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### **EMPLOYMENT FLEXIBILITY IN UKRAINE: ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS**

**Abstract.** The changes in the economic and social spheres that occur in conditions of rapid technological changes and affect the structure, form and nature of employment are studied. It is argued that increasing employment flexibility, which is in line with the idea of expanding economic freedom for employers and employees, may exacerbate the social risks associated, in particular, with a weakening of the social security of employed. The existing foreign mechanisms of risk prevention in promoting employment flexibility are analysed, and it had reflected in the flexicurity concept. It is proved that the strengthening of employment flexibility in Ukrainian practice is accompanied by three main tendencies: diversification of employment forms that are characterized by flexibility; maintaining the rigidity of labour legislation on employment and employment in the public sector; preservation of the non-sufficient and inefficient level of social protection of flexible employment. Various points of view of different scientists on employment flexibility are analysed that allowed to study the specific forms of flexible employment in the Ukrainian economy. Proposals had developed to improve the conditions for the development of flexible employment, covering organizational, economic and institutional vectors.

**Keywords:** employment, employment flexibility, social security, flexicurity.

**JEL Classification** J24, J62

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## ГНУЧКІСТЬ ЗАЙНЯТОСТІ В УКРАЇНІ: ПЕРЕВАГИ ТА ОБМЕЖЕННЯ

**Анотація.** Досліджено зміни в економічній і соціальній сферах, що відбуваються в умовах стрімких технологічних зрушень та впливають на структуру, форми і характер зайнятості населення. Обґрунтовано, що посилення гнучкості зайнятості, яка відповідає ідеї розширення економічної свободи для роботодавців і працівників, може призводити до загострення соціальних ризиків, пов'язаних, передусім, із зниженням соціальної захищеності працюючого населення. Проаналізовано наявні в міжнародній практиці механізми попередження соціальних ризиків за сприяння гнучкості зайнятості, що знайшло відображення в концепції флексик'юриті. Доведено, що в українській практиці посилення гнучкості зайнятості супроводжується трьома тенденціями: урізноманітненням форм зайнятості, яким притаманна гнучкість; утриманням суворості трудового законодавства про зайнятість і самої зайнятості в державному секторі; збереженням недостатнього та неефективного рівня соціального захисту гнучкої зайнятості. Проаналізовано думки вітчизняних та зарубіжних науковців на гнучкість зайнятості, що дало змогу дослідити особливості форм гнучкої зайнятості в українській економіці. Розроблено пропозиції щодо вдосконалення умов розвитку гнучкої зайнятості, які охоплюють організаційно-економічні та інституційний вектори.

**Ключові слова:** зайнятість, гнучкість зайнятості, жорсткість зайнятості, соціальний захист, флексик'юриті.

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**Introduction.** The development of employment of the population of Ukraine reflected the full range of socio-economic problems accumulated in society during the previous period, and characterized by insufficiently high level of efficiency, stability, decent working conditions and social protection of employees.

Important factors influencing employment are the development of innovative technologies, digitalization of the economy, changes in the nature and content of labour, the emergence of new competencies of employees, the transformation of their work behaviour. Transformation of the labour sphere under the influence of new challenges and aggravation of probable risks requires the formation of flexible mechanisms for its regulation, while ensuring adequate social protection of employees, prevention of unemployment's threats and deterioration of the quality of life.

The need to overcome contradictions in the field of employment had exacerbated by the need to adapt it to the conditions of formation and development of the information society, as well as the corresponding transformations in the field of employment. Finding optimal solutions requires priority attention to the new forms of employment, including atypical, non-standard and flexible. Their insufficient theoretical elaboration and practical problems of their regulation in the various types of economic activity determine the relevance of the topic of the paper.

**Research analysis and problem statement.** In the special literature the subject of flexibility of employment had investigated in the scientific papers of Bliznyuk V. V. [1], Gerasimenko O. O. [2], Galaidi T. O. [4], Hook L. P. [1], Kolota A. M. [2], Libanova E. M. [3], Tenitskaya N. B. [4], Montenegrin N. V. [4] and other Ukrainian scientists. In particular, Ukrainian scientists Gerasimenko O. O. and Kolot A. M. [2] had developed the concept of a new model of work and employment, so called «Labor 4.0». Among the main qualities of this model are noted «the diversity of forms of employment, the dominance of its atypical forms over the typical, non-standard — over the standard; increasing differentiation of the labour force by level of training and level of competence» [2, p. 9—10, 13]. That is, the employment flexibility is considered by the authors as a consequence of the technological changes.

Researches and investigations of other Ukrainian scientists devoted to the study of flexible employment, in turn, substantiate the objectivity of its emergence and development as a necessary condition for innovative employment development, a key factor of the improvement of its social and economic efficiency [1, p. 41—46]. According to point of view of the researchers of the Ptoukha Institute for Demography and Social Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of

Ukraine, «organizational and structural flexibility, as well as a freedom that allow to use of the innovative forms of employment, is not always transformed into a decent wage for the involved employees, in consistent compliance with its deadlines, etc.» [3, p. 225].

A significant contribution to the issue of flexible employment had made by Belarusian scientists Vankevych E. V. and O. V. Zaitseva who focused on the study of the problems of combining flexible employment and social protection of employees, which is reflected in the concept of flexicurity [5]. At the same time, among foreign researchers of the problems of flexible employment should be noted the study of S. Kazes and A. Neshporova, who systematized various forms of flexible employment depending on the levels of management, using informative international comparisons [6, 7]. P. Relly had pointed the objectivity of the process of adaptation of employment and wages to changes in economic conditions [8]. Of particular interest are cross-country comparisons of specific indicators of flexible employment related to the peculiarities of the manifestations of non-standard forms of employment in different countries.

However, the specifics of the development of employment flexibility in the context of transformational changes remain insufficiently studied. In particular, the Ukrainian experience in the field of functioning and regulation of flexible employment needs additional consideration in terms of deepening both the theoretical and methodological basis of the study, as well as identifying specific areas of new forms' using in the different economic activities. It confirms the relevance of the study of employment flexibility in terms of innovative change.

**Aim of the paper** is the analysis of flexible forms of employment in the Ukrainian economy (taking into account the multi-vector orientation of changes in macroeconomic conditions and employment / income), the identification of prospects and priorities for its further development under conditions of the constant changes in the labour sphere.

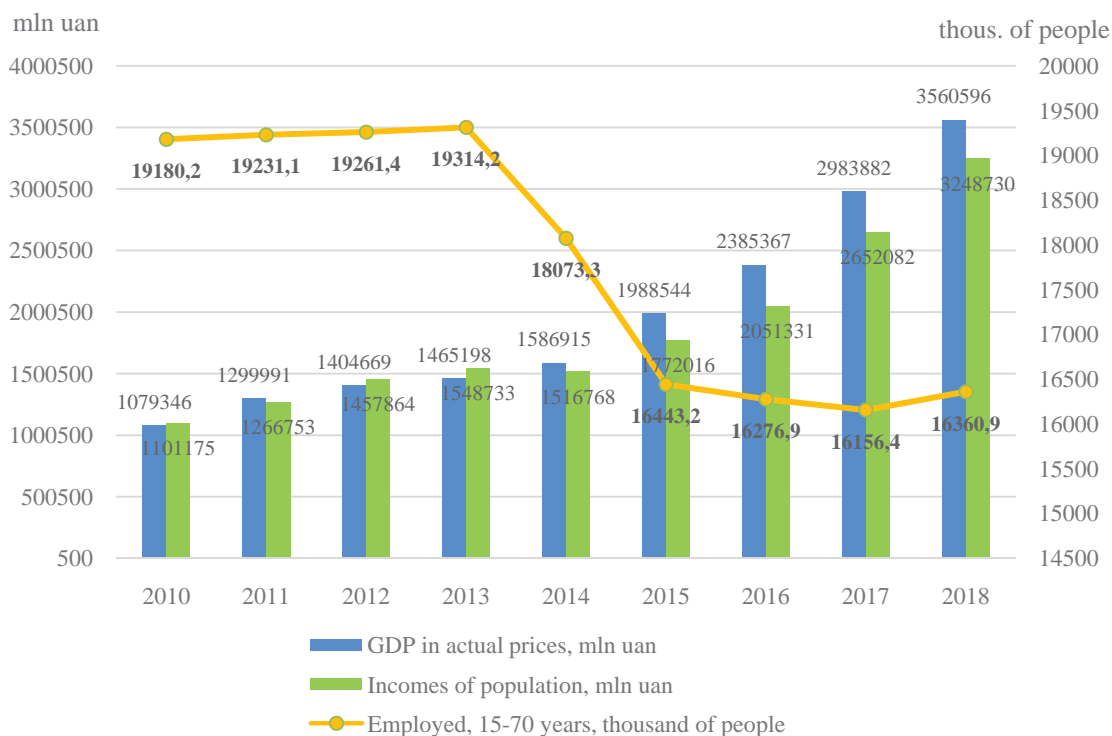
**Results of research.** Under conditions of globalization of the world economic environment, the deployment of the Fifth Industrial Revolution Industry 5.0, the digitalization of all sectors of the economy and society, increasing the flexibility of the labour market, which involves the spread of non-standard forms of employment. Among the main reasons for the acceleration of employment flexibilization process in Ukraine it is possible to point the technological impact on changes in the content and the character of labour in modern society, as well as a restructuring of employment under structural changes in the economy, the individualization of production process, and changing the role of the human factor and population needs in flexible forms of labour.

Using of the flexible organization and remuneration of labour has revealed, on the one hand, significant benefits associated with increased opportunities to increase productivity, to improve quality of life (by optimizing working hours and leisure), to stimulate labour and creative activity (due to expanding choice of employment spheres). At the same time, innovations in the field of employment encountered the invariability and poor adaptation of existing labour legislation and the emergence of social risks for employees.

In a broad sense, the flexibility (according to the points of view of the University of Economics and Law «KROK» researchers) implies a free transfer of labour from the external labour market to domestic. And, conversely, a wide variety of forms, methods, modes of labour using, differentiation of its payment created a conditions for more efficient using of labour resources, faster overcoming of crisis phenomena, adaptation to new challenges and shocks [9, p. 92—104].

The system of flexible employment had characterized by a one-way change in the dynamics of the number of people employed in the economy depending on the dynamics of GDP, which indicates the consistency of the main macro-proportions. On the contrary, so-called «rigidity employment» had characterized by multidirectional dynamics of the number of employees and GDP dynamics. In addition, rigidity employment can beendirectly targeted, if GDP growth exceeds the rate of employment decline. In the case of reverse employment rigidity, the opposite situation occurs: changes in employment outpace GDP changes.

The dynamics of macroeconomic indicators of the second decade of the 21st century shows a decrease in the absolute values of employment in the Ukrainian economy (*Fig. 1*) [10]. During the same period, a certain increase in actual GDP had occurred.



**Fig. 1. Diversity of employment, GDP and income changes in Ukraine**  
 Source: compiled by the author according to the data of State Employment Service of Ukraine [10].

On the different fragments of the figure 1, it is possible to observe the divergence of the vectors of employment, GDP and income changes, which indicates a certain rigidity of employment in the Ukrainian economy, namely, its inelasticity to GDP and income.

In addition, the virtually stable level of employment (under conditions of the saving of the low rates of GDP changes) remained the general trend of employment over a long period of reforming the Ukrainian economy. As a result, the employment had characterised by relatively stable level but not so efficient.

At the same time, according to the of the majority of researchers, the objective characteristic of the concept of flexibility is the speed of the adaptation of labour market to the economic conditions' changes. Other word, labour market flexibility is the degree to which the number of employed or working hours (quantitative adjustment) or wages fees (price adjustments) are adapted to economic changes [8]. With a flexible market, there is a weakening of job protection, while increasing the likelihood of job loss, but the chances of finding new jobs (or additional jobs) in such a market are higher [8].

Among the most important forms of flexible employment, researchers of the Institute of Economics and Forecasting of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, in particular, Hook L. P., single out the following [3, p. 41—46]:

- 1) by the formalization of employment: formal employment at the enterprises of real economy, and informal employment — employment only in the informal sector, and employment in the informal and formal sectors (under informal agreements);
- 2) by the nature of working time use: full and part-time employment;
- 3) by the form of workplace organization: at the workplace in the premises provided by the employer, and distance employment;
- 4) by method of employment: by employment contract between the employer and the employee, collective agreement and agreement of the parties.

Gradually, non-standard becomes one of the important features of modern labour market development. The conclusions of the ILO experts, prepared as a result of the meeting on the problems of non-standard forms of employment, identified four main forms of non-standard employment: 1) temporary; 2) incomplete; 3) temporary agency employment and multiple employment relationships; 4) disguised labour relations [11].

At the same time, among the most common forms of non-standard employment in Ukraine, researchers noted part-time or part-time employment; remote employment; temporary employment; borrowed work (outstaffing, outsourcing, staff leasing); secondary employment-based employment; employment nature; multiple (portfolio) employment or part-time work. In addition, it is pointed the job sharing under which two or more employees are hired for one job, and work in turn; telework, work on call; informal employment, self-employment, unregistered employment in the formal sector [9].

At the same time, it is important to distinguish between flexibility for employers that had manifested through the provision of labour, its use for production needs (using flexible work schedules), and flexibility for employees, as well as flexibility at the macro level.

According to P. Rally's point of view, flexibility, from the employer side, had appeared in such forms as:

- flexibility of the number: changes in the number of employees employed in enterprises / organizations through the using of fixed working hours that provides for the employment of employees on a temporary basis;

- flexibility of working hours: varying the number of hours and work schedules of employees using non-standard working hours (in particular, part-time work, shift work; overtime);

- local flexibility: allows or requires employees to work remotely, outside the physical workplace for a certain period of time or full time [8].

From the employee's side, the flexible forms of employment provide for the possibility of greater flexibility in the combination with paid employment and other activities; maintaining a better work-life balance. Accordingly, under modern conditions, a significant proportion of employees prefer part-time employment or temporary jobs. At the same time, permanent employees may be interested in job placement under conditions of flexible employment that provides the opportunity to change the duration of working hours and the territorial location of jobs.

At the macro level, flexibility is manifested through gradual adaptation to external influences and changes in employment conditions and takes the following forms: external (external) flexibility, internal flexibility, functional flexibility, financial / wage flexibility [6, p. 3].

At the same time, flexibility refers to changes in employment conditions due to increased labour turnover and increased territorial mobility of employees; and the ability of enterprises to change the duration of working hours and the number of employees by introducing flexible employment regimes. In addition, flexibility had reflected through increased professional mobility of employees within an individual enterprise, which implies the need for training and retraining.

Moreover, the excessive flexibility, without proper regulation, can negatively affect the ability to provide decent work, as some employees agree to employment under non-standard conditions due to the lack of opportunities for permanent full employment. However, it might increase the social insecurity of employees who don't have guarantees of permanent work and employment under the conditions of statutory working hours; deterioration of working conditions; lack of career opportunities; reduction of guarantees of obtaining a stable decent wage [12].

According to the concept of flexicurity (the theory of combining flexibility and security in the labour market), it is envisaged to harmonize flexible employment regimes in enterprises with the social security of employees. It can be achieved based on:

- protection of workplaces (preservation of the workplace for the employee under the conditions specified in the contract);

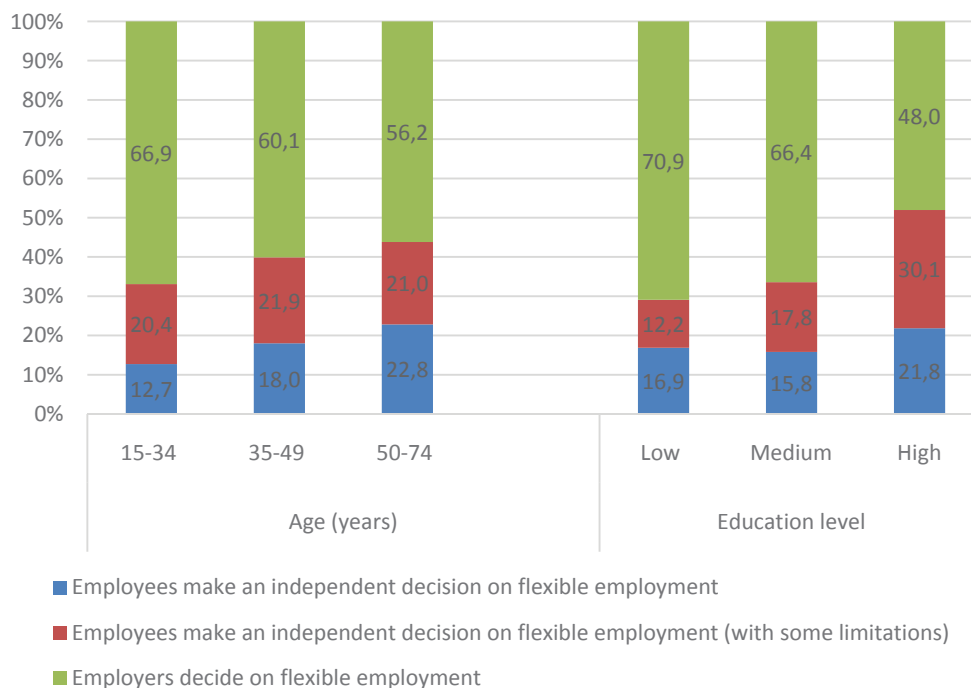
- employment protection (combining workplace protection with the ability of employees to remain competitive by upgrading skills and qualifications through continuing education);

- protection of income (ensuring the possibility of receiving income in case of job loss and the minimum standard of living) [13].

Using the flexible employment become especially relevant during periods of economic crisis that cause the deterioration of the economic situation in the labour markets of the vast majority of countries and significantly affect the development of flexicurity as a basis for balancing flexibility

and security in the labour market. Moreover, under crisis conditions the most widespread are the measures of employment policy related to the flexibility of working time into the direction of its reduction.

In the context of the coronavirus crisis, increasing labour market flexibility in the majority of countries had resulted in the practice of reducing working hours. At the same time, the structure of the employed population of the EU countries (in terms of flexibility) by age and level of education in 2019 was characterized by the following distribution (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2. Structure of employed (under conditions of flexibility) population of EU countries, by age and education level, 2019, %**

Source: [14].

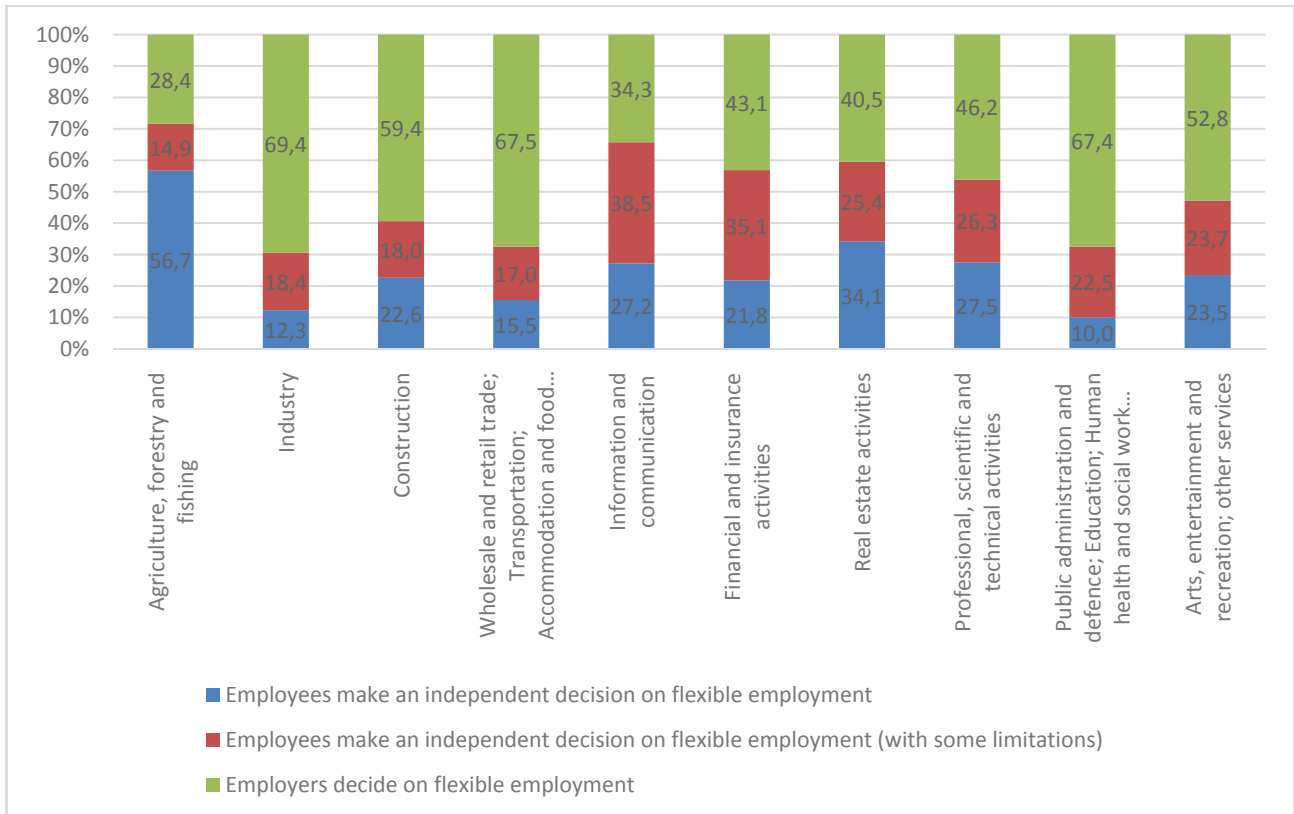
In particular, among youth (aged 15—34) the majority of employees was employed under conditions of flexibility based on the decision of employers (66.9%); while 20.4% of employees made personal decisions about flexible employment (with certain restrictions). Instead, employers mostly decide on flexible employment of low-skilled employees (70.9% of the total number of employed). At the same time, among employees with a high level of education, the share of those employees who make decisions on flexible employment (with certain restrictions) has constituted 30.1% in 2019 [14].

In the sectoral context, the largest share of employees, involved into forced flexible employment (for the initiative of employers) in the EU countries was concentrated in industry (69.4%); in the sector of wholesale and retail trade (67.5%); construction (59.4%); arts, sports (52.8%); professional, scientific activity (46.2%) (Fig. 3).

Instead, employees which made an independent decision on flexible employment, were concentrated primarily in agriculture (56.7%); in the sector of real estate activities (34.1%); information and communications (27.2%) [14].

According to expert assessments, the labour market in Ukraine lacks flexibility, which is limited for full-time and part-time employees. Freelance is the most flexible form of employment under modern conditions. According to the Ukrainian service Freelancehunt, only in 2019 the number of freelancers increased by 55%, the number of customers, as well as the total project budget, increased by 35%, and the number of projects — by 20%. Almost the half of all budgets was focused on paying for the services of programmers. In addition, the work of designers in the

fields of SEO and marketing, work with clients, texts, mobile development, audio and video, translation, architecture and engineering, system administration is in the stable demand. Even more striking is the increase in the number of freelancers in March — April 2020 due to the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, which was a clear demonstration of the benefits of e-employment [15]. It is known that the demand for Ukrainian freelance programmers on the world market is very high, which emphasizes the high potential of domestic employees.



**Fig. 3. Structure of employed (under conditions of flexibility) population of the EU countries, by economic activities, 2019, %**

Source: [14].

Thus, assessing the trend of flexible employment in the Ukrainian economy should be noted, that, on the one hand, it allows using the labour in different segments of employment (on variable terms), increases mobility and labour efficiency. On the other hand, it leads to the weakening of social protection, and using of some of its forms (particularly in agriculture) might be resulted in the deindustrialization of labour.

In the nearest future, a significant increase in non-standard employment (due to the trend towards digitalization of the economy) might be observed. Digital employment (by its nature) requires a change in established perceptions of the spatial and temporal limits of labour using. That is why it is possible to conclude that flexibility is an immanent form of digital employment development.

Given both the advantages and disadvantages of using non-standard forms of employment, it is important to determine the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of their regulation. According to the point of view of Galaida T. O., Tenitskaya N. B. and Chornohorska N. V., the following criteria are defined: ensuring employment guarantees, ensuring the rights of employees and employers, a decent level of wages, the interaction of labour relations on the principles of social partnership, social stability in society [4, p. 70]. At the same time, according to the authors' point of view, it is also advisable to supplement the list of criteria with indicators of productivity and quality of goods and services that created using non-standard forms of employment.

To increase the efficiency of flexible forms of employment, it is necessary to introduce social innovations in this process [16, p. 209—210]. In particular, experts note innovative forms of flexibility in combination with social technologies for monitoring, registration and control of working conditions and safety; voucher technologies in vocational training; stimulating professional and territorial mobility; modernization of the creation of innovative jobs, telecommunications based on online communications, modernized jobs at home and coworking.

In addition, it is worth paying attention to improving the institutional conditions for the flexibility of the Ukrainian labour market, which, on the one hand, will stimulate its competitiveness growth, and, on the other hand, strengthen the social protection of workers. It is necessary to note the following directions of the solving of these problems [9]:

- development of legal and economic infrastructure of the labour market to regulate employment flexibility and ensure social protection;
- providing conditions for decent work in its various forms;
- introduction of non-standard forms of employment and flexible work regimes with appropriate institutional design of «new practices» of employment;
- settlement of deductions from wages and income taxes to increase the flexibility of employment and working hours;
- development of universal, dynamic competencies of employees;
- support for the territorial mobility of the workforce, including labour and education.

Thus, in the context of innovative changes in the labour sphere, employment flexibility and social protection should become key areas for further socio-economic development of the country.

**Conclusions.** The main reasons for the growth of employment flexibility in Ukraine are the technological impact on the transformation of labour in modern society, structural changes in employment, the transition from mass production to its individualization, the growing role of the human factor and increasing the needs of the population in flexible forms of employment. The results of analysis testified that various forms of flexible (non-standard, atypical) employment are widely represented in the Ukrainian economy.

However, the process of functioning of flexible employment is controversial. In the legal and organizational-economic spheres, numerous manifestations of labour market rigidity persist that indicates a lack of employment flexibility in all sectors of the economy. In addition, new, more flexible forms of employment are characterized by insufficient or complete lack of social protection for employees.

At the same time, the phenomenon of flexible employment creates significant advantages for the application of this form of employment not only for employees but also for employers and the state as a whole. It proved the need for the elaboration of the measures for the creation of favourable conditions for its development (with adequate social protection of employed under conditions of flexibility). Moreover, it is important for Ukraine to study the international experience of regulating flexible employment, to make topical interstate comparisons, to determine the directions of adaptation of the international experience to Ukrainian realities.

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