

### CRISIS OVERVIEW

Approximately 3.5 million people have arrived in Poland from Ukraine since 24 February 2022. This number corresponds to roughly 53% of the 6.5 million people who have fled Ukraine because of the war (UNHCR accessed 23/05/2022). Although many Ukrainians choose Poland as a destination because of its cultural and linguistic proximity, the vast length of its border, and a large Ukrainian diaspora already living in the country, it is uncertain how many migrants and refugees intend to stay in Poland and how many have already moved to other locations (Politico 11/03/2022).

Almost 50% of migrants and refugees from Ukraine interviewed at the border indicated their intention to stay in the country for the duration of the war. Others sought to reach other European countries, such as Germany (17%), Spain (5%), Denmark (3%), Italy (3%), and France (3%) (REACH 04/05/2022). Over one million people had registered for PESEL (the Polish electronic system for social security) to receive a personal identification number in Poland (UNHCR accessed 17/05/2022). According to UNHCR projections from April, more than 4.3 million people will have entered Poland from Ukraine by December 2022, and 2.6 million people will likely remain in the country and require humanitarian assistance (UNHCR 25/04/2022).

### Geographic distribution of arrivals

The majority of people who applied for PESEL are concentrated in the voivodeships (regions) of Mazowieckie (main city Warsaw), Dolnoslaskie (main city Wroclaw), Slaskie (main city Katowice), Malopolskie (main city Krakow), and Wielkopolskie (main city Poznan). While this distribution is not a reliable indicator of where refugees are (since not all apply for PESEL), it shows that the main cities are receiving a considerable influx.

The influx has caused significant increases, ranging from 13–50%, in the population of main Polish cities (NFP 11/05/2022). In April, an estimated 469,000 Ukrainians (including refugees and those who lived in Poland before February 2022) resided in Warsaw, 302,000 each in Wroclaw and Katowice, 230,000 in Krakow, and 224,000 in Gdansk (UPM 04/2022).

### Crossing points, arrivals from Ukraine, and PESEL registration by region



See full map on page 9

**Disclaimer:** Arrival figures are as at 22 May 2022. People registered for PESEL figures are as at 18 May 2022.

**Source:** ACAPS using data from UNHCR (accessed 23/05/2022; accessed 19/05/2022) and OCHA (accessed 19/05/2022).

### Table of contents

Access to services and assistance	3
Humanitarian needs	4
International and local response capacity	6
Aggravating factors	7
Outlook	8

The humanitarian situation of the refugees depends on where they live. There are more available jobs for those residing in cities, but there has been a drastic rise in accommodation prices over the past few months. In rural areas, accommodation remains more affordable, but jobs are less available (NFP 22/04/2022; KII 16/05/2022). There is still a need for further assessments to account for the differences in needs according to the location of migrants and refugees (KII 16/05/2022).

There are eight crossing points between Ukraine and Poland used by migrants and refugees: Dorohusk-Jagodzin, Zosin-Ustyluh, Dołhobyczów-Uhryniv, Hrebennie-Rawa-Ruska, Budomierz-Hrushiv, Korczowa-Krakowiec, Medyka-Szeginie, and Krościenko-Smilnytsia (see the attached map) (UNHCR 09/05/2022). Medyka is one of the most used crossing points and among those with the largest presence of humanitarian organisations (NPR 11/03/2022). During the first days of the war in Ukraine, the essential concern in Medyka was to prevent the winter cold from causing people harm (UNHCR 16/03/2022). With winter ending and temperatures rising, the main focus has shifted towards organising the departure of people who want to return to Ukraine and protecting them and the people entering Poland from human trafficking (Metro 27/04/2022).

### Trends in arrivals and returns

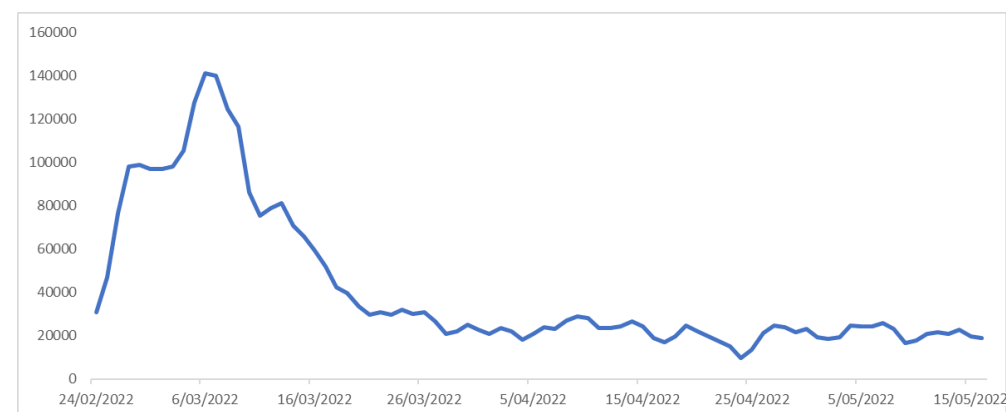
The influx of refugees and migrants from Ukraine to Poland started increasing on 24 February. It peaked on 6 March, with 140,800 people crossing in one day. Since this peak, the number of daily arrivals has been decreasing. Between 1 April and 9 May, the average number of daily crossings was 21,700, slightly higher than the number of daily entries before the start of the war (18,000) (UNHCR accessed 10/05/2022). Migrants and refugees who arrived during the first months after the invasion had more financial means, and some had connections in Poland, allowing them to settle quicker and potentially find accommodation with friends or relatives. The more recent arrivals often have fewer connections in Poland or less financial means, putting them in a more vulnerable position and keeping them highly dependent on humanitarian aid (KII 05/05/2022; INTERSOS 10/05/2022).

Some of the people who have entered Poland have continued their journey to other European countries, such as the Czech Republic, Germany, and Italy (UNHCR 05/05/2022; NBC 01/04/2022; DW 07/03/2022). There is no clear picture of how many refugees remain in Poland, how many have gone to other European countries, and how many have returned to Ukraine. Some refugees have chosen not to register in Poland out of fear of not being able to work because of their refugee status or being separated from their child family members, as not all of them have legal guardianship (UNICEF and UNHCR 07/04/2022; KII 12/05/2022; KII 05/05/2022). Others are afraid to register for PESEL because they do not know the consequences of the process. Some of them are afraid that if they register, they will not be able to move onwards to other countries (KII 12/05/2022).

There have been reports of refugees returning to Ukraine after Russian forces withdrew from some occupied areas (TWP 22/04/2022; NFP 25/04/2022). From 24 February to 25 April, 870,000 people have crossed from Poland to Ukraine, but it is impossible to assess how many of those were Ukrainians returning to their country (UNHCR 25/04/2022). Returns occur for multiple reasons. Some return permanently because of the difficulties they encountered during their journey or to be closer to their families. Others return temporarily to retrieve forgotten papers, pick up relatives, or protect their homes from looting (BBC 15/04/2022; NPR 05/05/2022).

When returns to Ukraine started in April, pendular cross-border dynamics developed, with people temporarily returning to Ukraine and then coming back to Poland. Since then, the daily number of Ukrainians entering Poland has been lower or similar to the number of people crossing into Ukraine (KII 16/05/2022; NHK 15/05/2022; BBC 15/04/2022). Although this trend is expected to continue, the number of migrants and refugees in Poland is not expected to considerably decrease (UNICEF 08/04/2022).

### Daily arrivals of Ukrainians in Poland since the beginning of Russian aggression



Source: UNHCR (accessed 27/04/2022)

### Demographic profile

Approximately 93% of the people who have arrived in Poland are adult women (50%) and children (43%) (REACH and UNHCR 27/04/2022; UNHCR 01/04/2022 and 06/05/2022). This proportion resulted from men of conscription age (18–60) being banned from leaving Ukraine. Exceptions from this ban are those financially supporting three or more children, single fathers, and guardians of children with disabilities (The Guardian 09/03/2022; Government of Ukraine 24/02/2022).

Children are likely to need mental health and psychosocial support because of the trauma of separating from their families. On the other hand, women are at risk of gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation, and trafficking. Given the situation, humanitarian assistance has had to consider their dual role as caregivers and economic providers for children and those accompanying them (UNHCR 01/04/2022 and 29/04/2022).

7.4% of the people from Ukraine who registered for PESEL since 24 February are over 65 years old (INTERSOS 10/05/2022; UNHCR accessed 16/05/2022). 10% of the assessed respondents travelled with people over 65 years of age (REACH and UNHCR 11/05/2022). Displacement disproportionately affects elderly people, as they typically arrive with health needs from weeks of missing long-term prescriptions (DW 12/04/2022; Howard 01/04/2022; Euronews 30/03/2022).

## ACCESS TO SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE

### Legal status

The Polish Government has guaranteed that Ukrainian refugees can stay in the country for up to 18 months. They can also receive a Polish ID number (PESEL), which allows them to access a range of benefits (including healthcare and social assistance) and work in the country (Government of Poland accessed 06/05/2022; NFP 14/03/2022). As at 10 May 2022, over one million people had registered for PESEL (UNHCR accessed 11/05/2022). Not having a PESEL does not mean that people cannot legally stay in Poland, but it does restrict their access to the healthcare system or any services that the Polish Government directly offers.

As at 13 May, an estimated 132,000 Ukrainian citizens had started working in Poland since 24 February (TFN 13/05/2022). Over 70,000 refugees in Poland were also enrolled to receive cash assistance from different entities. There are five enrolment points for cash assistance in four cities: Warsaw (Mazowsze), Kraków (Małopolska), Poznań (Wielkopolska), and Ostróda (Warmia i Mazury). Three more are expected to open in Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Wrocław. The target for the initial cash assistance programme is 360,000 people (UNHCR 13/05/2022). As at 2 May, over 195,900 Ukrainian children were enrolled in Polish schools (INTERSOS 10/05/2022).

The legal status of youth has been an issue, particularly those over 16 years old. In Ukraine, they had more freedom to move by themselves, while in Poland, they are still treated like children and expected to have a legal guardian. Some organisations have set up shelters specifically designed for older youth, but many young people prefer independent solutions and avoid staying in those shelters. There have been cases of 18-year-olds adopting or taking legal responsibility for 16- to 17-year-old partners to avoid separation. This situation is likely to continue being an issue in the medium to long term because procedures for adoption in Poland are complex and slow, and there is a lack of systemic solutions for separation issues (KII 12/05/2022).

## State of social services in Poland

Before the current crisis, Poland's health expenditure was among the lowest in the EU (WHO accessed 09/05/2022). Similarly, Poland had one of the lowest numbers of doctors and nurses per 1,000 inhabitants in the entire EU (Eurostat accessed 09/05/2022). In 2017, out-of-pocket expenditure (the money paid by citizens when using the health system) was comparably high (22%), which created inequalities. Close to 14% of the low-income population reported unmet health needs, lower than the 4% reported by the high-income population (OECD 2017). The Polish health system is highly decentralised, which creates challenges for effective coordination and equal access to healthcare depending on where people are located (OECD 12/02/2019 and 2017; European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2011).

Before the current crisis, education in Poland normally involved fewer disparities by socioeconomic status than in other European countries. The most notable differences were between migrants and natives. Polish classes and compensatory classes for migrant students were considered insufficient for them to keep up with native students. Some schools also opted not to accept migrant students because of a lack of resources to meet the challenge (ECRE 16/04/2021).

In Poland, approximately 40% of the population lived in overcrowded dwellings (Eurostat accessed 18/05/2022). 15% lived in houses with no access to toilets, no heating, or unsafe construction (Habitat for Humanity accessed 18/05/2022). The Polish Government had attempted to address this housing deficit, but by 15 April 2022, it had only managed to build 15% of the houses it had planned to build by the end of 2019 (NFP 15/04/2022). According to PwC, 2.2 million houses are needed to overcome the deficit (PwC 12/2021). With the influx of refugees and migrants leading to a growing population in Poland, accommodation will be one of the main needs. The Polish Government has stated that it needs financial support from the EU to provide housing for migrants and refugees (Financial Times 25/03/2022).

## HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

### Shelter and NFIs

Approximately 27% of the assessed refugees stayed with relatives or friends, 27% were with hosts they found through social media or volunteers, 16% rented accommodation, and 8% were hosted in shelters provided by the authorities. 8% of those interviewed reported not knowing where to stay (INTERSOS 10/05/2022; REACH and UNHCR 21/04/2022). Refugees have not reported shelter and NFIs as major priorities, likely because many of them are in shelters where all basic items (including clothing, bedding, hygiene items, and food) are available (IRC 31/03/2022).

The main shelters are in the big cities. One of the biggest is Ptak Warsaw Expo Centre (in Warsaw), which has a maximum capacity of 20,000 people (AA 04/04/2022). Many refugees prefer to stay near the border to stay closer to their places of origin and properties (KII 05/05/2022). While citizens, local organisations, and the Polish Government have provided shelters, there is still a lack of protocols and accommodation as the Polish Government has had no experience of welcoming such a high influx of refugees into the country (Foreign Policy 29/03/2022; DW 08/04/2022). There are several types of shelters, including collective and private ones:

**Collective shelters** are at the borders and in the main cities. The ones at the border are poorly set up. In these areas, volunteers and organisations have found it difficult to manage privacy issues, health issues, and lice outbreaks, particularly at the beginning of the influx. NGOs are facilitating transitional accommodations within Poland, but there are no clear medium-to-long-term solutions (UNHCR 20/04/2022). Local businesses have donated buildings and office complexes as shelters, but only temporarily as they might soon be needed for their original purpose (IRC 31/03/2022).

**Private shelters:** an estimated 600,000 people are in the private shelters of Polish citizens, who have also been providing them food and other types of assistance (PAP 21/04/2022). The Government (through an official website) and various volunteers (predominantly via social media) have been coordinating between hosting offers and people in need of shelter (Pomagam Ukrainie accessed 18/05/2022). Polish citizens who offer to host refugees can apply for financial support from the state, which amounts to approximately USD 9 per day for up to 60 days. The Government offers the possibility of an extension, but only for two months at most. It remains uncertain what happens after this deadline (NFP 22/04/2022; The Atlantic 03/05/2022). Some people have reported problems accessing this support given a lack of coordination between the Government and local municipalities (Portal Samorządowy 06/05/2022).

Despite the overwhelming hospitality, Polish citizens may likely be unable to provide housing for a prolonged period because of the protracted nature of needs and increasing inflation, which affects the cost of living (IRC 31/03/2022). Other important risks associated with this type of aid and accommodation include sexual exploitation, abuse, and even human trafficking, with incidents of sexual violence towards Ukrainian women hosted in private shelters already reported (RP 10/03/2022; UNHCR 13/04/2022).

### Livelihoods

After losing their livelihoods in Ukraine, many refugees in Poland, especially women, have become completely dependent on aid and need support in finding work (CARE and UN Women 04/05/2022; IFRC 05/05/2022). Livelihood aid in Poland focuses on refugees' access to jobs. There is a need for workers in some Polish provinces. The Government has said that it can accommodate up to 500,000 additional workers, but the jobs available do not necessarily match the skills of refugees. This mismatch may result in refugees working in occupations they are overqualified for (CBC 05/05/2022; ICMPD 08/03/2022). This setup can congest the lower-skill labour market and lead to a decline in wages (RAND 18/03/2022). Although the Polish population has shown readiness to receive migrants and refugees from Ukraine, an eventual saturation of the labour market, with a history of sociocultural tensions with Ukraine, could lead to social cohesion problems (TWP 06/04/2022; The Nation 18/03/2022).

By 5 May 2022, more than 100,000 Ukrainians had found a formal job, with almost half as unskilled labour. The Polish Government has announced that payments to Polish households hosting Ukrainians will end in August, meaning a probable increase in the need for livelihoods and shelter for migrants and refugees (NFP 05/05/2022; Euractiv 03/05/2022). One challenge they face is integrating into the Polish labour market. It will be difficult to match refugees with available jobs, particularly since the majority are women, children, and elderly people. NGOs have raised problems with the recognition of foreign diplomas and qualifications, which can worsen unemployment or push refugees to accept jobs below their qualifications (KII 12/05/2022; EC 20/04/2022).

People over 65 years of age have greater difficulties in accessing formal jobs. In one assessment, 51% of the respondents over 65 years old reported not having enough money (HelpAge International 02/04/2022).

## Health

The number of patients in Poland is expected to increase by at least 10% in 2022, which will likely overwhelm the healthcare system (*The Guardian* 06/04/2022). Health needs are likely to increase in cities and border areas. Some private health centres provide support, but the scope and time frame for that service provision is unclear.

Overcrowded conditions and a lack of vaccines prior to the invasion have put children at risk of contracting measles, polio, and diarrhoeal diseases (*Murphy et al.* 05/04/2022). People are also at risk of contracting COVID-19 because Ukrainians have been vaccine-hesitant, and only about 35% have had the first dose. This situation may increase their risk of contracting COVID-19 under overcrowded conditions and indicates a need for masks, which the Government has stopped mandating in public spaces in Poland (*Prawo.pl* 28/04/2022; *TWP* 05/05/2022).

High needs for medication and medical assistance are expected among elderly people from Ukraine given any pre-existing illnesses they may have. 63% of the assessed respondents needed urgent medication, and 40% needed urgent medical attention (*HelpAge International* 02/04/2022).

Women require access to reproductive care, menstrual, and hygiene kits (*UNFPA* 14/03/2022). As there have been reports of sexual and gender-based violence throughout the war in Ukraine, rape survivors and other victims arriving in Poland will face significant trauma over the lack of access to reproductive health services (*NPR* 17/05/2022). The availability of safe reproductive health services, including abortion and emergency contraception, is a big concern because of the Polish restrictive legislation limiting access to those services. This legislation would require victims of rape to provide proof of the criminal act to be able to access abortion – a condition that is very often impossible to meet and that leads to re-victimisation (*The Guardian* 10/05/2022; *The Brussels Times* 19/04/2022; *Impakter* 20/04/2022; *EPF* accessed 12/05/2022; *NPR* 17/05/2022). Conservative anti-abortion groups often target Polish hospitals and health centres that provide such services, resulting in many doctors and hospitals refusing to conduct abortions and a lack of information on which facilities provide it. Anti-abortion groups have also distributed leaflets alarming the Ukrainian women arriving in Poland against accessing abortions (*NaTemat.pl* 27/04/2022). Poland is also the country with the most difficult access to contraception in Europe (*The Guardian* 10/05/2022; *EPF* 12/11/2020).

The estimated prevalence of mental disorders (depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia) for the conflict-affected population from Ukraine in Poland was 22.1% at the beginning of the war. 5.1% (>80,000) are expected to develop severe mental disorders as a consequence of conflict (*WHO* 15/03/2022). Prior to the war, Ukraine had higher suicide rates than Eastern European countries and the global average. Given the effects of war scenarios on mental health, concerns around mental disorders will

likely be a priority (*WHO* 01/07/2020; *ABC* 22/03/2022). The Polish Government is encouraging healthcare professionals from Ukraine and other countries to join the medical response by offering free language courses in the country (*Howard* 01/04/2022).

## Protection

At the crossing points between Poland and Ukraine, around 75% of those transporting refugees at the beginning of the influx were volunteers who were neither registered nor associated with the Government or NGOs. This situation inhibited the control of their activities. These volunteers did not receive training on child safeguarding or dealing with GBV (*HRW* 29/04/2022; *UNICEF and UNHCR* 07/04/2022; *UNHCR and UNICEF* 07/04/2022). The situation also generated risks over human smuggling and trafficking at the border. Although volunteers still deliver much of humanitarian aid, certain permits and approvals have been required to prevent human smuggling and trafficking (*KII* 16/05/2022).

Although the Polish public prosecutor's office has initiated investigations into some allegations of human trafficking, as at 10 May 2022, they have not confirmed any cases. Local responders and refugees have reported some cases of human trafficking and sexual exploitation (*La Strada International and The Freedom Fund* 09/05/2022; *HRW* 29/04/2022; *UNHCR* 13/04/2022). Data on trafficking and smuggling is scarce and difficult to collect, but that cases are not confirmed does not imply that they are not taking place (*INTERSOS* 10/05/2022; *KII* 16/05/2022). Anecdotal evidence suggests that people have already fallen into exploitative labour networks (*HRW* 29/04/2022; *KII* 16/05/2022). Similarly, there have been reports of cases of sexual violence by hosts (*Newsweek* 12/03/2022).

Despite a lack of evidence, there is a high risk that cases of GBV, including trafficking, sexual exploitation, and rape, might occur in Poland because of a lack of security measures to prevent these incidents, and many women and girls are taking shelter with strangers (*CARE and UN Women* 04/05/2022; *HRW* 29/04/2022). UNHCR has warned of the dangers of not registering volunteers. Predators and criminal networks may pretend to be volunteers and attempt to exploit refugees by luring them with promises of free transport, accommodation, employment, or other forms of assistance (*UNHCR* 13/04/2022). Many volunteers also lack the training to identify signs of sexual abuse and the risks of exploitation and trafficking (*HRW* 29/04/2022).

Registration and verification systems for refugee children at crossing points are deficient, meaning children are at risk of separating from their families because of inadequate data management (*UNHCR and UNICEF* 07/04/2022 a and 07/04/2022).



## Education

An estimated 700,000–1,000,000 Ukrainian children will need access to education and assistance in learning the Polish language, implying a need to grow school capacities and expand the Polish school system by 14% (The Washington Post 06/04/2022; The Economist 09/04/2022). By the end of April, approximately 700,000 refugee children in Poland were of school age (6–18 years). Only 200,100 children had enrolled in Polish schools (UNICEF 14/05/2022).

The Polish Government has updated its national regulations so that Ukrainian teachers can work in Poland and Ukrainian children can study (UNICEF 08/04/2022). It has also increased the limit of students allowed in classrooms (NFP 02/03/2022). In most schools, however, there are no simultaneous translators, and most Ukrainian children do not speak Polish (The Economist 09/04/2022). Although Polish language classes for refugee children have been established, the demand for these services far exceeds the offer (NFP 02/03/2022). Ukrainian teachers in Poland and other volunteers have provided some translation services, but as with the provision of other assistance services, it is not possible to know how long such assistance will last (The Christian Science Monitor 03/05/2022; Devex 22/03/2022).

## INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL RESPONSE CAPACITY

### Structure of the response

Volunteers have been at the forefront of the response in Poland since the beginning of the influx, providing support and assistance at the border and across Poland. The lack of sustainability, technical expertise, procedures, and safeguarding, in some instances, demonstrate the need for a stronger and coordinated response with national authorities, local responders, and the humanitarian system (UNHCR 20/04/2022; The Guardian 06/04/2022; Reuters 04/04/2022). The high reliance on volunteers is not sustainable since the majority of them have exhausted their capacities and need to return to their regular jobs (Devex 22/03/2022; The Atlantic 03/05/2022). The situation can also traumatise volunteers without training, who are not prepared to treat refugees, children, or people with special needs (KII 05/05/2022). People are likely receiving confusing information at the crossing points because some volunteers do not know the correct procedures, which can affect the actions of refugees and migrants (UNHCR and UNICEF 07/04/2022 a).

As at 9 May, there were 87 humanitarian organisations in Poland responding to the influx of migrants and refugees from Ukraine (41 NGOs, 35 INGOs, seven UN agencies, one private organisation, and three unspecified). The sectors with the most organisations involved are

protection (41), education (30), and health (30). The sectors with the fewest organisations are food security (12), WASH (eight), and nutrition (six). The vast majority of organisations (66) are concentrated in Mazowieckie voivodeship (where Warsaw is). In voivodeships such as Dolnoslaskie and Slaskie, where a large part of the migrants and refugees presumably is, there are less than half as many organisations as in Warsaw (Poland RRP accessed 09/05/2022). All organisations working in Poland on the current crisis are coordinated through the Refugee Coordination Forum run by UNHCR (UNHCR 26/04/2022).

### National capacity

The Polish Government has repeatedly said that it maintains an open-door policy for Ukrainian migrants and refugees. Despite a recent history of rejecting migration, the Government has amended several legal provisions to allow Ukrainian citizens to stay, work, and study in the country (KII 16/05/2022; DGAP 23/03/2022). Some organisations have raised concerns about the Polish Government's ability to deal with the influx in the long term (NBC 11/04/2022; The Conversation 13/04/2022; KII 16/05/2022). A legal architecture guarantees Ukrainian citizens access to basic services, but the logistical capacities to provide these services do not seem to be sufficient (KII 16/05/2022).

The Polish Government has expressed a need for EU economic assistance in dealing with the migrant and refugee population, but the penalties that the EU imposed on Poland in February complicate the situation (The Guardian 08/02/2022; NYT 08/02/2022; DW 05/05/2022). EU is blocking funds to Poland until the country makes reforms to its judicial system (Politico 05/04/2022).

Cities such as Warsaw have reported spending more than EUR 10 million on assistance to migrants and refugees and have asked for more financial support from the Government (NFP 13/04/2022).

### Main information gaps and challenges

**Language:** during the first weeks of the war, there were reports of a shortage of translators to assist migrants and refugees at crossing points. As a result, many people obtained inaccurate or unofficial information (UNHCR and UNICEF 07/04/2022 a).

**Differential and gender approach:** there is insufficient information on assistance to people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ community, and foreign students enrolled in Ukrainian universities.

**Information on the location of migrants and refugees:** because many of the refugees who have entered Poland have moved to other countries in Europe or between different cities in

Poland, their current location and the number remaining in the country are unclear. Not having clear data on the location of migrants also means not having differentiated information on their needs according to the provinces they are in.

**Cross-border pendulum dynamics:** the number of people who have entered Poland and the number of those who have crossed the border into Ukraine since 24 February are known. What is unclear is the number of these people who have returned permanently to Ukraine and the number of those who have simply crossed temporarily. The population living between the two countries may have particular needs for access to different services. Without a clear idea about these data, designing a humanitarian assistance plan would be more difficult.

## AGGRAVATING FACTORS

### Discriminated groups

There have been reports of acts of discrimination on the Polish-Ukrainian border since the beginning of the war (NPR 09/05/2022; The Conversation 21/03/2022; The Guardian 02/03/2022). The Act on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in the Context of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine grants temporary protection to Ukrainian migrants and refugees who have entered Poland since 24 February. This act excludes non-Ukrainian migrants and refugees, meaning they have less access to the Polish Government's services (INTERSOS 10/05/2022). The official pages of the Polish Government affirm that all refugees fleeing from the conflict in Ukraine do not need to register and will be provided temporary accommodation, but there are some different guarantees depending on the nationality of the refugees. For example, the Polish Government has established that people fleeing from Ukraine without a permit to stay in the Schengen area can only stay in Poland for 15 days (SIP 03/2022). In comparison, Ukrainians can stay for up to 18 months (Government of Poland accessed 06/05/2022). The Government has also created a webpage with up-to-date information only for Ukrainian refugees (Government of Poland 28/02/2022).

There have been accusations that Poland responds differently to non-Ukrainian refugees and migrants attempting to enter Poland from Ukraine. Black and Indian refugees have reported being banned from trains or forced by authorities to travel at night (HRW 04/03/2022; CNN 28/02/2022). EU border authorities have also detained non-white students (The Independent 23/03/2022).

Minority populations, such as Ukrainian Roma, have complained about being discriminated against by not being allowed to rent accommodation or use public transport. Volunteers, other Ukrainian migrants and refugees, and the Polish population have also stigmatised them by falsely accusing them of theft (The Guardian 10/05/2022; INTERSOS 10/05/2022).

The Government has claimed that allegations of the poor treatment of non-Ukrainian migrants at the border are not true and that all migrants and refugees are treated equally (The Conversation 13/04/2022; Poland MFA Twitter 03/03/2022).

### Crisis on the Poland-Belarus border

Continued hostilities between Russia and Ukraine and deteriorating conditions for refugees in Belarus could increase attempts to cross from Belarus into Poland. This situation has led to tensions on the border, to the extent that on 11 April, the Belarusian authorities accused Poland of opening fire on their side of the border (Euronews 11/04/2022).

In Belarus, there are around 3,000 migrants from various countries in the Middle East and Asia who since 2021 have tried unsuccessfully to enter Poland to find asylum or be transported to other European countries (Balkan Insight 22/03/2022). In contrast to the Polish Government's attitude towards people crossing the border from Ukraine, they have implemented measures to restrict the arrival of the migrant and refugee population on the border with Belarus. These measures include building fences, sending military forces, preventing NGOs working on the border from delivering humanitarian aid, and legalising summary returns of refugees to Belarus without due process (ECRE 14/01/2022; Amnesty International 11/04/2022).

Throughout 2021, there were at least 40,000 attempts to cross the border between Belarus and Poland (with many migrants attempting several times) (Poland Border Guard 12/01/2022; Amnesty International 11/04/2022). During these attempts, at least 19 people have died, predominantly from the cold winter temperatures (InfoMigrants 22/02/2022; The Guardian 08/02/2022). Doctors Without Borders decided to withdraw from the Polish border area with Belarus after months of being blocked by the Government from entering the zone (MSF 03/02/2022).

Refugees in Belarus have reported that the war in Ukraine has made their conditions more precarious because of the sanctions that have been imposed on Belarus. The sanctions include restrictions on money transfers, which refugees without bank accounts often use. As a result, refugees have had less access to money to rent places to stay and less access to food and other necessities (Amnesty International 11/04/2022).

## Economy

Inflation in Poland is currently the highest since 1998. In April 2022, energy and fuel prices increased by 27.3% and 27.8%, respectively, and food prices increased by 12.7% (Bloomberg 29/04/2022 and 06/04/2022; The Guardian 06/04/2022). The central bank of Poland is expecting a peak in inflation in June–July, which would result in commodity prices continuing to increase (Reuters 06/05/2022). The disruption from Russia has affected the price of gas in Poland. In response, an interconnection between Lithuania, Poland, and the Baltic states has been inaugurated to strengthen the energy independence of the region (EC 05/05/2022).

## OUTLOOK

---

Although the arrival rate has declined over the past month, an unstable conflict in Ukraine will likely cause new displacement and arrivals to Poland. As long as the war in Ukraine remains active, return dynamics are expected to be intermittent, and people may start to frequently engage in pendular cross-border dynamics.

Regardless of Polish solidarity towards Ukraine, resources are limited, and the pressure given by the arrival of a large population of refugees could create tension between host communities and new arrivals and place stress on public services (FAO 07/04/2022; NRC 25/03/2022).

Currently, many responders are Polish volunteers who have provided assistance to people at the borders with Ukraine, offering food, housing, interpretation, and free transport across Europe (INTERSOS 10/05/2022). This setup creates uncertainty about the active capacity of the response if people are unable to continue to volunteer or provide assistance (KII 05/05/2022; HRW 29/04/2022; Amnesty International 22/03/2022).



## CROSSING POINTS, ARRIVALS FROM UKRAINE, AND PESEL REGISTRATION BY REGION



**Disclaimer:** Arrival figures are as at 22 May 2022. People registered for PESEL figures are as at 18 May 2022.

**Source:** ACAPS using data from UNHCR (accessed 23/05/2022; accessed 19/05/2022) and OCHA (accessed 19/05/2022).