What the Telegram Channels of Ukrainian Migrants in Germany 'Talk' and 'Keep Silent' About

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In today's globalised and digitalised world, forced migration takes on new features as new means of communication and interaction have emerged that can significantly influence it. Online social media and social networks currently play a role in migration processes. Migrants use various digital applications to access information, resources, and news, as well as for purposes such as communication, emotional management, intercultural relations, identification, and participation, among others.[1]

Of course, such media cannot eliminate all the negative consequences of forced migration and solve migrants' problems, such as being far from their homes and habitual way of life, the separation of families, or the difficulties along the migration route. However, because social networks are primarily aimed at finding and maintaining contacts and providing interconnection between users, this makes them an important resource for migrants. They help to obtain necessary information, communicate with people in similar situations, share emotions and experiences, and, finally, just feel support or find distractions. Migrants and representatives of the host country can also use them to establish social ties. To some extent, this eases adaptation to the new environment and helps with integration.

Migrants are often imagined as rootless or uprooted people, as they have been forced to break away from their homeland, communities, and family and can quickly or gradually lose contact with them. However, modern communication technologies have fundamentally changed this situation. The internet blurs geographical distance and gives a sense of presence in the 'here and now' – a sense of community and unity. Therefore, digital social media and social networks are appearing more frequently

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[1]   Koen Leurs and Madhuri Prabhakar, "Doing Digital Migration Studies: Methodological Considerations for an Emerging Research Focus", in: Ricard Zapata-Barrero and Evren Yalaz (eds.), *Qualitative Research in European Migration Studies*, Cham, Switzerland: Springer Open, 2018, 247–66, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76861-8_14.

in migration studies.[2] These studies help to understand how forced migrants build their social networks and see their 'inner world'. However, there is not yet a single explanatory theoretical model to describe the interaction of forced migrants on social networks. In this context, it seems necessary to study different cases and expand the empirical base for further theoretical development. One such case is the use of social media by forced migrants from Ukraine in host countries, particularly in Germany, which, according to official data, has received more than a million Ukrainians.

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the flow of forced migrants and asylum seekers from Ukraine to EU countries has increased rapidly. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in December 2022, the recorded number of forced migrants from Ukraine across Europe amounted to 7,896,825 people, and 4,885,650 refugees registered for temporary protection or in similar national protection schemes in Europe.[3] In early March, almost 50,000 people crossed the border with the EU every day; these figures gradually decreased, but the migration flow has not stopped. Poland received the largest number of forced migrants at the beginning of the invasion. A large number of Ukrainians also moved to Germany, the Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and other countries.[4]

Since 24 February 2022, mobile communication and the internet have provided forced migrants from Ukraine with the opportunity to keep abreast of events and receive up-to-date information about what is happening in their country of origin and abroad through a smartphone. Mobile operators in Ukraine and the EU have created special initiatives to support Ukrainians (e.g., free SIM cards, free calls and SMS to Ukraine, roaming benefits, and other offers for subscribers). This allowed many forced migrants to stay in touch with their families, quickly find information in their countries of arrival, and share it through groups on social networks.

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2   Elaine McGregor and Melissa Siegel, "Social Media and Migration Research", *UNU-MERIT Working Papers*, December 2013, https://www.merit.unu.edu/publications/wppdf/2013/wp 2013-068.pdf [accessed: 31.07.2024]; Lee Komito, "Social Media and Migration: Virtual Community 2.0", *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 62/6, 2011, 1075–1086, https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.21517; and Cornelius J. P. (Nelus) Niemandt, "A network society, social media, migration and mission", *Missionalia* 41/1, 2013, https://doi.org/10.7832/41-1-19.

3   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Operational Data Portal, "Ukraine Refugee Situation", https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine [accessed: 31.07.2024].

4   Liliana Filipchuk, Natalia Lomonosova, Olena Syrbu, and Yulia Kabanets, "Vymushena mihratsiia i viina v Ukraini (24 liutoho — 24 bereznia 2022)" ("Forced Migration and War in Ukraine (24 February–24 March 2022)"), *Cedos*, 29 March 2022, https://cedos.org.ua/researches/vymushena-migracziya-i-vijna-v-ukrayini-24-lyutogo-24-bereznya-2022/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

Social networks became a tool for self-organisation, as they created information 'bridges' between those who needed help and those who were willing and able to provide it. The most popular of them (e.g., Facebook, Telegram, X (formerly Twitter), etc.) have groups, chats, chatbots, and channels for Ukrainians, where they can find the necessary information, useful links, current announcements for support, and volunteer and charitable initiatives. They can also ask for help or advice, post requests, and find like-minded people, among other things.

This research paper studies the role played by the internet and, in particular, social media groups for forced migrants from Ukraine in Germany and explores the 'inner world' of such communities and the peculiarities of their communication. The study considers Telegram channels created in Germany to help forced migrants from Ukraine after 24 February 2022. According to a Kyiv International Institute of Sociology study conducted in the summer of 2022, this social network has become one of the leaders in the information space of Ukraine.[5] This is due to two main reasons. First, Telegram is easy to navigate, use, and administer. Second, this messenger platform has been present in Ukraine for a long time as a channel of personal communication with family members and friends. Its popularity increased during the COVID-19 pandemic when it was used to establish remote work in many institutions and organisations in both the private and public sectors. Additionally, trust in this platform also increased because Ukrainian government institutions and state organisations, after the beginning of the full-scale war, started using Telegram channels and creating chatbots to notify the population.

This study considers specifically two Telegram channels created in Germany to help forced migrants from Ukraine: "Berlin helps Ukrainians"[6] (with 23,000 followers and 450–900 messages per day) and "Ukraine in Tübingen Reutlingen"[7] (with 1,960 followers and 35–100 messages per day). The channels are both information-rich cases. The first channel represents a large urban setting, and the second represents a smaller provincial town. Additionally, the former is in the north of Germany, and the latter is in the south. In the first stage of this study, I thematically analysed

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5   Civil Network OPORA, *Democracy, Citizen Rights and Freedoms and Mediaconsumption in Times of War: July 2022*, report, 17 August 2022, https://www.oporaua.org/en/viyna/24256 -pid-chas-povnomasshtabnoyi-viini-v-ukrayini-zris-popit-na-silnu-ruku-shvidki-ta-struktur ovani-novini-i-reguliuvannia-mediaprostoru-opituvannia-24256 [accessed: 31.07.2024].

6   The users' direct speech, used for subsequent analysis, was extracted from an openly accessible channel within the Telegram messenger platform: https://t.me/berlinhelpsukr ainians. The number of channel participants and the daily frequency of messages were recorded as of August 2022.

7   The users' direct speech, used for subsequent analysis, was extracted from an openly accessible channel within the Telegram messenger platform: https://t.me/ReutlingenTu bingen. The number of channel participants and the daily frequency of messages were recorded as of August 2022.

the channels: I selected messages two days a month for six months (March–August 2022) and categorised them into thematic blocks. In the second stage, I added further categories to the thematic blocks based on keywords.

Russian is the main language of these Telegram channels, with a much lower frequency of Ukrainian and rare posts in German or English. The predominance of the Russian language is due to many of the forced migrants coming from the Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine (east and south), which suffered the most from the Russian invasion. German and English were used mostly in March and April, usually in offers of assistance and accommodation. Linguistic borrowing from German is also present in messages through transliterations into Russian or Ukrainian, mainly in reference to institutions, authorities, or documents.[8] Such borrowing suggests that users cannot find immediate equivalents in Ukrainian or Russian for these words.

Through an analysis of the two channels, I identified the ten key topics used.[9] Below, I sketch out my initial impressions of these topics and their change over time to provide insight into the 'inner worlds' of communication on migration and integration processes as conducted over these Telegram channels.

Communication Topics

1.   Arrival and Transportation

In March, most messages in this category were about transport and opportunities to get to Germany from Ukraine and Poland, with many questions about how to get to different German cities and about volunteer aid with transportation. For example, a user wrote: "Is anyone maybe driving tomorrow from Shehynia [the border crossing point between Ukraine and Poland] to Berlin? Morning–afternoon. 3 people need to be taken…". There were also messages about the volunteers in the arrival centres and the addresses of the centres themselves. In general, the messages are emotional, including many exclamation marks, emojis, and requests for help: "what to do", "where

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8   For example, words such as *Jobcenter* (джобцентр, *dzhobtsentr*), *Sozialamt* (соціаламт, *sotsialamt*), *Termin* (термін, *termin*), *Fiktion* (фікшион, *fikshyon*), *Anmeldung* (анмельдунг, *anmeldunh*), *Kindergeld* (кіндергельд, *kinderheld*), and others were often used.

9   Specifically, the topics are the following: arrival and transportation; housing, humanitarian aid, and household items; registration, documents, and legal issues; social assistance, work, and integration courses; childcare, education, and children's leisure; medical and psychological assistance; banking services and online shopping; leisure, sports, and beauty; communication, activities, and local events; and appointments, postal services, correspondences, parcels, and digital services.

to look", and "who can help me". These messages show confusion and some loss of orientation in the new situation.

During April and May, most of the messages were concerned with travel within Germany and public transport. In July and August, meanwhile, users discussed public transport issues (especially at the end of August, before the expiration of the 9-Euro-Ticket).

2.   Housing, Humanitarian Aid, and Household Items

In March and April, many users sought housing in Germany. They exchanged information about accommodation with German families and contacts of volunteers who could help find temporary housing. In early March, users reported accommodation for one night or a brief period in shelters. In May and June, users wrote about the need to leave the temporary housing provided by volunteers and find permanent accommodation. Some of the reports also contained complaints about prolonged stays in refugee camps and the inability to find their own residences. In the Berlin channel, there were many messages about the *Wohnberechtigungsschein* (WBS)[10] and how to obtain it. For example, one user wrote: "Hello, has anyone applied for a WBS already? Could you let me know how it generally went?"

In May, the number of requests for assistance in finding accommodation increased, likely because some German families who sheltered Ukrainians at the beginning of the war, as well as the forced migrants themselves, expected that such accommodation would be temporary and were not prepared for long-term cohabitation. Users shared links to housing search sites and reminders that housing in Germany is difficult to find, even for locals.

Meanwhile, in March and April, users also requested humanitarian aid, food, clothing, and information about volunteer groups and aid centres. From May to August, as Ukrainians found housing, they inquired about buying furniture and household appliances. Some phrases during this time indicate that users were happy to have found their own private space: "we found our apartment", "we managed to find our housing", and "we already moved into our apartment".

3.   Registration, Documents, and Legal Issues

Obtaining a temporary protection status and registration, as well as filling out documents, were the most prevalent concerns in this category on both Telegram channels from March to May. There were a large number of related questions and answers. The Berlin channel even developed certain standard answers and links to sources on

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10   A permit for subsidised housing in Germany.

these topics and posted them in pinned messages. Some of the inquiries were directed to such pinned messages. Users, however, still wrote the requests. The rapid growth of followers of the channels explains this situation: there was an addition of 'newcomers' who did not want to reread many earlier messages.

In late May and June, a new wave of messages about filling in documents flooded both Telegram channels due to the registration of a considerable number of Ukrainian forced migrants at the *Jobcenter*.[11] In the summer, both Telegram channels also received many requests from users to clarify how to apply for 21 days of vacation, to provide information on whether they were eligible, and to explain other specifics.

4. Social Assistance, Work, and Integration Courses

A large number of discussions in both Telegram channels were related to the issues of receiving social assistance, unemployment allowances, and child benefits. In the messages, users mainly shared their own experience with the necessary documents, the schedules and features of the relevant institutions, and their correspondences with them. They asked about the amounts of financial aid and the timing of the payments. The channels also posted links to official announcements on the websites of the relevant institutions and translations of essential information.

Many questions appeared around work permits, especially in the Berlin Telegram channel, as in early March it was not clear what status forced migrants from Ukraine would receive. By mid-April, users often asked whether Ukrainians had free access to the labour market. In both channels, but especially in the Berlin one, Ukrainians showed readiness to look for work immediately after arriving in Germany. Users even discussed whether this was the right approach. For example, some participants (who had emigrated to Germany earlier) pointed out that without language skills and the recognition of diplomas, they could find only unskilled, low-wage jobs, so they "should not rush", but first focus on language learning and a confirmation of their qualifications.

Part-time employment (i.e., *minijobs*) was also an important topic. The participants asked whether they would lose their social allowances if they had a *minijob*. On this topic, users suggested that if social allowances are reduced to less than 100 euros, it may not be worth taking such work. On the other hand, users who already

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11   Ukrainians who registered in Germany after 24 February could receive financial assistance on the basis of the law on support for asylum seekers. The situation changed on 1 June 2022. Since then, Ukrainians of working age are only allowed to receive general support from the *Jobcenter* (employment office), which gives an unemployment allowance (*Arbeitslosengeld II* or ALG II for short, also known as *Hartz IV*).

had experience in *minijobs* indicated that their main motivation was not financial, but the opportunity to integrate faster.

Language courses also came up in both channels,[12] especially in May and June. Participants searched for and shared the locations of language courses and recommended those with smaller queues. Course schedules and the problem of childcare for young children were important topics. Many mothers of children aged three to six worried that they could not attend the courses because they did not have a kindergarten spot and would, for this reason, lose their social allowance.

5. Childcare, Education, and Children's Leisure

In March and April, users inquired about accommodation with children, acquiring children's clothes and food, and locating medical treatment. According to the users' posts, the difficult journey and the seasonal increase in respiratory infections caused many children to become sick. From April on, users increasingly asked about childcare and/or spots in kindergartens and schools. Mostly, they shared their own experiences and discussed difficulties. For many, the biggest problem was a lack of kindergarten spots.

The situation with schools appeared better, as users mostly asked how to find schools with integration classes and what vaccinations children need for registration. Some parents shared that their children were in their final grades and wanted to complete the school year online to receive Ukrainian educational documents.

Lastly, many users inquired about leisure activities for children. Most forced migrants from Ukraine are women with children, and this question was highly prevalent. This topic, however, was also somewhat controversial. Some users in the Berlin group were outraged by questions about where to take children for free entertainment (e.g., zoos, swimming pools, museums, other attractions, etc.). Specifically, they found entertainment irresponsible, while people in Ukraine suffered. One user wrote, "Are you looking for protection or entertainment here, how can one even think about this when children back home are sitting in basements being bombed...". Other users pointed out that those children who have already reached a safe place should have leisure activities as part of their normal lives.

6. Medical and Psychological Assistance

In March and April, users inquired about medical care, asking where to go and how to find a doctor, make an appointment, and arrange insurance, among other things.

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12   Attending language integration courses is an important prerequisite for receiving financial aid from the *Jobcenter*.

Often, they requested a Russian-speaking doctor, as many users did not know German and, simultaneously, many German doctors did not know Ukrainian. (It is easier to find a doctor who speaks Russian, as most people from the former Eastern Bloc studied it.)

In May and June, the users who had experience with the German medical system posted about the differences between the Ukrainian and German systems. Supporters of the German system stressed the quality of service, the modern equipment, and the positive attitudes of medical workers towards the patient. Opponents listed the long waiting times for an appointment, the high cost of the services, particularly dental work, that are not covered by health insurance, and the inability to choose the types of diagnostics, among other things. For example, one user wrote: "...back home [in Ukraine], you come to a hospital, [to] a clinic with a problem... It doesn't matter what kind of problem... Immediately, they take a general blood test, then the diagnosis... Here [in Germany], you have to be dying to get even a blood test...". Most of the critical posts seemed to stem from a lack of experience with the German healthcare system, and other users provided answers.

In spring, there were also offers for free psychological support and aid. Moreover, these included both online assistance from psychologists in Ukraine and in-person help from specialists in Germany, as well as forced migrants from Ukraine who were psychologists.

7.   Banking Services and Online Shopping

Many posts in the channels, both in spring and summer, were related to banking services, as most forced migrants from Ukraine needed to open German bank accounts to receive social allowances. The users mainly discussed the conditions of different banks and the advantages of some over others. Users also asked about online banking and money transfers to and from Ukraine. Many messages in spring had requests and offers to privately exchange Ukrainian currency and US dollars for euros. An agreement between the National Bank of Ukraine and the Deutsche Bundesbank only happened in late May. Following this, in June, users asked how the exchange process worked.

When discussing banking services, users often compared them with Ukrainian ones. In their opinion, banking services in Ukraine are more modern, digitalised, and faster.

8.   Leisure, Sports, and Beauty

The groups received the topics of leisure, beauty, and sports with mixed feelings. For example, when one participant in the Berlin group asked about free classes in a fitness club for Ukrainians, a dispute began about whether it is appropriate for

asylum seekers to ask for such things. Some users responded that these services are not necessary and therefore should not be free. Others, meanwhile, argued that this is a health concern and an opportunity to distract oneself from the war and adapt to the new environment.

Participants in the Berlin group responded negatively to requests for hairdressers and other beauty industry workers. They argued that such issues are not relevant "when there is a war in your country". However, such responses were only typical for the first months of the war (from March to May), while from June onwards, finding hairdressers no longer caused negative reactions. In the group "Ukraine in Tübingen Reutlingen", meanwhile, this confrontation did not occur; on the contrary, users shared the contacts of hairdressers from Ukraine or recommended the hairdresser they visited.

In these situations, forced migrants, as opposed to representatives of the host society, imposed stringent expectations on themselves. They denied themselves and others in the same situation so-called 'unnecessary' things, services, expenses, and forms of leisure, especially at the initial stage of adapting to new conditions.

9. Communication, Activities, and Local Events

In April and May, the Berlin channel shared events organised specifically for forced migrants from Ukraine, as well as explanations about the peculiarities of local life. For example, users posted about the traditions around celebrating Easter and other holidays or the particularities of various institutions on holidays and weekends. However, such posts decreased over time.

The group "Ukraine in Tübingen Reutlingen" also shared updates about local life and meeting opportunities for Ukrainians. There were frequent invitations to a local club for forced migrants from Ukraine in Reutlingen called Dialog. Beyond communication and various events, the club helped with documents and translation, among other things. This channel, more often than the Berlin channel, published about local events, fairs, and holidays, indicated specific locations, and featured invitations in German.

10. Appointments, Postal Services, Correspondences, Parcels, and Digital Services

Both groups discussed the concept of the *Termin* in March and April. Seemingly, Ukrainians found making appointments and meetings with institutions and organisations several days or weeks in advance somewhat strange. In Ukraine, this practice is not widespread, and most institutions and organisations provide services to visitors without an appointment.

German post offices and correspondence practices were an important topic for forced migrants from Ukraine. The channels found the large amount of paper letters from most institutions and organisations unusual. This also applied to sending documents (e.g., bank cards, pin codes, health insurance cards, etc.) by mail. Largely, this can be explained by the fact that Ukraine underwent noticeable digitalisation in the last three years, reducing paperwork and transitioning to the provision of most public services through digital apps (e.g., Diia).

Lastly, there were also frequent requests for carriers shipping or delivering goods from Ukraine and back. This was not only for transporting personal belongings but also to send humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

What Do the Telegram Channels of Ukrainian Migrants in Germany 'Keep Silent' About?

Certain topics were 'not welcome' in the channels. If these topics came up, the moderators[13] warned that they could ban these users or exclude them from the groups. Specifically, these topics include language, religion, ethnicity, and politics.

Users brought up language more than once because most of the messages were in Russian. However, any disputes about whether to use Russian or switch to Ukrainian ended with a moderator's warning about the inadmissibility of language conflicts and the possible blocking of participants involved in the dispute. "Ukraine in Tübingen Reutlingen" asked users to join a specially created channel, "Fludilka", for such conversations. Meanwhile, moderators also prohibited discussing religion and ethnicity. Any intolerant statements, as seen by the moderators or other participants, received warnings and explanations that Germany is a tolerant country, everyone has the same rights, and everyone should be equally respected. These rules did not always apply to Russians, and derogatory neologisms such as 'rusnya', 'ruscists', and 'orcs' were often used for them.

The moderators discouraged discussing political issues, but there were some reports about rallies and other events supporting Ukraine, references to current world events, and updates on victories by the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Users, meanwhile, almost never mention gender. Although most Ukrainian forced migrants are women with children, there are men in both Telegram channels, and they are active participants. Occasionally during conflicts, users asked these men what they were doing abroad, why they were not defending the country, or for which reasons they left

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13   The initiators and moderators of the channels were mostly immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ukrainian immigrants who had moved to Germany from 2014 onwards. They had experience with migration and could give valuable advice to newcomers, so creating the channels was a form of solidarity and support.

Ukraine. This was generally used to insult them. Such posts, however, were an exception.

Moderators, and sometimes participants themselves, did not react well to posts that compared and complained. Complaints were not taboo, but users told their authors that they were ungrateful and disrespectful to the host country and that they needed to adapt to new living conditions. Sometimes they said so directly: "adapt or go back", "no one is keeping you here", or "we have to live here like others". However, such complaints did not decrease in number.

For example, Ukrainians often complained about the German bureaucracy and the long waits for solutions to what they considered "very simple issues". Answers such as "you just have to be patient", "wait", and "take your time" were not very reassuring. Having only temporary protection, Ukrainian forced migrants cannot plan their lives in the long term, and many of them have not chosen a further strategy: to stay or return to Ukraine. Nonetheless, 'temporariness versus permanence' was a topic that the channel participants avoided. Most users did not say that they wanted to stay in Germany forever, although sometimes in messages about finding housing, there were mentions of having nowhere to return to (e.g., their house was destroyed or located in a warzone or occupied territory). However, according to research, a considerable number of Ukrainian forced migrants are not considering a long-term stay in Germany. According to studies, 7[14] to 26 percent[15] do not plan to return to Ukraine,[16] but the rest see their situation as migrants as temporary and would like to go home. For this reason, time is a valuable resource for them. They want to solve their problems in the 'here and now' without postponing them into the future.

As with dissatisfaction with bureaucratic and other waiting times, a comparable situation was true in the service sector. Ukrainians are accustomed to 24/7 shops and the possibility to get numerous services even on weekends and holidays, so it was difficult for them to get used to the conditions in Germany. Therefore, they were

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14   Razumkov Tsentr (Razumkov Centre), *Nastroi ta otsinky ukrainskykh bizhentsiv (Lypen–Serpen 2022p.)* (*Attitudes and Assessments of Ukrainian Refugees (July–August 2022)*), report, 30 August 2022, https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/nastroi-ta -otsinky-ukrainskykh-bizhentsiv-lypen-serpen-2022p [accessed: 31.07.2024].

15   Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung, Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, and Das Sozio-oekonomische Panel, "Refugees from Ukraine in Germany: Fleeing the War and Starting Life in a New Country Summary: Background and Results", 2023, https://www.bib.bund.de/EN/Research/Migration/P rojects/pdf/2023-01-02-Ukraine-Summary-ENG.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5 [accessed: 31.07.2024].

16   However, this data is relative, as the situation may change according to individual life circumstances. Moreover, the decision to return to their homeland is a sensitive topic for migrants, which increases the possibility of obtaining socially acceptable answers. Lastly, due to different sampling methods and wording of questions in the questionnaires, we cannot compare the results of these studies.

very nostalgic and said that they could now see how much they used to have. This led to them over appreciating the Ukrainian level of development in many areas (but especially in the service sector).

The posts show that some Ukrainian forced migrants do not identify themselves as refugees. They sometimes wrote about this directly: "I'm not a refugee, I just have temporary protection" or "...Paragraph 24 is not refugee status; it's different". They also still considered Ukraine their home: "at my home in Ukraine", "I need to go back home [meaning to Ukraine]", and "if I go home to Ukraine for a while, will I be accepted back in Germany?" In addition, when describing their life in Germany, Ukrainian forced migrants often used phrases that denoted their identity not as migrants but as Ukrainians (e.g., "here for us Ukrainians", "here we are accepted as Ukrainians…", etc.). Even the names of the Telegram channels emphasise belonging to Ukraine and the users being Ukrainians, especially the name of the channel "Ukraine in Tübingen, Reutlingen", where the first word, "Ukraine", is written in Cyrillic (Україна), while the rest of the words are in German and the Latin alphabet. Accordingly, this suggests that a part of the 'motherland' has moved to Germany. Thus, their experiences in and memories of their homeland continued to influence how forced migrants perceived their place in the new environment.

Conclusions

The Telegram channels of Ukrainian forced migrants in Germany demonstrate an interesting example of self-organisation and mutual assistance. Nevertheless, the initiative to create such groups, rules, and processes of virtual interaction and communication between participants largely depends on the moderators. These channels accumulate useful information for forced migrants that can help solve some of their problems and record and share their experience of interacting with an unfamiliar environment. However, the large number of messages per day and the uniformity of questions and answers make these channels a kind of 'time sink'. To find relevant information, it is often necessary to read many 'surplus' messages that create 'information noise'.

How much these groups help to integrate their users into the new society is also debatable. In the groups, users communicate 'among themselves' and not with representatives of the host society. Additionally, such groups have a 'core' of participants, but they are overall unstable and in flux, suggesting little cohesion. Thus, the Telegram channels of Ukrainian forced migrants are an auxiliary tool for adaptation and orientation in new conditions, allowing users to feel 'less lonely', to see what problems others have and how they solve them, and to ask for advice or get help.

Social media platforms offer forced migrants a digital arena for social interaction and the exchange of experiences, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and community, which can play a significant role in maintaining their identity.

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