https://www.zois-berlin.de/ueber-uns/aktuelles/archiv-2026/ukrainian-working-lives-vulnerabilities-shifting-geographies-resistance?fbclid=IwdGRjcAPuYa9leHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZAo2NjI4NTY4Mzc5AAEeIl0kiGcGTJy5TLkdY6VBwG5TttK6sXTVgEEzi15Om7PCsrEZ-LrDC7ZZ2G8_aem_KAFuR6tZQdMQTh1oV0h7Ig

Call for Papers | Workshop

Ukrainian (Working) Lives: Vulnerabilities, Shifting Geographies, Resistance

28.01.2026

Four years after the start of the Russian full-scale invasion preceded by eight years of Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, resilience, heroism, and national unity have become dominant terms to describe Ukraine's outstanding defense and perseverance. This workshop will focus on how omnipresent violence, shifting borders, mobilisation, occupation, and infrastructural destruction have reshaped everyday working lives and trajectories, how the war has transformed the country's economic geography and thereby changed the labour market, while also producing new vulnerabilities (war injuries, psychological trauma, housing loss, and material precariousness), alongside profound gendered transformations (military mobilisation, restrictions on men's mobility). We aim at exploring new or transformed forms of agency in Ukraine at work (multiple ways in which labour is performed, reorganised, interrupted, displaced, or reinvented under conditions of war).

Particular attention will be paid to professional sectors and social groups based on skills rather than education, including agriculture, care work, transport, trade, industry, along the workers of public services, as these groups have received less media and scholarly attention. The workshop will take into account multiple and intersecting forms of mobility: internal displacement, migration abroad, circular and commuting migration, as well as the experiences of those who have remained in areas under constant threat.

The workshop focuses on wartime Ukraine, from 2014 to the present, with a particular interest on the period after the full-scale Russian invasion of February 2022, understood as a prolonged and transformative condition rather than a temporary rupture. Spatially, it adopts a multi-scalar perspective, encompassing front-line and occupied territories, rear areas, rural regions, small and medium-sized towns, and metropolitan centers, as well as transnational spaces shaped by labour migration and displacement.

Organised by the French-German Centre Marc Bloch in Berlin, the ZOiS and the KIU Competence Network Interdisciplinary Ukrainian Studies Frankfurt (Oder) – Berlin, the workshop aims to foster dialogue between scholars working in different national, disciplinary, and methodological traditions, and to connect empirical research on Ukraine with broader debates on war, labour, migration, and democracy in Europe. It prioritises research based on fieldwork (interviews, observations, ethnography), whether qualitative or mixed (including quantitative data). Its overarching objective is to make visible lives, places, and biographies, highlighting how labour, migration, gender, and violence intersect in individual strategies, forms of adaptation, and everyday resistance to war-induced constraints.

Proposals may focus on, but are not limited to, the following topics:

Economic Geography under Fire
How has the war transformed Ukraine's economic geography, including the relocation of activities from occupied or threatened areas, the emergence of rear-area economies, and the persistence or reinforcement of metropolitan labour markets?

Agricultural Work in a War Zone
How has the inaccessibility and dangerousness of farmland (occupation, mining, front-line proximity) reshaped agricultural labour, seasonal work, and rural livelihoods?

War Injuries, Disability, War-related vulnerabilities
What are the actual employment conditions and future prospects for war veterans with physical and psychological disabilities? For internal displaced workers? How mobilisation and migration related to the war have renewed internal demand for paid care work related to the elderly? For work on reconstruction sites?

War-related Migration and Labour Markets
How does pre-war labour migration interact with war-induced migration under EU temporary protection? How do internal labour mobility and forced internal displacement compete or overlap? How have war and geopolitics reshaped labour migration trajectories previously oriented toward the Russian Federation? What professional and geographic reconfigurations have emerged since 2014 and even more since 2022?

Labour Shortages and Recruitment Strategies
How do local actors respond to labour shortages caused by mobilisation and emigration? What are the prospects for non-European foreign labour in sectors under pressure (construction, logistics, agriculture, etc.)?

Submission Guidelines

The workshop will take place on 22 April 2026, at the Centre Marc Bloch in Berlin. Participants will be asked to share a short paper (ca 2,000 words) in advance of the workshop and deliver a 15- minute in-person presentation. Ukrainian colleagues unable to attend in person will have the possibility to present online. The working language of the workshop will be English. A publication of the contributions, either as a peer-reviewed special issue or an edited volume, is planned.

We welcome proposals from various academic disciplines. Early-career researchers are particularly encouraged to submit a proposal. In accordance with the travel policies of our institutions, participants are expected to prioritise train travel, especially for journeys of under eight hours. Travel expenses within Europe and accommodation will be covered.

Please submit your proposal (title of the paper, abstract of max. 500 words in English) and a short CV (max. 150 words) in a single PDF file by February 20, 2026. Please direct your proposal and any inquiries to ukrainianworkinglives(at)cmb.hu-berlin(dot)de Participants will be notified by 28 February.

Organising team

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