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INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE MIGRATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN UKRAINE: FROM CENTRALIZED APPROACH TO INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

The full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has fundamentally changed the migration situation in the state, creating unprecedented challenges for the migration management system. The contemporary geopolitical crisis has exposed both the vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities of existing institutional frameworks, necessitating comprehensive analysis of their transformation dynamics. According to official data, millions of Ukrainians became internally displaced persons, and a significant number of citizens sought refuge in neighboring countries. These demographic shifts represent not merely quantitative changes but qualitative transformations in the nature of migration flows, requiring sophisticated analytical approaches to understand their long-term implications for state policy. Such scale of forced population displacement requires a radical restructuring of the institutional architecture for managing migration processes.

Under martial law conditions, traditional approaches to migration management, based on routine administrative procedures of peacetime, proved inadequate to new realities. The crisis situation demanded immediate institutional innovation and adaptive governance mechanisms that could function effectively under conditions

of extreme uncertainty and rapid change. The state was forced to promptly adapt its institutional system to simultaneously address the tasks of protecting refugees, assisting internally displaced persons, supporting Ukrainian migrants abroad, and maintaining security control under active combat conditions. This multidimensional challenge highlighted the critical importance of institutional resilience and flexibility in contemporary public administration systems.

The reorganization of central executive bodies in July 2025, particularly the creation of the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine through the consolidation of several agencies' functions, became a logical consequence of the need to optimize public administration under limited resources and growing challenges. This institutional reconfiguration represents a paradigmatic shift in understanding migration governance as an integrated policy domain requiring holistic approaches rather than fragmented sectoral interventions. This actualizes the study of institutional transformation processes in the migration management system as an important element of state-building under wartime conditions.

The objective of this study is to analyze institutional transformations of the migration management system

in Ukraine in the context of transition from a centralized approach to an inter-agency coordination model, with particular emphasis on changes caused by martial law and the need to adapt to contemporary national security challenges. The methodological approach employed combines institutional analysis with policy evaluation frameworks to provide comprehensive insights into the transformation dynamics.

The issue of institutional transformations in migration management in Ukraine has been studied by several domestic scholars. The scholarly discourse on this topic reflects evolving theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches that mirror the complexity of migration phenomena themselves. T. V. Drakokhrust in her monograph "State Migration Policy of Ukraine" (2020) comprehensively analyzed the evolution of the institutional migration management system, although her research did not cover the radical changes of the wartime period [1]. Her work provides valuable baseline analysis for understanding pre-war institutional configurations and their inherent strengths and limitations.

The encyclopedic publication "Migration Processes in the Modern World" edited by Yu. I. Rymarenko (2008) laid theoretical foundations for understanding the role of various actors in migration policy formation and implementation, but requires updating considering contemporary realities [2]. The temporal gap between this foundational work and current circumstances underscores the dynamic nature of migration studies as a field requiring constant theoretical and empirical renewal.

The normative-legal foundations of the system's functioning are enshrined in Ukraine's laws "On Central Executive Bodies" (2011), regulations on individual ministries and agencies approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine [3]. These legislative frameworks constitute

the formal institutional infrastructure within which migration governance operates, though their practical implementation often reveals gaps between de jure provisions and de facto practices. However, dynamic changes in the organizational structure of public administration require constant updating of analytical approaches to assessing the effectiveness of institutional transformations. Foreign studies of migration management, particularly works by European scholars within EU migration policy integration programs, provide valuable comparative material for evaluating Ukrainian reforms, but the specificity of the wartime context makes direct transfer of foreign experience limited. The unique characteristics of Ukraine's situation necessitate development of context-specific theoretical frameworks that can adequately capture the complexity of migration governance under conditions of armed conflict.

The institutional transformation of Ukraine's migration management system reflects the evolution of conceptual approaches from sectoral management to an integrated coordination model. This evolution corresponds to broader trends in public administration theory, which increasingly emphasizes network governance, collaborative management, and cross-sectoral coordination as essential elements of effective policy implementation. At the initial stage of independent Ukraine's formation, migration management was characterized by fragmentation and the absence of a unified coordinating institution. This institutional fragmentation reflected the broader challenges of post-Soviet state-building, where new administrative structures had to be constructed while simultaneously addressing immediate governance needs.

The creation of the State Migration Service in 2009 as a specialized executive body became an important step in centralizing migration management [4]. This institutional innovation represented

an attempt to apply principles of administrative rationalization and functional specialization to the migration policy domain. Subordinating the SMS to the Ministry of Internal Affairs ensured concentration of main migration policy implementation functions within a unified institutional vertical. The hierarchical structure facilitated standardization of procedures and enhanced accountability mechanisms, though it also introduced certain rigidities that would later prove problematic. This allowed standardization of administrative service procedures and improved efficiency of control and supervisory functions.

However, the centralized model revealed its limitations under increasingly complex migration challenges. The growing interconnection between migration and other policy domains – economic development, social welfare, security, cultural integration – exposed the inadequacy of siloed approaches to migration governance. The need to consider economic, social, security, and humanitarian aspects of migration required involving expertise from various agencies, which was not always effectively ensured within the centralized structure. This recognition of migration as a cross-cutting policy issue necessitated fundamental rethinking of institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms.

Ukraine's course toward European integration became a catalyst for institutional transformations in migration management. The Europeanization process introduced new normative frameworks, operational standards, and institutional models that challenged existing administrative practices and required substantial adaptation efforts. Implementation of European standards required adapting the national institutional architecture to the principles of the Common European Asylum System and Schengen agreements. Signing the Association Agreement with

the EU in 2014 actualized the need to harmonize Ukrainian migration legislation with European norms [6]. This harmonization process involved not merely technical adjustments but fundamental reconceptualization of migration governance principles and practices. This required not only legislative changes but also institutional adaptation, including creating new coordination mechanisms with European partners and implementing European standards for administrative service provision. The capacity-building dimension of European integration proved particularly significant, requiring substantial investments in human resources development and technological modernization.

The visa liberalization process with the EU placed additional requirements on modernizing institutional infrastructure, particularly implementing biometric technologies, creating integrated information systems, and ensuring compliance with European personal data protection standards. These technological and procedural innovations represented broader digital transformation trends in public administration, demonstrating how migration governance increasingly depends on sophisticated information management capabilities.

The full-scale Russian aggression caused the most radical institutional transformations in independent Ukraine's history. The magnitude and speed of required adaptations exceeded any previous reform efforts, creating what might be characterized as a critical juncture in institutional development. Mass internal population displacement, refugee flows, and the need to coordinate international humanitarian aid required a fundamental restructuring of the migration management system. Creating a network of assistance centers for internally displaced persons, deploying temporary accommodation points, and organizing evacuation measures required rapid resource

mobilization from various agencies. The emergency response demonstrated both the adaptive capacity of Ukrainian institutions and the importance of pre-existing administrative capabilities that could be rapidly repurposed for crisis management. Traditional bureaucratic procedures were simplified or temporarily suspended to ensure rapid response to the humanitarian crisis. This procedural flexibility, while necessary for effective crisis response, also raised important questions about maintaining accountability and rule of law under emergency conditions.

Coordination with international organizations and partner country governments gained particular relevance. The internationalization of migration governance created new institutional interfaces between domestic and international actors, requiring development of novel coordination mechanisms and operational protocols. Ukraine was forced to create new institutional mechanisms for managing relations with UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration. EU governments, and other countries providing assistance to Ukrainian refugees. These multilevel governance arrangements demonstrated the increasing importance of transnational institutional networks in contemporary migration management.

The creation of the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine in July 2025 through consolidating functions of the Ministry of Social Policy with functions of the former Ministry of National Unity became a logical consequence of the need to consolidate efforts in working with various migrant categories [7]. This institutional merger reflects broader public administration reform trends toward creating integrated service delivery mechanisms that can address complex, multidimensional policy challenges more effectively than traditional sectoral approaches.

The new institutional architecture provides for integrating functions

regarding internally displaced persons, refugees, labor migrants, and Ukrainians abroad within a single agency. This functional integration creates opportunities for policy coherence and administrative efficiency, though it also presents challenges in terms of managing diverse stakeholder interests and operational requirements. This allows optimizing budget resource utilization, eliminating functional duplication, and ensuring a comprehensive approach to social protection of various migrant categories. The resource optimization dimension proves particularly crucial under conditions of fiscal constraints and competing budgetary priorities characteristic of wartime economies.

Integrating the State Employment Service into the new ministry's system creates prerequisites for more effective labor migration regulation and promoting employment of internally displaced persons [8]. This institutional consolidation recognizes the fundamental interconnection between migration and labor market dynamics, enabling more sophisticated policy interventions that address both dimensions simultaneously. Functional consolidation allows developing integrated professional training and social adaptation programs that consider specific needs of different migrant categories. The human capital development aspect of migration governance thus becomes more systematically addressed through integrated institutional frameworks.

Transition to an inter-agency coordination model requires creating effective mechanisms for coordinating actions of various executive bodies. The complexity of coordination challenges increases exponentially with the number of involved actors, requiring sophisticated governance mechanisms that can manage both vertical and horizontal coordination dimensions. The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine plays a key role in this process as the coordinating body ensuring unity

of state migration policy. Creating inter-agency working groups and coordination councils allows prompt resolution of complex issues requiring expertise from various agencies. These collaborative governance structures represent attempts to institutionalize coordination processes that might otherwise depend on informal networks and personal relationships. Regular meetings and information exchange between relevant ministries ensure synchronization of their activities and prevention of competence conflicts. The institutionalization of communication channels proves essential for maintaining policy coherence across diverse organizational boundaries.

Implementing digital coordination technologies, particularly creating integrated information systems and electronic document flow, increases inter-agency interaction efficiency and reduces administrative costs. The digital transformation of coordination mechanisms represents a qualitative leap in administrative capacity, enabling real-time information sharing and collaborative decision-making across organizational boundaries. Process automation allows shortening decision-making timeframes and improving administrative service quality. However, digitalization also introduces new challenges related to cybersecurity, data protection, and digital inequality that must be systematically addressed.

The contemporary institutional architecture for migration management in Ukraine continues evolving under the influence of changing internal and external factors. This evolutionary process reflects the dynamic nature of institutional development, where structures and processes continuously adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities. Completion of the active phase of military actions will require system adaptation to post-conflict recovery tasks, including reintegration of refugees and internally displaced

persons [9]. The post-conflict transition will likely necessitate another round of institutional reforms, focusing on long-term integration and development objectives rather than emergency response.

Integration into European migration management structures will require further harmonization of the national institutional system with European standards. This ongoing Europeanization process involves not merely formal compliance with EU requirements but substantive transformation of administrative cultures and operational practices. This includes participation in joint European programs, implementation of EU directives, and adaptation to new challenges related to global migration trends. The transnational dimension of migration governance will likely become increasingly prominent, requiring Ukrainian institutions to develop sophisticated capabilities for international cooperation and coordination. Technological modernization remains a key factor in improving institutional system efficiency. Implementation of artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and blockchain technologies could revolutionize migration management processes, making them more transparent, efficient, and citizen-oriented [10]. These emerging technologies offer transformative potential but also require careful consideration of ethical implications and regulatory frameworks to ensure their responsible deployment.

The institutional transformation of Ukraine's migration management system demonstrates a gradual transition from a centralized model to a complex inter-agency coordination system. This transition reflects broader paradigm shifts in public administration theory and practice, from hierarchical control to network governance models. This process was accelerated by Ukraine's European integration aspirations and fundamentally transformed

under martial law conditions. The 2025 reorganization became an important step toward optimizing institutional architecture, ensuring consolidation of functions regarding various migrant categories within a single agency. The reform trajectory demonstrates how external shocks can catalyze institutional innovations that might otherwise take decades to implement through incremental reform processes. However, the success of these reforms will depend on the effectiveness of inter-agency coordination mechanisms and the system's ability to adapt to future challenges. Institutional sustainability requires continuous learning and adaptation capabilities that enable organizations to respond effectively to emerging challenges while maintaining core functional competencies.

Further development of the institutional system should focus on principles of flexibility, technological modernization, and compliance with European standards while maintaining the capability to effectively respond to crisis situations and ensure national security in a dynamic migration environment. The balancing of these multiple objectives requires sophisticated strategic management capabilities and continuous institutional learning processes that can integrate lessons from both successes and failures in migration governance.

The article examines the institutional transformation of the migration management system in Ukraine, analyzing the transition from a centralized approach to an inter-agency coordination model under conditions of full-scale armed aggression by the Russian Federation. The study reveals how the unprecedented migration crisis, characterized by millions of internally displaced persons and refugees, has necessitated a fundamental restructuring of the institutional

architecture for migration process management. It is demonstrated that traditional peacetime administrative procedures proved inadequate for addressing the scale and complexity of wartime migration challenges, compelling rapid adaptation of institutional mechanisms.

The evolution of conceptual approaches to migration management is traced from the fragmented system of the early independence period through centralization efforts with the establishment of the State Migration Service in 2009 to the contemporary integrated coordination model. Particular attention is paid to the impact of European integration processes on institutional development, specifically analyzing the implementation of European standards following the signing of the EU Association Agreement in 2014, including visa liberalization requirements and harmonization with European asylum and migration policies.

The radical institutional transformations caused by martial law conditions are analyzed, including the establishment of assistance networks for internally displaced persons, coordination with international humanitarian organizations, and the creation of new mechanisms for managing relations with UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, and partner governments. Special focus is placed on the 2025 reorganization that created the Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine through functional consolidation, representing a new stage of institutional evolution aimed at optimizing resource utilization and eliminating functional duplication.

The emerging inter-agency coordination mechanisms are examined, including the role of digital technologies in enhancing administrative efficiency and the development of integrated information systems. Key challenges facing the contemporary

institutional architecture are identified, including post-conflict recovery requirements, further European integration demands, and the necessity for technological modernization.

Key words: migration management, institutional transformation, inter-agency coordination, internally displaced persons, European integration, Ukraine, martial law.

Дерев'янка А. Інституційна трансформація системи управління міграційними процесами в Україні: від централізованого підходу до міжвідомчої координації.

У статті досліджено інституційну трансформацію системи управління міграційними процесами в Україні, проаналізовано перехід від централізованого підходу до моделі міжвідомчої координації в умовах повномасштабної збройної агресії російської федерації. Розкрито, як безпрецедентна міграційна криза, що характеризується мільйонами внутрішньо переміщених осіб та біженців, зумовила необхідність кардинальної перебудови інституційної архітектури управління міграційними процесами. Продемонстровано, що традиційні адміністративні процедури мирного часу виявилися неадекватними для вирішення масштабів та складності воєнних міграційних викликів, змушуючи до швидкої адаптації інституційних механізмів.

Простежено еволюцію концептуальних підходів до управління міграцією від фрагментованої системи раннього періоду незалежності через зусилля централізації зі створенням Державної міграційної служби у 2009 році до сучасної інтегрованої моделі координації. Приділено особливу увагу впливу євроінтеграційних процесів на інституційний розвиток, зокрема проаналізовано імплементацію

європейських стандартів після підписання Угоди про асоціацію з ЄС у 2014 році, включаючи вимоги лібералізації візового режиму та гармонізації з європейськими політиками притулку та міграції.

Проаналізовано радикальні інституційні трансформації, спричинені умовами воєнного стану, включаючи створення мереж допомоги внутрішньо переміщеним особам, координацію з міжнародними гуманітарними організаціями та створення нових механізмів управління відносинами з УВКБ ООН, Міжнародною організацією з міграції та урядами-партнерами. Акцентовано увагу на реорганізації 2025 року, що створила Міністерство соціальної політики, сім'ї та єдності України через функціональну консолідацію, представляючи новий етап інституційної еволюції, спрямований на оптимізацію використання ресурсів та усунення дублювання функцій.

Розглянуто механізми міжвідомчої координації, що формуються, включаючи роль цифрових технологій у підвищенні адміністративної ефективності та розвиток інтегрованих інформаційних систем. Ідентифіковано ключові виклики, що стоять перед сучасною інституційною архітектурою, включаючи вимоги постконфліктного відновлення, подальші вимоги європейської інтеграції та необхідність технологічної модернізації.

Ключові слова: управління міграцією, інституційна трансформація, міжвідомча координація, внутрішньо переміщені особи, європейська інтеграція, Україна, воєнний стан.

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