sector generates 20000–35000 dollar US. This means that even partial replacement of physical migration with virtual migration can significantly increase the efficiency of human capital use in the donor country [15].

This trend is particularly important for Ukraine. More than 300000 specialists work in the IT and digital B2B services sector, and exports of IT services exceeded 7 billion dollar US, accounting for about 4% of the country's GDP [10]. At the same time, more than 5 million Ukrainians are involved in physical labour migration. This means that the development of virtual mobility creates a real opportunity to reorient some potential migrants to remote global B2B sectors, reducing the loss of human capital.

An important consequence of the spread of virtual migration is the reduction of social costs associated with physical emigration. The integration of a single labour migrant in the recipient country requires between 6000 dollar US and 15000 dollar US in public and social costs in the first years of residence (language adaptation, housing, social insurance, administrative procedures). In contrast, the virtual employment model avoids these costs, as the worker remains in their country of origin but participates in international production processes [16].

The article uses the Hybrid Mobility Index (HMI) as an integral indicator reflecting the degree of a country's involvement in global economic processes simultaneously through physical international mobility (labour migration, approximated by the share of personal remittances in GDP) and through virtual mobility like participation in the international division of labour without the physical movement of workers, approximated by exports of B2B services in GDP. The empirical operationalisation of the index is based on World Bank indicators such as Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) as the migration component and service export indicators in BoP as an approximation of the B2B segment, in particular ICT service exports, normalised to the country's GDP. The HMI allows for a quantitative comparison of countries with different models of international integration, revealing whether they are dominated by a strategy of labour export through migration, a strategy of skills export through B2B channels, or a balanced (hybrid) trajectory.

For the empirical calculation of the Hybrid Mobility Index (HMI), the study formed a comparative sample of countries representing different models of integration into global international mobility flows. The analysis includes Ukraine, Poland, Romania, India and the Philippines, covering both labour migration donor countries and B2B outsourcing leaders, as well as

economies with mixed (hybrid) models of participation in the global labour market.

Ukraine was chosen as the base country for the study because it is both one of the largest donors of labour migrants in Europe and a leading exporter of digital and IT services in the region. This dual role shapes a characteristic hybrid model of international mobility. Poland is included in the sample as a recipient country of labour migration, particularly from Ukraine, which is also actively developing its business services sector (shared service centres, BPO, IT services). This allows for an analysis of the combination of physical labour recruitment and B2B service exports within a single economy. Romania is similar to Ukraine in terms of economic structure and migration dynamics. It is a source of labour migration to EU countries, but has developed a strong IT outsourcing sector. This provides an opportunity to compare two similar models of hybrid mobility in Eastern Europe. India is included as a global leader in the B2B outsourcing and digital services market. Its economy demonstrates the dominance of virtual mobility through the export of business services, which makes it possible to identify a benchmark model of ‘exporting competencies’ in global value chains. The Philippines was selected as a country with high levels of labour emigration and significant dependence on remittances from migrants. This allows for the formation of a contrasting model in which physical mobility dominates over virtual forms of participation in the global economy.

The selected countries allow us to identify three key types of international mobility: the dominance of physical migration (the Philippines), the dominance of B2B outsourcing (India), and a hybrid model combining both channels (Ukraine, Poland, Romania).

Using the formula:

$$HMI = 0.5 \times \text{Remittances (\%GDP)} + 0.5 \times \text{B2B exports (\%GDP)}, \quad (1)$$

based on the sample data presented in the table 2, we will determine Hybrid Mobility Index

Table 2

Hybrid Mobility Index for 2024

Country	Remittances (% GDP)	B2B exports (% GDP)	Hybrid Mobility Index
Ukraine	6,3	7,35	6,82
Poland	0,9	1,34	1,12
Romania	2,5	3,08	2,79
India	3,5	2,94	3,22
Philippines	8,7	3,09	5,89

Source:[17;18;19]

The calculation of the Hybrid Mobility Index for Ukraine, Poland, Romania, India, and the Philippines allowed for a cross-country comparison of models of national economies' integration into the global labour market through a combination of physical and virtual mobility. The results confirm the existence of significant structural differences in the ways countries are included in international flows of human capital and business services, which shapes different trajectories of socio-economic development in the context of the digital transformation of the global economy.

The results obtained confirm that modern models of international mobility are increasingly taking shape as a combination of physical and virtual channels of integration, and the development of B2B outsourcing is a key factor in preserving human capital and increasing the competitiveness of national economies in the global environment.

Ukraine has the highest HMI among the countries studied, indicating the formation of a pronounced hybrid model of international mobility, in which significant migration outflow is combined with the active development of exports of digital and business services. This means that, along with the physical loss of part of its labour potential, the country simultaneously retains and attracts skilled human capital to global production chains through virtual

mobility mechanisms, which creates the conditions for compensating for the negative effects of emigration by generating domestic added value in the IT outsourcing, digital services and business services.

The Philippine model, dominated by physical labour migration, reflected in a high share of remittances in GDP and a relatively lower share of B2B exports, provides significant foreign currency inflows but is accompanied by a steady outflow of human capital and dependence of economic growth on external labour markets. The potential for transition to a virtual mobility model in this country is linked to the need to develop digital infrastructure, educational programmes and a business services ecosystem.

India demonstrates the opposite model, where virtual mobility dominates due to large-scale exports of IT and business services, which leads to high integration into global value chains without significant physical movement of labour. This confirms the effectiveness of the ‘export of competencies’ strategy, whereby a country retains human capital within the national economy while benefiting from global demand for digital services, minimising the social costs associated with mass emigration and creating long-term advantages for innovative development.

Poland and Romania are forming intermediate European models of hybrid mobility. Poland combines active recruitment of labour migrants with the development of the business services sector, which ensures a balance between physical and virtual mobility and contributes to the internal saturation of the labour market. Romania, like Ukraine, combines migration outflows with dynamic growth in IT outsourcing, indicating a gradual transition from a «labour export» model to a «digital services export» model.

The prospects for the development of virtual mobility for Ukraine are significantly enhanced by the simultaneous convergence with EU digital policies and internal institutional support for the IT and B2B sectors, as it is the combination of external integration and internal incentives that creates

conditions under which human capital can ‘work for export’ without leaving the country. The European vector of digital integration opens up access for Ukrainian organisations to financing and cooperation tools that are directly focused on innovation, digital technologies and competencies.

Ukraine's association agreement with Horizon Europe entered into force on 9 June 2022, allowing Ukrainian participants to take part in projects on terms similar to those of EU countries, while the total funding for the programme for 2021–2027 is estimated at tens of billions of euros.[] The European Commission signed an agreement on Ukraine's association with the Digital Europe Programme in September 2022, expanding opportunities to participate in initiatives on AI, supercomputing, digital skills and the Digital Innovation Hubs network. It is also important that the EU Digital Single Market framework has historically been aimed at removing barriers to cross-border digital services and creating a single environment for business, thus creating an institutional context in which Ukrainian B2B service providers receive clearer guidance on regulatory compliance and market access.

Ukraine's long-term competitiveness in the field of B2B outsourcing directly depends on the ability of the education system to quickly reproduce and build competencies that are critical for ‘virtual mobility,’ and this goes beyond technical skills. Since remote work in transnational teams requires a combination of digital competencies with management and communication skills, priority is given to programmes that integrate digital technologies (data, cybersecurity, cloud solutions, AI tools), business communication and cross-cultural interaction, project management, and legal literacy in international contracts are becoming a priority.

Participation in European programmes that directly support the development of skills and innovative ecosystems can perform not only a financial but also a standardising function, setting requirements for the quality of human capital and management practices in projects.

Ukraine's prospects lie in institutionally combining European digital integration, national incentives for B2B service exports, and systematic staff training. Only under this condition will virtual mobility transform from a situational response to migration challenges into a strategic mechanism for preserving human capital, where the state does not simply declare support for IT exports, but also develops infrastructure, reduces regulatory barriers, and invests in a ‘competency package’ for working in global teams, then the likelihood increases that some potential migrants will choose the path of virtual participation in the global economy. This mitigates the demographic and social risks of emigration, while strengthening the country's ability to create added value within the national economy.

Conclusions. The study confirmed that in today's global economy, international labour mobility is undergoing a profound structural transformation, with traditional forms of physical labour migration increasingly combined with virtual mobility through B2B outsourcing and digital trade in services. This evolution is driven by the digitalisation of business processes, the development of global communication networks and the growing demand for remote, highly skilled services, which allows human capital to be integrated into international value chains without the need for physical relocation.

The Hybrid Mobility Index (HMI) developed in the article made it possible to compare models of integration into the global labour market across countries and identify significant structural differences in the ratio of physical and virtual mobility. Empirical results have shown that Ukraine is forming a pronounced hybrid model of international mobility, in which significant migration outflow is combined with the active development of exports of digital and business services. This creates the basis for partial compensation for human capital losses through mechanisms of virtual

participation in global economic processes and opens up opportunities for a transition from a model of «labour export» to a model of «skills export».

The development of B2B outsourcing can serve as a tool for retaining human capital in countries with high emigration rates, as virtual mobility allows specialists to work in international markets while remaining in the national economy, which reduces the social costs of migration and increases domestic added value. At the same time, the effectiveness of such a model depends on the level of digital infrastructure, the quality of human capital, and the availability of government incentives for the development of export-oriented service sectors.

Prospects for further research in this area are linked, firstly, to improving methods for quantitatively measuring virtual mobility by expanding the system of indicators for assessing digital exports of services and the participation of specialists in global online platforms. Further research is needed on institutional mechanisms of public policy aimed at combining the regulation of labour migration with support for the export of B2B services, especially in the context of Ukraine's post-war recovery.

The development of an effective model of hybrid international mobility, in which physical and virtual forms of participation in the global labour market complement each other, is one of the key challenges and, at the same time, a strategic opportunity for countries seeking to retain human capital and strengthen their competitiveness in the digital economy.

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