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ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Análisis sectorial y desafíos críticos en la esfera social de Ucrania

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Resumen. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar los desafíos que enfrenta la esfera social en sus diversos sectores. Para ello, se emplearon varios métodos de investigación, como el análisis sectorial, la deducción, la generalización y la sistematización. Como resultado, se examinaron los retos específicos en cada área de la esfera social en Ucrania. El complejo cultural y educativo se enfrenta a dificultades relacionadas con la financiación insuficiente, especialmente en un contexto de restricciones presupuestarias debido a las necesidades de defensa. Complejo médico y sanitario: la escasez de especialistas y los problemas de personal son consecuencia de la migración tanto interna como externa, agravada por la invasión a gran escala. Complejo social y de bienestar: La prolongada guerra ha llevado al crecimiento de categorías vulnerables de la población, incluyendo soldados y civiles heridos, desplazados internos y desempleados. Sistema de relaciones sociales y laborales: la destrucción y los daños en infraestructuras e instalaciones también requieren atención urgente. Todos estos desafíos actuales en la esfera social demandan una mayor consideración y esfuerzos para abordarlos.

Palabras clave: esfera social, sectores de la esfera social, sectores vulnerables de la población, retos de la esfera social, desplazados internos.

Sectoral analysis and critical challenges in the social sphere of Ukraine

Abstract. The objective of this article is to analyze the challenges faced by the social sphere in its various sectors. To this end, several research methods were employed, such as sectoral analysis, deduction, generalization, and systematization. As a result, the specific challenges in each area of the social sphere in Ukraine were examined: cultural and educational complex: faces difficulties related to insufficient funding, especially in a context of budgetary constraints due to defense needs. Medical and health complex: Specialist shortages and staffing problems are a consequence of both internal and external migration, exacerbated by large-scale invasion. Social and welfare complex: The protracted war has led to the growth of vulnerable categories of the population, including wounded soldiers and civilians, internally displaced persons and the unemployed. Social and labour relations system: destruction and damage to infrastructure and facilities also require urgent attention. All these current challenges in the social sphere demand greater consideration and efforts to address them

Key words: social sphere, sectors of the social sphere, vulnerable sectors of the population, challenges of the social sphere, internally displaced persons.

INTRODUCTION

The social sphere is undoubtedly one of the main components of the standard of living of the population of any country. Given the prospective need to restore the country's infrastructure in the post-war period, including the social one, it is necessary, first of all, to overcome the existing problems, and most importantly, to eliminate the causes that led to its unsatisfactory state. The social sphere is an important element of the strategic potential of the state, and the quality of life of the population is one of the indicators of the effectiveness of the transformations and changes implemented. In order to overcome the devastating consequences of the war and achieve sustainable development in the long term, it is important to comprehensively analyze current challenges for the social sphere in order to record them and develop the state's social and economic policy, taking into account the identified bottlenecks.

For Ukraine, social development is now becoming a prerequisite for the return of numerous war refugees and residents of the de-occupied territories. Migration shifts caused by hostilities and high levels of insecurity can lead to regional disparities and have a negative impact on the economic situation in the country. Therefore, social issues are now becoming acute, and sectoral analysis of current challenges is becoming the primary justification for further plans for the development and transformation of the social sphere in the context of post-war recovery.

The purpose of the study. The purpose of the article is to analyze the challenges of the social sphere for its individual sectors. In order to achieve this goal, it is advisable to identify the sectors of the social sphere, to analyze and summarize the challenges in the context of each sector. Summarizing the research, it is advisable to identify critical challenges in the social sphere that require increased attention for further development of tools and measures of social policy in Ukraine.

Analysis of recent research and publications

In the study of the social sphere, the definition of its essence is based on the concept of H. Lopushnyak, according to which the social sphere is defined as an element of the ecosystem and an important prerequisite for its development is the desire for equilibrium through the harmonization of relations in the social aspects of life (Lopuschnyak et al 2021). Currently, there is a steady global trend towards strengthening the role of the social sphere in the processes of effective interaction with economic sectors to successfully address problematic issues (Lopuschnyak et al., 2023; Verkhovod et al., 2023). According to N. Pihul, this forms a dualistic direction of the social sphere development: to improve the quality of human potential and to ensure social stability in society. And the condition for the development of the social sphere is interaction with the economic, political and spiritual spheres (Pihul, 2013). Needs assessment and monitoring of the social sector development at the community level remain particularly important. The ambiguity of the decentralization process and the challenges associated with it justify the need for additional research on the decentralization of social services and the social sphere of municipalities, primarily from the perspective of the communities themselves, which are expected to properly implement social guarantees and standards of social services (Palatna, 2022).

According to D. Churovsky (2015), the development of the social sphere will be influenced by trends in social evolution, primarily the transformational transition from hierarchy to network, the transformational transition from democracy to collabocracy, and the creation of cooperation networks at the global level. These transformational shifts in social development will create new challenges for the functioning of the social sphere.

In Ukraine, specific challenges are emerging in the context of the war, and their solution should be based on an ongoing assessment of their status and control of problem areas. Currently, the world has not accumulated enough experience in addressing the social problems that Ukraine is currently facing, which necessitates monitoring current challenges and developing adequate programs and measures.

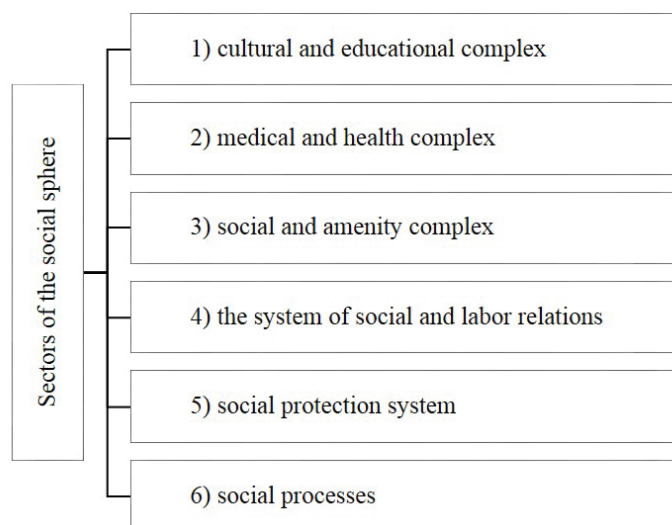
MATERIALS AND METHODS

In writing the article, the authors used methodological tools that allowed for a qualitative and comprehensive study of the literature and an analysis of the current challenges of the social sphere in Ukraine. First of all, sectoral analysis was used. As a research method, this method was used for a comprehensive analysis in the context of individual sectors, which made it possible to identify specific challenges and problems in each sector. The methods of deduction, generalization, and systematization were used to process the results. These methods made it possible to combine disparate information into a single structure of challenges for the social sector as a whole.

The study used information and data from the Save School statistical platform, the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, the World Tourism Organization, the International Labor Organization, the World Bank, and the analytical online portals Trading economics, Open Budget, and the Ministry of Finance.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The study divided the social sphere into 6 key sectors (Figure 1).

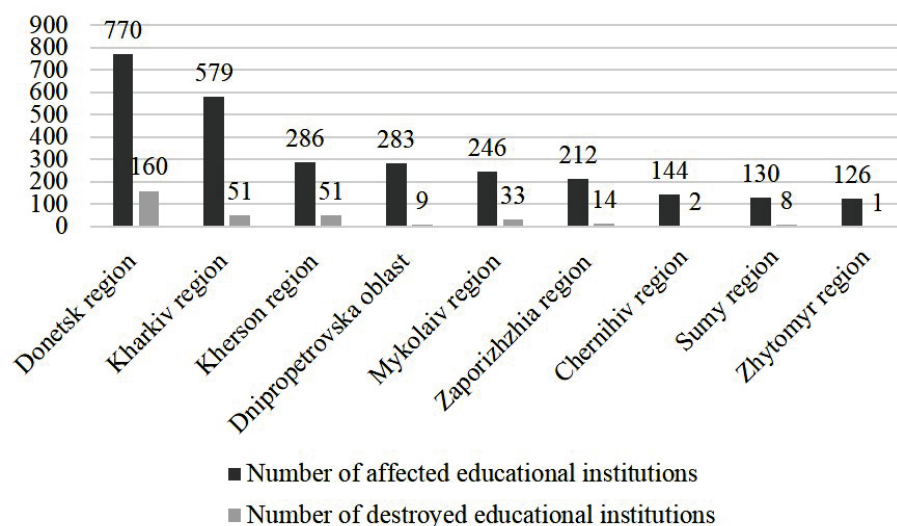
Figure 1. Structuring of the social sector

Source: compiled by the authors.

Thus, the sectors of the social sphere include:

- 1) cultural and educational complex, which includes education and culture;
- 2) medical and healthcare complex, which includes medicine, tourism, physical education, sports, and recreation;
- 3) social and household complex, which includes housing and communal services, consumer services, trade and catering, transport and communications, and public services;
- 4) the system of social and labor relations, which includes issues of employment, unemployment, and specifics of employment of certain categories (youth, people of pre-retirement age, disabled people, former military personnel, etc.);
- 5) social protection system, which includes social payments and benefits, social security, social support, etc.;
- 6) social processes, which include: demographic and migration processes, harmonization of socio-economic interests, social cohesion, social inclusion, socio-economic security.

When studying the cultural and educational complex, it should be noted that the war in Ukraine has significantly affected the country's educational sector, which had previously suffered from the effects of the pandemic. During the 2 years of large-scale invasion, a significant number of educational institutions have been destroyed or damaged, especially in the East of the country. There are serious challenges in terms of safety for children and educators and access to education, which makes it difficult to maintain the continuity and quality of the educational process (Migal, 2023). According to current data, 3798 educational institutions have been affected by bombing and shelling, 365 of which have been completely destroyed (Save schools, 2024). The 10 regions with the highest number of affected educational institutions are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Number of affected educational institutions

Source: compiled by Save schools (2024).

With regard to culture, according to the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation (2022), the main problems of the cultural segment during the war are the outflow of talent, reduced funding under severe budget constraints, reduced demand for cultural products and services, etc.

Thus, the challenges for the cultural and educational complex are as follows:

- 1) ensuring the safety, accessibility and quality of the educational process in the context of hostilities;
- 2) psychological and social support for children and teachers;
- 3) financing in the context of budgetary constraints;
- 4) the crisis of professionals;
- 5) reduced demand and need for educational and cultural projects.

With regard to the healthcare sector, it should be noted that the full-scale war had a devastating impact on the life and health of the Ukrainian population and caused significant damage to the healthcare system. Attacks on medical facilities were part of the strategy and tactics of the Russian invaders. The destruction of medical infrastructure, shortage of personnel, and disruption of logistical connections have all impeded the timely and complete provision of medicines to the population. At the same time, Ukraine's health care system had significant problems in peacetime as well (Andreasyan, 2023).

Therefore, we will highlight the following current healthcare challenges (Andreasyan, 2023):

- 1) significant losses. As of February 2023, since the beginning of the invasion, the Russians have completely destroyed almost 200 medical facilities in Ukraine, and 1218 facilities have been damaged. In particular, 540 hospitals were partially destroyed, 173 were completely destroyed, and 593 pharmacies were destroyed;

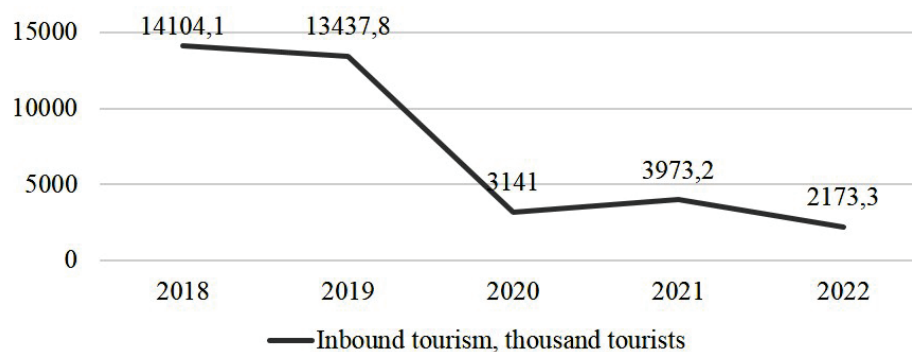
- 2) a large number of people were forced to relocate. According to the International Organization for Migration, the number of internally displaced persons exceeds 10 million, of which approximately 6.5 million have become internally displaced persons (IDPs). This affects the functioning of the health care system due to the increased workload in the western regions of the country;
- 3) staffing problems. Doctors and other healthcare workers moved to other regions or went abroad because of the war, which negatively affected the entire healthcare system. First, it led to an internal redistribution of specialists, with a large number of internally displaced healthcare workers finding jobs in other cities. The greatest demand for doctors is observed in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Dnipro, i.e. in the areas of the largest migration. In addition, there is a critical shortage of medical personnel in the regions along the front line;
- 4) disruption of logistics and availability of medicines. Since the beginning of the war, due to the massive destruction of the Ukrainian medical infrastructure and disruption of logistics, medical institutions have been struggling with a shortage of a large number of medicines and equipment
- 5) the lack of full-fledged bomb shelters in medical facilities. One of the biggest problems was the lack of full-fledged bomb shelters in medical facilities, so medical workers had to work in the field during the emergency and increased danger, replacing sterile operating rooms with basements and bomb shelters.

The biggest challenges to the development of physical education and sports in the healthcare sector are the destruction of facilities, the lack of appropriate conditions for the development of high-performance sports; the lack of attractive and accessible infrastructure for regular physical activity and sports, the outdated material and technical base of municipal and state infrastructure facilities; and the inconsistency of the state of digitalization of the sphere of domestic sports and physical culture with modern trends in the development of sports (Kolchak, 2023).

With regard to recreation, it should be noted that the existing capacity will not be able to meet the medical and recreational needs of civilians and military personnel who have been injured or amputated and will require a complete reboot with the participation of comprehensive state programs and appropriate funding with the involvement of international funds and investments.

The tourism segment has also suffered as a result of a decline in international tourist arrivals due to the security situation (Figure 3), and outbound tourism is hampered by the lack of air travel.

Figure 3. Dynamics of the number of foreign tourists visiting Ukraine in 2018-2022



Source: compiled according to UNWTO (2023)

The tourism industry is currently focused on domestic consumers. The prolonged phase of full-scale war puts the survival of tourism businesses at risk. In addition, many tourism facilities in the East have been destroyed, some tourist destinations have been occupied, and the sea coast of Odesa region is dangerous due to the mining of the Black Sea. On the other hand, tourism enterprises are actively reorienting themselves to the recreational needs of the population, offering recovery tours.

Thus, the generalized challenges for the healthcare sector include:

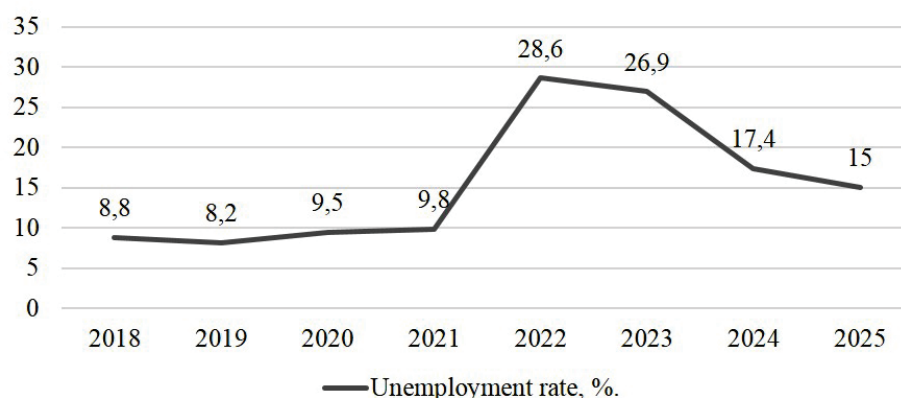
- 1) destruction and damage to medical and sports facilities, tourist attractions, and occupation of tourist destinations;
- 2) lack of professional staff;
- 3) disruption of logistics and availability of medicines;
- 4) migration of the population and workers;
- 5) insufficient number of bomb shelters;
- 6) lack of proper conditions for the development of sports;
- 7) the decline in international tourism exacerbates the problems;
- 8) inadequate capacity of recreational facilities to meet the growing demand.

The problems of destruction of facilities, infrastructure, and lack of personnel are relevant to the entire social and amenity sector. Given the current situation in Ukraine, special attention should be paid to the following challenges in the provision of public services:

- 1) providing basic administrative services in a difficult security environment;
- 2) ensuring the availability of passport services;
- 3) consideration of the possibility of simplifying the model of declaring the place of residence;
- 4) ensuring accessibility of services for the «non-digitalized» part of the population (Tymoshchuk, 2022).

Regarding the system of social and labor relations, it should be noted that since the beginning of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, almost 5 million jobs have been lost, according to ILO estimates. In the context of the humanitarian crisis caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine, labor markets are experiencing disorganization (ILO, 2022). The unemployment rate in 2022 reached 28.6%, with a forecast value for 2023 of 26.9% (Nosova O., 2023).

According to the global macro models of Trading Economics (2024) and analysts' expectations, the unemployment rate in Ukraine will be 21.5% by the end of the current quarter. According to the econometric models of Trading Economics (2024), in the long run, the unemployment rate in Ukraine will be around 17.40% in 2024 and 15.00% in 2025 (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Dynamics of the unemployment rate in 2018-2023 with a forecast for 2024-2025

Source: compiled by the World Bank (2024), Nosova (2023), Trading economics (2024).

The main challenges for the system of social and labor relations in Ukraine in the context of war include:

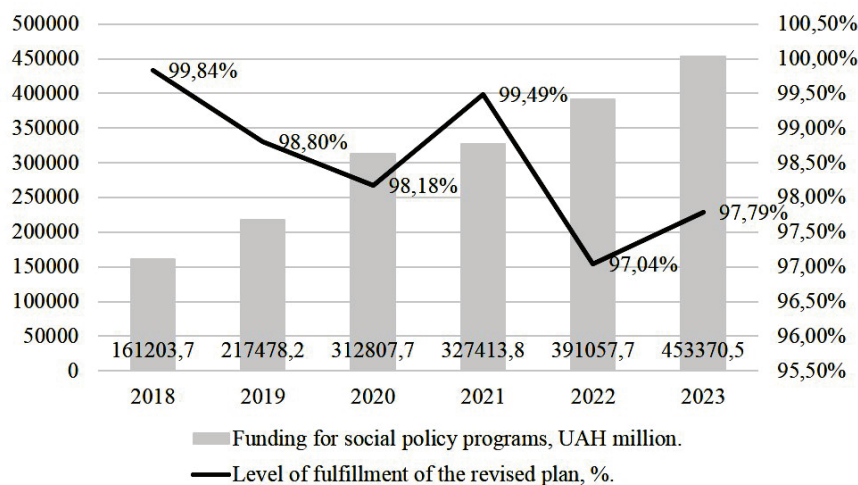
- 1) high unemployment, which in the context of war leads to a decrease in economic activity and disorganization of the labor market;
- 2) the need to provide employment for vulnerable groups of the population, namely: youth, people of pre-retirement age, disabled people, veterans, etc.;
- 3) the need for professional retraining, adaptation in the labor market and provision of social benefits for demobilized military personnel and IDPs;
- 4) creation of new jobs and support for self-employment and entrepreneurship.

The key challenge for the social protection system is to ensure funding in the face of growing demand. Social protection includes social payments and benefits, social security, social support, and, above all, it concerns vulnerable categories of people.

The amount of funding for programs and the functioning of the Ministry of Social Policy in 2018-2023 is shown in Figure 5.

The growth in the financing of the programs of the Ministry of Social Policy is due to an increase in the financing of pension payments. At the same time, there is a negative trend towards a decrease in the level of implementation of the revised plan, which indicates underfunding of programs. It should also be noted that in 2023, due to budget constraints, funding for many programs will be significantly reduced, including scientific research, assistance to deportees from Ukrainian territory, social protection measures, social scholarships, assistance to families of those killed in the protests and volunteers, targeted assistance to IDPs, experimental employment of low-income families and IDPs affected by the Chornobyl disaster, financial support for veterans' NGOs and NGOs of disabled people, rehabilitation of disabled people, and other programs. This is a significant reduction in social protection programs that has taken place over the past 5 years (from 2018 to 2023).

At the same time, some programs are significantly underfunded in 2023. Thus, in Table 1, we present the codes of the programs for which the implementation of the annual revised plan was less than 80%.

Figure 5. Dynamics of funding for social policy programs in Ukraine in 2018-2023

Source: compiled according to Open Budget (2024).

TABLE 1. Social policy programs whose funding did not exceed 80% in 2023, UAH million

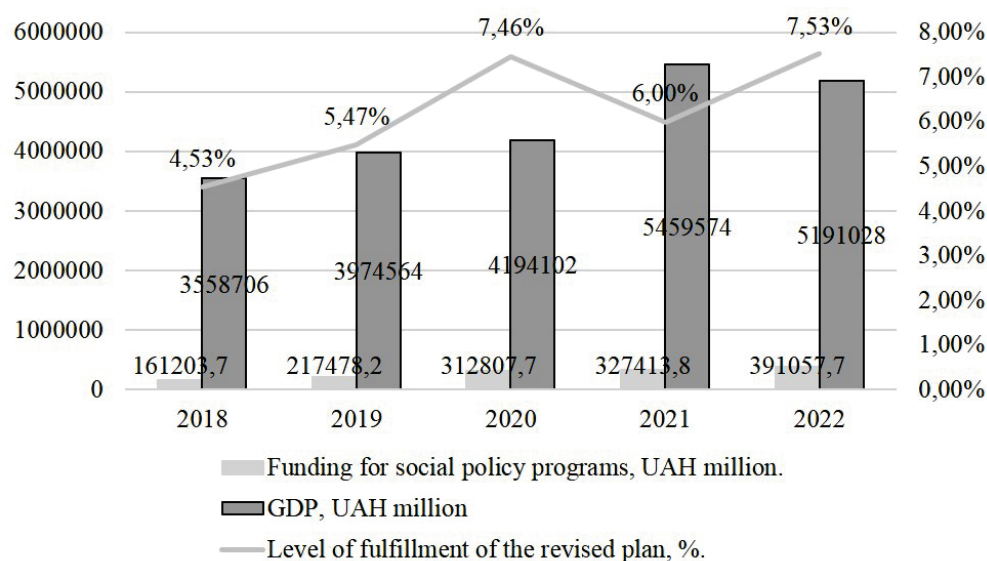
Code	Abbreviated name	Initial plan	Adjusted plan	Real funding	Fulfillment of the adjusted plan, %.
2501160	Payment of lifetime state scholarships	6,1	6,1	3,8	63,3
2501240	Insurance payments to healthcare workers and their families due to coronavirus disease and its consequences	74,5	74,5	21,2	28,49
2501290	Enforcement of court decisions	24,3	24,3	24,2	99,8
2501350	Rehabilitation and recreation of children in need of special attention and support in children's health and recreation facilities of the highest category	150,0	150,0	21,7	14,47
2501450	Rehabilitation and recreation of children in need of special attention and support in specialized institutions	296,6	296,6	130,7	44,09
2501570	Payment of financial assistance to servicemen discharged from military service	66,7	66,7	0,2	0,3
2501630	Modernization of the social support system for the population of Ukraine	963,4	963,4	68,5	7,11

Source: compiled according to Openbudget (2024).

Insufficient funding for the modernization of social support for the population is critical, with the plan implementation in this area amounting to only 7.11%. Together with the reduction in spending on research, this leads to the suspension of the social protection system reform process.

In Figure 6, we analyze the share of funding for the Ministry of Social Policy in relation to GDP.

Figure 6. The ratio of the Ministry of Social Policy's expenditures to Ukraine's GDP in 2018-2022



Source: compiled according to Open Budget (2024), Ministry of Finance (2023).

In 2022, the growth of social expenditures to GDP occurred against the backdrop of a decline in GDP due to the large-scale invasion.

Currently, social protection plays a significant role in the country's social development, and occupies one of the most important places, as the state should pay special attention to vulnerable groups. The prolonged nature of the full-scale war on the territory of Ukraine has had a significant impact on social protection. The hostilities have led to an increase in social assistance expenditures, and it is expected that this item of expenditure will only grow in the future. After all, these events have led to a significant increase in the number of Ukrainian citizens who need support and decisive action from the state. Therefore, today, an important task of the state is to provide social protection and assistance in such a crisis situation as war, and in the long run - a comprehensive organization of the social protection system of Ukraine (Mikulyak & Krasnonozhenko, 2023).

Therefore, in this sector, the key challenges are the need to ensure social support for vulnerable populations and the search for sufficient financial instruments to provide it, including through the involvement of partner countries and international organizations.

As for the social processes sector, the main challenges include:

- 1) demographic processes - a critical decline in the population of Ukraine (due to increased mortality, access to medical services and the outflow of refugees caused by Russian aggression), and, as a result, a demographic crisis, a labor market crisis and the problem of ensuring pension payments due to the decline in the economically active population;

- 2) migration processes - these processes are intertwined with demographic processes. And the main challenge here is the problem of women and children leaving the country, which creates the need to develop programs that will encourage their return. In addition, the massive movement of IDPs to the western regions of Ukraine threatens the social integration and economic stability of host communities;
- 3) the processes of harmonization of socio-economic interests, social cohesion and inclusion will also generate challenges to deepen contradictions between residents of different regions of the country due to the destruction of infrastructure, loss of jobs and relocation of production; this will require improvement of social partnership mechanisms to ensure cooperation between the state, business and the public;
- 4) processes of ensuring socio-economic security. The issue of national unity and countering fakes in the face of external threats and information influences in a hybrid war is also becoming an acute issue.

CONCLUSIONS

The study has resulted in the identification of specific challenges for certain sectors of the social sphere: the cultural and educational complex, the medical and healthcare complex; the social and household complex, the system of social and labor relations, the system of social protection and social processes.

Summarizing the study, the current challenges of the social sphere that require the most attention are highlighted:

- 1) insufficient funding in the context of severe budget constraints caused by the need to finance defense;
- 2) lack of professionals and staffing problems caused by external and internal migration shifts as a result of the large-scale invasion;
- 3) the growth of vulnerable categories of the population as the prolonged war leads to an increase in the number of wounded military and civilians, and IDPs. In addition, a prolonged war against a financially powerful aggressor economically depletes Ukraine and leads to a decline in its business activity, which ultimately leads to an increase in the number of unemployed. According to international think tanks, in 2024 and 2025, the unemployment rate in Ukraine will decrease to 14-15%, but successful advances of Russian troops on the battlefield could radically change the situation. In addition, the issue of support for veterans and the disabled, whose number is growing steadily, will become more acute;
- 4) destruction and damage to facilities and infrastructure. As a result of the hostilities throughout Ukraine, a large number of social facilities and infrastructure have been severely damaged or completely destroyed. The destruction of residential buildings, schools, hospitals, ASCs and other facilities has led to a significant deterioration in living conditions and difficulties in the provision of social services, worsened access to health care and education, and increased the social vulnerability of the population.

Further research should focus on developing strategies for implementing comprehensive measures to ensure social stability and support for the population during the war and post-war recovery, taking into account the existing challenges.

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