

# HUNGARY

## Ukrainian refugees

### CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

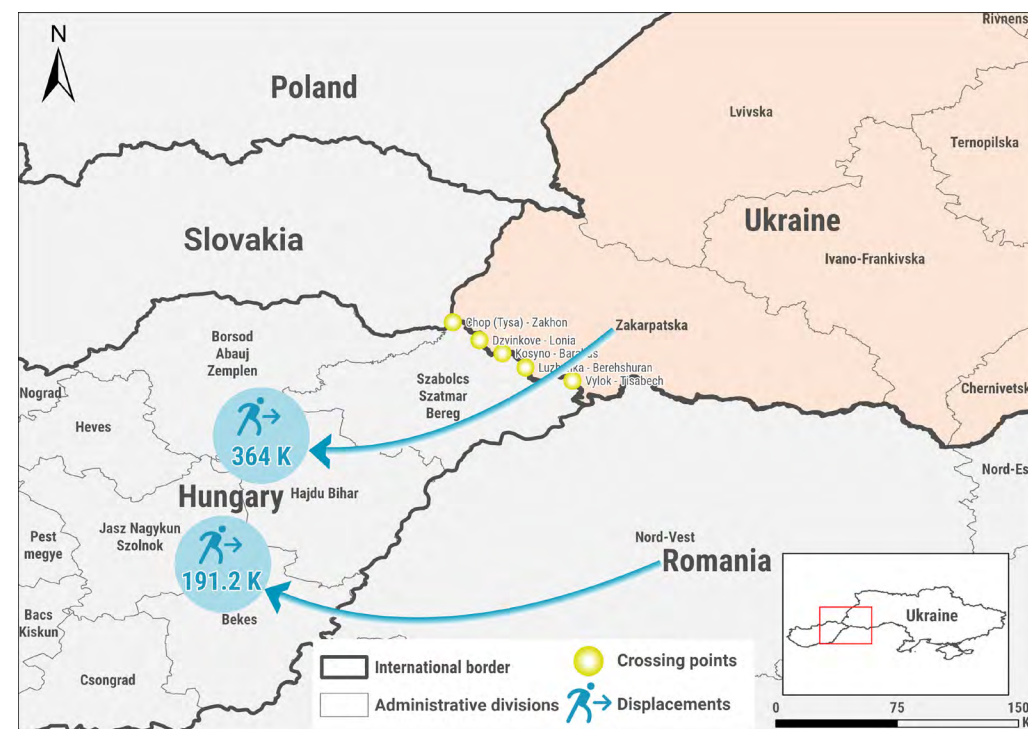
As at 28 March 2022, more than four million people had crossed international borders since the start of the hostilities in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 (UNHCR accessed 28/03/2022). In early March, UNHCR projected at least 250,000 Ukrainians arriving in Hungary by July 2022 as a result of the conflict (UNHCR 01/03/2022). On 24 March, this projection had already more than doubled with 522,100 arrivals (UNHCR 24/03/2022). This number represents about 5.3% of Hungary's total population and 12.9% of all Ukrainian refugees (UNHCR accessed 28/03/2022).

As at 31 March 2022, there was an undetermined number of arrivals planning to stay in Hungary and those only using it as a transit country. Humanitarian organisations claim that a large number is using Hungary only as a transit country, meaning there are likely fewer than 522,100 people staying (The Guardian 31/03/2022). Even so, the rapid influx of migrants and refugees into the country has already posed a challenge to reception capacities, which the Hungarian Government has reduced in recent years to discourage migration (UNHCR 25/03/2022; HRW 08/03/2022).

Between Hungary and Ukraine, there are five crossing points: Dzvinkove, Kosino, Luzhanka, Tiszabecs, and Tysa (The Kyiv Independent 07/03/2022). As at 24 March, at least 330,900 people had directly arrived in Hungary from these points. 191,200 had entered from other countries (mostly Romania, where there are five crossing points with Hungary) (UNHCR 24/03/2022). Ukrainians who lived in Ukraine before 24 February are entitled to temporary protection in Hungary so they can apply for asylum and, if approved, stay in Hungary for a maximum of three years. Third-country nationals are not provided the same opportunities (HHC 09/03/2022).

In 2021, Hungary passed laws to restrict the right of asylum for refugees (UNHCR 29/06/2020 and 10/03/2021). In relation, the Hungarian Government dismantled a large part of the temporary shelters and health centres available for refugees (InfoMigrants 11/06/2021; HRW 08/03/2022). Consequently, many Ukrainians have chosen to use Hungary only as a transit zone to other countries with more lenient migration laws (Insider 14/03/2022). Regardless, the Hungarian Government, which has faced questioning over its stance on migration in the past, has defended its open border policy for Ukrainians (AI Jazeera 03/03/2022; InfoMigrants 09/03/2022).

### Crossing points and cumulative arrivals in Hungary (24 February 2022 – 24 March 2022)



Sources: ACAPS using data from UNHCR 24/03/2022; The Kyiv Independent 07/03/2022

**Disclaimer:** This map only shows the cumulative number of arrivals in Hungary (from Ukraine and from Romania) in a month, but not the number of refugees currently hosted by Hungary. Many only transited Hungary and continued their journey to other European countries, some returned to Ukraine.

See full map on page 4.

## ANTICIPATED SCOPE AND SCALE

If the Russian army advances into western Ukraine, the influx of Ukrainian migrants to Hungary will likely increase. In Zakarpattia oblast (Ukraine), also known as Transcarpathia, about 12% of the population identifies as Hungarians, and between 100,000–150,000 have dual Hungarian-Ukrainian citizenship (Ukrainian Government accessed 17/03/2022; openDemocracy 11/10/2018). Since a Hungarian citizenship would help facilitate the migration process, Hungary might receive more refugees than expected. The Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister has raised concerns over Hungary's seeming lack of aid to Ukraine and a potential for further conflict escalation if Hungary gets involved in taking over Transcarpathia. The Hungarian Government has rejected these accusations (Hungary Today 24/03/2022).

As at 24 March 2022, more than 522,100 people had arrived in Hungary. An unknown number had relocated to other countries in Europe (UNHCR 24/03/2022). As at 31 March 2022, less than 7,750 people had applied for temporary protection in Hungary. If fighting in western Ukraine increases, many more are expected to arrive and stay in the country, especially with mobility to the rest of Europe being more costly (openDemocracy 08/03/2022).

## HUMANITARIAN CONSTRAINTS

In 2017, a law obliging organisations receiving more than EUR 20,000 (some 22,000 USD) per year in foreign funding to register as foreign-funded came into force in Hungary. For the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), the law implied imposing unnecessary and discriminatory restrictions on NGOs (CJEU 18/06/2020). Severe sanctions for non-compliance restricted NGO activity in Hungary (HRW 12/06/2017). By order of a CJEU ruling, the Hungarian Government repealed the law, but audit measures for NGOs and more administrative burdens replaced it, making NGO work more difficult (Amnesty International 18/05/2021; HRW 23/04/2021).

In 2018, another law was introduced in Hungary criminalising groups that assist asylum seekers. The law meant people providing services, advice, or support to migrants or asylum seekers could go to jail for a year (HRW 22/06/2018 and 23/04/2021).

On 25 February 2022, a Hungarian government official publicly criticised NGOs, stating they were trying to participate in decisions about refugees that did not concern them (Hungary Today 25/02/2022). In the meantime, government members published articles accusing NGO members of reproducing the 'foreign press', which, in the current context, exposed them as opponents of the Government and restricted them from doing their work (HRW 04/03/2022).

There are large information gaps on the number of refugees in need of assistance, the number of existing shelters, and the specific needs of refugees. Although more than 500,000 Ukrainians have entered Hungary, the number of Ukrainians who have decided to move to

other countries remains unknown. Humanitarian organisations have accused the Hungarian Government of not publishing the numbers to attract more funds by inflating the number of people who want to stay (The Guardian 31/03/2022).

## SECTORAL NEEDS

### Shelter and NFIs

As at 23 March 2022, the Hungarian Government had set up 173 reception centres for refugees across 11 counties. At least 7,000 Ukrainians were receiving assistance in these centres (Daily News Hungary 23/03/2022). No estimates are available on the number of Ukrainians still residing in Hungary who are in need of shelter. According to UNHCR, most refugees are in non-governmental shelters that lack the funds to indefinitely take care of them (World Today News 07/03/2022; 24.hu 13/03/2022; Ruptly 02/03/2022; The Conversation 09/03/2022).

Other refugees and migrants are staying in the homes of host Hungarians or using their savings to pay for hotels (Insider 22/03/2022 and 14/03/2022). Humanitarian organisations anticipate that in only a few weeks, these people will no longer be able to afford hotel rooms, increasing the pressure on public accommodation services (24.hu 13/03/2022). They might need cash assistance as a consequence.

Other refugees are in makeshift shelters in gyms and schools, where sanitation facilities and cooking space are limited for the number of people present (Ruptly 02/03/2022).

The shelters received blankets, food, and hygiene items from civil society in the first month of the influx. Humanitarian organisations have since appealed for international assistance, arguing that civil society's capacity to help is insufficient to cope with the crisis until the war is over (24.hu 13/03/2022; HVG 01/03/2022; Hello Vidék 25/02/2022).

The Hungarian Government's anti-migration stance has reduced Hungary's capacity to deal with refugees and migrants. As at 24 February, humanitarian organisations declared that Hungary had the capacity to provide shelter for only 300–1,500 refugees (World Today News 07/03/2022; Szabad Európa 24/02/2022). In contrast, the Hungarian Government has stated that the country can receive 9,000 migrants and refugees (Schengen Visa Info 21/03/2022). On 22 March, the Hungarian Government requested funds from the European Commission because of the challenges that the migrant and refugee crisis was putting on its finances (Hungary Today 23/03/2022; Reuters 22/03/2022).

### Health

There is no official information on the number of people with health needs. Humanitarian organisations state that they might need Ukrainian-to-Hungarian translation services for

health professionals to carry out their activities (HVG 01/03/2022). In 2015, when there was a rapid influx of migrants and refugees from Middle Eastern countries, the lack of translators in refugee centres limited the response and delayed some services for the population in need.

According to a 2016 WHO assessment on the capacity of the Hungarian health system to respond to new waves of refugees, Hungary needed to strengthen its medical response capacity. It also needed to establish better information channels with NGOs to avoid limiting its capacity to respond to medical needs (WHO 22/11/2016). Since then, Hungary has instead dismantled the refugee assistance system, including cutting the number of medical staff available to care for refugees in assistance centres (ECRE 29/09/2017; HRW 08/03/2022; Devex 26/04/2018). The European Commission has stated that the Hungarian health system is “chronically underfunded”, even for its own citizens. The increase in migrants and refugees will likely overburden the resources of the system (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 28/11/2019; HRW 04/08/2020; Vox 15/04/2020).

The vast majority of refugees in Ukraine are women and children because men of conscription age (18–60) are banned from leaving the country. Exceptions are those financially supporting three or more children, single fathers, or guardians of children with disabilities (The Guardian 09/03/2022; Government of Ukraine 24/02/2022). The large number of female and child refugees concentrates the pressures on healthcare services to their needs, such as obstetric care, maternal health, reproductive health, and response to sexual and gender-based violence (WHO 08/03/2022). In Hungary, women report having their health needs met less than men’s (EC 06/2018). There have also been reports of restrictions on women’s sexual and reproductive health procedures (openDemocracy 29/09/2016; Les et al. 10/2017).

There have been COVID-19 infections among several refugees. Other refugee centres have reported not having enough health staff to deal with the medical needs of refugees (AMDA 15/03/2022).

Although no assessment is available yet on the issue, many migrants and refugees will need mental health and psychosocial support (WHO 18/03/2022 and 08/03/2022). Children, in particular, might more urgently need these services, as they could have trauma related to what they observed in Ukraine or from the untimely disruption of their life plans (The Guardian 15/03/2022; Trauma Központ accessed 24/03/2022). Humanitarian organisations are trying to identify people with vulnerabilities to prioritise health assistance (UNHCR 24/03/2022).

## Protection

Various organisations have warned about migrant and refugee women and children from Ukraine becoming victims of human trafficking networks and sexual and labour exploitation (OCHA 08/03/2022; IOM 18/03/2022; UNICEF 19/03/2022). There have been only a few cases reported, but there is often an underreporting of these crimes given how they occur and the impossibility for victims to report them, meaning the actual number might be higher (EUobserver 21/03/2022; IICSA 01/02/2022). In 2021, Hungary registered 188 cases of human trafficking, most for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The Hungarian Government has

also established laws barring victims without legal residence in the country from receiving assistance, increasing the risk for a number of migrants and refugees amid the migration crisis (U.S. Department of State accessed 24/03/2022). Legal ambiguities in dealing with victims of human trafficking in Hungary could increase the risk for those transiting through the country.

## AGGRAVATING FACTORS

### Antimigration attitudes

For the past seven years, the Hungarian Government has maintained a critical discourse on migration, which has led the country to dismantle its refugee reception institutions (ECRE 29/09/2017; InfoMigrants 11/06/2021; HRW 08/03/2022). In border areas, Hungary has reduced the number of medical staff available to treat migrants and refugees, closed several shelters where migrants arrived, and implemented laws criminalising those helping migrants, all in an attempt to discourage migrants from coming to the country (ECRE 29/09/2017; HHC 30/08/2017; GDP 02/03/2022). Although, in the face of the Ukrainian crisis, both the Government and the public have maintained a discourse of open borders to Ukrainian citizens, the lack of initial capacities resulting from the previous dismantling of asylum institutions has led to a shortage of shelters and other essential services (World Today News 07/03/2022; HRW 08/03/2022).

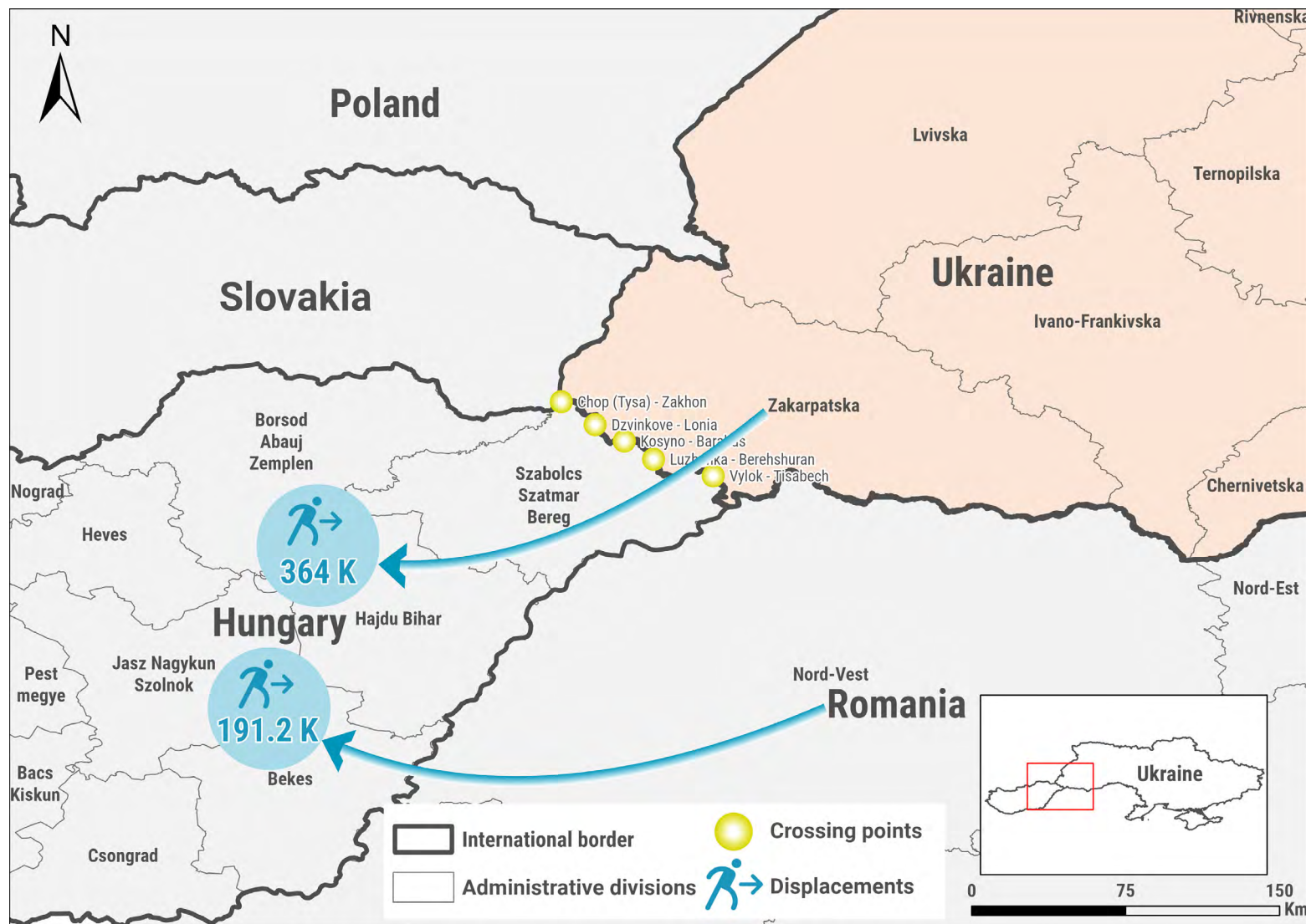
### Non-Ukrainian refugees

The migration restrictions previously established by the Hungarian Government have made it difficult for non-Ukrainian refugees and migrants fleeing war to enter and receive care in Hungary (InfoMigrants 03/03/2022).

Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Hungary from Ukraine since 24 February are allowed to work in Hungary. The Hungarian Government is offering financial support to employers hiring Ukrainians (Schengen Visa Info 17/03/2022). It is also working on a plan to allow Ukrainian children to continue their education in Hungary without restrictions (The Budapest Times 23/03/2022).

The situation for non-Ukrainians living in Ukraine before the onset of war is very different. These refugees do not qualify for the temporary protection that Hungary is offering, meaning they have to move to other countries to receive necessary care and assistance (UNHCR 15/03/2022). The Hungarian Government has established a humanitarian corridor for these people, but they might face challenges in their passage through the country because of laws criminalising those who support migrants and refugees (Reuters 25/02/2022; UN 21/03/2022). Refugees of other nationalities have reported being victims of physical threats, unclear information from the authorities, and racial discrimination in Hungary (Daily Maverick 03/03/2022; The Conversation 07/03/2022).

## CROSSING POINTS AND CUMULATIVE ARRIVALS IN HUNGARY (24 FEBRUARY 2022 – 24 MARCH 2022)



Sources: UNHCR 24/03/2022; The Kyiv Independent 07/03/2022

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